An Intersectional Perspective of Mothers in the Southwest, U.S.:

The Interwoven Experience of Black and Latina Working Mothers during COVID-19

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation focused on mothering practices among cisgender Black and Latina women during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This research sought to understand their engagement with public (employment) and private (domestic) labor and the ways that COVID-19 amplified existing gender, race, and class disparities in American mothering practices within these communities. This exploration considered the unique positions that Black and Latina mothers shared through community mothering, resulting in shared survival tactics. Mothering practice formed a web of knowledge production that was shared through generational child rearing as a form of communal protection. The survival strategies and techniques, employed by Black and Latina mothers, relied heavily on community and "othermothering" practices. The research questions sought to reveal the ways that capitalism, patriarchy, and socio-cultural expectations created racialized and gendered conditions that manifested in the lives of Black and Latina mothers already experiencing a syndemic due to interrelated complex issues of social crises that disproportionately affected women of color. The research in this dissertation project found that all mothers in the study, no matter their race, class, or gender, experienced an increase of stress, productive, and reproductive labor. Additionally, the study uncovered that no matter their race, class or gender, mothers sought creative and innovative ways to educate their children, create structured environments, and engage in othermothering strategies in order to continue their paid employment and care for their children. The research found that socio-economic status played a small factor in the ways that mothers perceived their privilege; yet, mothers of

working-class status also reported feeling “lucky,” “fortunate,” or “privileged” due to various factors such as positive outlooks, aspirational class, and support networks. This research underscored the ways that Black and Latina mothers successfully navigated a global pandemic, continued their paid labor and reproductive labor through acts of resistance, resilience, and thrivance.

DEDICATION

This incredible labor is dedicated to my six-year-old self. I wish I could hold her hand and reassure her that everything would be "okay." I carry the hopeful memory of my younger self with me every day as I journey through life. To my son, the little boy whom I birthed. My heart resides outside of my body and within you. I love you more than words can express. I hope that this work brings significance to your life one day. Without you, this dissertation would be meaningless.

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To my interlocutors: Thank you for sharing your stories with me and the world. Your participation in this study enabled me to write this dissertation, defend my work, and demonstrate to the world the remarkable mothering practices of Black and Latina mothers. I am in awe of each one of you and grateful for entrusting me with your voices.

Thank you to my dearest and most trusted support system (Amber, Cathleen, Erika, Isaac & Amber, Jamal, Monica, Renee, Roxanne, Sabrina, and Shannon). I am incredibly grateful to have you by my side. Your constant reminders of my value, worth, and brilliance are a testament to the friendship I am privileged to know. On the difficult days, you serve as my guiding light. Lastly, the reason I am here today is because I sat across from a friend many years ago and he said: you can do it, apply for to a PhD program. Jay, thank you for always being there for me in ways I never knew I needed. You are my reminder that there is good and hope in the world. I hope to be sitting across from you until I am 82; I love you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Unpacking Mothering Practices and Centering Phoenix, Arizona

The Backbone of the Nation

We are the backbone of this nation
Crying from the expectation and the damnation
Of this DAMN nation.

You expect the most and provide the least
This society wants more, more, and more
More of our bodies, more of our minds, more of our souls.

We give you everything, yet we are invisible
We are laborers, producers, accountants, educators,
chefs, managers, counselors, solvers, protectors.
We are invisible mothers.

You take our children from our womb and kill them in our streets
Patriarchal
Racist, Sexist, Homophobic
Nation that proclaims Safety, Security, and Prosperity.
We m(ohter)s are breaking to raise our children that you deem disposable.

We are unseen in the eyes of hegemonic, masculine, progressive America.
COVID-19 is killing us, and it's not from a contagious virus
Patriarchy, racism, sexism, homophobia is the epidemic.

Unseen, no more - we know more.
Patriarchy, no more - we know more.
Racism, no more - we know more.
Sexism, no more - we know more.
INVISIBILITY no more.

At the onset of the pandemic, I wrote this poem to reflect on my experience as a single Latina mother raising a multiracial child[1] amidst a global pandemic. The poem encapsulated the raw and intense emotions I felt as the world was navigating a global pandemic. It was March 2020 and the norms of the day to day came to a halt. It was

[1] My child identifies himself as a Black, Mexican, and White multiracial child. His phenotype is of a mixed-Black presentation.

during this time that people connected via social media platforms to encourage others and share their ideas of "*we are in this together*[2]". Well, it certainly did not feel like I was in this with anyone else except myself and my seven-year-old boy. There was no one to save us but me, the mom. The poem shed light on my journey as I navigated multiple responsibilities as a mother, productive laborer, reproductive laborer, and the caretaker of a multiracial child.

Before the word COVID-19 was a common household reality; my son and I left for a road trip from Phoenix, Arizona to Los Angeles, California. Our Spring Break trip was something we looked forward to all year; that particular year our Spring Break would finally align and we were headed to Disneyland. However, as we left the city limits of Phoenix, the atmosphere shifted dramatically. I received text messages from my friends and family asking if I was really going to go to Disneyland. I was told that I need to be careful of COVID-19. At the time, I thought they were being overly dramatic. "Isn't it far away?" I thought to myself. However, the looming threat of the coronavirus intensified with each passing hour, I remember becoming extremely nervous and scared. I thought to myself, "am I doing the right thing or should I turn around now"? I stayed my course; my child would have this well-deserved vacation, he worked hard for it and so did I. I arrived in California only to meet my sister who was equally nervous. Even with the media coverage and the judgment from family, we decided to go through with our plans and have a good time at Disneyland. It was only a few hours into our trip that Disneyland

[2] "We are in this together" was a common phrase that social media users would post on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to indicate that they cared for others as the shift from public to home took place.

shared they would close their doors for an indefinite amount of time beginning at the end of the week. With the closing of Disneyland, a quintessential symbol of American culture, I knew the severity of the situation; "American's do not value capitalism over lives," I thought to myself, "this is really bad." I felt awful for taking my son away from home to enjoy a trip in the middle of a global crisis - what kind of mother was I?

As the pandemic unfolded and shelter-in-place[3] orders were taking effect, I found myself confronting a new way of living: isolation. I was responsible for balancing paid labor, single-parenting, and pursuing my PhD. The multiple expectations of the pandemic felt impossible. I was required to shelter-in-place and figure out how to handle compounding expectations: work, school, educating my first-grade child, caretaking, and managing stress levels. I recall the first day of official lockdown as a day of suffocation. I did not want to stay in my house, so I took the dining room chairs outside and sat in the front yard. I needed space, sun, and normal. The initial weeks of lockdown were marked by depression and a longing for normalcy—a desire to escape the confines of my home and return to what I once deemed as normal.

The shift of the pandemic brought chaos and uncertainty; yet, it seemed that a silver lining was emerging for me and my son. The pandemic afforded me the opportunity to prioritize quality time with my son, a luxury I had been deprived of due to my demanding work and school schedule. Together, we engaged in so many fun

[3] Shelter-in-place was a term used to signify that people were required to stay at home in order to lessen the exposure of human contact during the pandemic. The goal was to reduce the spread of the disease by only coming in contact with immediate family members.

activities ranging from crafting and cooking to outdoor adventures. Despite the challenges of remote learning and virtual work, I focused on a balance between my course work and my role as a mother. This felt like the opportunity to teach my son what it took to raise a child in the U.S. in this era. I attempted to instill the importance of care work, education, exercise, and joy. The responsibilities of everything, productive and reproductive labor, was overwhelming but I valued the time I was able to spend with my son; I was never afforded this opportunity in the past. When my son was eight-weeks old, I had to return to my full-time job and my part-time job to make ends meet. The COVID-19 restrictions to remain in my home with my child was a gift. I was able to continue with my employment, education, and reproductive labor all within the home, my homeplace. I played with my son without feeling anxious or frustrated with traffic, driving to and from work or campus, or rushing to drop my son off at a caregiver's home. COVID-19 provided a pause. If only I was afforded the opportunity when he was so young, perhaps my motherhood journey would have been different. I realized that I needed to make the most out of this time because I would never get it back.

Reflecting on my journey as a Latina woman defying societal expectations, I acknowledged the obstacles I had to overcome to pursue higher education and obtain a Ph.D. I did not receive support through traditional family ties, such as parents, husband, or siblings; instead, I found support through a kinship network of professors, colleagues, mentors, and friends. I was determined to follow my goals and create my own mothering practices that were in line with my feminist values. My experiences through race, class, and gender underscored the inadequacies of a system that was never meant to work for

me, a Latina single-mother. Yet, COVID-19 created the space in which I needed to thrive. I wondered, “are other mothers experiencing this?” I realized the incredible amount of pressure placed on Black and Latina mothers but I was also seeing something else: homeplace and space to work in the ways that fit our feminist perspective. We know our children best. We are their mamas. Mamas are always their first teachers. Life was a challenge during COVID-19 and I had the best years of my life. These two conflicting statements can be true.

My experiences of mothering during the pandemic inform this research, which focuses on mothering practices among 12 cis-gender Black and Latina[4] women during the pandemic. Black and Latina women have a long history of paid labor in the United States (Collins, 1991, 2000; Jones, 2010; Nash, 2021); this research seeks to understand Black and Latina women’s simultaneous engagement with public (employment) and private (domestic) labor and the myriad of ways that COVID-19 amplified existing gender, race, and class disparities in the United States of America. The exploration of these two demographics of women considers the uniquely situated positions experienced by Black

[4] This study employs the terms "Black" and "Latina" to delineate the demographic racial indicators of the women who participated in the interviews. The women who identified as Black shared their racial makeup of either Black, Afro-Latina, or mixed-raced Black. The women that identified as Latina shared their racial makeup as either Mexican, Mexican-American, or Hispanic. I acknowledge that using the term “Latina” is exclusive and does not include all gender variations or representations of Latiné individuals. The term Latiné is a word that includes Latino, Latina, Latinx – and fosters an inclusive representation of individuals on a gender spectrum. The term Latiné is the newest term that offers a gender-inclusive lens and is utilized instead of Latino, Latina, or Latinx. Latino or Latina holds a binary gender position. Latiné is preferred as it is easier to pronounce in Spanish than Latinx. In reference to mothers in this study, I will utilize the term Latina (I am focusing on a select number of Latina women that either prefer the term Latina or they specifically identify as Latina).

and Latina mothers in the Phoenix Metropolitan area and the need to rely on community mothering and strategic mothering practices[5]; thus, resulting in the adoption of similar survival tactics. Several articles, books, and case studies have been produced to emphasize the intersectional framework that Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined in order to explain the multiple systems of oppression that individuals face simultaneously through their race, gender, class, and other social locations; this theoretical lens provides a foundation to understand how Black and Latina women's mothering practices were shaped by COVID-19. Additionally, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) applies the theory of intersectionality to a matrix of domination in *Black Feminist Thought* to illustrate the ways in which Black women experience oppression; the "matrix of domination" theorized by Patricia Hill Collins (2000) refers to how these intersecting oppressions, race, gender, class are actually organized. Collins (2000) elucidates that race is far from the only oppression faced by Black women and that other significant markers of difference that need to be taken into consideration are "class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship status…" (p. 23). Collins is deeply concerned about Black women in the United States and centers her work on the experience of Black womanhood.

[5] Riché Barnes utilized the term strategic mothering as a framework. This work builds from her argument and makes connections between Black and Latina mothering, care work, and labor. Barnes states, "strategic mothering is a framework I develop to account for the myriad ways in which Black mothers continuously navigate and redefine their relationship with work to best fit the needs of their families and their communities. Because Black women's roles as laborers (both as workers and their capacity to reproduce laborers) has been foundational to the development of the U.S. nation-state, I define strategic mothering as a way to discuss African-American women's roles as mothers and workers as multifold and multipurpose, often changing over the life course

I pull from Crenshaw and Collins' work to argue that Black and Latina women in the Phoenix Metropolitan area are faced with multiple oppressions from various systems within the United States and their productive and reproductive labor takes careful consideration, strategic planning, caretaking strategies, and personal and family agency. The systems that these two demographics face is employment, education, societal structure, health care, and care work. These societal structures frame the way the individuals in the U.S. understand the various systems and institutions that shape the norms within the society; some examples are government, family, religion, media, and social stratification. The intricacies of knowing how to migrate and mitigate harm reduction through these systems is necessary for the Black and Latina mother to raise their children in a safe and healthy environment, at home, school, and community.

This study attempts to uncover the strategies employed by Black and Latina mothers amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic, as they navigated the challenges of balancing full-time employment, full-time caregiver responsibilities, and full-time domestic labor household requirements. Mothering as a theoretical lens will be woven throughout the dissertation. The status of mother within a Black or Latina community holds a particular position within a community (Anzaldúa, 1999; Caballero et al., 2019; hooks, 1984; Collins, 1991, 2000; Hurtado, 2020; Jones, 2010; Nash, 2021); characterized by strength, resilience, strategy and resourcefulness.

Guiding Concepts

The concepts that were utilized in this research became evident while unpacking the experiences of Black and Latina mothers during the pandemic. I rely on a set of

concepts that highlight the ways that Black and Latina mothers engaged in strategic mothering practices that allowed them to survive and thrive amidst an unprecedented time.

Mothering practice is the act of parenting and engaging in an ethic of care for biological and non-biological children (Collins, 2000; Nash, 2021). Mothering as a verb is the act of care provided to a minor child; Joy James offers a critical theorized definition to view mothering from a captive maternal standpoint, she states, “captive maternals can be either biological females or those feminized into caretaking and consumption” (2016, p. 255). This lens of mothering can then be mapped on to the individual and not their gender. *Othermothering* is the act of child rearing and engaging in an ethic of care for non-biological children residing in the home and/or children within a kinship network or community (Collins, 2000). *Productive labor* is the act of working outside of the home or inside of the home for wages or paid income (Bhattacharya, 2017). *Reproductive labor,* typically assumed by women or mothers within a household, encompasses domestic tasks and responsibilities and care work of family and community. It involves the production and maintenance of the workforce through unpaid labor performed within the home (Bhattacharya, 2017). *Thrivance* is a concept that originates from Indigenous scholarship, and offers a way to view indigenous experiences not solely through a lens of survival but through an act of thriving and resistance to hegemonic, colonial and capitalist systems often functioning within the United States (Baumann, 2023; Jolivétte, 2023; Wilson, 2008). *Black women* are women who identify as Black or African-American and reside within the United States of America. *Latinas* are women who identify as Latina and

identify with Latina mothering practices. As a theoretical lens, motherhood, defined as an institution, identifies ways in which mothers are expected to perform a particular role within society and the ways that norms are upheld by the patriarchal system and the capitalist system (O'Reilly, 2007, 2016; Rich, 1986). Mothering practices across race, gender, sexuality, and class are disparate and dynamic, contingent upon numerous factors for Black and Latina mothers in a US capitalist, racialized, and gendered society, including historical legacies, socio-economic status, access to resources, systemic inequalities, cultural norms, and individual agency.

Black Feminist Scholarship and Chicana Feminist Scholarship

Feminist scholarship offers a deep understanding of Black women and their intersectional oppressions faced in the United States; similarly, feminist scholarship uncovers the ways that Latina women experience oppressions within the confines of the United States. There is historical and contemporary work on the plight of Black women in the United States; early work from scholars Black Feminist Scholars work as a collective to define, understand, and theorize the experience of Black men, women, children, and community within the context of a capitalist, patriarchal, white supremacist nation such as the United States. Similarly, early Latina feminists[6] have written extensively about the experiences of Latina women in the United States often from a

[6] Chicana feminist is a term utilized to describe the work of Chicano, Chicana, Latina (Latino, Latina, Latina) theorists that engage in feminist literature that researches individuals of indigenous descent, oftentimes referred to as Mexican, Latin-American, or Hispanic. In this work, I will use the term Chicana(o) only to refer to the literature from which it derives; however, the mothers in this study identify as Latina and I will use Latina to describe the women in this study.

perspective of borderlands, displacement, and gender oppression; more contemporary work has included authors such as Patricia Derocher, Michelle Téllez, and Aída Hurtado. The work of feminist literature is to bring light to oppressions held against communities; in the United States, these communities are often communities of color. The authors listed are feminists that have worked to emancipate their peoples from the confines of state sanctioned violence, oppression, and degradation. However, what feminist research often overlooks is the intermeshing of the experiences of Black and Latina mothers and their communities. The trajectory of feminist literature can move into the space of connectivity of feminism at large. The idea of bridging connections, crafting literature, and creating pathways through borderlands aims to forge an interwoven relationship between Black and Latina mothering; this connectivity can foster solidarity, mutual understanding, and collective resistance and empowerment throughout their respective communities.

Feminist geopolitical discourses offer a way to analyze the relationship between patriarchal power, domination, representation, borders, and equality. Feminist geopolitics signifies the ways in which geography and power intersect throughout the political landscape. Geopolitics is not merely about conflicts between nation-states on an international scale. Instead, it must be viewed as encompassing geo-power, which refers to the array of technologies or power mechanisms involved in the governance, production, and management of territorial space. Additionally, it involves considering how these technologies shape the subjects inhabiting these territories and the methods used to regulate them (Grewal, 2005). Hyndman (2004) highlights the shift in feminist

geography and feminist politics and their intersections between the two sub-disciplines to argue that the political within feminist geography stands to offer clear connections between the embodied view from which to analyze visceral conceptions of violence, security, and mobility. This intersection offers a framework to analyze the power relations between patriarchal domination in the United States and the oppressive experience of those who live and embody the marginal status through race, gender, class, and sexuality. Feminist geopolitical discourse as a theoretical lens offers significant insight into how Black and Latina mothers must learn to navigate the patriarchal system of power in the United States, absorb its material realities, and fight against oppression to obtain their education, raise their children in healthy communities, and strive for liberation.

This work argues that Black and Latina women are overlooked subjects in policy making that shapes the world in which they find themselves within. The embodied knowledge of feminist literature allows for a mapping of what it means to be a marginalized woman and mother in the Southwestern region of the United States. Yet, these authors, historical or contemporary, are rarely engaged with each other and mapped as a way to intersect the oppressive lives of Black Americans and Latinas within the Southwest region of the United States. The literature on the experience of Black and Latina United States Americans is vast; the goal of this project is to place feminist scholarship in conversation with Black and Latina mothers in the Phoenix Metropolitan area to understand the interconnectedness of their experiences as mothers of color in a global pandemic. Through this study, feminist scholarship will gain a deeper

understanding of Black mothers and Latina mothers and the intricacies of their mothering practice, mothering strategies, and their connection to community.

Shouldering Productive and Reproductive Labor

Black and Latina women have shouldered the dual responsibility of productive and reproductive labor to maintain their position as wife [if married], mother, and productive laborer; COVID-19 only exacerbated a reality that many Black and Latina women faced. The dual or multiple epidemics experienced by people of color before COVID-19 carried through the global pandemic. Black and Latina mothers need a space in feminist theorizing. It is imperative to acknowledge the gap of research on Black and Latina middle class mothers and women into feminist theorizing. This practice involves carving out their realities and strategically aligning them with the broader tapestry to women, gender, and sexuality studies. Black and Latina mothers are often silenced, dismissed, or drowned out by systems of power that continually operate to degenerate them. Black and Latina women as mothers and as community segments have their own plights in history; however, there are striking similarities in the ways in which they resist oppressive power regimes and persist in strategic and creative manners. COVID-19 allowed for Black and Latina mothers to strengthen their proverbial muscle through leaning on othermothering, care taking strategies, and simultaneously engaging in productive and reproductive labor like their foremothers. The pandemic added increased stressors; even so, Black and Latina mothers found the silver lining and emerged as wholehearted mothers, partners, friends, community members, and laborers.

Black and Latina mothers have deep similarities through community, labor, state-sanctioned systemic oppression, and liberatory strategies. In academic research, these two groups have often been studied in isolation to understand the ways that Black individuals and community and Latina individuals and communities have endured historical traumas and oppressions and the ways in which they have separately liberated themselves from said oppressions. There is a gap in feminist literature regarding the strong correlation between two demographics, particularly women of professional class status, who are viewed as both productive and reproductive laborers. The overarching research focuses on the working-class status and equates Black and Latina mothers to underserved, needy, welfare queens, or emasculating women (Collins, 2000). There is an opportunity to draw on the experiences of mothers that engage in productive labor beyond the stereotypical depicted controlling images placed upon Black and Latina mothers.

Mothering[7] is viewed as an individual experience; yet, mothers from Black and Latina communities have historically relied on a community to raise their children. Mothering practice forms a web of knowledge production that is shared through generational child rearing as a form of communal protection. The survival strategies and techniques rely heavily on community and "othermothering" practices. To engage Black and Latina women in dialogue with each other, it is essential to intertwine their mothering practices in a transformative manner. The power inherent in mothering,

[7] This perspective is what Andrea O'Reilly (2007, 2016) called patriarchal mothering or intensive mothering. The caretaking responsibilities fall on the cis-gendered woman. The labor is placed on the gender with an expectation of upholding patriarchal values, norms, and rituals.

characterized by resistance, resilience, and thrivance, can serve as both a strategy for survival and a pathway to thriving, thus enabling the sharing of experiences and strategies for empowerment.

Theoretical Explanation

The dissertation will offer an examination of theory, research, and practical application of motherwork, encompassing mothering and othermothering theories; it will emphasize the gender inequities, class-based divisions, and racial social locations as a focal point of analysis. Black feminist critique is utilized to explore the concepts of "radical mothering" within the biological or adoptive mothering practice and the othermothering (non-biological or non-adoptive) mothering practice; Black women engage in motherwork to "reflect how political consciousness can emerge within everyday lived experience" (Collins, 2000, p. 209). Motherwork is framed as a theoretical indicator of mothering activities, political sensibility, and activists for group survival (Collins, 2000). Similarly, Chicana m(other)work is a term that builds from Patricia Hill Collins theorization of motherwork. Chicana m(other)work uses parentheses to demonstrate a "collective resistance by naming the feminized, invisible, undervalued, and exploited labor of Mothers of Color in academia" (Caballero et al., 2019). In this work, I am not exclusively researching mothers in academia; however, three of the interlocutors are in the academic field as professors and curriculum designers. The integration of Chicana m(other)work, framed through Black feminisms such as intersectionality and the matrix of domination, create a foundation to engage these two populations and bridge the experiences of Black and Latina mothers in Phoenix, Arizona.

Black and Chicana feminisms, rooted in emancipation and liberation, have consistently demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the ways in which Black and Latina women hold a unique position within a larger hegemonic white supremacist patriarchal system (Collins, 2000; Caballero et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2017). These positionalities are situated within a complex web of intersecting oppressions that materialize in unfair biases, stereotypes, and discrimination. Black feminist theory is associated with intersectionality in that Black feminist scholars are concerned with oppressions beyond race or ethnicity. Black feminisms push against binary thinking, and offer analysis based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and the lived experiences of those being researched and their communities (Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw 1989, Nash 2019). Chicana m(other)work builds from Black feminisms and offers a bridge between Black mothering and Latina mothering from an intersectional and borderlands perspective (Caballero, et al., 2019). Chicana feminist literature employs the term m(other)work to draw attention to the inherent expectation that women, particularly those who are mothers, bear the burden of reproductive labor (Caballero, et al., 2019). Reproductive justice as a framework and theoretical heuristic continues the social justice work that Black feminists have utilized to dismantle corrupt systems such as capitalism and patriarchy (Roberts, 1997; Ross, 2017). I have selected these groups because they face similar challenges related to gender, race, and class; although their oppressors have employed different tactics against each group, both groups have experienced persistent effects of systemic control and dominance due to colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy. Additionally, Black and Latina mothers have a deep-rooted investment in

liberation movements, intersectional advocacy, and cultural expressions. Their histories of oppression and marginalization are not the same; their unique experiences can be mapped through interwoven histories, forming a pattern of resistance, empowerment, emancipation, and liberation.

Historical traumas created and reinforced by white supremacist, settler-colonial, capitalist oppression has resulted in the destruction of culture, family and kinship bonds. The continued racialization of Black and Latina bodies further perpetuates systemic inequalities and marginalization, resulting in ongoing suffering and oppression for both these mothers and their children. Despite their relentless pursuit of justice and liberation, the victories and successes of Black and Latina mothers are often overlooked or attributed to others that have not engaged in the care work, labor, or grassroots efforts. The reclamation of culture, the preservation of history, and the shaping and reshaping of worldviews through family narratives offer mothers a pathway forward for their Black and Latina children. Their response to oppression is not cowardice. The resistance response that is often taken up by Black and Latina mothers is a catalyst for transformative change. Their status as professional middle-class Americans provides them leverage within their positions as laborer and mother; this allows them to challenge systemic barriers and create pathways of opportunity for their children. By actively engaging in advocacy, education, and community-building efforts, they are reshaping the narrative for future generations.

U.S. American mothers are subject to laboring within a capitalist society. Mothers engaging in productive and reproductive labor are a great value to the nation-state.

Research on motherhood cannot ignore the labor of working mothers, their invisible domestic labor, and their cultural care work.[8] Mothering from a space of marginality requires the creative efforts of biological mothers and othermothers to weave between cultural practices, social reproduction, and care work. Therefore, a Marxist critique of capitalism, domestic labor, wage-labor, and exploitation of the mothering body are of great importance to this dissertation. Marxism offers a way to view hegemonic capitalism; however, it is the work of feminist scholars that closely align motherhood research, feminism, and Marxist critique to Material feminism. The outline of Marxism provides the bridge to connect Black feminism, Chicana motherwork, and labor within a motherhood argument. Lastly, reproductive justice as a framework and praxis demands healthy communities for mothers of color to birth and raise their children.[9] Reproductive justice offers solutions to systemic injustices and will serve to outline ways in which research on mothering communities can improve the health and well-being of the mother, child, family, and community.

Mothering during COVID-19 pandemic required mothers to engage in transgressive mothering practices that blurred the boundaries and expectations of mothering, productive labor, reproductive labor, and education. The COVID-19

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[8] I argue that mothers carry on the cultural legacy and teachings for their children. This labor requires knowledge keeping, information sharing (storytelling), and domestic labor (holidays, traditions, gift and time giving).

[9] Reproductive Justice (RJ): considers the right to birth or the right to not birth a child. I am not focusing on abortion or terminating pregnancies in this work; however, I want to highlight that RJ moves beyond pro-choice or pro-life arguments.

lockdowns required school-aged children to learn in a virtual environment in their homes. Mothers were responsible for caring for their children through an ethic of care, navigating online learning side-by-side their children, engaging in paid labor (through various means), and performing domestic tasks throughout the day. Black and Latina mothers were subsequently responsible for multiple burdens; the daily responsibilities of caring for their children coupled with the new realities of COVID-19 and the expectation of motherhood, personhood, and work, were all encompassing. The unique situation allowed for the possibility of what could be through the rhetoric of “the new normal”. The women interviewed experienced a varying degree of distress during COVID-19. All of the women interviewed worked full-time, while some were able to work from home, others were considered essential workers, some women were able to file for unemployment, while others had to continue to work in unpredictable environments. Some of the women were single-mothers with no partner or co-parent, some were single-mothers with an active co-parent, and some were married to their significant other in a heterosexual relationship.

Each mother shared their experience through difficult scenarios and exhibited moments of pause, reflection, and joy. The themes throughout the focus groups and individual interviews highlighted the ways that mothers found solace, joy, and happiness during a time of great uncertainty. COVID-19, thwarted a particular uncertainty; yet, Black and Latina mothers reflected on the ways in which they were able to continue to provide for their children and themselves while embracing the “new normal” and leaning on their community of othermothers to engage in care work and shared responsibilities.

The connection to joy during times of uncertainty resonated with indigenous scholarship and the term “thrivance”. Andrew Jolivétte (Louisiana Creole/Atakapa-Ishak [Tsikip/Opelousa/Heron Clan]) a Black and Indigenous scholar theorizes thrivance as an intersectional framework that centers joy and wellness. He states, “to thrive or enact thrivance means to turn our traumas and vulnerabilities into moments and possibilities to change our lives (Jolivétte, 2020). Jolivétte centers kinship relationships, transformative justice, radical love, relational accountability, and the collective as means of thrivance (2023). The framework has been utilized by Indigenous scholars to create meaning to their experiences of survival through devastation of settler-colonialism, loss of land and culture, and removal of traditional modes of living. This scholarship was reinforced by Baumann (2023) who denotes thrivance as an identity and a way to move beyond survival. Thrivance is a dynamic and evolving state that encompasses the active reclamation, revitalization, and resurgence of Black and Indigenous cultures and identities. It involves not only surviving and thriving but also flourishing within one's cultural and historical context (Wilson, 2008). The stories of the mothers in this study demonstrate the resilience and thrivance of what it means to be a Black and Latina mother raising children of color during a time of cultural pause. The world was on fire, what did they do?

Narrowing the Geographic Location to Phoenix, Arizona

The geographical location of Arizona, specifically the Phoenix Metropolitan area, offers a unique perspective in the lives of Black and Latina mothers. The space and place of this research is meaningful in that Black and Latina mothers in the Phoenix

Metropolitan area have historically dealt and presently deal with issues of racial segregation, class oppression, sexism and gender oppression, and the devaluing of their communities (Whitaker, 2005; Luckingham, 1994). This work brings together the idea that Black and Latina communities have experienced multiple epidemics that have resulted in a marginalized social status in Arizona. The legacy of African enslavement and the historical accounts of migration, the exploitation of labor, deportation, and racialization of Mexican and Latina bodies persists within the geographical region of the Southwest, namely Phoenix, Arizona. Herrera (2014) examines the political context of Arizona in connection with SB 1070, a Senate Bill enacted to support the Safe Neighborhoods Act. This law empowered law enforcement to question the immigration status of individuals they suspected to be in the country illegally, leading to concerns about racial profiling and harassment within the state. Her research indicates that "Chandler[10] police officers relied primarily on skin color as a marker of people's immigration status…according to the Arizona Attorney General's report, no Euro-Americans were stopped or arrested (Herrera, 2014, p. 67). The historical legacies of enslavement and racialization and demonization, particularly targeting Black and Mexican bodies, persists and are still influential within the contemporary neoliberal and geopolitical landscape of Arizona.

The migration patterns of Black individuals in the Southwest provide a particular vantage point for understanding the historical and present-day racist tropes faced by

[10] Chandler Arizona is a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. It is a neighboring city within the Maricopa County.

Black migrants. In her book, *Not All Okies are White: The Lives of Black Cotton Pickers in Arizona,* Greta LeSeur (2000) states that "one of the earliest blacks to arrive in Arizona was the slave known as Esteban or Estevancio, who had accompanied Cabeza de Vaca from Mexico in 1526…the second group of black to arrive in Arizona consisted of many who were not cowboys, scouts, or free persons. Some came as maids, cooks, housekeepers, servants, or slaves to white families" (p. 16). LeSeur (2000) stated that by the 1900 Phoenix had 200 Black residents and Tucson had 90. Although the residents tolerated the presence of black in some western towns LeSeur states, "in those years, a great many of the residents…were of southern extraction or connections and the local Negro folks were kept strictly in their place, and, at that time, caused no trouble or disturbances of any kind- either socially or commercially" (p. 16). Even so, Blacks were subjected to fear and terrorism in the 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan swept through the city of Phoenix, employing racism, scare tactics, and lynching to enforce racial domination. LeSeur stated, "there was a certain amount of jealousy on the part of the also newly established white populace, who were already sharing homesteads and other necessities with Mexican and Indians" (p. 16). This manifestation of racial inequality and discrimination continues to persist in Arizona. The echoing of historical patterns of oppression are materialized in the disparities in education, healthcare access, and employment within the state. The lack of opportunities particularly faced by Black and Latina communities continue to result in anti-immigration policies such as SB 1070, police brutality, racial profiling, anti-blackness, and further marginalization of Black and Latina geographical regions of the state. In order to combat this reality, Black and Latina

mothers employ strategic mothering practices to navigate the lineage of racism and cultivate healthy environments for themselves, their children, and their communities.

Conversely, Black and Latina individuals have made notable upward movements through education, social status, and political gains (Luckingham, 1994). The efforts of Black and Latina migrants' history are woven through the stories of the mothers in the study. The spatial proximity of these communities, driven by factors such as racism, oppression, and migration, has resulted in their coexistence within parallel physical spaces (living side-by-side via streets/zip codes/neighborhoods) (Whitaker, 2005; Luckingham, 1994); this the dissertation both draws upon and produces knowledge that sheds light on how Black and Brown women have negotiated these intersecting forms of oppression. The goal of this project was to gain knowledge that was both embodied and theoretical to shed light on the ways that Black and Latina women have interwoven experience through racial segregation, gender oppression, and mothering strategies.

Phoenix was historically known for its affordable housing, community building, and pockets of safe minority neighborhoods (Luckingham, 1994). In order to understand the landscape of Phoenix, it is important to note that Mexican[11] and African-Americans[12]

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[11] This research is limited to Mexican individuals during this moment in time, in the past. I acknowledge that there are various immigration patterns and multiple immigrants in Phoenix, Arizona that do not identify as Mexican or of Mexican descent. I chose to incorporate this research to identify the indigenous roots to the land that Mexicans have to what is now known as Phoenix, Arizona.

[12] The term African-American is used in this dissertation to refer to research conducted by various researchers that either prefer to use the term African-American or they are solely researching Black Americans where their ancestors derived from the continent of Africa. I use the term Black in place of African-American to identify the Black mothers in my research. The interlocutors that were either Black American or of African descent

have resided in Phoenix before the land was part of the official state of Arizona. “In 1870 the valley contained 240 residents, 124 of them Mexican” (Luckingham, p. 17, 1994). The valley, now known as Phoenix, was indigenous land seized and colonized by settler colonial Anglo-Americans (Luckingham, 1994). “The labor and expertise of Mexicans proved essential to the success of early irrigation operations in the valley” (Luckingham, 1994, p. 17). Arizona became the 48th state within the United States on February 14, 1912 (United States Census Bureau, 2024). Luckingham (1994) notes that many of the canals, farms, adobe brick buildings, streets, and utility systems were constructed by Mexican entrepreneurs. Although Mexican labor was crucial to the foundation of Phoenix and the success of the city, Anglo-Americans continued to discriminate and degrade their reputation; Anglos viewed Mexicans as “bad” and “undesirable” (Luckingham, 1994, p. 18) neighbors and community members. The reputation of Mexican Americans would continue as more Anglo-American settlers migrated to the Phoenix area and seized land, built businesses, and constructed a city that resembled their familiar cultural patterns (Luckingham, 1994). Racial oppression allowed for Anglo-Americans to hold power, enabling them to assert dominance and relegate Mexican families and businesses to marginalized neighborhoods.

Black Americans in Phoenix faced similar oppressions. “The 1870 United States census listed twenty-eight African-Americans (five of whom were women) in Arizona” (Luckingham, 1994, 129). Passed by Congress on January 31, 1865 and ratified on

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preferred to identify as Black. I acknowledge that not all Black individuals in America identify with the term African-American or Black American.

December 6, 1865, the thirteenth amendment abolished slavery (Jones, 2010). After passage of the thirteenth amendment, African Americans migrated West in search of opportunity to gain employment, live freely, and build prosperous lives. The migration of Black southerners out west was an opportunity to “divorce themselves from the oppressive conditions of the post-Civil War South and search for freedom and opportunity” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 199). Opportunity came with a cost. At the turn of the 20th century, Blacks experienced the most racial segregation from the Anglo community (Whitaker, 2000). This period marked heightened segregation, enforcement of formalized laws that were enacted to keep Blacks from prospering within the Anglo-American community.

Black residents began organizing as early as 1870; they “established businesses, literary clubs, and political organizations” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 200). Black communities were established in what is now known as Downtown Phoenix, Central Phoenix, and South Phoenix. This land was less desirable; Angle-Americans pushed the Black and Mexican-American communities into these sub-par neighborhoods and city spaces (Luckingham, 1994). Early business owners such as Frank Shirley, a black businessman ventured to Phoenix in 1887, “opened Fashion Square Barber Shop” (Luckingham, 1994; Whitaker, 2000) and other small businesses established and run by Black Americans began to open to service their community. The first Black church was established in 1905 bordering the land of Richard Rosser who arrived in Phoenix from Georgia in 1893 (Luckingham, 1994; Whitaker, 2000). In 1908 “the Second Colored Baptist Church at Fifth and Jefferson Streets” was established; this church later became known as “The

First Institutional Baptist Church" (Luckingham, 1994; Whitaker, 2000). "The first predominantly black church in Phoenix was the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), located at the corner of Jefferson and Second streets. It was erected in 1899, and was later named Tanner Chapel" (Whitaker, 2000, p. 201). The long-stating history of Black churches and businesses in Downtown Phoenix (the areas where the churches once sat and continue to sit are in what is now known as Downtown Phoenix) illustrates the importance of worship, community, and activism in the Black community.

This dissertation places significant emphasis on the establishment of roots in the city by both Black and Mexican communities. Understanding the layout of the city is foundational for comprehending why communities of color, particularly Black and Latina communities, occupy their current positions. The extensive amount of productive and reproductive labor undertaken by both Black and Latina communities in the establishment of Phoenix and throughout the decades leading up to the present day demonstrates their efforts to pursue safe, healthy, and community-centered lives.

As a result of this community building, families that were once considered migrants or transplants are now second, third, and fourth generation Phoenicians. There was significant change in Phoenix as both the Black and Mexican communities found new housing opportunities post World War II (Luckingham, 1994; Whitaker, 2000). "In 1946, the Progressive Builders' Association, a black construction firm…built attractive homes on tracts of land extended from Sixteenth to Fortieth streets, between Broadway and Roeser Road" (Luckingham, 1994, p. 129). Today, this area is considered South Phoenix and there is still a prominent Black and Latina population within those city

limits. The Civil Rights Era fostered opportunities for communities of color to engage in political organizing in order to gain equal rights and access to healthy communities, desegregated education, and career opportunities (Luckingham, 1994; Whitaker, 2000).

Present-day Phoenix is known for an influx of state migration, individuals and families travel to Phoenix for the weather, housing market, and job opportunities. Although the Black population in Phoenix is a quantitative minority, a recent article highlighted the influx of Black folks moving to the Phoenix Metropolitan area. Between January 2020 and December 2021, the Black population in Maricopa County grew nearly seven times faster than its white population, making it the fastest-growing region for Black people outside the Dallas and Houston areas (Mahoney, 2023). Prior to this data, Phoenix was praised for its innovative city, best places to live, most affordable housing, and community centered life ("City History," n.d.). In 1991 and 1995, Phoenix was praised by the Financial World magazine for the best managed city among the nation's largest cities; the state also honored Phoenix in 1991 as the "Most Financially Sound Large City" ("City History," n.d.). Phoenix's growing population brought families seeking opportunity, safe neighborhoods, and optimal educational opportunities. In feminist research Black and Latina mothers are often in search of communities in which their children can thrive and their skills can be utilized within their productive labor. Black and Latina mothers and families might find it logical to relocate from their land of origin to Phoenix, Arizona.

Migration stories are grounded in the motivations arising from family dynamics, economic opportunities, political circumstances, and social inequities. Gloria Anzaldúa, a

Chicana scholar of feminist theory and queer theory, explores the experience of Latina women bound between two words, a borderland space. “The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture” (1999, p. 25). Anzaldúa’s work signifies the unnatural boundary that exists between the border towns along the U.S.-Mexico border and the alienation that Mexicans and other migrants receive that are perceived to have crossed illegally. Anzaldúa writes, “borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (1999, p. 25). Gloria Anzaldúa's borderland theory enriches our comprehension of mothers' quest for a better future for their children. This conceptual space not only encompasses physical landscapes but also philosophical dimensions, existing both externally and internally within individuals' realities. Understanding life in a borderland involves grasping the experience of marginalization and feeling like an outsider within a space that does not naturally embrace oneself or one's community.

There is evidence to demonstrate that Phoenix was and is a place to migrate for greater opportunities. Chicana literature offers an explanation for their continued migration. However, it is also important to note that the Southwest is a land of origin for

Chicanos; as Anzaldúa states, "Our Spanish, Indian, and *mestizo*[13] ancestors explored and settled part of the U.S. Southwest as early as the sixteenth century… For the Indians, this constituted a return to the place of origin, Aztlán, thus making Chicanos originally and secondarily indigenous to the Southwest" (1999, p. 27). While Phoenix is not typically regarded as a border town, the migration of individuals from the borderland physical space persists, bringing hopeful migrants to the city for similar reasons as early colonial settlers: seeking a better way of life.

This reality allows for a parallel in history - migration, passing down of historical events, and shared strategies of survival in relation to mothering. In this study, several of the mothers are third or fourth generation Central and South Phoenix residents. Their proximity to their family is in a close radius; the unique contribution of these families offers an insight into the ways in which a large metropolitan area such as Phoenix functions as a small community within a large metropolitan area. The sense of community, othermothering strategies, and faith-based centering, is an important element to the survival and thrivance of these mothers and their families.

This dissertation will coalesce Black feminisms with Chicana feminisms and integrate motherwork theory, Marxist critique, Material feminisms, and mothering feminisms. The integration of these five theories, tenets, and praxis allows for an intersectional analysis of what it means to engage in a mothering practice as a Black and Latina mother in the U.S. More specifically, I am considering this practice during and

[13]Mestizo refers to individuals of mixed race or ethnicity. The term is used to identify people with Indian and Spanish blood (Anzaldúa, 1999).

through the COVID-19 global pandemic and questioning the ways in which mothers reconsidered and reimagined their mothering practices during this unprecedented time in history.

Reflecting Theory to Lived Experience

The theoretical framework utilized in this research allows for a more profound exploration of the experiences of Black and Latina mothers in the U.S. Southwest. It is crucial to center the lived experiences of Black and Latina mothers, acknowledging their perceived status as marginalized groups of women subjected to patriarchal expectations and notions of motherhood, while also understanding their potentiality of upward mobility in class status and career achievement. Their education status, career status, and socioeconomic status lends a provocative argument that Black and Latina mothers experience varying degrees of lived experience and subsequently mothering practices. Therefore, an intersectional approach is key to embarking on the lives of the interlocutors in this research. In feminist research, Black and Latina women are often researched as being in positions of degradation and otherness; this continues a narrative of Black and Latina women living within the confines of subjugation. This research pushes the social science discourse and offers another perspective; aspirational class[14] as a determining factor in the ways in which Black and Latina mothers strategically engaged in productive labor (paid employment), and reproductive labor (domestic work) to care for their family

[14] Aspirational class will be defined later in the literature review. Aspirational class is not bound to traditionally defined socio-economic class status (low-income, middle-income, upper-middle-income, elite). Instead, the aspirational class is tied to career goals, dreams of the future, educational emphasis on their children, and building community within a particular neighborhood.

while also working towards upward mobility. This research highlights the ways in which Black and Latina mothers survived and thrived during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The data lends to their ability to lean into the mothering practices that were passed down from either their biological mothers, othermothers, or kinship networks; this ancestral passing of caretaking provided insight into creative labor and mothering practices that built a space of thrivance.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how Black and Latina cis-gendered mothers survived the COVID-19 global pandemic amidst the expectations of both productive and reproductive labor. The study explores the ways in which Black and Latina mothers negotiated and navigated their responsibilities as both productive laborers and reproductive laborers within the confines of their homeplace. The research focuses on Black and Latina working-class and professional-class women to understand how their racialized embodiment drives their desire to work harder, offering their children a more prosperous life and fostering a connection to agency through education and networks. The questions in the semi-structured research guide explore the shift in support that professional mothers and working mothers in Phoenix may have experienced due to the pandemic. Additionally, the study aims to underscore how gender, race, and class intersect in relation to the changes in their lives and the outcomes of their COVID-19 mothering practices.

Study Significance

The significance of this study lies in the potential to center the nuanced experiences of Black and Latina working class and professional class mothers in Phoenix, Arizona during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research offers language to demonstrate that class can be viewed in various ways and this research highlights the idea of aspirational class as a motivating factor within Black and Latina mothers in this study. The study complicates the racialized and stereotyped images of Black and Latina mothers by introducing their mothering practices as creative, strategic, and resilient. These terms offer a new way of viewing Black and Latina mothers and offering insights to the discussions on social inequalities, intersectionality, and liberatory practices. A deeper understanding of the movement of Black and Latina women in the workplace in search of an aspirational class status can inform policies and interventions aimed at supporting Black and Latina mothers; this in turn can address systemic disparities in employment and education.

Limitations

This research is limited as the study focuses on (a) cis-gendered mothers, (b) heterosexual mothers, (c) employed mothers, (d) working class and professional class mothers, and (e) mothers who live and work in the U.S.[15]

[15] A further explanation of the limitations will be explained in the conclusion chapter.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Intersections of Black Feminist Theory and Chicana Feminist Theory: Exploring Motherhood Research Centering Black and Latina Mothering Practices

“Those who study women but ignore motherhood do so at some peril…” motherhood “permeates culture, society, and politics” (Buchanan, 2013, p. 115).

Mothering Practice

Mothering as a practice in a patriarchal state is seen as maternal, domestic, and nurturing (O’Reilly, 2007).[16] Yet, mothering practices within communities where lineage was based on survival strategies often reject patriarchal norms and expectations based on gender and sexuality (Gumbs, et al., 2016). Black mothers have celebrated motherhood through communal affairs which is reminiscent of hundreds of years of enslavement and the commitment to raise biological children and kin in order to create a radical sanctuary for black children (Nash, 2021). Additionally, Nash states that Black feminist scholarship has researched, advocated, and celebrated Black maternal advocacy; yet, has in some way still devalued the work of bloodmothers and othermothers (2019). Likewise, motherhood through a mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1999; Gumbs et al., 2016; Téllez, 2011) was/is encapsulated by Latina mothers through the teaching of *cultura* (culture), *la familia* (family) (Téllez, 2011), and social justice/political movements (Blackwell, 2011). Mothers not only pass down traditions or rituals, they provide ways of survival, cognitive dissonance, and rejection of patriarchal standards.

Motherhood is a multifaceted and intentional area of study that offers rich opportunities for feminist researchers to examine the practices and teachings utilizing an intersectional lens. Researchers can uncover the many ways in which mothers navigate

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[16] Maternal mothering - is an expectation of patriarchal mothering and is gender specific. Only cis-gender biological mothers are capable of fully mothering their biological children (O’Reilly, 2007).

and negotiate their roles by analyzing discourse, cultural expectations, intergenerational mothering strategies, community rearing, and material craft. In the US, mothers experience a unique positionality within a system that uphold patriarchal mothering practices. The coupling of Black feminist theory, material feminisms, and Chicana motherwork aims to uncover and address the significant disparities that Black and Latina mothers face. Understanding the intricacies of mothering is essential for promoting positive outcomes in education, health care, and community rearing as feminist scholars explore the intersections of race, gender, and class.

Motherhood a Gendered Concept

Motherhood in the U.S. is conceptualized as a gendered role experienced by cis-gender women. In the U.S. women are expected to follow and uphold the teachings of the heteronormative, patriarchal, capitalist system.[17] Rich (1986) highlights the use of the patriarchy in motherhood as the power of the fathers: the familial-social and political system in which men force women to agree and abide by the customs, education, etiquette, division of labor, and law. This power system forces women to see themselves as submissive and subsumed under the male (Rich, 1986). The Western ideology, theology, and cultural milieu has been shaped and standardized by white supremacist masculine expansion and denounced matrilineal societies (culture, kinship relationships, property, religion, etc.) (Rich, 1986). The mode of patriarchy is upheld by cis-gendered

[17] O'Reilly (2004) states that motherhood (the term) is a site of oppression. Motherhood refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood that is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women.

women accepting patriarchal mothering (O'Reilly, 2004, 2007) as the gold standard.[18] The institution of motherhood deems cis-gendered women as experts in mothering by virtue of their biological sex and an instinct of nurturer due to their sexual organs (O'Reilly, 2016) and restricts their maternal identity to the traditional nuclear family. The mother is the wife to her husband and is responsible for domestic labor and child rearing, while the husband is the provider for the family (O'Reilly, 2016). Adrienne Rich writes about the implications of accepting patriarchal motherhood and the psyche of the powerless. Rich asserts that powerlessness can lead to self-negation, guilt, and depression (1986). Mothers who ascribe to patriarchal mothering due to their sex/gender are engaging in dangerous terrain set forth to entangle their realities in suffering and "not good enough" mentalities.

Gendered stereotypes of mothering such as nurturing, caring, innate, or feminine reduce motherhood to normative behaviors that "all women" should possess (Rich, 1987; O'Reilly, 2016) creates an illusion that all women are bound to be mothers and all women engage in similar mothering experiences (O'Reilly, 2016). O'Reilly coined the term essentialization to describe the patriarchal notion that all women want to be mothers and naturalization as the maternal ability to birth and love are innate to all mothers (2016). Patriarchal perspectives impose limitations that require cisgender women to conform to certain expectations of motherhood; these expectations are rigid and inflexible, causing significant pressure for women.

[18] Patriarchal mothering: cis-gendered women, typically white women, who abide by the rules of the patriarchy and uphold those values through their child-rearing practices even though engaging in patriarchal motherhood is oppressive (Rich, 1988; O'Reilly, 2007

Patriarchal mothering insists that mothers are self-sacrificial and loving, putting their children and the family's needs above their own in an effort to demonstrate selflessness and ultimate mothering grace (Porter et al., 2005). The motherhood message suggests that mothers should dismiss their personal needs, satisfaction, and pleasure to uphold motherhood standards and raise healthy, well-adjusted children (Porter et al., 2005). Outside of gender roles and expectations, women today are a large part of the United States workforce. Their earned income is not negotiable in many families and/or households (Porter et al., 2005). Their public paid labor complicates their position as a mother within a Western society. Working mothers believe they must perform at capacity in all endeavors. They must fulfill their home or domestic responsibilities while also meeting or exceeding expectations in the workplace (Porter et al., 2005). Working women that attempt to integrate motherhood and paid employment are reminded that their children should come first. However, the messaging is contradictory for mothers as the ideology and expectations of the workplace are not congruent with mothering (Porter et al., 2005). These unhinged expectations breed guilt and shame in the working mother standard of perfection as a norm is unattainable. In fact, the lens of patriarchal motherhood deems this acceptable with the knowledge that these interlocking social responsibilities fall solely on the working mother and promote competition, individualism, and advancement (Porter et al., 2005) to the detriment of the mother who will compare her inadequacy to the status quo of motherhood. Porter et al., state that mothers are constantly bombarded with guilt when they work outside the home and leave their children in childcare facilities or kinship arrangements (2005). This argument,

although salient for particular women in white middle-class positions, dismisses the fact that women of color have historically left their children with othermothers, kinship networks, or family members (Collins, 2000) in order to engage in public paid labor. Oftentimes, these women of color were subjected to subpar working conditions yet continued to labor to make ends meet for their family (Reynolds, 2001).

These multiplicities of responsibilities are uniquely positioned on mothers; Black and Latina mothers are additionally burdened with racists and classist oppressions structured by patriarchal society. As Pheng Cheah (2010) notes in their work on biopower and the division of labor "women in developed economies shoulder a double burden" (p. 192). Women are expected to contribute to the national growth and development but also maintain the status of woman, wife, mother, and caretaker (Cheah, 2010). Porter et al., ascribe guilt associated with leaving children in the care of others is marked by patriarchal motherhood; the myths associated with mothering discourse erroneously state that children run the risk of insecure attachment and low self-esteem (2005). Porter et al., describe this phenomenon of motherhood intertwined with guilt as a double bind; it is meant to create stress for women who have chosen or need to work (2005). Importantly, their review of mothering discourse within literature and research excludes the lived experience of low-income mothers, gay mothers, single-mothers, and mothers in general; their voices are drowned out by those in power (Porter et al., 2005). Mothering as a gendered concept is tightly defined by patriarchal motherhood as a cis-gendered woman capable of birthing a child (O'Reilly, 2007). This rigid definition leaves out the realities

of Black and Latina cis-gender mothers that engaged in multifaceted experiences of motherhood that are not tied to gender norms, roles, or expectations.

Mothering research, viewed through a feminist lens, scrutinizes patriarchal structures that compound oppression against mothers based on gender, race, sexuality, and class. It's essential to recognize that mothering isn't limited to cisgender women; individuals of all genders assume mothering roles, employing various strategies and practices. However, this study specifically centers on cisgender Black and Latina women to unveil how they resist societal norms while navigating a landscape entrenched in racism, sexism, and classism. Within existing literature, there is room to examine upwardly mobile Black and Latina mothers; this cohort of cis-gendered women are a significantly understudied demographic in labor and socioeconomic research. This group, comprising educated Black and Latina mothers, warrants closer scrutiny and interrogation within the academic discourse.

Intersectional Approach to Racialized Gender and Class

As a methodology, intersectionality offers the possibilities of connecting to decolonial thought, research, and methods. Intersectionality considers the ways in which systems work to oppress individuals or communities based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, geographic location, immigration status, language and more (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2019). Similar to decolonial thought, intersectional thinking requires knowledge of structural power and hierarchical systems oppress individuals or the collective group (Collins, 2019). The use of intersectionality as a feminist framework bridges the racialized, gendered, and classed aspects of mothering as a woman of color.

The mapping of discrimination, based on an intersectional approach, can provide key insights into the experiences of Black and Latina mothers subject to multiple intersecting oppressions. Porter et al., urges researchers to continue studying mothering (2005). To delve deep into a mother of color's lived experience an intersectional lens is required to shed light on the double bind (Porter et al., 2005), double burden (Cheah, 2010), and second shift (Hochschild, 2012) responsibilities forced upon cis-gendered women of color engaged in their mothering practice. My intention is to use intersectionality as both a heuristic and a paradigm to identify ways in which Black and Latina mothering practices are held to unfair expectations in a racist, sexist, and classed society.

In the US, Latina and Black mothers are uniquely positioned and subjected to injustice based on their race, class, and gender. Intersectional analysis is required to uncover the varying degrees of subjectivity; for example, class informs the ways in which mothers engage in productive and reproductive labor responsibilities. Evidence suggests that the ethics of care, child rearing, and labor historically and presently are disproportionately placed on mothers; (O'Reilly, 2007, 2016; Rich, 1986) therefore, studying the experiences of mothers of color and their engagement in productive and reproductive labor during a contemporary global crisis such as COVID-19 will allow for future solutions to problems faced by Latina and Black mothers based on Black feminist critique, Chicana m(other)work, and intersectional research.

Intersection of Racialization and Aspirational Class in Phoenix, Arizona

The racialization of Black and Latina mothers serves as the common thread that unites the women in this study. Their embodiment of Black and Latina as their racial

identity is crucial for recognizing how race shapes their pursuit of aspirational class and challenges gender norms. The aspirational class status underscores their desire to work longer hours, engage in a pursuit of higher education, and engage in upward mobility to ensure stability and luxuries for their children. Aspirational class can be held at any socioeconomic status. It is important to note that working class and professional class Black and Latina women are part of an aspirational class. Professional women might have financial stability in terms of career, home, and bank accounts; yet, a recession, a global pandemic, or an illness in the family could swiftly shift the financial landscape of the professional Black or Latina woman. Therefore, it is important to note that professional class status does not undermine the need and desire to be among an aspirational class. Additionally, the cultural transmission of knowledge passed down through generations connects these mothers, providing a framework for analyzing their experiences as they strive to offer their children a better life while upholding cultural values inherited from previous generations. This work sheds light on the literature concerning the racialization of Black and Latina women in the United States, their class-based upward mobility, and their roles as cisgendered women and mothers.

Racialization of Black and Latina Mothers in Phoenix, Arizona

The racialization of people of color in the United States is dated back to the birth of a settler-colonial nation (Jones, 2010). Black and Latina communities have a long history with oppression enacted via the power and status of European-Americans. According to scholarship on the history of the Black labor in the U.S. Jones writes, “The black family has been the site of struggle between black women and the whites who

sought to profit from their labor, slave owners and employers who saw black mothers' family responsibilities as detrimental to their own financial interests" (2010, p.2). The ongoing manifestation of this history and ideology continues to oppress Black and Latina communities in the southwestern United States today. Race is often analyzed by research scholars in isolation. Black communities suffer with particular oppressions while Latina communities suffer with their own (often viewed as different) racial oppressions. There are distinct separations that exist among Black mothers, U.S.-born Latina mothers, and Latina mothers born outside the U.S. However, numerous interconnected aspects of their mothering defy racial categorization. The connections can be seen through mapping their experiences through their mothering practices. In this vein, racial formation is important to highlight to identify the unique ways that Black, U.S. born Latina, and non-U.S. born Latina women experience their lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Additionally, there are many complex identities centered in this geographic region. I acknowledge that this is not a homogenous experience; not all Black women or all Latina women experience life through the lenses that are set forth in this research. However, I will articulate the various perspectives of Black, Afro-Latina, and Latina women in this study to highlight the intersections of race, gender, and class through a mothering practice. By intersecting these two racial categories: Black and Latina, I am offering a deeper connection to the histories of oppression of Black and Latina in the Phoenix metropolitan area; I propose a perspective that views these women as both racialized and actively fostering an aspirational class experience for their children through radical mothering. This involves their involvement in education, community

building, geographic positioning, and participation in unconventional spaces, all while challenging oppressive colonial ideologies. In her article, *Interlocking, Intersecting, and Intermeshing: Critical Engagements with Black and Latina Feminist Paradigms of Identity and Oppression,* Belle (2020) makes the argument that,

> Black and Latina women in the United States have a long history of creating vocabularies for articulating, writing, theorizing, contemplating, performing, and resisting our multilayered, complex, paradoxical lived experiences as raced, gendered, classed, sexualized, etc. With this in mind, when we engage these vocabularies, it is important to remember the contexts in which they were initially articulated as well as the ways in which they have been both productively expanded on the one hand, while problematically misappropriated and depoliticized on the other. (p. 166)

It is crucial to emphasize that race serves as an indicator necessitating research to be conducted on how it influences the lives of Black and Latina mothers. This highlights their experiences as protectors, agents of change, and carriers of culture.

Aspirational Class

Class status in the United States is a complex and nuanced concept, often subject to interpretation by individuals based on their subjective perceptions of lived experiences and comparative wealth accumulation relative to others. Class status is defined as a person or group's social position within the society in which they live; it is based on several key factors such as wealth, earned income, education, profession, and social status (Lareau, 2011). In the U.S., class status is often tied to financial means and material possessions (Lareau, 2011). Middle class can refer to more than just income, be it level of education, the type of profession, economic security, home ownership, or one's

social and political values. Class also could simply be a matter of self-identification[19] (Pew Research Center, 2008).

In this research, the women that self-reported[20] their class status stated they were middle-class or upper-middle class. Interestingly, additional research conducted by the Pew Research Center stated, “53% of adults in America say they are middle class. One key measures of well-being, income, wealth, health, optimism about the future[21] - they tend to fall between those who identify with classes above and below them” (Pew Research Center, 2008). This data extends to Black and Hispanic[22] families and their determination based on income.

Anette Lareau an American sociologist studies the complexity of social class through a class, race, and family life lens. In her 2011 book, *“Unequal childhoods: Class, Race, and Family life,”* Lareau (2011) indicates her view on class and social status is that “seeing selected aspects of family life as differentiated by social class is simply a better

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[19] As someone who has engaged in upward mobility in terms of class, I identify with the self-identification of class and find it an interesting way to denote a person’s class status. This perspective (later identified as a theoretical perspective) will guide my research in relation to a mother’s class status.

[20] I chose to not ask class demographic questions and instead relied on the focus group analysis to organically share their class status. The mothers either outright stated their class based on a response to a question or they offered key indicators of class based on their homeownership status, their profession, their school choice, their geographic location of residence, and their education. There are several other markers of class status; these are the identifiers in this research.

[21] I am connecting the phrase “optimism about the future” to the theoretical research of aspirational status. These phrases can and will be mapped on to each other throughout this research.

[22]I do not use the term Hispanic to refer to my interlocutors; the research I interrogate does not use this term either; however, it is a term often used within the U.S American context to refer to those of Latin descent and/or from Spanish speaking countries. "Hispanic" is a term of ethnicity and does not encompass racial identity.

way to understand the reality of American family life. I also believe that social location at birth can be very important in shaping the routines of daily life, even when family members are not particularly conscious of the existence of social class" (p. 236). The dynamics of social class are "woven into the texture and rhythm of children and parents' daily lives. Class position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use, and kin ties" (Lareau, 2011, p. 236). In essence, Lareau articulates class as a multidimensional status that has a correlation with achievement, success, and well-being. In this research, the concept of class extends beyond the confines of the quantifiable socioeconomic status typically recognized in the United States. It challenges normative ideas of class, particularly the distinctions between working class and middle class, to develop a new understanding of aspirational class closely linked to Black and Latina mothers striving for upward mobility.

The social class served as a crucial focal point for these mothers, playing a pivotal role in shaping their decision-making processes regarding home purchases, children's education, and their engagement with kinship relationships. In her book, "*The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class,"* Elizabeth Currid-Halket (2017) provides examples of an aspirational class as individuals that demonstrate "their class position through cultural signifiers… these behaviors and signifiers imply aspirational class values and also suggest the knowledge acquired to form them. Today's aspirational class prizes ideas, cultural and social awareness, and the acquisition of knowledge in forming ideas and making choices ranging from their careers to the type of sliced bread they purchase at the grocery store" (p. 18). The aspirational class regarding decision

making on small decisions such as leaving children at home unattended during grocery shopping, or major decisions such as vaccinating children during COVID-19 all have a social significance and direct correlation to aspirational class. These elements will be highlighted and discussed within the research.

Motherhood within a Feminist Framework

At times, feminist research has excluded mothering as a focus or area of interest; yet, the study of the mother and her proximity to community and social justice has continued to be of interest in feminist scholarship. Mothers tend to care for, nurture, guide, and pass on culture to their child, children, grand-children, and other children in their kinship network structures (Gumbs et al., 2016). Mothers of color often raise their own biological children and the community children.[23] Feminists integrated research on mothering into the discipline during the 1980's when Adrienne Rich wrote *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution.* Rich's groundbreaking text countered traditional academic literature on institutionalized motherhood and her arguments offered an anti-patriarchal platform for feminist scholars interested in motherhood studies to utilize within academic literature. Andrea O'Reilly (2007, 2016) developed maternal theory and matricentric feminism, and coined terms related to mothering in a patriarchal society. These canonical works explored patriarchy and capitalism as interconnected systems that devalue women's labor while institutionalizing traditional gender norms of

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[23] The term mothers of color will be generously used within this work. I will define mothers of color in the section on motherhood and racialization. Mothers of color indicate various groups/communities of color whereas Black mothers, African-American mothers, and Latina mothers are isolated racial groups.

motherhood, offering an opportunity for feminist scholars to analyze motherhood and consider elements of motherhood as an area of research and discipline.[24] The initial feminist arguments focused on gender discrimination and underscored the ways in which women were subjected to patriarchy, religion (Judeo-Christian morals and values), and heteronormativity (Rich, 1987).

Since the 1980's, other feminist scholars have added to Rich's revolutionary work and made visible the intricacies of motherhood. Much of Rich and O'Reilly's work discussed the role of the mother, the expectations of motherhood, and community mothering. Black Feminist Scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Jennifer Nash have deepened the conversation of what it means to mother from precarious social locations. These intricacies are researched and coded through an intersectional analysis and framework. Black feminist scholars have furthered the work on motherhood and the racialized embodied experience of pregnancy, birth, rearing a child/children, and mothering non-biological children.[25] The conjoining of motherhood studies, intersectional research, and material feminism allows for the understanding of how Black and Latina mothers experience the position of motherhood in America.

Motherhood within a Racialized Framework

Mothering in the U.S. is coded as white mothering (Gumbs et al., 2016). Mothering as a role and practice is similarly raced, classed, and oppressed as other

[24] Labor: the devaluing of women's labor is multifaceted. This can be viewed as unpaid domestic labor, paid employment, and/or unpaid or paid community labor.
[25] Mothering non-biological children will be termed in future sections, see Patricia Hill Collins work in Black Feminist Thought.

marginalized groups. The underlying racism, white privilege, classism, and other systems of oppression are still not addressed within a conservative American patriarchal system (Gumbs et al., 2016). "Mothering" is seen as entirely white, coded for "white mothering" and is subsequently a danger to bodies that are not white or white passing. Black women historically and present day fall outside of the traditional views of femininity (Kaplan, 2021). Black women's bodies are subjected to increased surveillance and control within the United States healthcare system due to their deviant reproductive bodies (Bridges, 2011; Kaplan, 2021). This surveillance continues after the birth of their children and permeates into the community through white supremacist systems of education, policing, jobs, and housing (Kaplan, 2021). For example, maternal mortality rates for Black women were significantly higher between 2007- 2016 than their white and Hispanic counterparts (Gadson et al., 2017); research by Davis (2019) suggests that 2 out of 3 deaths occurring in the perinatal period are preventable. Additionally, Black, Indigenous and Latina mothers have a higher incidence of severe maternal morbidity when compared to their white counterparts (Creanga et al., 2014) and experience increased risks from unnecessary cesarean deliveries from surgical complications, longer hospitalization, and neonate respiratory problems (Bridges, 2011).

Racialized mothering is perpetuated by white supremacist patriarchal systems in the U.S. This historical backdrop is shaped by institutional power dynamics stemming from the colonization of indigenous lands, the forced displacement of peoples, the enslavement of Africans through chattel slavery, the imposition of white supremacist religious and cultural values, patriarchy, capitalism, and neoliberalism (Bridges, 2011;

Briggs, 2002; Gumbs et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2017). This lineage of the U.S. American history has forged a racially stratified nation, leading to the marginalization of Black and Brown communities and individuals. Consequently, women from these communities have been subjected to profound vulnerabilities, often resulting in ongoing subjugation and the erosion of their bodily autonomy. Throughout American history, Black, African-American, Latina, and Indigenous women have endured systemic powerlessness, lacking agency and legal protections that would safeguard them from rape, forced childbirth, sterilization, and the inability to protect their children from harm or to raise them according to their cultural and religious beliefs (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Black and Latina mothers in the United States have historically experienced subjugation, oppression, stereotyping, and scapegoating. The demonization of Black motherhood can be traced from enslavement to present day; in a parallel comparison, Latina motherhood can map immigration restrictions and laws making their practice of motherhood alien and illegal (Oliveira, 2018). Black and Latina motherhood is dangerous in a state that diminishes Black and Brown women to female degenerates (Porter et al., 2005). Scholars have traced historical moments when mothers of color were seen as "illiterates, "unfit," "over breeders," or "deviant" (Buchanan, 2013). These racist caricatures were supported by racist, sexist, and classist propaganda that attempted to protect society from so-called bad mothers and their offspring. The status quo set forth by a white supremacist patriarchal society discredits Black and Brown[26] mothers by

[26] Brown as a positionality refers to Chicana/Latina mothers as an indicator of non-white persons. The term Brown is used together with Black and Brown to show similarities between Black mothers and Chicana/Latina mothers in America.

assigning blame for systemic outcomes and deems them as “bad” mothers that are inevitably held responsible for all the ills of society (Gumbs et al., 2016).[27] Gumbs et al. suggest that, children of color are viewed by colonial, imperial, patriarchal systems as products of “morally impoverished women” (2016, p. xvii); this perspective allows for U.S. patriarchal power the right to commodify BIPOC[28] women’s bodies thus children of color become disposable remnants subjected to protect or produce wealth for the one percent (Gumbs et al., 2016). Research on motherhood needs to close the gap on racist and classist propaganda that subjects the marginalized mother to an othered body.

Black feminists have critiqued the historic body of research on mothering as intentionally ignoring the experiences of women with intersecting identities, and that discussions of mothering must move beyond a focus on white dominant communities. As Dorothy Roberts (1997) argues in *Killing the Black Body*, the act of Black mothering is disruptive to white desires and acts of defiance and liberation for Black societies. Mothering asserts Black women’s right to body sovereignty, the importance of community mothering, as well as the perpetuation and sustaining of family, cultural, and social production (Roberts, 1997; Ross et al., 2017). Additionally, practices of othermothering such as educating neighborhood children, feeding non-biological children after school, transporting children to school/church/activities, and nurturing their growth, is a way Black mothers has strategically incorporated anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, anti-racist learning environments (Collins, 2000). These moments of learning are instrumental

[27] Examples of systemic outcomes are poverty, increased incarceration, drug dependency, gang related violence, undereducation, health disparities, etc.
[28] BIPOC: stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

to the interweaving of building Black communities that foster kinship relationships and normalize a non-biological mothering as a method of elevating the lives of the Black community and safeguarding against white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.

During desegregation, Black mothers wrestled with the exclusionary practices of the white Eurocentric American education system and relied on othermothers to educate their children in sociohistorical and sociocultural terms (Ross et al., 2017). African-American children were encouraged to pay homage and honor their culture and refuse internalized white supremacist beliefs and biases of Black people.[29] Black mothers were at the forefront of informal anti-racist education within the home and the community. In an effort to encourage young Black children to remain proud of their ancestry and culture, Black women engaged in community service that directly protected the lives of school-aged children. White supremacists in the south were determined to uphold white status quo and segregated schools. After *Brown v Board of education*, the south characterized new tactics to instill white supremacist values and preserve Jim Crow (Fernandes, 2018). Instead of retreating, a group of women known as the Harlem nine engaged in civil disobedience and refused to send their African-American children to school citing it increased their vulnerability and safety (Fernandes, 2018). This example of othermothering and activism demonstrates the communal styles of mothering and binding togetherness that bind Black women to Black communities (Nash, 2021). Nash cites Holloway's concept of Black children as "community property" to conceptualize the

[29] African-American is the term Fernandes used in their writing; I am using Black as an inclusive language tool to include multiple demographics of Black Americans.

care work blood mothers and othermothers provide as a community effort and as a celebration of shared mothering responsibilities that provide a base for the possibility of self-actualizing and acquiring status within society (Nash, 2021). Today, mothers continue to rethink Eurocentric educational institutions in America and rely on kinship relationships to bridge the gaps in learning and survival strategies. The ingenuity of mothering as care work infused with social activism is birthed from necessity and passed down through cultural teachings and lineage.

Latina mothers face various forms of discrimination and oppression rooted in imperialism and capitalism which impacts their ability to provide for their family and communities overall well-being. The material realities of immigration status, economic inequality, discrimination, and cultural/language barriers greatly impact the ways in which Latina mothers engage in mothering practices. In this work, Black feminist theory informs Chicana m(other)work as a methodology and theoretical framework. The connection between intersecting oppressions due to race, class, gender, and status impact the way Black and Latina mothers are "othered" visa-a-vis stereotyping, discrimination, and scapegoating. Latinx motherwork as a body of literature shares commitments with Black feminist scholarship and adds a focus on mothering as transformative labor through an intersectional lens (Gumbs et al., 2016; Hurtado, 2020).[30] Latina mothers are

[30] Gumbs et al. utilizes the term Latinx to offer an inclusive way of researching mothering - moving away from cis-gender biological mothering to all bodies that encompass mother. Their research extends beyond cis-gender women and includes transgender mothers, non-binary mothers, cis-gender men as mothering figures performing mothering and queer mothering. I limit the use of Latinx and will only use this term if it is paraphrased or cited directly from a source. This dissertation is focusing

discriminated against in insurmountable ways, from prenatal care, birthing and breastfeeding practices, child rearing, education, employment, immigration status, and lack of accessibility to several resources (Buchanan, 2013; Hurtado, 2020). Chicana motherwork as a framework includes Chicana and Latina mothering in the dimension of mothering discourse within feminists' arguments. Mothering as a theory and praxis must go beyond a binary consideration of White and "other" and consider ways in which different communities of mothering have experienced oppression and sought emancipation through liberation and resistance. Scholar activists such as Téllez, Gumbs, and Salomón, along with multiple mothers of color collectives examine narratives of feminized reproductive labor that prioritize collective action and holistic healing for mother-scholars of color, their children, and their communities within and outside academia (Caballero et al., 2019; Gumbs et al., 2016; Téllez, 2011; Salomón, 2020). This scholarship informs the advocacy within social movements and explains the effects of separation, migration, state violence, and detention on mothering (Salomón, 2020; Hernández, 2020, Oliveira, 2018); the efforts of Chicana/Latina and other women of color mother-activists to broaden services, understanding, and discourse on mothering (Oliveira, 2018); the role, importance, and significance of intergenerational mothering (Téllez, 2011); and how loss, reproductive justice, and holistic pregnancy impacts collective understanding of mothering and care work necessary for collective resistance

on cis-gender Black and Latina mothers and these terms will be utilized to reference my interlocutors.

to structural oppression and inequality (Caballero et al., 2019). This body of literature is activist oriented.

Reproductive justice is framed as social justice work and centers mothers as protectors of culture, kinship relationships, and children's futurity. The need for reproductive justice as a research framework stemmed from the opportunity for feminist politics to incorporate intersectional theory, human rights, and social justice work for varied experiences of mothers experiencing intersecting oppressions at different stages of mothering (Nash, 2021). Lorretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger (2017) define reproductive justice as a way to engage the experience of reproduction and provide a framework for political activism; reproductive rights are intertwined with social justice "to achieve reproductive justice" (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 9). There are three key tenets to reproductive justice, these principles move beyond the binary argument: pro-life vs. pro-choice. "(1) The right *not* to have a child; (2) the *right* to have a child; and (3) the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments" (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 9). Reproductive justice extends to all elements of a person's life: birth, access to food/nutrition, safety (environment, public/private), education (equal access to learning resources), and healthcare (birth and beyond) (Ross & Solinger, 2017). Reproductive justice argues that the states should not dictate who can, cannot, or should carry a fetus to term (Ross et al., 2017). The state, however, has a direct obligation to ensure that the systems in place support women, families, and communities (Ross et al., 2017). Yet, Black and Brown communities are continually underserved (Lipsitz, 2011). Motherhood is racialized and reproductive justice integrated with intersectional research offers a lens

to understand how Black and Latina mothers' experience of practicing motherhood within an oppressive nation-state. Reproductive justice provides a framework that moves beyond the birth or termination of a pregnancy and into the lives of marginalized communities to offer solutions to problems faced in relation to the totality of their lives. The basic principles of reproductive justice call for collective action. A collective, Sister Song (founded in 1997) engaged 16 women of color to deliver radical feminism with fierce determination to envision a better future for communities and families (Ross et al., 2017). Reproductive Justice as a theory, methodology and praxis demonstrates feminists' capability to move beyond the binary construction of pro-choice and pro-life arguments; the feminist imagination has the potentiality to liberate beyond borders. This idea of liberation is deeply intertwined within the lives of Black and Latina women; their choice in productive labor, their engagement with their children's education, and their connection to mothering practices forms threads of strategic mothering practices that offer up ways to liberation.

Black and Chicana scholars have provided blueprints to motherwork through multiple channels of engagement. It is evident that the investigation of racialized reproduction requires academic scholarship to turn knowledge into research and continue to explore the possibilities of what can be: the radical mothering imagination. This idea draws from the inspiration of Black feminism that emerged from activism and theoretical frameworks created by Black women (Collins, 2000). It aims to empower Black mothers to transcend negative stereotypes, including being portrayed as "bad" mothers, oversexualized, criminalized in the media, and facing biases in the healthcare system;

while acknowledging the fact that a patriarchal hegemonic system continues to seek ways to oppress and marginalized Black women. Black feminists elevate Black mothers as vital members of their communities, society, and nation. The ingenuity and survival strategies passed down generations and upheld by Black and Latina women deserve recognition. In a society that privileges white, heterosexual, and male dominance, and white mothering practices, motherhood is a form of defiance when experienced by racialized individuals. Black and Latina mothers persist in fighting for social justice, both for their own children and for their broader communities. These communities extend from border regions, inner city spaces, to upper-middle class communities in which Black and Latina women reside. Black and Latina women do not exist in a stereotypical monolith of experience. The range of complexity and lived experience is diverse. Therefore, the reconceptualization of what it means to mother while Black and Latina is urgent. The radical mothering imagination will be conceptualized and integrated into the research questions of this dissertation to uncover ways in which Black and Latina mothers have pulled from previous generations to guide their mothering and activism.

Motherhood within a Gendered Framework

Motherhood as a site of gender construction is a societal construct that has devalued women's place within a hegemonic society. Linda Buchanan's work in rhetorical motherhood states that these "gender fictions" emerged and evolved in the US to frame motherhood as a maternal instinct that included nurturing, care taking, self-sacrifice, sexual disinterest, mortality, and natural female characteristics (2013, p. 15). She continues, "the paradigm shift transpired during the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries that revolutionized previous understandings of biological sex and gender" (Buchanan, 2013, p. 15). Prior to these social conceptions, "male and female reproductive organs were thought to be structurally and functionally analogous…Men and women were, therefore, thought to be hierarchically, vertically, ordered versions of one sex, their genital variations interpreted as differences of degree rather than kind" (Buchanan, 2013, p. 15). Buchanan notes that the "two-sex model" (p. 16) linked reproductive organs to masculine and feminine characteristics and thus, the ideal feminine roles were mapped on to the woman as mother, maternal, timid, domestic, etc. (2013). This code of motherhood assumed its present form in connection to the publication of Michael Foucault's *The History of Sexuality;* the medical, scientific, and political developments reformulated foundational beliefs about biological sex and human sexuality (Buchanan, 2013). This modification of biological sex linked to sexual desire, maternal desire, empathy, and space began to shape what the US constitutes as good mothering (Buchanan, 2013).

Motherhood became a destiny for young girls and women; society began orchestrating the ideal woman and the motherhood apex was birthed and the mother over the woman was privileged (Buchanan, 2013).[31] Men assumed the role of active sexual agent while women engaged in a passive role as wives and future mothers. This gendered code forced women to accept a secondary position within their private households and society. Buchanan notes, "these gendered perspectives, values, and expectations were ensconced within the code of motherhood and encouraged by the mother's ascendance to a god term" (p. 19). Mothers who failed to follow these criteria were regarded as deviant

[31] Read: white girls/women

or deficient (Buchanan, 2013). Black and Latina women have often fallen short of the expectation of the coded mother; historically and present-day mothers of color have engaged in radical redefining of motherhood and moved beyond biological determinism to engage in a liberating mothering practice (Gumbs, et al., 2016). During the antebellum period, Black women worked alongside Black enslaved men and were seen as equally capable of taxing field labor (White, 1999). Black women's bodies were viewed as a commodity as their reproductive bodies offered the potentiality of future enslaved laborers. Discussion of Black women's sexual activity was normalized among white plantation owners as acceptable public discussion and was often a deciding factor in the purchase of a Black woman at the chopping block (White, 1999). Black women's bodies have been owned, commodified, and by white colonization; white supremacist views dictate and label how Black women's bodies are utilized and present day, they control the stereotypes assigned to Black women (White, 1999).

Historically, Mexican-American women were viewed as sexually promiscuous, hyper-fertility, or objects of male sexual desires. The ideology held historically permeated into modern times. Latina women continue to experience oppression due to sexual assault, rape, and brutalities (González-López, 2005). Yet, ethnographic accounts of Mexican-American women in González-López (2005) research indicates that their virginity is sacred to their being and an expression that is experienced with a husband after marriage. The Catholic Church has held incredible control over women's reproductive and sexual lived experiences; the shaping of piety and morality is culturally taught and passed to their children (González-López, 2005). Nonetheless, the patriarchal

stereotypes of motherhood deem Latina women as over breeders wreaking havoc on the United States health care and welfare systems. Social and political interest in controlling Latina women's bodies stems from conservative political anger over immigration, welfare, and health care costs (Gutiérrez, 2008). The U.S. government strategically sterilized Mexican and Puerto Rican women in efforts to expand colonization and decrease the Latino population (Gutiérrez, 2008). The intentional control over Black and Latina women's bodies continues today through forced birth control and sterilization. The efforts to reduce the Black and Latina demographics in America greatly impacts women and their constitutional right to bear children (Gutiérrez, 2008). The exploration of bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, and women's rights extends to the racialized mother of color. Black and Chicana feminists continue to seek justice by researching communities of color and mapping in justices on to their lived experiences.

Motherhood and women's maternal experiences within cisgender Black and Latina women are not only reduced to biological tendencies, reproductive labor, and the private sphere but the racialized stereotypes set forth by a racialized society. Early feminists dismissed mothers and mothering as an area of research and coded motherhood as upholding patriarchal norms and coded mothering as anti-feminist (Buchanan, 2013; O'Reilly, 2016; Meehan & Strauss, 2015).[32] The patriarchal state, capitalist regime, and white supremacist nation encouraged the gendered patriarchal mother to engage in

[32] Often referred to as first and second wave feminism although there are complications with this language and dismisses the fact that women of color have always already engaged in feminist thought: Black Feminist argue the First, Second, and Third Waves of feminism are ingrained in White feminism.

domestic work, submission to their husband, and maintenance of gendered societal norms. Bhattacharya states, "under the capitalist mode of production, social reproduction, whether waged or unwaged, refers to the totality of those activities required to create, maintain, and restore the commodity labor power" (2017, p. 39). During the time when men's wage work was the primary source of income, women's reproductive labor was reduced to invisible work, especially as women began working for wages in the US (Bhattacharya, 2017).[33] US wage-earning women engage in textile production, domestic work, nursing, service work and caregiving roles. In 1870's in the US 50% of employed women were domestic workers (Bhattacharya, 2017) and many of these women were non-white; Black married women were five times more likely to work for wages than white women and Black men's salaries were substantially lower than white males; therefore, Black women's work was non-negotiable (Bhattacharya, 2017). Prior to World War II, U.S Black women worked in agriculture and domestic work (Collins, 2000). Their employment and labor offered the country a promising future creating economic expansion on the backs of Black women's exploitation (Collins, 2000). Similarly, immigrant women and women of color engaged in unfavorable low-paying jobs that were strenuous and dangerous (Bhattacharya, 2017). Bhattacharya states, "in this way, social reproduction[34] was not only gendered, but racialized" (2017, p. 45).

[33] Read: White men's work.

[34] Social Reproduction builds from a Marxist framework and is taken up by Marxist feminist. There are additional approaches to SRT that are discussed and theorized: care work, ethics of care, emotional labor, invisible labor, precarious work, and motherwork.

Black women's oppression has a long-standing connection with U.S. capitalism; Black women's paid labor has been exploited and ghettoized (Collins, 2000) in an effort to benefit a white heteronormative capitalist American system. Comparatively, during the years of industrialization and expansion, the United States had a need for increased labor from farm workers, to railroad laborers, and steel mill workers (Gutiérrez, 2008); many families migrated to the United States to join their husbands/fathers/brothers.[35] [36] Subsequently, Latina immigrant labor and domestic work was exploited by white middle class families and the capitalist American system for the direct benefit of wealth accumulation and economic growth (Mies, 2014). It is clear that gender as a system marginalizes all women; however, the effects of discrimination and exploitation are "compounded by additional systems of oppression, including race, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, and so on" (Buchanan, 2013, p. 19). Black and Latina women's social position within American society maps to a precarious social location and positionality that marks them as always already *bad mothers* and therefore exploitable (Buchanan, 2013; Collins, 2000; Gumbs, et al., 2016). Their personhood and motherhood are neglected within a capitalist society. America as a colonized project continues to exploit Black and Latina women for the sake of progress and the comfort of the white middle-class. Black and Latina mothers share commonalities via the burden of childcare, loss of bodily autonomy, and gender discrimination. The COVID-19 global pandemic

[35] Bracero Program in 1942: An executive order called the Mexican Farm Labor Program established the movement of Mexican male labor to the United States of America.
[36] Traqueros: Mexican railroad workers in the United States 1870-1930

further objectified the Black and Latina mother that was already experiencing a double burden,[37] the disproportionate amount of private and public labor.

Marxist Feminist Critique

Feminist scholars have critically analyzed and repurposed Marxism to integrate issues of gender, race, and class into a theory that focused almost exclusively on wage labor. Feminists have introduced the intersectional considerations of reproductive labor and women to Marxism. Sylvia Federici (2021) notes that "Marx missed the fact that capitalism not only exploited the laborer but the raced and gendered laborer/producer: domestic and public" (p. 52). The important work of private labor and producing and reproducing the workforce relies heavily on the bodies of cis-gender mothers.[38] Feminist scholars began using a Marxist framework to grapple with motherhood issues and centered the private labor of the cis-gendered mother. The mother's daily unpaid labor is required for the optimal production of the workforce. Mothers' private work includes the home but is not limited to the confines of their home space. Their required private work is complicated by the reality that many mothers in America are also publicly employed for wage labor. The private and public laborer is responsible for both the production and reproduction simultaneously. The always working mother labors in shifts during her day

[37] There is an extensive amount of feminist research on the term double-burden in relation to race and gender. This research will underscore a double-buren and add the complexity of aspirational class amidst a global pandemic. See work from Arlie R. Hochschild, Andrea O'Reilly, bell hooks, Angela Davis, and Patricia Hill Collins.
[38] I use private labor to connote domestic labor and additional laboring tasks that are outside of domestic work such as care work, emotional labor, other-mothering, educating/mentoring, etc.

and is disproportionately responsible for the domestic labor at home (Buchanan, 2013). Additionally, emotional labor and care work is often a requirement of the mother, many times this labor is at the expense of reduced hours/time in her public wage labor position (Buchanan, 2013). This patriarchal expectation demands cis-gendered working mothers to place motherhood at the center of their lives and supersede all other life expectations. This is to the detriment of the mother, the child, and the family.

The increased pressure to do it all and be everything for everyone causes exponential problems for mothers and their communities (Buchanan, 2013). In addition to the stress of labor, the unhinged realities of capitalism also suffocate the working mother of color. While colonialism is the perpetrator of the present-day issues of racialization, capitalism is the continued promise to oppress people of color and benefit from their marginal status in a country that enjoys the benefit of hegemonic patriarchal power. Black and Latina women have participated in the labor force at higher rates than white women; yet, their work is paid at a lower wage and lower status (Meehan & Strauss, 2004). Poverty rates for women of color, specifically African-American are higher than any group in the U.S. despite having similar education as their full-time white counterparts (Meehan & Strauss, 2004). It is important to note the exploitation of labor and economic expansion secured by colonialism and supported by imperial power (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 22) made it nearly impossible for Black/African-American and Indigenous people to counter and overcome. Capitalism, in effect, works through colonial powers to produce an economic system in which private ownership and wealth accumulation happens at an individual level instead of a state or national (Briggs, 2002).

Neoliberalism extends the goal of capitalism by "proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). Neoliberalism is deeply connected to hegemonic discourse and patriarchal ideology and therefore governs the ways in which we understand the world (Harvey, 2007).[39] Harvey states, "the creation of the neoliberal system has entailed much destruction" (2007, p. 23).

This destruction will unfold in the lives of Black and Brown women and children unable to meet the demands of colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal agendas. Harvey notes that neoliberalism is "not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers… but also divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life, attachments to the land, habits of the heart, ways of thought, and the like" (2007, p. 23). Feminist scholars studying working mothers must consider multiple theories to unpack the ways in which patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and labor continue to exploit cis-gendered working mothers.

Connecting Marxist Thought to Materialist Feminism

Feminist scholars researching gender production offered a critical analysis of Marxism and feminism (Giménez, 1998). As previously stated, Marxism did not offer an intersectional analysis (Giménez, 1998); however, Gimenez argues that feminism and

[39] "We" is a blanket statement for those that are born in North America and experience the world through an American lens. The people included in "we" may be aware that decolonization is needed; however, their understanding of roles and expectations are seen through a Western lens.

feminist scholarship was also problematic. Feminist scholarship focused on the "essentialist and idealist concept of woman" (Giménez, 1998); this left room for an alternative - materialist feminism. Gimenez states, "materialist feminist need to hold on to the critique of the totalities which affect women's lives: patriarchy and capitalism" (1998). Materialist feminism offers a way to research competing powers and makes clear the connection between "differentiated subjectivities that have replaced the generic woman in feminist theorizing, and the hierarchies of inequality that exploit and oppress women" (Giménez, 1998). The intersectional oppressions mothers face based on race, gender, and class have material effects on their lives and these issues are a product of patriarchy and capitalism; Gimenez states the subject is traverse by differences grounded in hierarchies of inequality which are not local or contingent but historical and systemic (1998). Giménez offers a clearer insight into class disparities and moves the conversation beyond a gender binary (Ward, 2019). This advancement of social reproduction theory challenges simplistic notions that capitalism is the sole oppression of women and instead incorporates labor, gender discrimination, and reproduction as social inequalities that further objectify and alienate women from benefiting from their reproductive labor (Ward, 2019). By dissociating the mother from her labor, patriarchal mothering insists that Black and Latina's mothering is an undue burden on society and their reproductive labor is a cost instead of a reward to American capitalism. This drain on society is inaccurately documented throughout history; one example being the Moynihan Report of 1965 deeming Black women as emasculating Black matriarchs running Black fathers away from their families and raising delinquent and criminal Black male youth (Kaplan,

2021). These controlling images (Collins, 2000) coupled with the systemic injustices of class and gender, created an implosion for mothers of color faced with multiple simultaneous duties in relation to paid and unpaid labor. The historical and systemic tenets of patriarchy and capitalism created the perfect storm during the global pandemic. Black and Latina mothers already facing inequalities due to their race and gender further divided their marginal status by unprecedented class oppressions.

Bridging Fields to Explore Black and Latina Mothering

This research integrates several feminist approaches to the study of cisgender motherhood. Mothers engage in a wide range of experiences from the moment of conception to the termination of pregnancy or birth of their child. If a mother decides to give birth to a child, she is expected to manage a variety of conflicting factors that arise when raising a child and navigating the intricacies of their marked racial identity. [40] Black feminisms include the term othermothering to insist that mothering is a community effort; mothering does not happen in a single-family home, mothering is a community effort. Chicana feminisms often integrate border crossing and borderlands within their work; images of mother and mothering have a deep connection to political, religious, and cultural experiences. Anzaldúa (1999) notes, "La cultural Chicana identifies with the mother (Indian) rather than the father (Spanish)" (p. 52). This relationship to the mother maps on to the Black feminist research of mother and othermothering kinship

[40] I use the term choosing to raise a child here as reproductive justice calls for the right to raise a child or not. I am using a feminist imagination in a space where women are choosing to raise their children and are still underserved by a system that disenfranchises them and their community.

relationships. This mapping creates a possibility for integration of Black feminist and Chicana feminist research working alongside each other with interlocutors that identify as Black and Latina in the U.S. This research intends to uncover the ways in which their experiences are similar and coincide with the systemic oppressions' mothers face through gender, Black and Latina women face through racial discrimination, and people of color face through class oppression. The intersectional compounding of issues requires a Marxist feminist critique to understand the ways that class and wealth (or lack thereof) continue to perpetrate violence on a mother's lived experience. To further a Marxist critique, this research considers material feminism in order to map class, race, and gender to the mother and their oppressions. Cis-gendered mothering requires women to understand their place in society and abide by patriarchal standards in order to live the American dream. This dissertation will unpack what mothering means and the ways in which mothers of color are circumventing these prescribed ideals of "good" or "bad" mothering.

Othermothering

Black motherhood is a collective effort within the community and not a solo act or responsibility. U.S Black women constructed what Patricia Hill Collins coined "othermothers" (Collins, 2000). Black women in rural and urban communities alike participated in constructing oppositional knowledge as well as resisting heteropatriarchal forms of oppression (Collins, 2000). Mothers, aunts, grandmothers, churchwomen, teachers, and neighbors collectively participated in the child rearing responsibilities. Othermothers were essential to biological mothers who were expected to care for their

children but also held the burden of productive labor (Collins, 2000). Othermothering is not a contemporary practice. Enslaved women needed othermothers in order to maintain their ability to engage in dual responsibilities of mother and laborer (White, 1999). Black mother's present-day reality is no different. Black women continue to engage in dual responsibilities of mothering and labor. Therefore, the act of othermothering is a political move against the heteronormative ideas of patriarchal mothering. For Black families, mothering happens through community or social mothering, not via biological birthing or gender (White, 1999). Biological mothers often required the help of elderly female women to look after slave children; they did not assume full responsibility; however, they spent more time with the children than their biological mothers (White, 1999). Moreover, feminist scholars that research and uncover the repercussions of enslavement explain that othermothering practices were required during chattel slavery due to white plantation owners selling enslaved women's children at the auction block. Mothers that lost their children to another plantation likely gained non-biological children that were purchased on their master's land. The passing down of cultural mothering practices encompass what it means to mother beyond biological mothering. Today, mothers, biological and non-biological, participate in mothering and care work in an attempt to define their own roles, community outcomes, and resist negative controlling images of Black womanhood and mothering (Collins, 2000). Othermothers are often found within a community network or kinship relationship. Black mothers who are able to care for non-biological children are often neighbors, teachers, churchwomen, or community activists (Collins, 2000). These kinship relationships were typically women-centered and engaged in a particular ethic of

care to shelter, feed, and educate the children within their community (Buchanan, 2013; Collins, 1991, 2000; Nash, 2019).

Mothering as a job or sole responsibility instead of a role was ascribed to the white mother.[41] White patriarchal society declared the norms of motherhood and set forth the racialized mother (Buchanan, 2013). The racialized mother always engaged in dual responsibilities of labor and mothering. When either of these responsibilities was not met by the expectations of the patriarchal motherhood norm, they were cast as deviant and irresponsible mothers (Bridges, 2011). While Black motherhood is in crisis and Black mothers are deemed as the most vulnerable citizen in America (Nash, 2019; Nash, 2021), white mothers are desirable to patriarchal mothering, their status as mothers is never questioned, their ability to mother is determined by their class and race, and their legal rights remain intact (Gumbs et al., 2016). Their assumed position in society is to mother and birth the future of the country. Their participation in the labor force, especially during pregnancy and when their children are young, is optional. They enter and exit the workforce in a socially responsible manner, putting their husband and children first. Mothers/women "entering" into the workforce for paid labor during World War II and beyond was a construction of whiteness (Buchanan, 2013). White mothers that chose to work post WWII did so by hiring domestic help and delegated their mothering labor to women of color. Middle to upper class white women were able to alleviate themselves of

[41] Mothering as a job for white women means that their full responsibility was to care for and raise their children into adulthood. White mothers were not expected to work for wage labor; society set for protections in place to make sure the widowed or single white mother was protected in case of abandonment or becoming a widow. These same protections were not set forth for mothers of color.

guilt via a paid domestic worker to cook, clean, and rear their children. These women basked in the title of mother, while their mothering responsibilities were off-loaded on the woman of color. For this reason, Black and Brown women have always divided their time between productive and reproductive labor, paid and unpaid. The biological mother or "bloodmothers" (Collins, 2000, p. 178) that worked outside of the home for wages often left her children with "othermothers" (Collins, 2000, p. 178) that care for "all our kin" (Nash, 2021, p. 19). This kinship network was also known as collective childcare arrangements that created a "family of choice" (Meehan & Strauss, 2015, p. 41). While white mothers were upheld as the standard "good" mother; Black mothers were viewed as "bad" (Gumbs et al., 2016, p. xvii; Ross et al., 2017, p. 12; Roberts, 1997, p. 32). Black mothers and mothers of color have fought against racist and sexist oppressive systems and have figured out how to safely navigate these systems for themselves and their children (Nash, 2019). The collective formed out of necessity and extended into a community in which motherhood opened the feminist imagination and possibilities beyond patriarchal mothering.

Latina M(other)ing Through Borders

Chicana/Latina feminism focuses on reproductive justice through an intersectional lens with the engagement of borderlands theory. As Hurtado explains, borderlands theory coalesces with an intersectional approach by incorporating "social identity theory as embodied in the master status of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and physical ableness" (p. 148). The connection between Chicana literature and reproductive justice is tied to the idea that borderlands theory encompasses the "fluidity and context-dependent

nature of social identities result in 'social travel' between structural systems, cultural symbols, and cognitive understandings, ultimately creating a non-normative consciousness of the arbitrary nature of social reality" (Hurtado, 2020, p. 148). In *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology*, Caballero, C., Martínez-Vu, Y., Pérez-Torres, J., Téllez, M., & Vega, C., work to piece together fragments of history to inform the present-day oppressions faced by Latina mothers and other mothers of color. This work furthers Ross and Solingers' arguments on reproductive justice as they center the lived experiences of Latina mothers. These scholar-activists and fierce mothers use Coyolxauhqui[42] as their guiding light. Their academic activist work "highlights their agency nonhierarchical collective power to dismantle heteropatriarchy and resist neoliberalism" (p. 12).

Chicana academics often tie their scholarship to fragmented histories in order to make sense of the forgotten histories. Feminist Chicanx/Latina scholars have incorporated influential female figures such as La Malinche, La Llorna, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Xochiquetzal, and Coatlicue to redress the notion that women are docile and instead reclaim their strength and ancestral power. These figures work in opposition to the feminine and encapsulate masculinist visions of women through the ability to nurture yet can endure pain and sorrow (Hurtado, 2020). Chicana feminist incorporate these

[42] "Coyolxauhqui's emergence and revelation unearth a sacred, ceremonial center, but it gave birth to an entire re-imagining/re-imaging of Xicana feminist ideas and icons. This metaphor of birth and emergence from the earth is appropriate as this article attempts to insert an added, alternative interpretation of Coyolxauhqui, not as the "dismembered woman" commonly inferred, but rather as an empowered woman warrior that is in process of labor and birth" (Luna & Galeana, 2016).

figures into their writing and activism to illustrate the dichotomous reality of Chicana motherwork; the ability to teeter womanhood through the masculine and the feminine (Hurtado, 2020). Although these collective ideas do not free the Latina community from class oppressions, there is evidence to suggest that Latina mothers have created a community of care that works towards the possibility of liberation. Grace Gámez (2019) recounts the reasons for developing the concept of fierce mothering. She engaged in a storytelling project with predominantly Black and Latina mothers who were formerly incarcerated or convicted. She states, "each mother who participated in the project told stories riddled with pain and sadness but also tenacity - and a fierce reclamation of identity" (p. 78). Latina research on reproductive justice, intersectionality, and motherhood creates a bridge from Black feminist critique to engage borderlands theory to reclaim a retrofitted memory (Blackwell, 2011) of maternal ancestors with the goal of a decolonial practice of motherhood.

To engage in Chicana/Latina m(other)work is to embody what Gloria Anzaldúa describes as a borderland.[43] Anzaldúa defines the borderland as an in-between, a vague and undetermined space created by an unnatural boundary (1999). This space can be engaged and applied to Black and Latina mothering in the US as a material manifestation of an othered lived experience. Borderlands theory can be applied to Black mothers by examining the intersection of their identities as Black people residing in the US and

[43] Caballero et al., utilize the term M(other)work to signify their intersectional and fragmented identities. The (other) is an intentional act of conceptualization and an organization of their framework. They borrow the term "rebozo" to illustrate a woven together metaphor. The words Chicana, mother, other, work, and motherwork weaves to become their Chicana M(other)work framework.

mothers; this may expose them to unique experiences of forced migration and loss of kinship communities. The application of borderlands theory applied not only to Latina mothers but Black mothers as well further exemplifies the complex ways in which multiple systems of power shape their realities and produce material outcomes of health, education, culture, and community spaces. The objective of this nuanced approach is to address the unique challenges that mothers face in their dual roles as caregivers and laborers within a borderland, by examining their mothering strategies. The importance of a borderland theory is to understand the geographic location of the US/Mexico border and the women who have mothered through that particular space; it is also to acknowledge that the borderlands exist in families of multiple generations post-immigration/migration. The borderland follows the family lineage and is passed down through the mother (Anzaldúa, 1999; Moraga, 2019). At times, due to financial obligations and labor opportunities, the mother leaves their children with family members, further complicating the notion of the border and borderlands (Oliveira, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2008). The geographic distance between families for Latina individuals can complicate relationships and biological family (familia) ties that traditionally would weave together the intergenerational family unit (Téllez, 2011). Additionally, Latina mothers are precariously positioned within their community as gender roles reinforce a woman's position in society and "produces a unique combination of domestic centrality and economic marginality that ensures male advantage supported by women's captive labor and childrearing in the home while disadvantaging women by limiting their access to public sphere politics" (Téllez, 2021, p. 86). Latina mothers must engage in a

shapeshifting of sorts to accommodate their cultural (and often reinforced by Euro-centric religiosity/Catholicism) demands of mothering while also becoming involved in various social movements (Téllez, 2021). Chicana feminists have been in solidarity with multiple progressive movements in the United States and Worldwide (Hurtado, 2020). Hurtado offers an important view of borderlands, Chicana/women of color identity and the "in-between position situated in the interstices of multiple social, economic, and cultural systems" (2020, p. 10). The fight against racism and sexism is a complicated experience for Latina mothers living within the lens of a borderland. The challenge to critique sexist behaviors within prescribed gender norms based on Catholicism, the ideal version of mothering through La Virgen de Guadalupe, and the resistance against oppression is realized when courageous men and women have labored alongside to preserve their families against state sanctioned violence and racist state interventions such as family separation, deportation, exploitative U.S. labor practices, etc. (Hurtado, 2020, p. 17). In Blackwell's 2011 book *¡Chicana Power! Contested histories of feminism in the Chicano movement,* she utilizes Lipsitz's suggestion of a mode of remembering as countermemory. This connects to existing histories by way of time traveling to the past; the connectivity and strength is sought through their foremothers fight against oppression. The use of countermemory introduces a collective experience to decolonizing memory(ies) and create new possibilities for education, liberation, and future feminist movements within Latina communities.

Blackwell also presents the image of the Revolutionary m(other) to seek women's agency within m(other)hood. This depiction illustrates the ways in which Latina mothers

engage in political activism while reproducing the future generation (Blackwell, 2011). The complex relationship between personhood and mother is evident within Latina mothering communities. The collective efforts of the African-American community to engage in othermothering are also evident in Latina homes/communities. Latina children are often raised to respect their elders, engage in a deep understanding of family history and immigration status, and understand racial injustice and fight against it (Gumbs et al., 2016). The reliance on family or *La familia* exemplifies the notion that family can also be connected through a kinship network.

The United States plays a key role in the need for a kinship network in Latina families through the movement of Latina bodies. Immigration and the movements of peoples centers reproductive justice as women are particularly vulnerable during migration experiences (Hernández & De Los Santos Upton, 2020). The experience of a borderland is both physical and psychological (Hernández, L. H. & De Los Santos Upton, S, 2020); the present-day reality of being at the Mexico-U.S. border and detained in camps creates a heightened level of uncertainty as children are being separated from their biological parents, individuals are subject to increased health risks, and transgender individuals are not provided with proper reproductive care (Hernández & De Los Santos Upton, 2020). Although this scholarship is relatively new and stories of reconnection with parents/children and/or outcomes of asylum seekers are unknown, this present-day example under the Trump administration (Hernández & De Los Santos Upton, 2020) demonstrates the precarity of Latina mothers, children, and families within the borderland. Hernández states, “at the children’s level, there is no mention of any sort of

reparation for the mental health injustices and traumatic experiences which were instigated and inflected at the hands of the American government and its immigration officials" (2019, p. 132). Hernández argues that border theories highlight the injustices based on racial and ethnic discrimination while reproductive justice and intersectional theories illuminate the ways in which the border allows for repeated gendered violence against women and children (2019). To mother and embody Black and Latina lived experiences is to carry the weight of historical trauma and present-day injustices and *still* continue to engage in an ethic of care, nurture, educate, and envision a better future for your children.

Mothering Expectations During COVID-19

The COVID-19 global pandemic ushered in unexpected changes to the workplace, family structure, and education settings. Working mothers experience exponential shifts in their unpaid domestic roles and as part of the paid labor force. Black/African-American (Cummins & Brannon, 2022) and Latina (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022; Cummins & Brannon, 2022) mothers were forced to make difficult decisions between domestic labor and reproductive care and paid work (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022).[44] Mothers across America were forced to immediately change their pre-pandemic realities and accommodate new labor expectations. Mothers from different class statuses and racial makeups were faced with a new reality of simultaneous domestic

[44] I utilize the term Black to include multiple demographics - If the term African-American is used, I am using this term in relation to the source's use of language relating to African-Americans as a particular demographic.

and paid labor. Research suggests that Black (Cummins & Brannon, 2022) and Latina (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022) mothers were more likely to be deemed essential workers, were the least likely to experience telecommunity for their employment and substantially increased their care work and domestic labor (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022).

Additionally, essential workers were more likely to contract the virus and spread the virus to their children, family, and or community (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022; Salomón, 2020). The health risk disproportionately affected Black and Latina mothers (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). Some working mothers in nonessential businesses such as arts and entertainment, accommodations and food service (hotels and restaurants), and retail either experienced temporary closure or scaled back activity further amplified economic hardship and/or challenges since occupations in these industries tend to be low wage with women constituting a greater share of the low-wage labor force (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022). Moreover, since women constitute the largest share of minimum wage workers by gender it was unsurprising when news reports began to emerge that unemployment for women exceeded the unemployment rate for men (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). The women in this study occupied a unique position as Black and Latina individuals. The precariousness of their status within the professional class underscores their necessity to maintain employment in order to sustain their lifestyle. Therefore, the co-constitutive relationship between the working class and professional class will illuminate the complex ways in which class, as a social construct, influences these women's lives. A divergence arises from the interdependence between the working class

and professional class, highlighting their interconnectedness and the significance of their respective statuses.

COVID-19 Shift in Labor Expectations

As the world sought to find a vaccine or treatment for the virus, shutdowns continued to change the living and work spaces of mothers who found themselves needing to create areas for their children's learning and, for some, their own home workspace (if they did not have one). Some workers in the U.S. were able to do their jobs from home, especially those in professional tracks, yet a high proportion of "essential workers" (loosely defined as those who work in supermarkets, grocery stores, public transportation, pharmacies, nursing homes, hospitals, and correctional facilities, among others) did not have this option (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022; Cummins & Brannon, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed already existing systemic issues of racism, sexism, and classism. These disparities were felt by many working mothers, specifically, Black and Latina mothers. Around the world, women perform 76.2 percent of the total unpaid care work.[45] The responsibility of care work equates to an average of four hours and 25 min per day. In comparison, men complete one hour and 23 minutes of unpaid care work a day (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). The disparity is clear; however, COVID-19 added additional laborious and time-consuming tasks, much of this was absorbed by women. Since February of 2020, nearly 2.4 million women have dropped out of the

[45] These statistics are women in general. I will break down the demographics of women later in this section.

workforce. The pandemic required closing of childcare facilities and schools; additionally, all persons were urged to shelter in place and stay within the confines of their dwellings and immediate family. These recommendations to stay healthy were government mandated and shifted the expectation of the mother (Cummins & Brannon, 2022).

Mothers navigated extreme parenting decisions during the pandemic such as balancing full-time employment while managing and directing their children's remote schooling expectations (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). Pre-COVID-19, mothers were already experiencing unrealistic expectations of working, parenting, and having-it-all the added stressor of the pandemic pushed already struggling mothers into survival mode and furthered the existing gender and racial inequalities faced by cis-gendered working mothers (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). Motherhood is already challenged by societal expectations of perfection or being an ideal mother. The ideal mother is white, middle-class, cis-gender, heterosexual, and married (Buchanan, 2013; Cummins & Brannon, 2022; O'Reilly, 2016). Therefore, Black and Latina mothers who always/already fall outside of the expectation of idealized mothering or otherwise known as patriarchal mothering (O'Reilly, 2016) are unlikely to be considered when policy creation is under discussion within a capitalist, patriarchal, hegemonic society. Their mothering standards are neglected due to ongoing racist and classist stereotypes from patriarchal ideology. Patriarchal mothering idealizations have depicted Black and Latina mothers as inadequate, deviant, or neglectful which has resulted in racial, gender, and class inequalities (Collins, 2000; Gumbs et al., 2016). In 2022, the New York Times reported

"moms are not okay" and NPR reported "moms feel forgotten" (Cummins & Brannon, 2022) the categorization of mothers was not Black or Brown mothers. The research suggests their agency is repeatedly dismissed. Black and Latina mothers were already experiencing a disproportionate amount of care work, public and private labor, as well as intersectional discrimination.

Material Impact on Black and Latina Families

As the pandemic loomed, Black US Americans accounted for approximately one-quarter of all deaths in the country as of May 2020, even though they only represent 13 percent of the US population (Holder et al., 2020). The structural issues coupled with systemic racism in the US rapidly increased the inequities in health care, education, employment, and child care (Holder et al., 2020). Black mothers were found to have a higher likelihood of occupying essential worker positions, taking care of sick or ailing family members, managing virtual schooling for their children, as well as dealing with grief from the loss of loved ones and their community (Cummins & Brannon, 2020; Holder et al., 2020). Similarly, Latinas left the workplace in unprecedented numbers (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022). This swift shift in the labor force is equally disturbing as the number of Latinas in the U.S. workforce was projected to grow by over 25% over the next decade (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022). However, the pandemic halted this projection and Latinas faced devastating realities with one out of five women leaving the workforce to care for children in the wake of school closures (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022). Additionally, both Black and Latina mothers shared increased amounts of time spent on household labor (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022). The intersections of race, gender, and

class, play an important role in the lived experiences of Black and Latina mothers during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Newly emerging research on the effects of the pandemic has additionally found that COVID-19 affected the relationships, living conditions, and working conditions and expectations of mothers (Salomón, 2020). However, little research has focused exclusively on its effects among Black and Latina working and professional mothers (Cummins & Brannon, 2022) and the ways in which these mothers engaged in community rearing, mothering resilience (Cummins & Brannon, 2022), precarious social locations, and social justice movements. It was not fully understood how COVID-19 affected the networks, community, and support systems available to Black and Latina mothers and othermothers during the pandemic (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). Published research suggests mothers in America experienced challenges in managing private versus shared space in the home (Cummins & Brannon, 2022) but had not yet examined the resources or strategies used to address those challenges. For instance, while men were less likely to report experiencing challenges in accessing a dedicated home workspace (Galdámez & Carmona, 2022), women have reported not having a dedicated workspace. Some reports of women stating they worked from closets, hallways, bathrooms, and dinner tables sometimes in partnership with their children have emerged but have not focused exclusively on the experiences of women by race and class (Cummins & Brannon, 2022). This dissertation project will seek to find answers to how Black and Latina mothers survived COVID-19 and government shutdown orders while working (productive and reproductive labor) and managing school-age children. The questions

will connect directly to their experiences as mothers of color and will take their class, relationship, and gender status into account. Additionally, the questions will uncover the types of kinship or othermothering relationships that were afforded before COVID-19 and how the pandemic affected their strategic mothering practices.

Material Effects of COVID-19 on Black and Latina Women

The material effects of patriarchy and capitalism were swiftly realized by Black and Latina mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a matter of days, educational facilities (schools, day care, after school programs) shut down due to mandatory lockdowns by the United States government. Black and Latina mothers were left with impossible decisions that included public and private labor, care work, susceptibility to a deadly disease, increased stress, parenting/co-parenting responsibilities, childcare or school work, and domestic labor. The pandemic ushered in several new realities and Black and Latina mothers were faced with what was already expected - increased workload. Despite holding an equitable position within the public labor force, women continue to bear the primary responsibility for household chores and childcare, with their societal value often tied to marital status, childbearing, and domestic labor (O'Reilly, 2016). This study complicates the experiences of Black and Latina mothers engaging in both productive and reproductive labor during the global pandemic, highlighting the oppressive gender expectations imposed by patriarchal mothering, limiting women's leisure and self-care (O'Reilly, 2016). The sudden COVID-19 lockdowns exacerbated the challenges faced by working mothers, particularly those of color, such as Black and Latina women in the United States, who now had to juggle remote work with childcare

responsibilities. COVID-19 removed the strategic system and network that was cultivated and crafted by Black and Latina mothers in order to support their needs as women, mothers, and caretakers. The efforts to remain steadfast, calm, and intentional during the COVID-19 pandemic fostered ingenuity among Black and Latina mothers.

Chapter 3

Qualitative Methods: Employing Grounded Theory and Narrative Theory to Engage in a Multi-Methods Approach to Black and Latina Mothering Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In this research study, I utilize qualitative methods to understand the experiences of Black and Latina mothers during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This research sought to uncover the ways in which Black and Latina cis-gendered mothers engaged in mothering practices during an unprecedented time in history. During the global pandemic, a new perspective emerged on the sites of oppression experienced by Black and Latina women as a result of their race, gender, and class. The intention of this research was to introduce the survival strategies that Black and Latina women leaned into in order to engage in productive and reproductive labor and continue to care for their children and families.

I utilized two qualitative research methods to understand Black and Latina's experiences as working mothers during a global pandemic. Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) suggest that qualitative research embraces the uncertainty inherent in everyday life. I chose to utilize Grounded Theory and Narrative Method in order to gain a deeper understanding of the ways that Black and Latina cis-gendered women shouldered the responsibility of productive and reproductive labor while engaging in strategic mothering practices. I also utilized the theoretical framework of intersectionality to provide an explanation for their social location, racialization, aspirational class status, and gender experience. Similar to other feminist research, the concentration on intersectionality offers a complex understanding of its effects on the lived experiences of Black and Latina women. The variables such as race, class, and gender are inseparable aspects of Black and Latina women's embodied experience. Additionally, qualitative research is conducted in natural settings, where the researcher serves as an instrument of data

collection, gathering observations, words (via interviews or informal discussions), pictures, and other visual or written artifacts. Analysis is conducted inductively, focusing on the participants' meanings, and describing a process that is expressive and persuasive in language (Creswell, 1998).

I draw from qualitative research supported by intersectional methodologies to perform the research with Black and Latina mothers in Phoenix, Arizona. The goal of this research was to integrate interconnected maternal knowledge that was passed down intergenerationally and revived during the global pandemic. My intention was to understand how Black and Latina women engaged in an ethic of care during an unprecedented time in history and perform motherwork through strategic mothering practices. I drew from Black feminist scholars, Chicana Feminist Scholars, and Indigenous Scholars to make connections between Black and Latina mothering practices, their strategies for survival, and the opportunities for thrivance.

Methods

Grounded Theory

This research utilizes a grounded theory approach to answer the research questions in relation to COVID-19 and motherhood. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which seeks to uncover theories from empirical data. This method engenders an organic, emergent process to discover themes found in the data. Grounded theory utilizes a systematic and inductive approach to data analysis; it involves constant comparison of data, open and axial coding, theoretical sampling, and memoing (Wertz et. al 2011). This research utilized Grounded

Theory due to the ability to engage the research without predefined theories (Charmaz, 2009); instead, the data will be used to guide me to uncover the ways in which theoretical frameworks such as motherhood, othermothering, Chicana motherwork, and intersectionality are expressed in the lives of working mothers under extreme conditions such as COVID-19. By using Grounded Theory, I uncovered patterns, categories, and relationships in the data that demonstrate the ways in which Black and Latina mothers engaged in survival strategies during the pandemic. I also analyzed the data to uncover the interconnected ways that Black and Latina mothers engaged in intergenerational knowledge sharing to raise their children during unprecedented times. This analysis was viewed through a motherwork lens as well as a mothering practice theoretical framework. By utilizing Grounded Theory, this research was able to engage in self-reflexivity and offer an ethnographic lens to the data. As a researcher, I integrated my epistemological knowledge as a Latina mother in Phoenix, Arizona.

Narrative Method

The use of the Narrative Method allows the researcher to delve into the stories of research participants to process accounts of the human experience. Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) highlights narrative methods as a way to engage Black women and their stories. Through what she calls "Tellin' stores: Black women's thumb prints" and "(De)commodification of the Black girl narrative," she highlights the ways that research can articulate the truth through the lived experience of the interlocutor from their first-hand experience. She states, "most research on Black girls in education and sociology used quantitative methods to study Black girls, and from a deficit and pathological

perspective" (p. 73). Academic inquiry pays considerable attention to Black and Latina women to uncover their oppressive experiences; nevertheless, dismissing their joy, liberation, and ethic of care would mean to strip away their creative spirit and determination for upward mobility. It is vital to engage in qualitative research to uncover narratives that tell stories of lived experiences from a primary perspective. In this research, I interviewed four mothers to understand their experiences as Black, African-American, Latina and mixed-race Black/Latina mothers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Narrative Method was intentionally utilized in an effort to decolonize the research and center Black and Latina mothers; additionally, their words, specific phrases, anecdotes, and real-life experiences exemplify the impact of a global pandemic on working Black and Latina mothers from an intersectional standpoint to and to observe how they navigated productive and reproductive labor. The work of decolonizing research is to decenter white, hegemonic, patriarchal ways of conducting research and recenter those stories from the communities themselves (Bejarano et al., 2019). As Tuhiwai-Smith states, "a constant reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect of indigenous cultural politics and forms the basis of an indigenous language of critique" (2012, p. 25). I am connecting the framework of decolonization to this research by making clear that Black and Latina women relied on othermothering strategies and strategic mothering practices that were both learned and passed down from their mothers, grandmothers, othermothers, and kinship networks. In this work, decolonizing as a methodology involves decentering the patriarchal motherhood trope. I acknowledge that this work does not center on

Indigeneity specifically, yet, the connection to Indigenous scholarship is not lost on the research and the writing process. I offer appreciation and respect for Indigenous scholars who have crafted theories and methodologies to engage in decolonial work. Tuhiwai-Smith argues that "while being on the margins of the world has had dire consequences, being incorporated within the world's marketplace has different implications and in turn requires the mounting of new forms of resistance" (2012, p. 25). Tuhiwai-Smith's work on decolonial research and methodological approaches enables this work to connect to the migration experiences of Black and Latina mothers and their genealogical past.

Explanation for Multi-Methods

The multi-methods approach facilitated two distinct types of data collection. I utilized a snowball sampling method to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. Upon selecting the participants, I scheduled the focus groups via Zoom. Zoom was chosen as the platform for the focus groups to enable hosting in a shared setting. Furthermore, this research prioritizes the lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Zoom was a platform familiar to many U.S. Americans due to the remote work conducted during shelter-in-place procedures. The questions from the focus groups were semi-structured questions with eight categories: managing COVID-19 restrictions, support systems, survival strategies, distance learning and childcare, remote work responsibilities, shifting parenting responsibilities, navigating multiple pandemics, and re-engaging with society post-shelter-in-place. The questions focused on their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic, if they caught the virus, what support systems they had in place during the shelter-in-place procedures, and how they engaged in care work for their

children. The questions allowed for open-ended responses from the focus group participants. Once the focus groups were complete, these data were saved to a double password encrypted file. After the completion of the focus groups, I selected four individuals who shared specific experiences that closely aligned with the research questions. I conducted two of the interviews in my home office and two of the interviews via Zoom. The individual interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide and had five categories: demographic questions, parental skills, support systems, financial resources, and cultural connections. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to do a deeper dive into the qualitative data to further understand the experiences of Black and Latina mothers and their mothering practices.

The utilization of Grounded Theory to analyze the focus groups and Narrative Method for the individual interviews was ideal for this project. This multi-method approach facilitated the collection of diverse types of data, which allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Grounded Theory enables the opportunity for shared experiences and perspectives among participants, providing rich insights into the lives of Black and Latina mothers. The focus groups were ideal to gather a breadth of data and explore the shared experiences between the participants. However, there was a need for additional one-on-one interviews to further explore the depth of intergenerational teachings of mothering perspectives, practices, and strategies employed by these women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The utilization of snowball sampling allowed me to find participants that fit the inclusion criteria. I found participants from my son's Catholic school, my friend network, and my academic network. The snowball

sampling was effective in that I was able to find participants relatively quickly. The ideal setting for these interviews was via Zoom and utilizing technology to capture the interviews. In the focus groups, I recorded and transcribed the focus groups with the participants permission. In the two individual interviews that were held in my home, I recorded the interviews using otter.ai with the participants' permissions. The second two interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded and transcribed with their permissions.

Research Questions

The research questions seek to reveal the ways that capitalism, patriarchy, and socio-cultural expectations created racialized gendered conditions that manifest in the lives of Black and Latina mothers already experiencing a syndemic[46] due to interrelated complex issues of social crises that disproportionately affect women of color. How have Black and Latina women experienced resistance, liberation, and joy historically? Are those experiences passed down generationally and did these experiences assist Black and Latina working women during COVID-19? This research is guided by the following questions: (1) how did the COVID-19 global pandemic affect Black and Latina working and professional mothers relationships; living conditions; and working conditions and expectations; (2) how did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the community, network, and support available for Black and Latina working mothers to provide mothering during

[46] Merrill Singer (1996) defines a syndemic as the "interrelated complex of health and social crises facing urban poor" (99) "a syndemic is a set of closely intertwined and mutual enhancing health problems that significantly affect the overall health status of a population within the context of a perpetuating configuration of noxious social conditions" (99).

2021-2022; (3) how did the COVID-19 pandemic impact community, network, and support available for Black and Latina professional mothers to provide mothering during 2021-2022; (4) what resources or strategies did Black and Latina mothers and othermothers utilize to address the additional or emerging challenges faced during the pandemic; and (5) was there a difference between the strategies working mothers and othermothers used versus professional mothers and othermothers?

Data Collection

Sampling & Recruitment

This study features mothers in the major metropolitan areas of Phoenix, Arizona. Due to the nature of this study and the researcher's positionality as a professional mother, this project utilizes a convenience/snowball sampling approach. I started my recruitment search with my personal network at my son's private Catholic school located in Phoenix, Arizona. Mothers from a Catholic School in Phoenix Arizona were approached for potential participation in the study. Additionally, I consulted my network of mothers to connect with women that fit the criteria of the study and are willing to engage in focus groups and individual interviews. Through these networks, I identified participants who meet the criteria for inclusion and those who may be able to provide recommendations through snowball sampling for additional mothers interested in participating in the research. As the researcher, I approached the potential participants through informal conversation followed up with an email introduction with details about the study (see Appendix B). Before focus group interviews and/or individual interviews, the participants were provided with consent forms detailing all aspects of data collection and storage,

ethical considerations, and provided information about who to contact should there be any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Participant Sample

Focus groups included 11 mothers living in Phoenix, Arizona. They were conducted May - July 2023. The individual interviews included 4 mothers living in Phoenix, Arizona. They were conducted July 2023 - August 2023. The following was used as selection criteria, which was used for both focus group and interview participation: (See Appendix A).

Focus group participants identified as mothers of the following background: Black mothers of working-class status/aspirational class (3), Latina mothers of working-class status/aspirational class (3), Black mothers of middle/upper-middle income status, aspirational status (2), and Latina mothers of middle/upper-middle income status, aspirational status (2) during the COVID-19 pandemic years 2020-2022. Individual interview participants identified as mothers of the following background: Latina working-class/aspirational class status (2), Black middle-class/aspirational class status.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was triangulated and consists of the following sources: focus group interview data and individual interview data. As a Grounded Theory project and Narrative Method, I used a thematic coding method and data was analyzed using content analysis for the focus group interviews and thick descriptions for the interviews. I used a Google Excel spreadsheet to notate all recurring themes within the focus groups. The 5 parent-themes emerged were utilized to guide my analysis. The additional themes or sub-

themes were mentioned in the research and analysis as important elements to consider or alternative for future research.

Chapter 4

Navigating Motherhood Through a Global Pandemic: Strategies of Adaptation and Resilience that Leads to Thivance

The goal of this project is to make visible the productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) labor of Black and Latina mothers during a global pandemic. Black feminist research and Latina feminist research on motherhood are typically conducted in separate realms; there is limited collaboration or intersectional exploration between the two demographics. The interconnected lives, especially in the Southwest region, are often overlooked. Belle underscores this point in her work by emphasizing Black and Latina feminist paradigms of identity and oppression. She stated, "it is vitally important to thoughtfully, generously, and seriously engage the critical vocabularies and practices of Black and Latina Feminisms in a spirit of complementarity, collaboration, conferences, and publication outlets (e.g. journals, books, and op-eds)" (Belle, 2020). This dissertation work complicates the racial division and articulates the ways that Black and Latina mothers share a similar experience through motherwork and labor. It is my focus to bring light to the ways that Black and Latina mothers have strategically navigated motherhood through reproductive labor and productive labor while also leaning on a care community in order to achieve thrivance.

Analyzing race, gender, and class in relation to Black and Latina mothering during the COVID-19 pandemic is imperative for understanding the unique challenges the interlocutors faced during this precarious time. Black and Latina mothers undergo oppression through an intersection of race, gender, and class, serving as a significant social marker within the matrix of domination. In this chapter, I analyze the responses from the mothers from an intersectional perspective. These categories do not stand alone; however, I will define the terms and offer theoretical implications for the ways that race,

class, and gender apply to these women. I present perspectives on Black and Latina mothers as individuals who enact an ethic of care through reproductive and productive labor by depending on their support networks to navigate and persevere. The overarching themes in the focus groups speak to their view of homeplace[47] as both a refuge and a barrier, mothering practices[48] as a form of survival, creative labor linked to othermothering and kinship strategies, and their mothering strategies that connect directly to their resilience that led to thrivance in the nuanced aspects of motherhood. The chapter introduces Black, Afro-Latina, Biracial (Black and White), and Latina mothers living in Phoenix, Arizona. The focus group sessions were divided by racial/ethnic and class status. The women in the study worked as attorneys (2), college professors (2), a college instructional designer (1), regional operations manager (1), K-6 administrative assistant (1), a front desk administrator for a private practice (1), an elementary school teacher (1),

[47] The use of homeplace derives from bell hooks' work that focuses on spaces in the home as a domestic sphere; much of which is the domain of the feminine and therefore, the woman. This space, the domestic sphere, is regarded as a woman's place within the home and hooks' notes that private domesticity is viewed as a theoretical stance and a public act of resistance (1990). She stated, "homeplace, as fragile and as transitional as it may be, a makeshift shed, a small bit of earth where one rests, is always subject to violation and destruction. For when a people no longer have the space to construct homeplace, we cannot build a meaningful community of resistance" (p. 388). This space, for Black and Latina women is both gendered and racialized. The kitchen space and the dining room space is seen as inherently gendered and feminized. In this, the importance of Latina mothers kitchen/dining area and Black mothers kitchen/dining area converge.

[48] Joy James defines Captive Maternals as "either biological females or those feminized into caretaking and consumption" (James, 2016, p. 255). James also stated, "parenting is a function, not a gender. Black parents are central in the formation of the Captive Maternal. Black women have been highlighted as leading figures in struggles against prison/police/ vigilante violence" (2018, p. 21).

lead server at a restaurant (1), and customer service representatives (2).

The themes that were revealed through the analysis of the data sets were intersectional race and class dynamics of (re)productive labor, homeplace and migration, homeplace as refuge and barriers, creative labor linked to migration and intergenerational mothering practices, mothering practice as a form of survival, and from resilience to thrivance. *Intersectional race and class dynamics of (re)productive labor* indicates that Black and Latina mothers had to grapple with their situatedness as racialized mothers and women working towards an aspirational class status. Their waged labor is non-negotiable. Professional class women expressed deep gratitude for their homes, space, and amenities, and realized that their income was essential to their continued lifestyle. There were layers of complexity that these mothers faced due to their race and expectations as a working mother. *Homeplace and migration* offers an insight into how these women have made Phoenix their home and built community within the city. The women in the study shared stories of their families' migration from various parts of the United States, Mexico, and Central America. Migration was a key element in how these women centered Phoenix as their homeplace; Phoenix provides a sense of "roots" for these mothers to raise their children. *Homeplace as refuge and barrier* became essential in the survival strategies of these mothers and their mothering practices. Their homes served as their workplace, their children’s school, their site for reproductive labor, their place to relax and recharge, and their platform for activism and resistance.

Creative labor linked to migration and intergenerational mothering practices was informed by these women’s respective mothers, grandmothers, and othermothers. Their

connection to the hardship of migration (from their families' told stories) and understanding what it meant to leave the familiar behind in order to search for a more promising future for themselves and their families offered a lens of resilience. The mothers who reported a connection to migration also highlighted the selflessness and creativity their mothers, grandmothers, and other mothers employed so that their children could enjoy their childhood and, subsequently, their lives. This lens of survival and resilience through disparate times had a profound impact on the women and their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to shift mindsets and figure out how to survive and thrive under extreme pressures linked back to their foremothers' stories. *Mothering practice as a form of survival* illustrates the various ways that Black and Latina mothers engage in intentional mothering. Survival goes beyond mere existence; to survive, one must confront challenges and push against normative expectations associated with their social position. Black and Latina women navigate survival by continuing their employment, educating their children, caring for themselves and their families, and participating in acts of resistance to ensure their children's needs are met. The survival strategies employed during the pandemic transitioned into resilience and thrivance. *Moving from resilience to thrivance* provides a lens through which to view Black and Latina mothers as empowered and resourceful; their labor is characterized by creativity, intentionality, and strategic planning. These elements work together to cultivate resilience in their lives and ultimately contribute to healthier and happier outcomes over time.

Focus Group Demographics

The first focus group consisted of working class and professional-class Black and Latina mothers. In this focus group, one woman identified as Black, one identified as Afro-Latina, and one identified as Latina. Denise and Kathryn are college educated women, both with one respective child, and are both married and live with their respective families in the South Phoenix region of Phoenix, Arizona. The location of South Phoenix residents is largely farming land with more affordable housing developments woven throughout the foothills, farming communities, and industrial parks. I met Denise through Maricopa Community College’s center for teaching and learning eight years ago. Denise and I developed two online-courses and worked closely together. After our projects ended, she and I became close friends and our children played together. Kathryn and I met as freshmen in college over 20 years ago and have kept in touch throughout the years. Kathryn and I attended Arizona State University as undergraduates. I met Laura in 2014 when I was an adjunct professor at a local community college in Phoenix, Arizona. She was one of my students in a public speaking course. She lived in my neighborhood and I would see her walking around on occasion. She became interested in my research study when I solicited participants in my social network; she joined the Black/Afro-Latina cohort as that time suited her needs best. This group evolved into a heterogeneous cohort of participants, rather than isolating solely Black mothers.

The second focus group consisted of Black professional mothers (Rose and Julia) both of whom hold positions as college professors. My introduction to Rose and Julia

occurred through my chair and mentor, Dr. Mako Fitts Ward. Rose specializes in education, policy, and equity, demonstrating a profound passion for education and an extensive understanding of policy issues, which she frames through the lenses of race, gender, sexuality, and ability. Her expertise left me eager to explore further how Black and Latina mothers promote inclusive learning within their households. Julia and I exchanged emails on multiple occasions regarding research and an upcoming panel presentation scheduled for later in the 2023 academic year. Our first virtual encounter took place during the focus group with Rose. Additionally, Rose and Julia have collaborated, and their children have had opportunities to interact during both the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic period. While I was already acquainted with Julia's work and personal background, delving into her research provided me with a deeper understanding of narrative storytelling and the influential role of qualitative research within theoretical frameworks. Julia's deliberate approach and expertise in race, gender, and class issues offered invaluable insights that greatly contributed to advancing this work and bridging the gaps within the existing literature. Both Rose and Julia grew up in working family homes and have transcended class status through upward mobility. Additionally, both of these women relied heavily on their mothers as othermothers during COVID-19; their mothers lived in their respective homes during COVID-19.

The third focus group consisted of working-class Latina mothers - Renee, Rochelle, Martha, and Ivonne. I met Renee and Rochelle in 2011; we were part of the same social circle. Renee and Rochelle are ex-sister-in-laws, both divorced from their respective husbands. Martha and Ivonne are friends and live in the same area in Phoenix.

I met Martha in 2018 at our children's Catholic school function and we became fast friends. Martha's daughter was new to the school; I empathized with her as I was in search of a school community. Her friend, Ivonne, was part of a snowball sampling and was recruited by Martha to participate in the interview. I have met Ivonne on one occasion but knew very little about her and her family. Ivonne is married with one son and during the interview was pregnant with her second child.

The final focus group consisted of two Latina professional-class mothers - Margarita and Marissa. I met Margarita at my son's school in 2018. Marissa was part of a snow-ball sampling; Margarita encouraged her to participate in the research process. They are both highly educated and practice law in Phoenix, Arizona. They are married to their respective husbands who hold college educations and lucrative careers. They live in the Central Phoenix area, in a wealthier neighborhood in Phoenix, Arizona. Their lives are shaped by their upward mobility, striving for an aspirational class and reaching a socioeconomic status that is desired in the United States.

Intersectional Race and Class Dynamics of (Re)productive[49] Labor

Class is a crucial element in this research as it expands on the understanding of racial dynamics, the mothering practices that are taken up by Black and Latina mothers, and their agency within their careers and their home lives. During the pandemic,

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[49] I use (re)productive labor intentionally. Reproductive labor is domestic work, care work, and activism held by individuals that engage in feminized labor. Productive labor is paid labor, often outside of the home; it is often termed waged-labor. By utilizing the parenthesis around re, I am illustrating that one cannot be outside of the other for Black and Latina mothers. If you are engaged in productive labor, there is always (re)productive labor that is expected of the working mother.

professional-class women expressed gratitude for the privilege and autonomy to manage their own schedules, rely on their kinship networks for assistance, or hire tutors or nannies to care for their children while they engaged in productive work. Marissa, a Latina attorney stated,

> I think, you know, we have so many blessings to be grateful for the way that we experienced the pandemic was not the way that others experienced it, you know, we had a pool, we have a backyard, we, you know, we have so many luxuries, we have my mom we have, you know, there's just so many luxuries that we were able to fold in, and it was still hard for us, you know, so I'm incredibly, eternally grateful for what we have, and very conscientious. So, you know, other people had to do this in a one room apartment, perhaps, you know, other families maybe had other domestic violence, substance abuse, you know, financial issues, just other crises that they were probably feeling that exacerbated these other people lost loved ones.

Marissa expresses her class privilege in a way that demonstrates her acknowledgement for the blessings that were afforded to her through her social location. Her positionality was possible by virtue of her education, her dedication to her career, and her husband's social location and career. Her choice of words, "blessings," "grateful," and "conscientious" underscore a minimization of her accomplishments and class status. Her remark highlights the importance of socio-economic status and the ability to live comfortably, have space for her mother in her home, and her children being able to safely shelter-in-place with two high income-earning parents that held secure careers during the pandemic.

In contrast, working-class women reported feeling anxious about money and expenses while also feeling joy in the ability to stay home with their child/children during a global pandemic. Ivonne, a working-class Latina mother, shared her anxiety centered

on keeping her job, she stated, “what sucks is that I focused more on my job than on my son…he would be hungry and I would take a quick break to feed him. I tried to keep it easy to make stuff around the house, because I didn’t have time. I had a manager that was micromanaging me and I felt like if I took a longer break, I was going to be let go.” Martha, a working-class Latina mother stated, “I felt rich knowing that I was going to be able to stay home with my daughter and stay safe from COVID-19.” Her sense of class was one of aspirational status, she engaged in a level of care that was afforded to her by the temporary government lockdown and shelter-in-place procedures. The women’s reports of privilege, fortune, luck, or appreciation tie back to their understanding of their class status, either aspirational or realized. There are various examples of class that are woven throughout the themes as class is placed within the intersections of race, and gender. I will continue to highlight elements of class as they become evident throughout the research. Importantly, mothering decisions on education, school choice, and quality of care, highlight important dimensions of mothering practice and class. The social striving, or aspirational class, demonstrated the desire for their children to have access to “better[50]” resources, “better” education, and “better” communities.

The productive and reproductive labor of women in the U.S. is non-negotiable. Working women comprise nearly 47% of the labor force (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2023); the participation rate for all mothers with children under the age of 18 was 71.2 percent in

[50] Quotes of “better” will be interrogated later in the research. The “better” is subject to a person’s opinion - based on their understanding of what is considered “better” from their lived experience. I insert quotations as many individuals in the study emphasized their need to strive for better, live in better homes/spaces, or attain better education.

2020, this fell from 72.3% in 2019 (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2023). It is noteworthy that working women, in various careers, accounted for millions of jobs across the nation. The 76.4 million women workers, more than 39% of women work in occupations where women make up at least three-quarters of the workforce and women own close to 10 million businesses (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2017). Even with these statistics, patriarchal mothering[51] is the baseline for caretaking in the United States. Mothers are an essential part of the labor force; yet, their domestic labor is viewed as superior and expected to their paid employment due to the expectations of U.S. society. Because of this, the labor force is often viewed through a patriarchal lens and working equates to a masculine sphere (Buchanan, 2013).

Black and Latina working mothers simultaneously negotiate their time in order to work their paid-labor full-time job and care for their children during their virtual school-day. All of the women in the focus groups worked outside of the home prior to COVID-19 lockdown procedures and most of the women were able to engage in almost all or all of their work remotely from their homes. They had to engage in strategic measures to keep their employment (no matter their class status); their position was precarious due to their race and gender (Jordan-Zachery, 2023). The employment challenges faced by Black and Latina women amidst the pandemic demonstrates an interconnectedness.

[51] Andrea O'Reilly uses the term patriarchal mothering to denote the oppressive institution of motherhood through a male dominated lens. She stated that mothers need a feminism of their own due to the problems mothers face through distinct social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological problems related specifically to the identity of mother, the work of mothering, and the patriarchal institution of mothering (Green, 86; O'Reilly, 2016).

Marissa, a Latina attorney stated, “It was challenging, and I think it was more so challenging as a mom and a woman of color. I think there were extra layers that others didn’t experience but I also have perspective about the bigger picture.” Her acknowledgement of her race as a barrier to her lived experience is amplified through the “extra layers that others didn’t experience” - this can be connected to the undertone of the political landscape at the time. 2020 was an election year and Donald Trump was running for U.S. President for the second term. In fact, Marissa expressed deep concern in relation to the pandemic and the political landscape in 2020-2021.

> The fact that they're [her children] living in this world where you just, you know, you see, hate, and, this polarization happening, and, then the siege on the Capitol. I mean, there was just one thing after another and I do remember, my mom does, like to watch the news. So we constantly had CNN on and I remember at one point, you know, needing to just have the TV off, because at night, finally, when we'd lay down and go to sleep, I just felt like I would have anxiety. I was like am I breathing fine? Do I have COVID? Or is this just plain anxiety because the world is so you know, on fire right now.

Marissa’s other layers were in relation to her gender responsibilities and her career trajectory pre and post-COVID-19. She stated,

> Prior to the pandemic, I feel like my career projection was on a really wonderful upward trajectory. And I was growing a book of business and I was just on my way to greater things. And I feel like the pandemic stunted that for me professionally. I remember you know, people at the firm saying I'm getting my best hours ever. I've never been this productive. Working from home you know, this is this is you know, the best arrangement for me… and I was the opposite. I had never had so much, so many balls in the air at the same time that it was my worst hours professionally in my entire career. And it wasn't for lack of working hard and working into the night and working in the wee hours and working, you know, and it wasn't for, I mean, I probably was one of the hardest working of, our group and, and it wasn't reflected, you know, in my productivity statistics, because that would have been impossible. Because I had children at home, and I had other responsibilities that, you know, were just layered on top. And so it definitely that three year period, and I you know,

> you can look at statistically, your book, your hours, your collections, you can look at it over time, and it's measured and available, you know, in our tracking systems, and there it is, but you know, you, if you had to pinpoint when the pandemic occurred, and Marissa's career, you could probably look at the numbers and say, I think it was probably, you know, this, it wasn't just a year period, it was a three year slump, because it was a nosedive, and then it was a recreation, you know, crawling back out.

The racialization of Black and Latina mothers is at the forefront of their identities and the ways in which they move in the world. Black and Latina women hold positions within productive labor fields that require their continued participation. The productive and reproductive labor of Black and Latina women in this study are non-negotiable. However, even though they hold vital roles within the labor force, patriarchal mothering and the expectation of mothers required them to prioritize domestic labor over waged-labor. This contributes to the undervaluing and demonizing of women's work outside of the home. Black and Latina mothers have to navigate dual expectations of (re)productive labor in order to fulfill their racial and cultural expectations of mother. Regardless of their class status, these mothers faced challenges in maintaining their employment due to intersecting factors of race and gender, leading to an amplified sense of vulnerability. Marissa's experiences exemplify the additional barriers faced by Black and Latina aspirational class women, as she navigated the pandemic's disruptions to her career trajectory while also contending with the political and social context during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Homeplace and Migration

There are several commonalities between these women irrespective of race, gender, and class. The themes that resonated as working mothers during a global

pandemic all connected back to their upbringing, social location, and family connection. Many of the mothers shared their connection to Central Phoenix; this is an important element of this research. Central Phoenix offers a unique perspective to culture, family, and religiosity. Numerous families have relocated from various regions of the U.S. in pursuit of a new lifestyle; Phoenix, Arizona has proven to be a destination that fulfills their aspirations. "Scholars describe migration as a strategy women employ to interrupt violence and ensure survival for themselves and their children. Various forms of interpersonal, systemic, and structural violence intersect with the experience of migrating mothers" (Heffron et al., 2022).

The women in this research project shared their experiences with migration; there were varying degrees of migration within the focus groups. I highlight the first- and second-generation migration stories to highlight the reasons why Black and Latina families moved to Phoenix, Arizona and why centering this research in this area is important. Margarita moved here when she was five years old, it was 1987 and her father was working on a farm in Casa Grande. She said, "I came to visit my dad…little did I know, we wouldn't leave the USA again; we lived in Casa Grande. My only sibling, my brother, was born in Florence, AZ in 1988 and we later moved to Phoenix when I was 8. We lived near the Creighton school district where my mom was a teacher." Her mother was hired as a bilingual English/Spanish teacher within the Creighton (Phoenix) school system - she said, "it was the first school to offer bilingual curriculum and gifted classes." Margarita, a Central Phoenix lawyer stated, "my mother felt as though living in the U.S. would offer me more opportunities to be successful. She wanted me to go to college, earn

a high paying job, and have a family of my own." She said, "my parents always had high expectations for me; I always seemed like the outcast but I followed the rules and made sure they were proud of my accomplishments."

Similarly, Martha migrated to the U.S. in her early twenties. She was born in Mexico and moved to Arizona at the age of 26. She began working in the U.S. as a server at a restaurant; her friends and family were concerned about her career choices because she was formally educated in Mexico and holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology. Her migration to the Southwest, specifically Arizona, was to live in the United States and begin her adult life. She became pregnant in 2012, a few years after she moved to the U.S. She stated, "I told my family that going to school was never about a career; I wanted to learn and have knowledge. I wanted knowledge, no matter what I was going to do with the rest of my life, I can always be in my experience. School always gave me more tools, to become the person you think you can become, a mother, a friend, a parent, a neighbor, or anything. It was always about the learning experience for me." Her migration to the U.S. was to explore new possibilities; once she birthed her daughter, she decided to stay for the community. She explains, "when I came here, I used to have family here. They were immigrants from Mexico. They were working here until they were deported back to Mexico. I was here in 2003 for three months, on vacation, and then another time as an ESL student in the summer. My cousin's friend took me to the church, and I fell in love with the Catholic church community here."

Denise's family migrated to the U.S. West and Southwest via the U.S. South during the Great Migration. Her family's story demonstrates the ways in which Black

Americans risked their lives to migrate to new cities, outside of the oppressive South. Her family migrated post-enslavement; although according to her, “the history is hard to track.” Her father is from Texas and her mother’s side is from the Louisiana area. Denise said, “I mean, historically, it's actually really funny because they're Creole. So, my mom's or, my grandmother's, my mom's mom's old maternal grandmother's maiden name is Rideaux. And one of my cousins and I are like, we should do a deeper dive into, like, our ancestry and find out more about that. But one of our cousins did. And he's like the keeper of all of that, but we don't want to talk to them. And there's like a split, like an ancestral split between the Christian side of the family and the Catholic side of the family.” Denise described how her mother, who belongs to the Christian side of the family, moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where she established a community through kinship networks and her immediate family.

The majority of mothers in this study are second, third, or fourth generation Black or Latina families in the Central or South Phoenix area. According to a 2023 study in the Population Reference Bureau, Metropolitan Arizona has an increase in business and employment opportunities and is the fastest growing economy in the United States. The state of Arizona, over the past half-decade, has seen an increase in jobs, income, and sales growth; this has resulted in the expansion of health care, information technology, construction, and goods/services sales (Abu-Hashem & Srygley, 2023). The same report noted that Phoenix and the sprawling metropolitan area has seen a 16% increase in its population; from 2010-2020, Phoenix was the fastest growing city in the nation (Abu-Hashem & Srygley, 2023). The influx to state migration has mimicked the migratory

patterns of the historical past: Phoenix has once again become an area for a new way of life, job opportunities, and community connections. The women in this research articulate their reasons for living and raising their children here are connected to the geographical location and their family history. While their migration histories may differ, the integration into the community, the pursuit of better educational opportunities for their children, and access to career prospects serve as salient reasons for women to settle and remain in Phoenix, Arizona. Caballero et al. state, “motherhood and migration are fundamentally interconnected in the development of political agency” (2019, p. 183). The connection to Phoenix offers a way to understand: the personal as political. Being ingrained in a community offers Black and Latina mothers the fluidity to engage in mothering practices.

Homeplace and migration is an important element for Black and Latina women regardless of their class status. Their deep connection to Phoenix, Arizona as more than a location but a homeplace shapes their view of culture, family, and religiosity. The interconnected experiences of migration from both Black and Latina women underscore the importance of opportunities in relation to careers, home, and education. The diverse migration histories offer a pattern within the Central and South Phoenix area. This space is culturally diverse and offers a connection to past generations and cultural artifacts. The city has murals painted depicting phrases such as “immigrants belong here,” “vote” depicting indigenous peoples, and artwork that intertwines both English and Spanish such as “community and todos por un cambio.” As a Latina woman and mother residing in Phoenix, Arizona, these images provide a sense of connectedness, homeplace, and refuge.

It feels like I belong in this space. Similarly, in this research, there are second, third, and fourth generations of Black and Latina mothers who have chosen to stay and raise their families here. The connection to the city offers insights into the landscape of Phoenix, Arizona, as a place where Black and Latina mothering practices take place and form collectives. Black and Latina mothers are deeply connected within their communities; this engagement allows them to navigate and participate in mothering practices, shaping their experiences and political agency. The complex interplay between intersectional awareness of race, gender, and class informs the ways that migration and homeplace are quintessential in shaping the lives and identities of Black and Latina mothers in Phoenix, Arizona.

Homeplace as Refuge and Barrier

Irrespective of race and socioeconomic status, the women expressed a stronger sense of connection with their children, family, and friends throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Women recounted their COVID-19 experience as a unique time given the ability to stay home with their child or children. Rose stated, "for me, the kids…I think, my son, he was always a homebody, so he enjoyed staying at home. There was nothing online for him because he was fourth at that point. I was like, you're home." Julia stated, "I was homeschooling my son and I think he liked it. He was by himself; we would meet and talk about the readings but he didn't have anybody. You know, I was just worried about the kids" Julia shared that in an effort to connect her children with others they would find community with their friends and meet up. Julia said, "at times, the support, it was just different. We would do things like meet up at the park and we all had masks on

and we would spend time together." The shift in the norms of these women's daily lives was drastic; the ability to creatively think through the constraints of the pandemic and care for their children demonstrated an act of care and strategy. Kathryn shared, "we were here together, we had phone calls and Zoom. I remember everybody doing those little Zoom parties, for a birthday party or whatever it was. If we were going to have a social interaction or needed support, we would drive by my parents' house and drop off food, to make sure they were okay. It was a lot of drive-by experiences to see people we loved." Margarita emphasized the importance of time and homeplace, she stated, "it was really special because what we would take for granted like our home, pool, and community, we learned is actually really a luxury to be able to spend so much time together." The experience varied across socioeconomic status; however, the emphasis on thankful, grateful, blessed, appreciative, was woven throughout their responses. Several key themes emerge drawing clear connections to Black Feminist theory and Chicana Feminist theory, including shifting family dynamics, the importance of bonding, the role of technology in maintaining connections, and the adaptability of children in response to virtual education.

In this study, homeplace was their safety net from the surging COVID-19 virus and pandemic. The luxury to stay at home and be protected from the virus was not lost on these mothers. The homeplace, at first was nerve wracking and beyond their expectations of normalcy, became a refuge and a safe place. The women describe ways they engaged in time spent with their children, continued to work, and educate their children. They also described the virtual "fun" by introducing Zoom parties and drive by check-ins with

family members. I recall a few drive-by parties for kids' birthdays, newborn babies, and graduations. It was the only way for us to remain safe during a pandemic but still show support and connection through strategic ways. The homeplace as refuge became a beacon of light for Black and Latina mothers. The women knew their children were safe by sheltering-in-place and knew that they would be able to virtually connect with their peers and family members. The barriers were often overcome by strategic planning and the connection with kinship networks. As in Julia's case, she opted to mask and meet friends at a park. This connection to place and space is also significant. I noticed much more neighborhood foot traffic (walking dogs, riding bikes, skateboarding) than I had in previous years. People seemed to embrace the time away from the normal routine and create spaces for enjoyment through outdoor activities.

The barriers that existed were absolutely a struggle for Black and Latina mothers. Their work routines were disrupted, their sense of space in the home was taken over by their children's school work and their homes were multipurpose. Marissa stated, "it was like a war zone on my kitchen table." Denise stated, "I had to work from home and I didn't have an office, I had to move my husband's office around to accommodate me." Renee said, "there was no room in my apartment for distance learning, they had to do school from their dad's home because he had a bigger house and more space." The women discussed space as being important elements for their success and their children's success. Their homes were converted to offices, school rooms, and kitchen cafeterias in a matter of days. Their ingenuity was needed to engage in a prolonged experience of sheltering-in-place during the pandemic.

Distance Learning: Migration from School to Home

The transition to at-home education during the COVID-19 pandemic imposed a significant burden on parents, especially Black and Latina mothers. Parents were required to substantially increase their involvement in their children's educational process. Distance learning or online-education not only demanded parental supervision during times when children would typically be under the care of school personnel but also necessitated greater engagement to ensure that educational activities were understood and completed. This was particularly challenging for parents of young children and those with disabilities (Lee, Ward, Chang, & Downing, 2021). The magnitude of these responsibilities was exacerbated by the employment situations of millions of United States parents. Before the pandemic, 61.1% of parents in two-parent households were employed full-time, constituting 22 million households in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018; U.S. Department of Labor, 2017; Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, the 11 million single-parent households with children under 18 years old faced even greater realities; they lacked the proper systemic support to share the labor of productive work, child care, and at-home education during the pandemic (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). This situation raises inquiries about how Black and Latina working mothers, despite seeking support from othermothers, managed to care for their families, and work full-time while navigating the difficulties of at-home education.

Margarita reflected on their mother's and grandmother's mothering. She grew up seeing her grandmother work as a seamstress and her mom go to work every day as a teacher.

> My mom came home, out of breath, from all of the expositions on a variety of topics that she could tackle during the day. And just falling on her chair. And it just made me appreciate that work ethic so much because I saw both of them, in different fields, give everything and find a break and then start the most important job at home, which was helping us grow. So, I never knew the opposite, that there were moms who only focused on being at home.

Margarita's core principles as a mother are "we're their first teachers; we lead by example. If they see mommy working on the computer, they see mommy reading a book, they see mommy reading a book to the younger children. There are so many things you can tell them to do, but to have the opportunity to tell them how to do it, is something that I strive to do to this day." This was the opportunity that COVID-19 provided many mothers and children. The children were able to see working moms do everything from morning routine, to getting the children and themselves ready in the morning, making sure they were on their Zoom classrooms, engaging with them during the breaks, reading to them, making lunch, playing during recess, putting their daily work tasks aside at time or telling their children to wait a moment while mommy finishes an email, or a call, or an important lecture. All of these moments during COVID-19 have not been accounted for; not in the way of education and resilience of both the children and mothers. There was so much push back against keeping the children at home due to the ineffectiveness of distance learning; yet, there was no conversation about the actions of mothers as teachers via example setting and children watching and mirroring their mothers during the day; this was an effective way to teach their child to learn, grow, and respect the work ethic of their mothers. bell hooks (1984) stated,

> By learning housework, children and adults accept responsibility for ordering their material reality. They learn to appreciate and care for their

> surroundings. Since so many male children are not taught housework, they grow to maturity with no respect for their environment and often lack the know-how to take care of themselves and their households. They have been allowed to cultivate an unnecessary dependence on women in their domestic lives and as a result of this dependence are sometimes unable to develop a healthy sense of autonomy.

Rose, stated, “I didn’t think that the schools were going to be shut down for that long. My son was in preschool and my daughter was in second grade in 2020. I figured they would have an extended Spring Break, since the schools shut down during break. I never thought she wouldn’t go back to that school. The shift completely happened unexpectedly.” This left many families scrambling to figure out what was going to happen next. How will they adjust to school, work, activities all from their respective homes. Additionally, many children that relied on school programs such as free or reduced lunch, extended care or after school care, or reading/math school tutoring, would lose these resources. The majority of the women reported that they didn't need the supplemental programs, however, thousands of families across the nation did. The panic of what was next, was further exacerbated for families that could not afford basic necessities.

COVID-19 served as a backdrop for scrutiny of the education system and the lack of resources throughout the country and the many districts that educated children of color. The U.S. government placed programs in place to address gaps in accessibility, for example school lunches. The U.S department of Agriculture offered food distribution modules to include curbside distribution, home delivery, or food pick-ups at various locations in the community. These services offered families the opportunity to feed their children and themselves during the pandemic. The students that were provided free or

reduced lunch were able to gain access while schools were closed (Supporting Students During COVID-19 Pandemic, n.d.). There were many gaps beyond food resources that needed to be filled. This research does not address the myriad of ways that children suffered during the pandemic; however, there is an acknowledgement that children with less resources needed further support from their schools and community. Socio-economic class serves as an important factor to note that individuals who could not afford basic necessities during the pandemic were much more likely to skip meals, be absent from distance learning courses or assignments, or care for themselves or their siblings due to their parent(s) employment situation. Mothers in this study highlighted the ways they dealt with the uncertainty. Renee stated "I made things work" and Denise stated, "I figured it out, what else was I going to do?" The sentiment was the same across racial and class demographics, the mothers had to engage in strategic mothering practices to ensure they were able to survive the pandemic.

Martha, a Latina working-class mother, was unemployed once the government restrictions took place. Martha has worked at the same restaurant for 15 years. The state mandated that all non-essential businesses close and she was forced to stay at home. She said, "thankfully a friend told me I could get unemployment. I had never heard of such a thing - this is something new to me. So, I was able to get 200$ a week. I didn't care that we were eating beans and rice, I was happy that we were safe and together at home." The experience of sheltering-in-place at home with her mother and daughter was a surreal experience. She stated, "it was such a crazy time, people were dying, there was no toilet paper, and my child didn't have school. I had no idea what was going to come next." She

said, “once we were settled and realized schools and businesses would be closed for a while, we went to the family center in Phoenix. They have a dream center and they gave us activities for the kids, science projects, and they offered drive through meals. We went there often to get food and fun for my daughter.” Martha struggled financially during the pandemic; however, with the support of her mother and the community services she said that her and her mother and daughter were able to relax. She said, “we learned to have fun, we watched Netflix almost all day once, and planted a garden - I never would have time to do this with my family and I felt happy I could spend this time with them.” I acknowledge that families suffered greatly, especially marginalized communities and communities of color; yet, I want to highlight the ways that Black and Latina women, in spite of this all, fostered a positive outlook on a grim reality.

The sense of structure and routines were vital for many working Black and Latina mothers. Laura emphasized the importance of routines, “routines were my saving grace to was our only sense of normality, to be honest, was keeping the same bedtime, the same shower schedules and waking up and going to bed at the same time. We scheduled our school day and homework, all in relation to my full-time employment. I had a preschooler, kindergartener, and a third grader. These routines were made tangible. This was the only way I could work because I was working full time. This taught my kids that they could be independent, my oldest helped me with my youngest. It’s the only thing that kept me sane, those daily routines.”

Similarly, Rose shared that her mothering experience during COVID-19 was liberating in some ways. This is not to minimize the distress that Black and Latina

women encountered, but instead, it is to highlight the ways that Black and Latina women who have engaged in upward mobility were able to engage their children in creative, intentional manners. Rose stated, “we were careful and considerate to create a fun environment in the house” Rose removed her daughter from her online classroom environment due to issues of racialization of students in her daughter’s online classroom and a deficit teaching method. She explained, “I got together with other people I knew who had kids around the same age and we did a bedtime story thing on Facebook Live every night. Then, I found this Black studies course, I found this woman who was doing a black studies black history type of course, it was twice a week and they had different age groups that attended for 90 minutes. She loved it. They would learn about Black history, dance, and have fun, virtually.” Rose explained that the opportunity to get her child involved in learning and community collaboration was a positive experience. She reflects, “it gave us an opportunity to think about other ways and other venues that kids could be involved in, that had to do with, you know, learning, and community. So, it was really interesting.” Her labor as a mother and educator she explains was intense. “It was very stressful. I scheduled our days on a whiteboard, education, snack, down time, lunch, educational films, homework.” Even though she admits there was a good amount of screentime, the learning was evident through her daughter's daily participation in creative cultural investments made possible by a Black woman educator facilitating online courses for children. The care work that is involved with being intimately involved in a child’s education, often goes unnoticed. Mothers, especially Black and Latina mothers, are not only involved in the homework, classroom, and routines of the day, but also the

ways in which their teachers were engaging them from a cultural standpoint. This attention to detail and labor can be exhausting and all encompassing. Rose craftily removed her daughter from a racially charged education system and placed her in a culturally mindful environment. This speaks to the ways that Black and Latina mothers engage in invisible labor and mother through a liberatory lens while keeping it all together. Rose stated, “I was still working; I was teaching online. I was trying to keep it together and trying to manage, and create a fun environment.”

Julia shared her experience as a mother to two teenagers. Her son’s school did not have a well-rounded online school experience. With the online learning shift of Covid-19, this was a perfect opportunity to remove him from school.

> I am a teacher; I'm not putting you back into school. That's stupid; let's sit down and create the type of curriculum that you want, let's talk about what school can look like for you. So, we incorporated black history, of course. And so, we talked about all of those issues, everything that came up, became part of his curriculum with me. And as part of his learning, he wants to be a chef. So, we incorporated culinary art. We did financial literacy; I created the curriculum of what I felt was important for him. And for the first time, my son was on me if I didn't post his work up soon enough. I started doing his curriculum like a month in advance. I'd sit down and take the whole day and just lay out what is going to be for the month. I realized; this was the first time that my son has ever been interested in anything.

The transformative nature of crafting an education was heightened by the challenges of a precarious time. Creating a curriculum that sparks enthusiasm in a teenager who might have otherwise felt marginalized in a system tailored to a specific student demographic reflects the mother's investment in her child through creative efforts, aimed at advancing his education and fostering a transformative learning experience. These innovative ways of educating children and thinking outside of the

normal parameters of the U.S. education systems demonstrates the ways in which Black and Latina mothers utilized creative labor during COVID-19. Ward (2021) denotes creative labor as, "A mode of cultural production that relies exclusively on the creative labor of Black women and is sustained through personal and economic investments from our networks of support, which include white and other non-Black co-conspirators" (p. 271). Black and Latina Mothers took on the role of educator, caregiver, manager, and supporter throughout the stay-at-home orders; these examples provide a clear insight into the ways in which mothers decolonized their child's education experience, fostering a lens of a collective and collaborative learning experience.

Home Place and Distance Learning (Sharing the Maternal Space: Kitchen Table)

Black and Latina mothers found ways to thrive during the COVID pandemic, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds, by embracing various strategies. The kitchen and dining table is often the site of mothers cooking, serving, and care taking. This space is seen as a site of resilience for Black and Latina mothers. The idea that Black and Latina women share this commonality in this communal space is important to notate; the kitchen space, often gendered, allows for women to engage in a sense of kitchen table feminism or activism. The kitchen table is where women come together to chat in an informal setting and catch up or "spill the tea;" this space is not just for gossip; it is a key historical marker for social change and grassroots organizing (hooks 1989). The kitchen table represents resilience and resourcefulness; the symbol of motherhood, activism, and social change. Black and Latina women have used this space for mobilizing and advocating for social change, making the physical space of the kitchen table a hub for

activism and community organizing (Collins, 2000, Davis, 1981, Lorde, 1996). This everyday space became a pivotal marker for learning and working during COVID-19.

Ironically, the mothering space of the kitchen and dining room table became the focus point for the family learning and working. Laura, a working-class mother with three children laughed while sharing her experience with her young school-aged children at home with her while she was working and on calls. “Everyone was at the dining table.” Her job moved to a fully remote position and her three children, preschool, kindergarten, and third grade were all set up in a pod-like environment. She stated, “we all had our laptops or iPads set up. Their job was school, and I had my job and we made it work.” Their family, like many, had to quickly adapt to remote schooling and work.

Kathryn, a full-time 5th grade elementary school teacher, was teaching from her kitchen table with her daughter on the opposite side of her. Her daughter was a fourth grader when COVID-19 distance learning began. As an educator, Kathryn felt responsible for her students’ well-being and their mental health. She began her days by touching base with as many of the children as possible. She stated, “I do work at a Title I school; my children are below the poverty line; and some don’t have a stable two-parent family, or even one-parent family, or some sort of grown up at home. So, I became the person that they needed to come to and check in with me. I did not care what time it was; they could email me and let me know they were safe - I made myself available to them. It was not something I was asked to do but I needed to make sure that I was a base for those students.” Kathryn saw the need to be present in her student’s lives; however, the limitation for virtual connection due to internet issues, technology issues, or parental

involvement made it difficult to ensure all of her students were safe and well-taken-care of; this caused frustration and fear for Kathryn as an educator. Meanwhile, her daughter is sharing space at the kitchen table attempting to learn through distance learning measures. As a fourth grader, she lost the opportunities to continue to engage in her extracurricular activities; she was upset that she missed out on their special Grand Canyon field trip with the school. However, Kathryn stated that for the most part, her daughter was happy to be home with her parents in a safe and loving environment. Her daughter was in band prior to the pandemic and Kathryn mentioned the band class was an interesting one to overhear, “can you imagine, you would hear other children at the same time and learn what tune and pitches and they were all doing it online, which is insane. I don't know how those band teachers did it. But it was pretty awesome.” Kathryn’s husband worked from home as well. I imagined they were all at the kitchen table, similar to other families. She said, “no, actually we brought people in to build him a whole new office. We have a fourth bedroom that we made an office because he is always on the phone. He works for a financial institution. He’s always on the phone, so he needed an enclosed space.”

The kitchen table once again is a focal point; yet now it’s within the shared family experience. The negotiation of space encroached upon what was formerly designated as maternal or domestic territory. The transformation of this space into a work and school environment highlights the ways in which mothers frequently sacrifice personal space and time due to domestic responsibilities. Marissa, an upper-middle class Latina mother stated, “I mean, our dining room was no longer a dining room, it was like a learning

center, a law office and a business office. I mean, you know, it looked like a war room." COVID-19 brought new significance to the kitchen table as a symbol of collective labor efforts, where Black and Latina mothers created a space for nurturing, education, and paid labor.

Home Place (Reclaiming Space: Converting Distance Learning Space)

As the pandemic persisted, schools did not resume the following school year (August 2020), it became evident that some families had to make alternative arrangements for their young learners. The kitchen table became a source of stress, restlessness, and overwhelm for both mothers and children. Mothers were becoming increasingly worried about their children's socialization and education.

Margarita, a Latina mother stated,

> So, I feel that my oldest lost a lot of that experience hands-on learning…with the learning loss, I don't see it in their grades, I saw it more with the experience of being in a full classroom as opposed to being in a bubble. And that kind of made me a little bit sad.

Parents had to make adjustments to their work schedules nearly six months into the pandemic. Margarita stated, "I was ready for them to go back to school. When I realized that they couldn't return to school… It was a bit fun, for a second, and then I realized, we need help. I had to rally my parents and my nanny." Margarita stated that the need to reclaim her space and the movement from her children being at home into a pod-like learning environment and later back to school through social distancing measures was crucial to the success of her career and her mental health. She said,

> But I wanted them to go back to school as soon as possible. And I was really kind of begging our school to open their doors because the routine that it affords us was incredible, you know, you drop off the kids at

> school, you go straight to work, and you're there at work at eight o'clock in the morning, as opposed to shoot, I'm rolling in at 11 because I got all their school day going, and then my nanny arrived.

In June 2020, the Superintendent of Public Instruction Arizona Department of Education of Kathy Hoffman, MS, CCC-SLP, drafted a 37-page report that outlines school opening procedures and rates of inflection and the risk measures in place for schools to reopen. The schools in Arizona did not resume in-person learning until March 2021 timeframe. Even so, many schools engaged in a hybrid model and offered a Monday Wednesday or Tuesday Thursday alternating school schedule. This left parents seeking other accommodations for their children as they continued to work from home, enter back into the office or their respective places of employment. In essence, it was a logistical nightmare.

Marissa reflected back to the fall school year of 2020, she stated, “we were at a breaking point where we left like we did not have a choice, we needed extra support.” In addition to the support parents needed, research from news media, school broadcasts, and academic articles were coming out discussing the negative effects the pandemic had on children, especially school-aged children. Research reports were becoming available discussing the negative implications of children not returning to school and the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health. The mental health distress was evident for mothers and children; there was an increase of psychological distress as the duration of the lockdown continued, heightened levels of anxiety and depression, and elevated levels of fear, confusion, and loneliness were experienced as quarantine measures were kept in place (Onyeaka et al., 2021). Mothers were faced with another

challenge as the pandemic continued and their children became overwhelmed with the reality that school would not resume in-person. According to Kamp Dush et al., "women reported more COVID-19 stress than men (2022, p.113); this stress was experienced through the burden of childcare, COVID-19 panic that led to fatigue, and their employment. Similarly, in the same article it was reported that minorities (Black, Latina, Indigenous, and Asian) reported an increase in stressors than their white counterparts (Kamp Dush et al., 2022). There was a clear need for adjustments to be made. Many of these adjustments were orchestrated by the mothers in this study. Essentially, their chaotic routine would have remained unchanged if they had not undertaken reproductive labor and strategic measures to adjust their work life and their children's learning environment.

Margarita, an immigration attorney, was able to convert her garage into a learning center for her two children and their peers. She asked her mother, a former educator, if she would be willing to teach her son's and a few children from their private school. After some deliberation and purchasing of classroom materials, they were able to convert the garage to a full-fledged classroom. 10 children attended their pod-learning center.

> I was ready for them to go back to school. Realizing that they couldn't return was a little bit of fun for a second. But we really had to rally my parents and my nanny to help us keep them going because they needed to do their homework. And we had a small bubble. You know, everybody was learning who can you continue holding on to without affecting their health or putting them at risk. So, my mom as a retired teacher really helped a lot.

In an effort to keep a consistent school schedule with her children and return back to her office, Margarita opted to create a space that would function as a school. She stated,

> It was like a mini charter school. Because Nana was no longer Nana during the day, she was in full teacher mode. And she really knows how to rally everybody at different age levels and learning capacities to keep them focused, and entertained, she really makes learning fun. So, the kids enjoyed seeing that aspect. And being around their peers. It's so sad that a lot of children were alone, and became shy, and were at a disadvantage in their learning growth, because they didn't have that peer interaction. So, we were really lucky there. In the middle of summer, I got COVID. I don't know how, we didn't have the little *escuelita* going at the time, I was just going to work not seeing any clients, or people besides my five staff support. And I don't know how I got it. And at that time, people didn't know, is it going to last seven days, should you isolate for 10? And Maricopa County just wanted to know my address and who I was talking to. So, it was really scary to be a part of my kids. I think I was gone for 21 days; I would see them through the window. That was hard. But we had a system in place where the kids already knew their routine of how to isolate and still do their work at the same time.

This demonstration of upward mobility within a Latina mother's life was essential for her children to shift from a confined space in their home to a thriving space with other children. The available space and resources, allowed this family, and many others to engage in a unique and creative alternative to online learning and sheltering-in-place. This presented a certain level of risk, with the potential for infection. Nonetheless, it served as a preferable alternative to returning to a fully populated classroom. The comparative risk was minimal. Additionally, during this period, reports detailing the mental and emotional health of children were becoming concerning for many working parents (Learning Pods: Back to School Decisions During a Pandemic, 2020). Additionally, numerous arguments have been presented through online posts, news reports, and informal discussions among mothers, highlighting the persistent inequities in the education system. Learning pods, in particular, introduce an additional layer of disproportionate effects related to class and fairness in learning. An important

consideration, though, is to note that Black, Latina, and Indigenous communities have often engaged in learning pods, micro-schools, or informal community education (Lee et al., 2023). The “new” ideas of education - breaking away from the traditional brick and mortar school house is not a new idea; Black, Latina, and Indigenous communities engaged in these practices well before they became popularized.

Nonetheless, parents of school-age children have directly criticized learning pods, asserting that they create an unfair advantage for students whose families can afford to organize pods and hire external teachers or tutors to provide in-home education for their children or multiple children within a pod. (Vedantam, 2020). The idea was appealing to parents among a particular class, particularly those working full-time since March 2020. Parents with disposable income could hire private tutors and pod teachers to formally educate their children, instead of relying on online-learning platforms provided by their local schools. Unfortunately, parents who couldn't afford this option or didn't want to risk infection were unable to participate in this creative learning process. (Vedantam, 2020).

Not all affluent families took advantage of a learning pod. It is important to note that although finances played a major role in the outcome of people’s experience during COVID-19, that many children, mothers, parents, and communities of color endured various forms of hardship. Marissa, an attorney, expressed concern with her youngest child learning to read. Although she and her husband are highly educated and hold positions in professional careers, they struggled to teach their youngest child how to read due to time constraints and the inability to consistently focus on skill building. One of her main concerns was her child falling behind in a skill that is essential for learning and

building as they progress in their education. Marisa emphasized that their initial experience during the stay-at-home orders were efforts to try and manage their schedule and keep as much normalcy as possible. Their goal was to keep up their full-time work days while engaging in best practices of negotiating space. She shared, “the way that it worked in our home, our children's needs and ages were such that we didn't, for example, take separate offices and spaces, we set up a huge work area in the dining room, where we had divided cubicles. We were side by side. I was writing a brief and my three-year-old was painting. And then, my husband might have been taking calls at the end of the table. And so, it was very chaotic.” The shared space and chaos that continued as the pandemic loomed forced families to consider alternative ways of working and educating their children simultaneously. Marisa shares, “over time, we figured out that we needed to have a conference room. So, if you took calls, you would go into the conference room; we just had to support each other. If you were the one on the call then the other was preparing lunch with the kids, or getting the snack. And so, we just had to bounce off of each other throughout the day.”

Marissa shared in the parenting responsibilities with her husband throughout the pandemic; even so, she took on the primary-parenting role. She explained,

> My day was much longer and come the weekend - there were funny pictures of me just knocked out, you know sleeping, we would go for a ride and the first thing I would do was fall asleep. I had to fold in so many more hours in the day. And not that my husband didn’t do that too. But you need to be a mom that in, in that time of stress, you know, the children’s inclination is to come to you and say, I want you to get me a snack, I want you to wipe my butt, or whatever they need. It was like I was the only one that could do that for them. I would say, ask daddy or abuelita. And they would say, “no, you're the only one that can do it”.

Even within the professional class, Latina women often find themselves bearing the primary responsibility for caregiving duties. Despite holding high paying positions and engaging their family in upward mobility, Latina women still fell as though the expectation of prioritizing caregiving roles is paramount to their careers. The juggling of roles was *real* during COVID-19 for Black and Latina mothers. Mothers in the primary parenting role often view their disproportionate share of pandemic caregiving as necessary, even if it leads to reduced work hours. In this case, Marissa's mother and husband were available but she still took on the brunt of the labor as her children were conditioned to ask mom. In this case, it seems that the arrangements via gender roles and cultural factors reinforce the perception of caregiving as a natural duty for mothers, influenced by gendered norms and stereotypes. These dynamics are intertwined, contributing to the continued burden placed on mothers.

Research suggests that much of the invisible labor and care work during COVID-19 continued to fall upon mothers during the working day (Jordan-Zachery, 2023) and subsequently, others had to be brought into their shared family space. Marxist feminism intertwined with material feminisms reference this labor as social reproduction; this work is required to produce future laborers and produce labor power for capital accumulation (Meehan & Strauss, 2015). Material feminisms argue that social reproduction needs to consider elements of race, gender, and class to understand the intersectional oppressions experienced by mothers in the United States. In Marisa's case, their family was able to move her mother into their home during COVID-19. Marissa stated, "we brought my mom into our bubble. She lives with us now, which is culturally appropriate and

acceptable. It was a no-brainer for us." Marissa is originally from Central America and their family focus is collectively on the well-being of the family as a whole. Although Marissa was married and had equal partnership and parenting, their efforts as a working couple were not enough to sustain distance learning for an extended period of time. Marissa stated, "it helped to move her in during the pandemic because there was another adult and another set of hands, but it does also add to the chaos." Her mother was able to assist in the caretaking of the children, this allowed Marissa and her husband time to focus on their respective careers. The addition of another "set of hands" allowed for Marissa to feel content in the transition back to her law office outside of the home, too. She reinforced the decision and stated, "at that point in time it was really significant."

Class and School Choice

For many Black and Latina women, attaining "good mothering[52]" involves a complex interplay of values and aspirations. Beyond mere childcare, it often encompasses instilling values in their children, fostering their success later in life, and striving for upward mobility. However, these ideals can vary across social classes, with those in professional class families often having different priorities and resources than working class households. Social status significantly influences the values and aspirations that inform their approach to motherhood, yet, the ideal of the aspirational class offers a

[52] Good mothering as a theoretical framework is reinforced by patriarchal mothering. Andrea O'Reilly, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and Cherríe Moraga, among many other Black Feminist, Chicana Feminist, and Mothering Scholars highlight the ways that white dominant culture produces an expectation of a good mother as nurturing, feminized, middle-class, and subservient to their husbands (O'Reilly, 2016, hooks, 1984, Moraga, 2011).

way for working class or middle-class families to aspire to financial security, privatized education or elite charter schools, or gaining desirable material possessions to mark a particular social status. In this study, social status is directly linked to the schools in which many of the mothers went to as children or send their children to present-day.

Denise, a Black mother, reflected on her parent's decision to send her to Catholic school. "We are not Catholic; half of my mother's side are Catholics and the other half are Christian. We don't speak to the Catholic side. But I went to a Catholic school to get a better education." Martha, a Latina mother, shared her experience with Catholic school and choosing to send her daughter to a more prestigious school in Central Phoenix,

> I sent my daughter to Catholic school because I was educated through Catholic education in Mexico for my whole life. I did elementary school, middle school, and high school in the Catholic education system. So, it is in me. When I went to test my daughter for Kindergarten, I took her to two different Catholic schools. She passed the first school with high marks. The second school, she received lower results. She was accepted to both schools, but I decided the second school was the better choice because it was probably harder; the teacher thought my daughter was not ready in the ways the other children were, but that she would be able to learn much more through their program. I also loved the building, the church, and everything else. When they accepted her, I decided yes, I would like her to go there.

Martha identifies as a working-class single mother and lives in a small apartment with her daughter. I have known Martha as someone who has continually strived to provide her child with every possible opportunity for success. Martha enrolled her daughter in extracurricular activities within the school and her community, she engaged with the school in a volunteer manner, and was known on a first name basis with all of the staff and teachers at the school. Ivonne's son went to a public school during the COVID-19 pandemic and struggled immensely. She shared that her son would have had a

much different experience if he went to a school like Martha's daughter. Ivonne and Martha are best friends and often compare their children's schooling experience. Ivonne stated,

> My son was having so many issues like technical issues, and the babysitter had no idea how to help my son. So, and then the teachers, the staff, they just were having trouble trying to figure that out. And he missed out on a lot of stuff. And plus, I just don't feel like he was focusing that much. And he was getting sidetracked. And watching YouTube videos and other stuff that he didn't really, he, you know, a lot of kids were probably doing that. And that's what I heard from other mothers as well.

Ivonne wasn't able to provide her full attention to her child during her work-day, so she opted for a babysitter to supervise her child during the school hours. She said, "the babysitter was a friend and did not get paid, she watched him to help me out." She indicated that she didn't have the resources to pay for a tutor or pod-learning, so she attempted the next-best thing. Class and agency are a factor; she could not afford to hire a tutor nor did she have the network for pod-learning. Additionally, she could not take time away from her job to fully engage with her child during his school day. She lamented that she wished her school was similar to Martha's so she could have the support she desperately needed during COVID-19. Similarly, Rochelle's children went to a public school during COVID-19; however, Rochelle, a middle-class Latina mother, is the administrative staff at their school. She stated,

> If you're a staff member, when the schools did semi open, you know, partially open, they did offer low-income families, and, you know, staff that had students at the school to come to school every day. So, I was fortunate to have that for my youngest daughter. And you know, that helps make sure her work was done. Because when she went, it wasn't that way, you know, where it was just strictly online, only she struggled, she struggled that no matter how much help we gave her, she was just like, not completing assignments or not logging in when she should have.

Rochelle highlights her ability to connect with a broad network of teachers and staff to keep her daughter on track during the pandemic. During the distance learning era, she stated her daughter was not completing assignments or staying engaged. However, through her ability to rejoin the pod-like learning phase of COVID-19 procedures, she was able to gain the support and assistance she needed.

Mothers across the spectrum reported being frustrated with their children's schools, public or private. The mothers that sent their children to Catholic schools reported frustration with distance learning in the beginning of the pandemic, March 2020. Martha reflected back on the experience of transitioning from traditional Catholic school to distance learning,

> It was like no time for anything. It was like, hundreds of pages, it was copies and more copies. And I was like, this is crazy. And it was so strange. I don't know if you remember that. It was boxes outside the school, for all of the different grades, and you were not supposed to come in contact with anybody. And then you have to drop them off. And then you gotta leave in your car, like you're stealing a trophy or something. You're not supposed to… have like zero contact. Remember that?

In contrast, Rose reported issues of deficit learning models within her daughter's public school virtual learning environment.

> They (her child's school) resume online schooling, and I have her (her daughter) sitting next to me as I'm doing work. And I'm overhearing the conversation. And it's through Google Classroom, which was already a mess, because there's all these technical issues going on, and it's just very chaotic. Her teacher is making really inappropriate comments, like, and I'm hearing her say things that are very deficit oriented. For instance, she said, this is a moment when she said something like, they were doing a math problem. She's like*, oh, okay, can the really smart kids, if you're really smart, you can answer this problem.* I mean, it's very, like, again, that was like, I hear this, Rose, at this point, I'd already had multiple issues, multiple comments, and I said, you know, what, just log out, we're done, you're done.

The issues of deficit education and the inability to foster positive and inclusive learning environments was the catalyst for Rose to pull her daughter out of that particular school. Although Rose is not a proponent for private education, she highlighted the need to have inclusive learning environments, and educators that were willing to engage in critical conversations. She said, “I went back and forth with the principal and the teacher, you know, via email, and I thought they were doing a really poor job of engaging families.” Her ability to remove her daughter from her school’s deficit learning model and find a school that was more closely aligned with her educational values speaks to her agency as a college educator and status within a particular class. Her experience was vastly different from that of Ivonne’s, who also sent her child to a less than stellar public school.

Arizona public schools statistically rank among the worst in the nation (Arizona Department of Education n.d.). The public schools in the state are often overcrowded, underfunded, and lack sufficient teacher retention. Rose, a college professor that studies education in the state of Arizona shared that, “the state has consistently reduced funding for public education programs and services and instead has funneled funds to private schools and charter schools.” The mothers that send their children to private Catholic schools shared they did so for a “religious and culturally connected” school experience. As a mother in Phoenix Arizona, I know that the public schools in Central Phoenix and South Phoenix struggle with teacher retention. There have been several movements to bring light to the teacher shortage, the unacceptable facilities in the district, and a lack of focus on diversity. As a Latina mother and part of a professional class status, I did not

want to send my child to a neighboring school. If we lived in an area that offered public education that fostered inclusion, smaller class sizes, a pathway to elite higher education, and a community focus, I would have sent my son to public school. That is not our reality in the area in which I reside. This sentiment was expressed with the mothers in the study as well. Martha stated, “I wanted my child to have the best opportunity at life and that starts with her education. The private Catholic school we chose was the best in the area.”

Culturally based teachings are important for several reasons; during COVID-19 mothers were able to pass down their cultural values and also instill new traditions and ways of thinking and doing. Marissa shares her experience as a first-generation Latina mother, “our household is very affectionate, very close, very loving, very, you know, family oriented. And, you know, I think that that's how I was raised, and how we raised our children. The flip side of it is that, culturally, you know, my mother was more hands on than she needed to be.” Her reflection makes a clear connection to her cultural values and expectation of motherhood through a gendered lens. She stated, “I think that I see that in myself being more hands on, and then having to recognize, you know, the benefits of letting the children have, you know, independent skills that they're developing so that they're doing things that are age appropriate that they can do for themselves, especially with boys, because culturally, you know, I remember, my uncle's full-grown men would sit down and be served. And, you know, and, and, and it was just culturally appropriate.” She acknowledges the significance of her cultural teachings but seeks a different approach for her own family. She continues, “whereas we want to teach our children that if you need a snack, you can go to the pantry, these are the snacks that are, you know,

healthy, and you don't even have to ask. And, you know, so it's not just a mother role that's going to serve you or it's not just a female role, or a female figure that's going to serve you or do the chores or do the things around the house. I am always trying to be very conscientious about things about the culture that we want to embrace fully, and things about the culture that I don't want to pass on. Particularly because I have boys."

Latina mothers, akin to Black mothers, experience the weight of a double burden of labor while contending with racial, gender, and class-based oppressions (Blackwell, 2011, Gumbs, et al., 2016, Téllez, 2011). Their employment outside the home is not a choice but a necessity to support their families. Furthermore, they shoulder the primary responsibility for caregiving, household management, and nurturing within their homes (Gumbs, et al., 2016, Téllez, 2011). Balancing these dual roles can be intricate and highly demanding. Margarita expressed distress when grappling with her delicate balance between working and motherhood, "when I tried that (working from home), and when COVID pushed us into that, I realized, oh, my gosh, I can't just be at home, I need to go to the office, I need to push forth, these other talents that I have, because I see how they're helping all of these other members of our community and making me a better mom at home. It was definitely a challenge of inner growth, because I felt guilty. Like I said, leaving early to go to work, but I would feel so good at work. And then I would feel so good coming home and being with them." This experience of maternal guilt is a common phenomenon who experience tension between their roles as productive laborers and reproductive caregivers.

Uncertainty

The expectations placed on mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic have necessitated the simultaneous performance of all aspects of production and reproduction, disproportionately impacting women of color and their children (Sampson et al., 2020). This burden, present even before the pandemic, has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis. Women found themselves shouldering the bulk of domestic responsibilities, including childcare and homeschooling, while also managing a full-time job that has transitioned into their homes. The mothers in this study discussed the importance of having othermothers or support systems outside of themselves and their partners, if applicable. Unfortunately, there were situations where a few of the women reported having to scramble to figure out how to work, parent, and engage in personal care.

Ivonne, expressed frustration with her husband; she stated, "he did the bare minimum in terms of support, he provided some assistance by cooking, but he did this because he wanted to have lunch for the following day." She shared that she was depressed and rarely had the motivation to cook meals outside of working full time and caregiving for her school-aged son. She stated, "I didn't do anything. I was going through a hard time with my relationship. So, I feel like it affected me way worse during the pandemic. And I really didn't do any self-care. I didn't have the energy or even the time to even think about that." The lack of support from her husband and the inability to rely on a kinship network negatively affected her mental and physical health. She expressed a lack of motivation, stamina, and personal self-care. This speaks to the importance of a community network to share the burden of domestic responsibility while engaging in

productive labor. A woman who shoulders productive and domestic labor without the care or support from a partner, or kinship network will find herself in an incredibly stressful situation. There is also a mask involved with mothers with partners that are not supportive within the home. The demand that men place on women through a patriarchal lens can be devastating to a woman who is also required to earn income in order for her family to survive.

The stress of keeping her job during a time of uncertainty was also part of her worry. One research study stated, “mothers were nearly three times as likely as fathers to report that they took on the majority or all of additional unpaid care work related to school or childcare facility closures: 61.5% of mothers of children under age 12 say they took on the majority or entirety of the extra care work, while 22.4% of fathers report that they did” (OECD, 2021).

In the Fall of 2020, six months into the pandemic, she was forced to prioritize her job and focus primarily on work, leaving less time to oversee her son’s distance learning school day. She described her seven-year-old son's difficulty in following online expectations, often missing lesson plans due to distractions with technology or toys. This produced an experience of mothering guilt as she became narrowly dedicated to her obligatory work tasks and would subsequently lose track of time, and did not hold a consistent schedule to check on her son’s classroom management and snack and lunch intervals. The reality is, this mother was working full-time in an environment that required her to adhere to a strict schedule and micromanagement of tasks to complete her 9-5 job. The lack of flexibility during COVID-19 speaks volumes to the ways that

companies expected working mothers to perform under scrutiny and unrealistic expectations. The mothers that lacked flexible schedules were unable to engage in parenting in the ways that were needed while their children were engaged in distance learning. Additionally, Ivonne did not have the financial resources or kinship network to lean on othermothering practices. This reality disproportionately affects women without financial means to hire nannies, tutors, or engage in pod learning. If Ivonne had additional support in the home, a mother for example, her experience may have been different. However, the lack of support from a network and her husband made the balance of productive labor and reproductive labor nearly impossible.

COVID-19 exacerbated the domestic responsibilities that women were already expected to carry out pre-pandemic. The domesticity held within the household is typically viewed as women's labor and therefore feminized (Bhattacharya, 2017; Briggs, 2002, 2017; Federici, 2021). Kathryn and Denise both expressed that their agreements of labor remained the same. Kathryn, an Afro-Latina mother stated, "I usually handle everything that's inside, like grocery shopping, laundry, cleaning, and my husband handles everything outside, like the cars, garbage, the dogs, all that stuff. So, it's always been split like that. it really didn't change." Denise, a Black mother shared, "um, essentially the same setup, I handled everything pertaining to childcare. And inside the home, we split groceries; we did a lot of grocery pickup. I'd order it online, and then he'd pick it up on his way home, depending upon what was available for grocery pickup. So, we did do some sharing of that responsibility. But other than that, not much shifted during COVID- 19 as far as responsibilities." Wood (2011) discusses the division of

domestic labor between married heterosexual couples and highlights important factors in relation to productive labor, earning salaries, and contribution to reproductive labor; she stated that,

> Today more women are working and more married women are earning salaries that equal or surpass those of their husbands (Wilson, 2000). The number of women who are sole wage earners for families was the highest ever in 2009, and the number of men who were sole wage earners for families dropped to the lowest level in a decade (Yen, 2010). On first glance, this appears to suggest that men's lesser contributions to domestic labor are more than ever evidence of imbalance and inequity. But, again, we don't know the whole of marital systems, which include a "wide range of both tangible and intangible rewards" (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996). (p. 46)

I did not incorporate a question about the mother's relationship to their husbands in relation to equity; this was a gap in this research. However, I did ask about their relationship to domestic work and an ethic of care. Margarita said, "my husband was my best teammate. We were really lucky in that aspect that we held firmly on to our routine, okay, we don't have the luxury of being able to go to school, but we still have to read at night and we still have to do our homework and let's check in with what the teacher is trying to get us to do." She placed an importance on working together; however, their family was able to get support from Margarita's parents and their nanny. She said, "we really had to rally my parents, my nanny, to help us keep them going because they needed to do their school work…it was everybody scrambling but I felt good about how everybody worked together to try to commit to the join purpose of - we are going to survive, we are going to see the light at the end of the tunnel." The support between her and her husband was positive but it is important to note that having access to external family support may have contributed to the negotiation of responsibilities between her

and her husband. Similarly, Marissa, shared, “we just had to bounce off each other throughout the day.” Their family, too, needed to enlist the support of her mother to continue their careers and caregiving to their children. Marissa also emphasized that her working hours were extended throughout COVID-19.

> Well, for me, what I think happened is that it spilled into after hours, so there wasn't a night that everybody else wasn't down, and I wasn't still trying to get a normal billable day, or as much as possible in, you know, from ten to whenever the work got done, because it needed to get done. And, you know, and clients at the time, they had pressing issues so they were dealing with things that they had never seen, didn't know how to handle and every permutation of it, that was coming fast. And that needed attention. People knew they were getting emails from me at 11pm. But they were getting it, you know, and they would have it by the next morning. So, what happened is that my bandwidth just had to stretch. I had to give, and it wasn't, you know, the kids aren't going to not get snacks, you know, their school day isn't going to be affected. We kept them on the schedule as possible, because they're at such a critical point in their development that, you know, for example, our younger one at a critical point where he was learning to read. And so there needed to be attention paid to that. And so if there were things that I needed to get done in my work day, outside of our family life, well, I had to, you know, accommodate it. And then for me, it ended up just being, you know, after hours or outside of the family time.

Mothers had to stretch. As the pandemic loomed and the uncertainty of the future, mothers continued to share in a constant theme: schedules and consistency. The new normal would prove that mothers needed to have a sense of direction through the day. Their children had to conform to the idea that mom was not only mommy but also an attorney, or a teacher, or an instructional designer, or a professor. The pandemic restrictions continued throughout the end of the year - ringing in an unfamiliar 2021 New Year. What was next? The migration from the classroom to the home would shift children’s understanding of their mothers - when mother’s felt as though they had

nothing left to give, they needed a shift. This shift resulted in a connection to the past: the creative ways that Black and Latina mothers engaged in both productive and reproductive labor, through community.

Creative Labor linked to Migration and Intergenerational Mothering Practices

Race and Intergenerational Mothering and Othermothering

Black women have worked productive labor industries since enslavement to present day and Latina women have historically engaged in essential roles in the workforce such as agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic service. Although the shaping of their labor is produced through separate experiences and means of oppression, Black and Latina women have a long history with paid labor in the United States while engaging in mothering, reproductive labor. It is important to note that Black and Latina women have upheld the lens of motherhood as a humanizing labor; hooks stated, "historically, black women have identified work in the context of family as humanizing labor, work that affirms their identity as women, as human beings showing love and care, the very features of humanity that white supremacist ideology claimed black people were incapable of expressing" (p. 134). Moreover, Angela Davis (1981) stated that the only work that was meaningful labor performed by mothers and women for the enslaved community was that of domestic labor. This labor became a pinnacle of family rearing, community care, and motherhood. Today, this labor continues to be paramount in the lives of Black and Latina mothers. COVID-19 marks no exception to the expectation of Black and Latina mothers to uphold their responsibilities as mothers and care providers.

In an effort to preserve their identities as a laborer and mother, many of the Black and Latina mothers in this research study relied on other women in order to continue to work and care for their children. Two of the professional class mothers I interviewed permanently moved their biological mothers into their homes during COVID-19, one a Latina mother and one a Black mother. Naming their respective race, gender, and class highlight the ways that their experiences can be mapped on to their mothering strategies and survival mechanisms. In total, I interviewed 11 Black and Latina working mothers that range in socio-economic status and each of them relied on the support of their mothers or kinship networks in some fashion. Of the mothers that moved their mothers into their homes, they discussed the stressors it took to move their mothers during a global pandemic. Each woman discussed the incredible amount of stress it caused to get their mother moved into their home and quarantine, and then proceed with caution to integrate their mother into the fold of their family during a pandemic. Julia, a Black college professor stated, “my mother ended up moving in with us; she was older, so I wanted to be really careful, although that was hard with teenagers.” Marissa’s experience was a bit more intense because her mother had to travel in order to move into their home.

> We were at a breaking point where we felt like we didn't have a choice, we needed extra support. It was a small risk we're going to take so for my mom, we had to fly her in. We planned it on both ends of the trip, all the gear that she was going to wear to travel. And then when she arrived, she took everything off in the garage, she went straight to the shower, she took a hot shower, and then we had her in her room, where she isolated for a period of time and tested her to make sure you know that she didn't contract COVID when she was traveling, and that, you know, then she was safe to come out into the home. And so it was a big stressful orchestration. But it really stemmed out of the necessity of feeling like, we have too many layers piled on, and, you know, nothing can fold in this, nothing can bend. So, what's the extra support going to look like? And it

> also was good and made sense, you know, for her as well. So, that's how we arrived at it. It was good, you know, and maybe over time, inevitably, she would have come to live with us, but I think it was certainly precipitated by just this great need to have more help in our home. And even now post pandemic, by and large like she cooks dinner, you know, she packs lunches. I mean, there's just an extra huge extra help to manage things in our homes so that everyone you know, can kind of breath easier and get through a full plate of tasks.

The extra help that Marissa discussed was a required element of Black and Latina working mothers, historical and present day, and it was even more essential during the pandemic. However, it was not recommended to engage with other individuals during the pandemic so the risk of bringing in another family member, even to assist and care for the children, was a concern from a family perspective but also a community perspective. The goal of shelter in place was to continue to flatten the curve and reduce the number of infections (Onyeaka et al., 2021). Flattening the curve (FTC) is a method utilized to decelerate and disperse the progression of the COVID-19 outbreak that led to the global pandemic. Flattening the curve conveyed the critical public health message that measures such as social distancing, 6 feet away from another human in public spaces, will diminish the peak volume of cases. To flatten the curve, means to minimize the number of active COVID-19 cases to prevent an increase of cases that results in school closures and an increased demand for essential workers to incur extreme working hours (Flattening-the-curve, n.d.). Mothers that needed to engage in othermothering strategies in order to survive the ongoing pandemic took the risk of bringing in mothers or family members in order to continue to engage in both productive and reproductive labor. The risk of increased vulnerability to their othermothers was deemed essential to their labor,

regardless of their race or class, in order to adapt to the prolonged reality that the pandemic would endure for years.

It is crucial to underscore the importance of an ethic of care, given by their mothers, and an integral aspect of the survival strategies of these women's lives. This is not uncommon in Black and Latina mothering genealogy. What is fascinating is the realization that no matter class or marital status, women need to rely on the labor of their mothers or othermothers to continue to flourish. In the research, these women required othermothering strategies to continue to survive, work full-time, educate their children, and continue domestic labor. Rose, a Black college professor, lived with her mother when the lockdown order was in effect in March 2020. Rose stated, "my mom was a huge support system for me. She moved in with us [pre-pandemic] and was living with us for 10 years. She helped a lot with the kids, even though I was married, he was gone a lot… so when everything happened, in March, she was home and everything was a little bit easier." Of the interlocutors, 4 mothers were married, Rose, a Black professor, Denise, a Black instructional designer at a community college, Margarita a Latina lawyer, and Marissa a Latina lawyer; each of them required the assistance of their mother or kinship network to continue to engage in paid labor and reproductive labor, regardless of their marital status. The unmarried mothers relied on either their mothers or a kinship network to survive during the pandemic.

Othermothering & Kinship Networks

Intersectional research acknowledges the disproportionate rate at which Black women and other women of color experience unique oppressions due to residing in a

geographic region, such as the U.S., that upholds multiple systems of oppression (Jordan-Zachery, 2023). Black women faced severe economic hardship and were "disproportionately exposed to evictions" (Jordan-Zachery, 2023, p. 16). Additionally, Jordan-Zachery cited a CNN headline that reported "The U.S. economy lost 140,000 jobs in December. All of them were held by women" (Jordan-Zachery, 2023, p. 16). Mothers were being pushed out of the workforce at an alarming rate; another report declared "COVID Is pushing Black Mothers out of the Workforce at a Staggering Rate" (Aggeler, 2020 as cited in Jordan-Zachery, 2023, p. 16). The pandemic has exacerbated Black and Latina's realities with the U.S. workforce - their employment is volatile and if they cannot stretch and include longer working hours to get their work done, they are done. The majority of the women in this study did not lose their jobs or experience a loss of income. However, being aware of the potential risk of job loss or insecurity in their careers heightened stress and highlighted the precarious position of Black or Latina mothers in the workplace. Their salary was non-negotiable for their family's lifestyle; they had to make this challenging situation work for their livelihoods.

Several of the interlocutors stressed the importance of othermothering as a key to their success during the pandemic. Those women that did not have the built-in support system, or a kinship network embedded in othermothering struggled significantly during COVID-19. Ivonne, a married Latina mother stated, "I didn't have that much support" her lack of support led her to feeling overwhelmed and depressed during the pandemic. She stated, "I was going through a hard time with my relationship. So, I feel like it affected me way worse during the pandemic." Ivonne was responsible for her full-time job, caring

for her child, and also engaging in the majority of the domestic work at home. She gave further details about her complex situation. Ivonne worked for a company that did not send their employees home, the company was able to temporarily qualify their workers as essential and they received an exemption from sending their employees home to shelter-in-place. Even though she is married, she relied on a babysitter to watch her son during the time she was considered an essential worker. Her husband, a construction worker, was also working outside the home during COVID-19, which made it difficult to lean on him for support. She stated, "at first my employer didn't give me the option to work from home. Supposedly, we were considered essential workers. I answer the phones in a customer service position." As the pandemic ran into the summer months and the cases of infected individuals continued to grow; her company was required to shut down and all personnel began working remotely. She recounts "whenever they allowed us to work from home, we started setting everything up. During that time, my son was having so many issues like technical issues, and the babysitter had no idea how to help my son. So, and then the teachers, the staff, they just were having trouble trying to figure that out. And he missed out on a lot of stuff." The lack of support from her husband and the babysitter's inability to troubleshoot technology with her son left Ivonne feeling helpless regarding her son's education.

To focus on othermothering as a concept and heuristic, a babysitter is often a short-term temporary caregiver who ensures the child's safety but may not necessarily prioritize the child's overall well-being as a mother would. An othermother, on the other hand, engages in caretaking for an extended period and essentially assumes the mother's

role when she is absent. While Ivonne's babysitter provided temporary relief by watching her child, the babysitter's inability to engage in othermothering imposed additional labor on Ivonne, extending her workday and increasing her stress levels.

In contrast, Martha, a single mother, had the support of her mother in the early pandemic months of 2020. Martha's mother was in Phoenix for Spring Break from Mexico; she often spends breaks with her granddaughter to help her daughter care for her. Due to the quarantine and travel restrictions, Martha's mother was forced to stay in Phoenix for an extended period of time. This greatly helped Martha focus on her daughter. Martha stated, "it was just my mom, me, and my daughter. We did not have the internet, so I was trying my best to help her on my phone. I was thankful that my mom was required to stay here because she did most of the cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping." It is important to note that women of varying socioeconomic backgrounds required assistance during COVID-19 for various reasons; however, their class status did not determine whether they were able to obtain the assistance they needed. Women of a particular class did have additional access to resources, yet, as we see in the case of Maria and Yvonne - class was arbitrary, and othermothering as a resource depended on their proximity to their mother and/or kinship relationships. A babysitter, although helpful to ensure the child is fed and safe, was not able to engage in othermothering, the responsibility of care (education, support, adequate nourishment) fell on Ivonne, the mother. Her partner did not hold the same responsibility or pressure in terms of care or domestic responsibilities. Martha' mother engaged in othermothering by supporting her daughter and granddaughter through domestic labor and an ethic of care. Although

Martha was a single mother, she did not experience the same stressors that Ivonne faced, their class status is similar but their experience during COVID-19 was vastly different. The family structure, in-house support or othermothering strategies alleviated an incredible amount of stress in these women's lives, no matter their class. An ideal support system is complex and nuanced. History on Black and Latina motherhood illustrates the ways that women were able to wear multiple hats was to rely on a mother figure, or othermother, to care for their children while they engaged in productive labor outside of the home.

Co-parenting and Othermothering

The mothers that were co-parenting with their ex-spouse in the same state experienced a different kind of support system. Renee, also a working-class mother, shared her experience parenting with her ex-husband during COVID-19 as a positive one. She emphasized that she was "fortunate enough that their dad and their dad's wife were both at home with the kids the whole time. They were right beside them during the school hours. Their dad is in IT and works from home and their step-mom is not employed. So, if there were issues with anything during the day, they were able to handle it." Renee emphasized that her employment did not change; as an office assistant and later promoted to an office manager of a clinic, she was an essential worker and worked directly with the public. She expresses gratitude towards her ex-husband and his wife and their ability to be present for her children, "if it wasn't for them, I have no idea what I would have done, like, none at all. I am grateful that they were able to be with their dad and still get their work done." Renee continually had to negotiate her role as the mother in her children's

lives during this time; she shared there were times she felt “out of the loop” or she herself was in a role as the “step-parent" because the children spent a majority of their day with their step-mom. She stated that she “had to let certain things go” she felt “jealous and angry that she couldn’t be there with her children during the school day” but “I had to work, I do not get financial support from their father beyond minimal child support of a few hundred dollars a month.” They share 50/50 custody; however, during the pandemic, their father was the primary-parent due to the school closures. Her frustrations with her employment status as an essential worker had to be put aside. This letting go and allowing the step-mother to become the primary caretaker for her children was an act of love and care. She did not hold resentment and instead chose to put her feelings of “this isn't fair, they are spending much more time with their father and step-parent than me, their biological mother” and instead said, “I was fortunate they could stay at home with them.” This lens of othermothering, although supportive and necessary, provided a sense of disruption and internal tension for Renee that she had to work through knowing that there was no ideal situation in a global pandemic.

It is important to note that Black and Latina women with time, agency, and financial means have different experiences than those that experience an interlocking oppression of race, gender, class, and geographic region in a simultaneous manner. This is not an effort to erase the experience of women systemically pushed to the margins; instead, this notes that not all Black and Latina experiences can be viewed through a monolith. Lugones writes about the interlocking oppressions of Latina women by utilizing the framework of interlocking oppressions to highlight the complex

interconnection and interlocking realities of people’s categories - the ability to engage as “companions of resistance and go against the grain of sameness as it goes against the grain of power” (Belle, 2020, p. 177). If we categorically look at Black and Latina mothers and map their realities onto poverty, sexual exploitation, and degradation, we will never see the realized material experiences of women who have engaged in a powerful move of upward mobility, strength, grit, and resilience in a system that was meant for them to fail. To say that we can only view Black and Latina women in particular ways due to feminist structures, is to remove the very essence of their liberatory struggle and potentiality of emancipation. This is it of itself is a form of prescribed oppression; to stop researching Black and Latina women when they have reached a certain level of achievement. If we understand their strategies of survival, we can appreciate their ability to experience joy and thrivance.

Mothering Practice as a Form of Survival

In the context of Black Feminist Scholarship, "surviving" goes beyond mere existence; it encompasses the multifaceted and often heroic efforts of Black women and marginalized communities to persevere in the face of systemic oppression, racism, and gender-based discrimination. Drawing from the wisdom of scholars like Audre Lorde and bell hooks, surviving is not merely enduring adversity but actively resisting it. It involves the cultivation of resilience, strength, and a collective spirit of resistance against intersecting oppressions. In this research, Black and Latina women engage in survival strategies in order to continue their full-time paid employment, raise their children through domestic labor, and educate their children during a global pandemic that required

all non-essential individuals to shelter-in-place for an extended period of time. The act of survival was multifaceted during the pandemic and mothers shouldered the double burden of employment and domestic responsibilities. The essence of survival during the pandemic was to maintain their job, care for their children and themselves. To survive, was to make it through a pandemic without losing their livelihood, mental, physical, and financial. Audre Lord discusses the act of resistance in order to resist interlocking oppressions; in terms of survival turned resilience; it is important to note that the act of resistance, small or big, are on the back of Black and Latina mothers.

During COVID-19, mothers were expected to survive through the expectations of motherhood, while working full-time. Their work and income were not negotiable; it was needed for their families and the continuation of labor in the United States. The act of resistance was shown through their decision making with their children's education, engaging in conversations about racial tensions in the United States, or by removing their children from hostile learning environments in order to witness their potentiality for success. Survival turned into resilience as the pandemic continued from months into years. The term "the new normal" demonstrated that as a whole people were just expected to adapt; yet, that adaptation was not a direct focus on Black and Latina mothers; that focus was on the people as a whole to continue to live their lives. Black and Latina mothers engaged in survival and resilience tactics; yet, these were largely invisible or dismissed.

The atmosphere in the United States during 2020 simmered with tensions. Donald Trump held the presidency. It was an election year overshadowed by a disastrous start

marked by the looming pandemic, with the Trump administration turning a blind eye to the inevitable impact on Americans. Meanwhile, tensions escalated following the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man. Marissa, stated, "it was just really such an awful time. A Lot of people felt personally and emotionally concerned about the direction of the country. I think having children exacerbates that because you're not just thinking about yourself; you are worried about their well-being." Marissa, just like other mothers in this study, were glued to their television screens watching our sitting President "called the pandemic a 'hoax,' minimizing its severity, and identified immigrants and people of Asian descent as its terrifying source… Trump was speaking the racist language of some of his followers who assumed that the coronavirus is a 'plague brought by immigrants' who have no right to seek entry into their 'home'" (Watts, 2021, p. 12). This not only underscored the racist remarks of a sitting president but also the reality that this administration was not taking this seriously; that was frightening to many of these mothers. For example, Marissa continues and stated "I can manage my political views but you're thinking about your children' the fact that, that they're living in this world where you just see hate and this polarization happening…I mean, there was just one thing after another. So, we constantly had CNN on and I remember at one point, you know, needing to just have the TV off."

Black and Latina mothers were surviving and still finding ways to engage their children in a productive and positive manner. Motherhood research suggests that Black and Latina mothers have engaged in methods of survival in order to make ends meet for their children and communities. The stories of these women, although fraught with

increased pressures of society, education, and paid-labor, tell a story of caretaking and resilience through a dark time in history. Denise shared her experience sending her child to a charter school in Phoenix, Arizona.

> Her school is a global education school; it is extremely diverse. Her kindergarten teacher was an African-American female and she told me, we don't just focus on Black History Month, every day in my class is Black History. She learned about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the oppression of Black Americans. She came home asking about racism. She has seen things on the news. And so having to talk to my now six-year-old about that and answer questions about social justice and racism has been interesting. Because it's not something I thought I'd have to have a discussion with my six-year-old about.

In the same focus group, Kathryn a Black mother, stated, "my daughter kept hearing the word division on the news." Kathryn shared that her daughter asked "why is Trump saying we are divided and it's division, why are we dividing everybody?" Kathryn explained to her daughter that these were beliefs or ideas by stating, "No, babe, it's just, some people believe these things. And some people believe these things. Some people are really, really awesome on the inside. And sometimes people are really bad, unfortunately." She explained that she had to think carefully about the way she was presenting the information and that she ultimately stated, "In all the senses that everybody's good. And I want her to be proud of herself. So, we've talked to her about being very pro who she is, pro-Black, pro-Afro Latina, pro-girl, whatever she claims herself to be is, do that. Do that with all of your heart. And you know, people will love you people will see that and no matter what color you are, what, or what you look like." This example highlights the ways that Black and Latina mothers had to respond in the wake of the racist comments portrayed on the news by the sitting president.

Often, Black and Latina mothers are portrayed in situations of crisis, subjected to moral defamation, or exploited through stereotypical controlling images (Collins, 1990). Their stories are not told through the lens of the mother as the maternal activist, community mobilizer, and maternal resilience narrative. It is not to ignore the facts that "Much research examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on American life has ignored the co-occurring racial trauma from police violence and anti-Asian hate. Following the murder of George Floyd, the percentage of Americans racialized as Black reporting that discrimination was a source of stress grew from 42 percent to 67 percent, and 78 percent agreed that it was difficult being Black in America during summer 2020" (Kamp Dush et al., 2022). It is not to say that Black and Latina women have escaped and relented the historical traumas of enslavement, displacement, migration, or deportation. In spite of these historical traumas and maternal grief Black and Latina mothers engage in motherwork that inspires a mothering practice of resistance against oppressive structures that lead to their resilience. In the interviews, it becomes evident that Black and Latina women are used to pivoting due to race, gender, and class oppressions. The act of survival turned resilience was another pivot. This pivoting will be highlighted in my individual interviews as a Black professional class mother explained, "I was just trying to keep everything very calm for my kids. I think that that was like my focus. It's gonna be okay. These are really weird times and we just need to keep good energy in our house. It is not going to be doom and gloom the whole time." The perspective to keep your head up, and knowing that Black and Latina mothers often had no choice but to keep moving forward is embedded in Black Feminist Research and Chicana Motherwork. The

interplay of race, class, and gender in these mothering practices and experiences led these women to knowing there is always some sort of obstacle in the way of living a fulfilling life. This obstacle was COVID-19, the Xenophobia from the sitting president of the U.S., racial tensions and the murder of an unarmed Black man, and the continued need to engage in mothering strategies from a marginal racialized space - no matter their class status. To lean into the optimism, many women connected back to their roots or ancestry. Mothering as a community endeavor became paramount to their well-being. Intergenerational experience of mothering became essential for Black and Latina mothers. The focus groups conducted offered an engagement with political agency and visibility. Although the experience of COVID-19 lockdown proceedings were shocking and detrimental to the lives of many Black and Latina women and their communities, there were aspects of the pandemic that offered a new way forward.

Collective Orientation to Mothering

Black and Latina mothers in this study had a lens of collective or community orientation. One of the conflicting points in this research was vaccination status and the reasons why mothers decided to vaccinate themselves and their children, or not. The overwhelming majority to Black and Latina women opted to vaccinate their family right away. The reasoning was connected to the scientific data of flattening the curve. Kathryn, a black teacher stated,

> My daughter and I both got sick. But luckily, thank goodness, we are healthy. So we survived. My parents were immunocompromised. So before we even had to see them, we're like, okay, we had to get vaxxed. So our job strongly encouraged us to get vaxxed. And I ended up doing that. But others in my family were against it. And it was a whole debacle on that as well because they didn't want to be exposed. They don't know

> what's in the shot and things like that. So, it was just basically the fear of getting it again and passing away. That's still pretty huge on our end, but it's waning.

The fear of what was in the shot and how the shot could have been created so quickly was of concern to many individuals across the nation. Martha stated,

> Well, then, yeah, there was a lot of judging from my co-workers and other moms asking me why I did not get vaccinated or get my child vaccinated. There was pressure for me because I had to go back to work. I wore a mask and my daughter was one of the last children at school to wear a mask when they went back in-person. I felt a lot of pressure to get the vaccination - especially when my job offered me $250 to get it. I needed the money, but I didn't want to take a risk. People were also saying this COVID decision was a community situation and that my personal choice was affecting the community. I never judged people for their decisions during COVID, going to a party or having a party, so I was upset that I was the minority in that way.

The collective sentiment reflected in the data. People that were getting vaccinated and going back to work and school offered a new way to view COVID-19 and their experience with the public. This research will not indicate whether the vaccination was the right or wrong decision, rather, it illustrates that mothers considered various aspects of getting vaccinated, beyond their own self-interest. Rose stated,

> The pandemic became very real for us as we saw people in our family getting sick and having a hard time. It made us realize the importance of protecting others, not just ourselves. We had conversations about the collective versus the individual, which helped my kids understand the seriousness of the situation. They became more careful and considerate, and we tried to make things fun at home despite the challenges.

It is important to note that Black and Latina mothers were concerned about the effects of the vaccine on their children and the well-being of their communities. The mothers who opted out of the vaccine did so to care for their children and protect them from harm. This harm reduction, based on their experiences with the medical system, is

salient in terms of understanding how systems of care often fail to prioritize their patients[53]. The women who opted to vaccinate their children did so to care for their child and their community. It was viewed as a collective effort and a way to return to "normal". The connection between opting-in or opting-out is the ethic of care Black and Latina mothers have for their children and the well-being of their community.

From Resilience to Thrivance

Maternal identities upheld through a patriarchal motherhood lens (O'Reilly, 2016) adheres to the construction of motherhood through a gendered lens in which mothers should adhere to the confines of the home. Margarita expressed her dilemma of feeling torn between being at home with her children and feeling the pressure to be in her office working. Yet, when she was at work, she felt guilty for not being at home with her children. Her productive labor as a lawyer and the income it generated, along with the professionals who depended on her to maintain her immigration law office, were necessities, not choices. However, she stated,

> I felt maybe a little bit guilty, sometimes wanting to be home, because then I felt I wasn't paying as close attention to supervising my staff or being on top of the mail every day and what was coming in or having more time to do appointments over the phone or Zoom because I wanted to be home and see my baby, you know, take those steps. So, there's guilt in both fears. Am I not doing enough? Here at home? Am I not doing enough work?"

[53] There is a considerable body of research on the pathologizing of Black and Brown bodies in the medical field and the misuse of vaccines to harm marginalized communities. To familiarize yourself with this research read: Dorothy Roberts (1997) Killing the Black Body or Khiara Bridges (2011) Reproducing Race.

The constant questioning of "Am I enough?" in motherhood, in productive labor, in life, is a thread seen through the lens of working-class mothers and high-income earners. Margarita ultimately shared her perspective after months of agonizing over her predicament as a working mother during a global pandemic,

> In the end, I just realized, this showed us: we survived, we worked together and we're doing the best we can I need to stop it with that guilt stuff. If I'm ever feeling guilty, I'm gonna go out for a walk, I'm gonna jump on my bike, I'm gonna do something to get that out of my brain because you can't do everything all the time. So, focus on what can I do for myself today, what can I do for my husband, for my kids and to propel and enhance our community? A little bit at a time.

Margarita, as well as the other mothers in this study, underscored the complex interplay of visible and invisible labor (Hochschild, 2012) that creates tension and stress within the working mother's life. The tensions that were experienced due to COVID-19 heightened the awareness of their mothering abilities. There was a need to find balance and navigate what it meant to artfully spend time working and caring for their children, themselves, and their loved ones.

Building upon the foundations of survival, "thriving" is understood in Black Feminist Scholarship as the pursuit of holistic well-being, self-fulfillment, and self-love within Black communities. Black feminist scholars such as Audre Lorde and Kimberlé Crenshaw emphasize the importance of not only surviving but also embracing joy, self-care, and self-empowerment. Thriving is an intentional, radical act that seeks to break free from the shackles of oppression and cultivate a life of abundance, agency, and cultural expression (Baumann, 2023; Jolivétte, 2023; Wilson, 2008). It entails reclaiming one's narrative, embracing intersectional identities, and pursuing self-determination. In

this research, mothers talk about time and slowing down. They recount the moments they were able to take a breath and enjoy their children during what would normally be their school and work hours. Denise, Margarita, Laura, and Marissa all shared that they enjoyed warm coffee for the first time, had lunch outside with their children, created obstacle courses in their backyards, and scheduled family walks during break and recess time. The sense of connectedness seemed to be a highlight for many of the mothers. This part of COVID-19 allowed for an aspect of thriving in their role as a mother and employee. Many of the women reported that working from home allowed them to spend valuable time with their children for the first time since their birth. While this was not shocking information, the United States has one of the worst family medical leave of the developed nations (Briggs, 2017). As a Latina mother living in Arizona, it was difficult to recall and relive my experience as a new mother 11 years ago with an infant and only eight-weeks off of work to spend with my newborn. When I was at home, forced by the government due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures, I remember thinking, I wish this was the case when I was a new mother. COVID-19 provided the flexibility for many of these mothers to thrive in motherhood and thrive in their careers.

Understanding Thrivance

Thrivance emphasizes the importance of cultural resilience, resistance, and the regeneration of traditions and knowledge systems that have been historically marginalized or suppressed. It is a profound testament to the enduring strength and creativity of Black and Indigenous communities and their commitment to reshaping narratives, celebrating heritage, and envisioning a future rooted in justice, equity, and

self-determination. Post COVID-19, Black and Latina mothers that were able to continue their engagement with cultural teachings, family closeness, kinship networks reported aspects of thrivance. The term was not directly used in the research; however, aspects of thrivance and wholehearted mothering shows up in the ways that the women talk about their lives as mothers during and post a global pandemic. In order to achieve a level of thrivance, it is crucial for mothers who identify as Black and Latina to have their basic needs met. Additionally, the ability to critically consider aspects of oppression, act against atrocities, and engage in liberation acts—whether small or significant—is essential.

Resilience that Led to Thrivance

Privilege can be defined as having access to education, financial resources, or unearned advantages or benefits that individuals enjoy due to their association with a particular race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or ability. Oftentimes these are unnoticed materialized realities that people of a privileged social location. Mothers in this study used the term privilege to define how they felt during the pandemic. Across the board mothers expressed their relationship to privilege during the pandemic as, "appreciating what we have," "it gave us time to bring our family closer together," "I finally had time to slow down," and "I was grateful I had time to learn new skills." I argue that these are not formalized forms of privilege as in order for these experiences to exist, Black and Latina mothers had to create the conditions for themselves and their children to flourish. To acknowledge privilege, particularly in terms of class status, is to understand what it may be like to embody a lower-class status. For these reasons, I have

used the term resilience in place of privilege.

These women survived through the unimaginable and yet they found ways to engage in resilience. The act of engaging in resilience is to persist in spite of the obstacles set forth; it is to engage in a mothering practice that considers the mother, the child, and the community. The lens of resilience is understanding that the mother is subject to interlocking oppressions and persistently engages in their paid productive labor, their reproductive labor, their child's education, and their community. There are several examples of resilience that leads to thrivance within the focus groups; I will highlight just a few. Rose, a Black college professor shared, "I created a Zoom link for my daughter and her friend. They were reading Diary of a Wimpy Kid and they wanted to be detectives. They decided they wanted to create this whole detective agency online. They did videos and got super creative. This was another avenue of learning - just because it wasn't in a school classroom doesn't mean they didn't learn anything." Rose was able to lean into the virtual world and share insights with her daughter on leading in a Zoom room, sharing visual aids, creating content, and engaging in small group work with a peer. This resilience led to thrivance as her child was learning through an alternative modality and thriving in her environment. Julia, a Black professor stated, "My younger two struggled, there was something going on at my daughter's school - she's a little black girl with locks… for her, it was just a relief to engage in online-learning. Her school did a really good job with online learning. They had done it for years; when they transitioned, they pulled it from the playbook that they have with their online portion of the program. I can honestly say they were probably one of the best in the state." Julia underscores an

important measure in her child’s education - they were ready for online learning because that modality was embedded in their school culture. Unfortunately, for her son, she shared, “I ended up homeschooling him, I pulled him out, their program was horrible.” She was able to educate her son and enroll him in the Arizona homeschooling program. She details her experience discussing the transition with her son,

> Let’s sit down and create the type of curriculum that you want. Let’s talk about what school can look like for you. We incorporated Black history, of course. We talked about those issues, everything that came up, became a part of his curriculum with me. He wants to be a chef, so we incorporated culinary arts. I created the curriculum of what I felt was important for him to have in what he wanted to have. And for the first time, my son was on me if I didn't post his work up soon enough, he was like, Mom, you didn't post that! So, I started doing his curriculum like a month in advance. I'd sit down, I have to take a whole day and just lay out what is going to be for the month. It was like checking me about me not putting at work soon enough. I was like, oh, this is the first time he has ever been interested in any dang on thing and we'd sit at the dinner table.

Julia utilized COVID-19 to identify her son’s goals and focus on what he wanted his future to look like; what he wanted to aspire to become. The act of resilience was removing him from a school that was not supporting his education or skills in meaningful ways and taking it upon herself to create his curriculum and learning. This resilience turns to thrivance when she notates,

> And I was absolutely inspired by what happened with my kids, but especially my son. So, he graduated, he graduated online, with me, recorded everything and had people come and judge the senior presentation. And the people who were panelists were professors, and Deans of community colleges, these people are my friends. And I was like, Yo, would you come and judge my son, send your exit presentation and be for real? And they were like, we've never seen a high school senior exit presentation like that, ever. We've never seen that. And, for me, it was about the possibility. And I don't think anybody's going to have that type of investment in the possibility of our kids beyond mamas. I just, I just don't.

The possibility of engaging with her child, finding a sense of inspiration that led to his passion was the moment of thrivance for this mother. Her ability to engage in his learning, foster a positive environment, and connect him with professionals at the college level demonstrates an ethic of care and shows her love for her children. The time that Black and Latina mothers were provided due to the mandatory shelter-in-place orders offered a temporary pause to their way of moving through life. The rush of the morning, the late nights at the office, and the need to transport children to and from school, sports, and parties came to a halt. The ability to connect and engage their children without the noise of the outside world centered their experience of thrivance during the pandemic. The ability to just be with each other, shelter-in-place in their homes, and create meaningful experiences during COVID-19 offered a new way forward. One of the deepest sentiments from this research was the ability to manage their time, take the time with their children, being intentional with their time, and fostering positive outlooks through the lens of thrivance.

Positive Side of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic placed additional demands on mothers serving as primary breadwinners, often necessitating a delicate balance that could come at the expense of their mental well-being (Jordan-Zachery, 2023). As stated, Black and Latina women have unique ways of knowing and understanding the world (Jordan-Zachery, 2023) due to their experiences of racial, gender, and class oppression. There have been only a few studies that have exclusively focused on Black women during the pandemic (Jordan-Zachery, 2023); this research unearths the way that Black and Latina women

relied on their support systems in order to continue to maintain a level of balance, safety, and sanity. Although the research indicates that Black and Latina women suffered exponentially during the pandemic; the cultural importance of mothering, other-mothering, and kinship networks proved to be an effective means for survival that often lead to thrivance.

The positive aspects of COVID-19 are interwoven throughout the chapter. I believe this chapter has focused on the nuances of COVID-19 while illustrating how Black and Latina mothers in this study have resisted race, class, and gender oppressions and have come to realize there was a silver lining in the wake of the global pandemic. The terms bonded, appreciate, enjoy, learning community, the collective, fun, fortunate, grateful, self-care, recharging, time with my child, all resonated with me and the mothers in the focus group. Their nods and non-verbal were felt through the Zoom screen. It was this moment of realization that we lived through something so profound, it was incredibly difficult, and yet, we persisted. Across different economic strata, women discovered and embraced the silver linings within their experiences of mothering at home during the pandemic. Marissa stated, "we benefited tremendously from it [COVID-19] by actually going outside and running around with them for a little bit. That was, you know, helpful for us to just sort of decompress so, so definitely all of those elements that we tried to create around our day in the structure of our day, were aimed at just, you know, managing things in a positive way and making sure that you know, that the kids weren't anxious or that they weren't, you know, afraid or that they had consistency and so that they felt safe." Ivonne stated, "since my son was born in 2012, I only stayed at home with

him for a month so I didn't really get the chance to spend as much time as I wish I could. I was always working - sometimes 12-hour shifts. I relied on my mom, or grandparents, or a babysitter. I was just grateful to be able to spend more time with him at home during COVID - I didn't have that for seven or eight years." The parental leave in the U.S. or lack thereof leaves mothers without the opportunity to stay home and care for their children. Although I do not directly discuss parental leave in this dissertation, which is a limitation in this study, Ivonne alludes to the challenges of mothering her child as she would prefer, given the demands of her work and social circumstances. COVID-19 marked the first time in her child's life that she was able to be at home and care for him while working full-time. These positive aspects underscore the importance of families spending time together, engaging in leisure activities, and bonding through the child's formative years.

Family Bonding

The pandemic offered a time for pause and reflection. The initial days of the pandemic were filled with uncertainty and stress. However, once the mothers in this study found their stride between productive and reproductive labor, it seems that they were able to negotiate a better work- life balance. Margarita stated,

> My husband was my best teammate. We were really lucky in that aspect that we held firmly on to our routine, okay, we don't have the luxury of being able to go to school, but we still have to read at night and we still have to do our homework and let's check in with what the teacher is trying to get us to do. You know, they were learning to adapt to how to function in the teaching field. It was everybody scrambling but I really felt good at how everybody worked together and tried to commit to the joint purpose of, we're gonna survive, we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The light at the end of the tunnel offered their family a chance to connect in a deeper

capacity and find solace in each other. Similarly, Kathryn shared, “I just kind of noticed that since my daughter is growing up a little bit more, her interests are totally different. So, her and her dad would bond over a whole new set of television shows or games or something like that. So, their bond would flourish that way, as well, me and my daughter would maybe do more things like crafts at home, or she picked up baking and she's a way better cook than me. So that is pretty cool.” Laura shared,

> During that time, we brought out all the board games, we played more together, like when school was out so that there was a clear cut between, okay, school's over. It's time for fun. It's time for chores, mental health wise. I see a therapist regularly anyways, and I continued my therapy sessions over zoom, as well, my bi weekly visits, and she was able to give me material that I was able to print at home so that I can help my kids cope with being isolated from their friends and whatnot. I feel really, really lucky the way that it all played out for COVID in my household because I had all these tools at my hands. Um, but fun, wise, we literally will learn how to play poker. Um, we actually worked together in our backyard, which was just a dump and we turned it into a play area. They helped with, you know, raking out the rocks and the trash and whatnot that was in the backyard and made it another place for them to be able to get some energy out and play in the backyard when it's not too stinking hot. So that was our mental health wise.

Laura explains how she and her family adapted to the challenges of COVID-19 by focusing on family time, creating fun outdoor activities, and prioritizing mental health. She also created strong boundaries for herself and her children when it came to productive labor (work/school) and reproductive labor (chores), and leisure activities (play/board games). This balance was crucial to maintaining a positive outlook in a time of uncertainty.

Self-Care

Self-care is a crucial component of balancing productive labor, reproductive

labor, and leisure. COVID-19 exacerbated feelings of isolation, heightened stress levels, and presented numerous challenges, many of which went unnoticed. While I do not directly address self-harm, depression, suicidal ideation, or domestic violence in my research, the data indicate significant increases in each of these categories during the pandemic (Jordan-Zachary, 2023). Black and Latina mothers in this study shared the ways they engaged in self-care and shifted themselves as a priority during the pandemic. Kathryn stated, "I did some mental health stuff that worked for me, I downloaded a bunch of mindfulness apps like calm and headspace. It is still a staple in my house. I have incorporated ME time - remembering that I have to take care of myself first - I wasn't doing that before COVID-19." Rochelle, stated, "I am medically diagnosed with bipolar depression, so I leaned on my friends for support during the pandemic. We would do Zoom meetings and FaceTiming and I did a few virtual happy hours and cherished moments together. Their friendship and laughter helped center me during such a difficult time. While I may not have prioritized what the media calls self-care, such as getting my nails done or dressing up, my friends showing up for me was invaluable to me, and I am grateful for their support." Marissa shared her complex relationship with self-care. She stated, "The last thing on our list was self-care, like, no time for that… you know, it is down to what tasks kind of are essential and have to get done. I did start running. Actually, I won't say that I, because I needed to be able to take a little bit of time and just get out. So, it was even in the summer and in Arizona, and I would go on a run just to get out." Her self-care regiment was in her time to herself when she was running - although she felt as though self-care was "out" there was still the need to carve out time for health.

Similarly, Margarita stated, “I feel like it helped me slow down and find a common denominator because everybody was going through the same thing. So, we really appreciated what we have so much more like our backyard, or picnics, our sports that we could do at home, we made a little in, and it brought us so much closer together. And it really was special because what we would take for granted, we learned is actually really a luxury to be able to spend so much time together.” The act of slowing down is a form of resistance and an engagement in mothering practices, a strategy for survival, but also a lens of resilience that leads to thrivance.

Black and Latina women experienced significant stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they remained resilient in their mothering practices. Despite facing numerous challenges, they demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, which enabled them to engage in thrivance amidst a global pandemic that offered complete uncertainty. These women navigated the complexities of balancing productive and reproductive labor while offering unwavering support to their families and communities. Through their perseverance and commitment to their roles as mothers, they exemplified resilience and strength, serving as pillars of support during uncertain times.

Chapter 5

Exploring COVID-19 Impact on Working Mothers and the Continuity of Mothering Practices with Insights from Intergenerational Resilience

Today is March 2024, precisely four years after the initial shock of school closures due to the March 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. It is hard to believe that we lived through such excruciating times. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of many, including Black and Latina mothers. In this chapter, I introduce the lives of four mothers. I offer a deeper exploration of their lives as working mothers during the global pandemic. I use a Narrative Method to analyze their struggles and adaptations in balancing productive and reproductive labor, engagement with mothering practice, and the challenges posed by distance learning education. The themes in this chapter will be highlighted in each mother's vignette: shelter-in-place (remote work and learning), the significance of othermothering strategies and kinship networks, and their resilience that lead to thrivance.

In my home in Phoenix, Arizona, I sat trying to figure out how I would manage working, going to school, taking care of myself and my child amidst a global pandemic. There was no mothering book on how to parent during a deadly pandemic. In my research, I knew communities thrived from the support of mothers, othermothers, kinship networks, and community. I had none of that. How, then, would I survive? I began focusing on what I could control: laundry, laying in the warm Phoenix sun, and cooking. Beyond that, there was not much more I could do. The world was rapidly changing and I was not ready to change with it; but I had no choice but to shift. This shifting and awareness of my ability to mold to a new normal (this was the coined phrase during COVID-19) was a theme of my life. I would have to shift again; this time, the world would shift with me. Yet, I realized that I was sitting in a precarious social location, a

single-mother with no family support in close proximity, in the middle of a PhD program researching the intersections of race, gender, and class. The pandemic underscored systemic cracks leading to increased isolation, depression, financial strain, and mortality, particularly impacting Black and Latina communities. As a member of these marginalized groups, I braced for inevitable challenges ahead, uncertain of their exact form.

A few weeks into the pandemic, a wave of relief washed over me. My seven-year-old son was content and flourishing, enjoying uninterrupted days with his mother—a rarity in our busy lives. Despite the initial stress of juggling work and motherhood, I found myself engaging in more leisure activities than I had in the past seven years. As I settled into the rhythm of sheltering-in-place, I discovered a newfound sense of thriving. It dawned on me: it's crucial for people to understand that we can achieve a work-life balance, even as single mothers. We don't have to endure constant struggle—this is our opportunity to learn from the pandemic and find equilibrium and balance.

I argue that Black and Latina women share similar experiences of mothering through a global pandemic, and their intersectional positionality in the United States offers a unique vantage point to understand how communities of color not only survive but also find ways to thrive under conditions of oppression. The women introduced here share experiences of fear and triumph through their determination in aspirational mobility, an ethic of care for their children, and preservation of themselves.

Demographic of the Interlocutors

Renee, a Latina single mother of three, shared her experience as an essential worker during the COVID-19 pandemic in a focus group. She had her first child at 17 and later married, having two more children. She currently lives in the East Valley of Phoenix but was born and raised in Central Phoenix.

Martha, a Latina single mother living in Phoenix, Arizona, participated in the focus group. Originally from Mexico, she has no immediate family nearby and she raises her daughter alone. Martha works full-time as a lead server at a local Mexican restaurant and sends her daughter to a Catholic school in Central Phoenix.

Denise, a Black woman from Phoenix, Arizona, resides in Laveen. She works as an instructional designer for a local community college, holding a bachelor's degree. Denise has one adopted daughter and lives with her now-ex-husband. Despite her parents' divorce, they live nearby. We have maintained a friendship since working together years ago and resumed contact post-COVID-19 restrictions. Our children also became friends during this time. Denise has a sizable extended family, primarily in Phoenix, with some scattered across the Southern United States.

Alexa, a mixed-race (Black and White) single parent, is a regional operations manager at a financial firm. Alexa's three sons attend the same Catholic school in Phoenix, Arizona, where they've been since preschool. We initially crossed paths through our sons' baseball team in 2019 when they were in the first grade. Despite being a single parent, she co-parents closely with her ex-husband. She resides near her parents' home,

where she grew up, and has close ties to both sides of her family—her father is Black from Georgia, and her mother is white from Phoenix, Arizona.

I live in a historic home in Phoenix, Arizona. The location of my home is important to the research because many of the interlocutors have ties to this area, even if they do not live in the historic district. The historic district is in Central Phoenix, this space historically[54] has a larger population of Latino/Latina and Black communities - each of these women have either lived in Central Phoenix, have family that have lived in Central Phoenix, or have children that are educated in Central Phoenix. I held three of the interviews in my home. I intended to interview the participants in their own homes to visualize their set up of COVID-19 working spaces; however, each interviewee preferred to interview in my home-office[55]. My home offered a unique cognitive dissonance; the area in which I lived used to be homes that were not sold to Black or Latina families; they were deemed for whites only. The first Black man moved into this neighborhood in 1994; when this happened, the neighbors to the right sold their house and moved to the suburbs.[56] The spatial location of our interview offered a symbolic connection to our present as Black and Latina mothers through persistence, a struggle for social justice, and the interconnected realities that Black and Latina individuals face in Phoenix, Arizona.

[54] This research is supported in the Introduction Chapter; revisit the Central Phoenix/South Phoenix descriptions in the chapter for reference.
[55] Each mother had their own reason for preferring to interview in my home.
[56] I know this story from a neighbor who is in their 60's but grew up in this neighborhood. He shared it with me when I bought my house with my then husband in 2011. My ex-husband is a Black-American. I never asked why the neighbor decided to share this story, I only made assumptions as to why.

The journey of motherhood is not only unique but also profoundly intertwined. These interrelations offer a critical lens through which to examine experiences of race, class, and gender. While feminist research often approaches oppressions in isolated categories of race, gender, and class, the stories of Black and Latina women reveal an interweaving of these dimensions. Black feminisms and Latina feminisms have traditionally remained separate, but the focus groups and one-on-one interviews demonstrate a narrative of interdependence. This narrative aligns with Belle's concept of intermeshed experiences, as articulated by Lugones, which explores the complex interplay of intersecting oppressions among Black and Latina women.

Renee's Vignette

Renee is a Latina mother of three. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona with her two youngest children. Renee's motherhood journey began at 17 when she had her first son. Her boyfriend was incarcerated at the time, and she was forced to raise her son on her own. In order to care for herself and her newborn son, Renee worked full-time and relied on the support of family and kinship relationships. Renee developed a keen sense of whom she could rely on for emotional and financial support when her child was an infant. She cultivated this awareness through her experience as the primary caregiver for her seven younger siblings at the age of eight. During her childhood, Renee's mother worked full-time, which led to Renee taking on the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings. This situation arose because her mother's work commitments meant she was often unavailable for childcare duties, leaving Renee to step in and provide care and support for her siblings at a young age. She realized that she would not be able to lean on her mother or maternal grandmother for support, as they were caring for several children and grandchildren when Renee was a new mother. Renee reflected on her childhood and shared,

> My mom wasn't very hands on. She had to work a lot. So, she would work on Saturday so I had to take care of the kids. I would have to be responsible to comb my younger sister's hair, who was a kindergartener. Yeah. One time I forgot her at school. And she had a walk home; I was in third grade. I didn't remember, sometimes I did forget. But that's a lot of responsibility to put on me. But there was no other choice.

Renee's reflection demonstrates the importance of intersectional feminisms and the identification of a person's social location. The social structures that influenced her motherhood practices in March 2020 were indicative of her experiences as a child. Her

mother’s need to work extensively to financially support herself and seven children reflects the economic realities of working-class families. Additionally, her mother’s racial location was one of a marginal status in the Southwest of the U.S.; this further complicates her mother’s experience as a woman and breadwinner of the family as oftentimes Latina women are considered bad mothers when they are unwed, have multiple children, and rely on family support instead of their husbands to raise their children (Herrera, 2014). According to Herrera (2014), "historically, the socially designed split of the good and bad mother has been responsible for degrading politics in the United States that has disenfranchised and discriminated against mothers of color” (p. 18). The complex reality for Renee is when her life mimics her mother’s; there is a lens of self-reflection in and seeing herself in her mother’s position. The good/bad dichotomy inherent in Mexican-American culture is embedded in Chicana motherwork research. “The representation of the virgin/whore and good/bad mother represented by the historical figures La Malinche, La Llorona, and La Virgen de Guadalupe have become so embedded in the Mexican and Chicano cultures that the ways this destructive dichotomy inhibits women’s self-realization” (p. 46). In essence, Renee’s mothering experience requires her to engage in a profound self-reflection when her experiences parallel those of her mother. This underscores the interplay between cultural expectations and personal identity. This grappling is influenced by the pervasive good/bad dichotomy ingrained in Mexican-American culture. Renee’s experience resonates deeply within Chicana motherwork research, providing a raw example of archetypes on women's self-realization.

Renee's relationship with her mother is intricate due to deviations from perceived norms of patriarchal motherhood. Her desire to be different from her mother in relation to her own mothering practice signals her perception of her mother's approach to mothering as inadequate, failing to meet the patriarchal standards of mothering from both a U.S. dominant perspective and her Latina cultural perspective. This realization triggers a fear within Renee that she, too, will be deemed an inadequate mother should she replicate her mother's methods. And, yet, in the interview, I asked her what it was like to be a Latina mother in Phoenix, Arizona and she said,

> I think there's a lot of love. There's a lot of comfort. You know, when your mom is watching TV and you know you can just go lay on her lap. You know, I can just go to mom's bed and just lay there and talk to her. It's that close knit family feeling. And that's how it is with me and my kids. Like you just have that close knit feeling and that's how I want to raise them. I don't want them to ever feel like they're not a part of anything. They're a part of something big. Being Mexican to me, you hold that proud family symbol where you know that you have a big family and you know that everybody is always going to know everybody's business but you always have that close knit relationship and you're always going to have each other's back no matter what. You can hate that person. But if somebody's talking about that person, you're still gonna have their back because nobody else is allowed to talk about that but you, that's what it is for me.

The close familial bond she shares with her mother, maternal grandmother, and siblings serves as a foundational aspect of her identity as a Latina mother. She emphasizes that, "I know my mom did the best that she could during that time… she never meant to cause harm or stress in our lives, it just happens to be that I was the oldest and the one responsible for the others and that took away my childhood. But I have learned to forgive my mom because she tried her best." Similarly, she reflects on her mothering to Steven in the same manner. She said, "I did absolutely everything I could to raise Steven the right

way. I made sure he had everything he needed, he never went without. But I know that I cannot take the credit for raising him because I had a lot of help from my dad's ex-wife Tina and from Steven's paternal grandparents."

Importance of Kinship Networks

Shortly after the birth of Renee's first child, Steven, she moved out of her mother's home and into a home with her dad's ex-wife and her new husband. Renee stated, "She's always been that mother figure. She always knew what to say and how to say it. I felt close to her even after she and my father divorced." Renee lived within this new family structure for six years and developed a strong bond with Tina. Tina supported Renee and was a mother-like-figure to Renee, offering her emotional support, teaching her how to mother her son Steven, and providing guidance through life decision making. Renee stated, "I thought, I'm going to be a parent like Tina, I'm going to make sure that I do all the right things. Tina said all the right things. She was always there. She was and still is a great mother. Like it was always about her kids always making sure they had everything they needed. Being that mother to where you feel comfortable talking to her and you're not going to be judged." Tina offered Renee a kinship network; this relationship was crucial for Renee's development as a single-mother working full-time and caring for her child.

Renee was deeply concerned about being the mother she desired to be; she wanted to have a family that was rooted in care and love. The opportunity to live with Tina proved to be a pivotal moment in her life. She was able to work full-time and

provide for her child without worrying about financial obligations such as a mortgage, utilities, or groceries. She budgeted for herself and her child's necessities until she was able to provide for herself. Tina and her husband provided a kinship network for Renee; however, they did not engage in othermothering or care for Steven. Renee said, "I was the only parent for Steven; I did everything for him." However, Renee stated that she relied on her ex-boyfriend's parents to care for Steven while she was at work. This level of support and care was an act of othermothering.

Othermothering

Renee utilized othermothering strategies in order to care for her son. She states, "I actually had a lot of help from Steven's dad's mother. She was the second parent in raising Steven." Her use of the term "second parent" underscores the significance of othermothering. In situations where a parent requires assistance in raising their children, they often attribute credit, or even greater credit, to the othermother in their absence. Patricia Hill Collins writes extensively about othermothering strategies and support networks for Black women. In Black communities it is not uncommon for women to rely on their mothers, aunts, or close neighbors to engage in othermothering or care work for their children (Collins, 2000). This can be mapped on to Latina mothers, and in this case to Renee's experience as a single-mother. Renee's child's paternal grandmother stepped into the role of othermother when Steven, her son, was an infant. Steven's grandmother, Vanessa, embodied the othermother role throughout Steven's life. Renee relied on Vanessa and her husband to care for him in the absence of their son, as he was in jail.

In Renee's interview, it was unclear of her feelings towards her ex-boyfriend and the role that he played, or did not play in her son's life. However, it seems that the parents overcompensated for their son's absence. Building on Cristina Herrera's 2014 research on intergenerational parenting and caretaking in her book on *Contemporary Chicana Literature,* there might be a feeling of guilt within the paternal grandmother and grandfather. Their provision of care to Renee without any guilt or expectations attached offered her a sense of peace. However, this peace appears to have come at a cost. I will delve into this cost later in the analysis, as she embraced what she perceives as "good mothering practices." Renee stated, "they helped me literally raise him, they gave him structure, they gave me structure. They gave him roles and guidance. His grandfather taught him how to be a man. I mean, I didn't know anything about boys. So, they did a lot of parenting. I was young. I had no idea what the hell I was doing." As a mother myself, I can recall the first few months with my infant son. I was a 27-year-old homeowner, married, had a bachelor's degree and a master's degree; and yet, I was shocked when the hospital let me go home with my 6-pound son. Renee's last sentence makes me stop and pause. Does any woman know what they are doing after giving birth to their first child? I will admit that this may be a limitation in my study; I have not engaged in that research. However, I can speak from experience and the experiences of many of my close mom friends. No, we do not have a clue what happens when we arrive home. It also saddens me to know that my dear friend, whom I value as a human and a mother, felt unjustified in accepting her parenting and mothering practice as "good mothering."

Instead, she viewed herself as the secondary mother, allowing Vanessa to take credit for the mothering role, instead of the assumed othermother role. This is in part due to Renee's childhood experiences and also the patriarchal expectations of *mother* as solely responsible for the caretaking of their children. Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) denotes that the U.S portrays Black women's fertility as dangerous to the values of the country and thus instill the visualization "controlling images" (p. 79) of the mammy, matriarch, jezebel, whore or welfare mothers as a bad mother (Collins, 2000). These controlling images instill anxiety in women who fail to meet the patriarchal norms of white, middle-class, married mothers, thus labeling them as deviant (Collins, 2000). It appears that her decision to designate Vanessa as the primary caretaker, despite Renee fulfilling that role in all practical aspects, provides insight into the shame and embarrassment she experienced as an unwed Latina mother.

Renee observes Vanessa, who epitomizes the idealized version of motherhood within Mexican-American cultural contexts, adhering closely to traditional familial roles of husband, wife, mother, domesticity, and Catholicism. These cultural and societal expectations establish a rigid framework; this lens offers Vanessa's approach as the gold standard of motherhood. It seems as though Renee internalizes the belief that her own success as a mother hinged upon fulfilling these expectations by entering into marriage and then having children. Renee could never match the excellence of motherhood until she achieved the status of wife and mother.

Renee met David when Steven was ten years old. She dated David for a period of time before she moved in with him. Renee and Steven moved approximately 30 miles

from Central Phoenix to the East Valley of Phoenix's metropolitan area. This was a challenge and an adjustment for both Renee and Steven. David was Renee's boyfriend and she was finally in a place where she felt she could begin a stable family life. She said, "dating and marrying David gave me the family I always wanted; I thought I was doing the right thing." However, Steven was struggling; being away from his paternal grandparents, he was not thriving. Renee continued to drive Steven to his grandparents' home every morning and drop him off before going to work. She picked him up after work and drove 30 miles back to the East Valley. Additionally, she allowed him to stay with his grandparents every other weekend, establishing a shared informal custody arrangement to ensure Steven could maintain a strong connection with them. She emphasizes this importance of connection by saying, "When we moved, I knew that I needed to keep some sort of consistency for my son. And to be honest, I wasn't involved in his every day, school and all of it, everything that consists of being a mother like schooling and transportation and worrying about how the tuition is gonna get paid or what his grades are, his homework, all of that. It all fell on them [the paternal grandparents]." In her statement, a complexity of emotions emerges. She acknowledges her role as his mother while also recognizing Vanessa's position as the othermother, attributing significant value to their roles as caretakers or parents due to their ability to provide for her child through financial means (such as sending him to Catholic school), time, support, and an ethic of care. It appears that Renee experienced a sense of inadequacy as his biological mother because she could not offer the same resources to her

child. She allowed the paternal grandparents to assume primary caregiving responsibilities, yet this decision came at the cost of her feeling like a "good mother."

I questioned her remarks about the paternal grandparents assuming the primary caretaker role. Renee attended to Steven whenever she wasn't working. It's typical for working mothers to rely on caregivers for their children. So, why did she appear so eager to downplay her own parenting involvement with Steven? As she paused, tears welled up, and I felt the urge to stop the interview. It felt like prying into Pandora's box that had been carefully sealed. Steven is now 25 years old; why persist with these questions? Isn't our focus meant to be on COVID-19 research? We locked eyes, she smiled and cried and said, “it was different with Steven. When I had my second two babies, I was married to their father and they only had me and David.” She highlighted the patriarchal expectations of mothering practice. “Parenting the younger two - after marriage, it’s very different. I'm the parent 24/7 versus Steven, I think. That's it. It's a hard pill to swallow but it was more like this. I was his mother, but his grandparents raised him. And I will give her that credit from day one. When she passed away…that was his mother. And I know that he loves me as his mother, but his grandparents raised him as their child. And that's what he knows is them as his parents; his grandfather as his father and his grandmother as his mother.” She expressed her grief and attempted to make sense of her past mothering decision,

> Steven was the other piece to my puzzle. But he got older, and he gravitated more to his grandparents. The more I gravitated to my husband's family and their gatherings, I think he felt like an outsider coming in and I never wanted him to feel like that. But that's just how he felt. He was so comfortable with his grandparents. And he just pushed

> himself away. I always wanted him there. But I also wanted him to be comfortable.

As a mother, Renee made sacrifices, including sacrificing her own relationship with her son, to ensure his well-being. She entrusted his upbringing to his paternal grandparents, allowing them to guide him from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. Renee views these decisions through the lens of her teenage parenting, often accompanied by feelings of guilt or regret. From my standpoint, however, her actions reflect the tough choices faced by working mothers in diverse situations. Her unwavering commitment to her child's welfare underscores her dedication to the ethic of care which is a common thread among many Black and Latina mothers. Collective care, kinship networks, and othermothering were essential in Renee's experience as a young single-mother. Scholar activists like Téllez, Gumbs, and Salomón, along with various mothers of color collectives, explore narratives of feminized reproductive labor, prioritizing collective action and holistic healing for mother-scholars of color, their children, and their communities (Caballero et al., 2019; Gumbs et al., 2016; Salomón, 2020). This scholarship informs advocacy within social movements and addresses the impacts of separation, migration, state violence, and detention on mothering (Salomón, 2020; Hernández, 2020; Oliveira, 2018). It also highlights Chicana/Latina mother-activists' efforts to expand services, understanding, and discourse on mothering, as well as the significance of intergenerational mothering (Téllez, 2011; Oliveira, 2018). Loss, reproductive justice, and holistic pregnancy shape collective understanding of mothering and care work necessary for resistance to structural oppression and inequality (Caballero et al., 2019). Intergenerational mothering and kinship networks play a crucial role in

facilitating upward mobility and transcending class inequities. Othermothering, involving a kinship network to care for a child in the absence of the mother, is a practice that supports mothers in various situations, whether temporary or permanent (Caballero et al., 2019). In Renee's case, she relied on her kinship network to care for herself and her infant son. Her need to highlight that her intention as a mother was to break generational cycles, is the effort to challenge feminized reproductive labor and to engage in a healing process of her own childhood and transition into teen mothering. Her transition to motherhood, for the second time, provided her with a perspective through which she could view her mothering practices as "good mothering," influenced by societal expectations regarding gender roles, societal norms for women, and patriarchal views of child rearing.

COVID-19: Mothering, Distance Learning, Essential Worker

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Renee and her now ex-husband David were sharing a 50/50 custody agreement of their two children. Renee's eldest son was 23 at the time and was living with his grandparents. Renee worked as an essential worker in a dentist's office; her ex-husband and his new live-in partner both worked from home. Through many initial discussions in March 2020, they decided to maintain the custody arrangement as outlined in the divorce decree, and the children would continue to split their time between the parents. The challenge, however, was that Renee was once again losing time with her children because she was an essential worker. In several of her responses, she stated, "I was an essential worker, I could not stay home - I wish I had that opportunity. It was not fair that my children were spending more time with their dad and

his partner, but what was I supposed to do?" This highlighted many of the predicaments that Black and Latina mothers were facing: I am an essential worker, now what? Renee's full-time employment was non-negotiable, she had to continue to work to provide for herself and her children. She lacked the flexibility and privilege to stay home with her children during the pandemic. Although she expressed deep frustration and unfairness, she understood that she had to prioritize her career to support her two children. This reality was faced by many Black and Latina mothers, juggling productive and reproductive labor as the breadwinner and caregiver while navigating systemic inequities exacerbated by the global pandemic.

Once again, Renee found herself compelled to set aside her personal desires as a mother and focus solely on what was best for her children. Engaging in an ethic of care, she planned her days to try and balance full-time work, commuting, grocery shopping, and ensuring safety measures to avoid contracting COVID-19 and potentially exposing her children. Additionally, she remained committed to providing after-school care, including homework time, dinner, bath time, and bedtime routines. When asked how she felt about having to go to work instead of having the opportunity to work from home, she stated, "I was resentful a little bit because they [ex-husband and new partner] did get more time. They had the opportunity to do the schooling and be at home with them." She constantly worried about the health of her children and herself, fearing that if she got sick or her kids got sick, they would not be able to see each other, or she would not be able to care for her sick children. She said, "but I had to just keep on truckin' and not even try to

think about that. Or else I would have gone cuckoo, but I mean I wore a mask every day. And I knew they were safe."

In terms of their children's learning, she states, "she states, "I don't really think they learned anything." She continues, "we have a nine-year-old and was diagnosed with ADD post-Covid. I knew she would struggle without being in a school structure." COVID-19 forced school age children to remain at home with their parents. The abrupt shift in their learning modality was difficult for her youngest child. The diagnosis of ADD and distance learning may have exacerbated existing challenges she was already facing in a traditional classroom. Even though Renee's ex-husband and his partner were in the home, there were still disruptions in her learning. This highlights the complexity of education disparities due to the global pandemic; the limited access to resources, even in a middle-class nuclear family setting, identifies the gaps within the education system.

Renee provides further details about her daughter and distance learning. Renee emphasizes, "she's too all over the place to try to sit in a home office and do work on a computer and she has to have somebody in front of her teaching her." In the focus group chapter, there were two Black mothers, Rose and Julia that identified the needs of their children and offered various alternatives in learning, education strategies, and modality. It seems that a middle-class family, with one parent working from home and one parent as a primary caretaker, would be equipped to take on the responsibilities of redirecting Renee's daughter and offer her other forms of support. However, this was not the case. In the end of Julia's focus group interview, she stated, "And, for me, it [distance learning] was about the possibility. And I don't think anybody's going to have that type of

investment in the possibility of our kids beyond mamas. I just, I just don't. And so, I extend that to so my work is also about other mothers, especially Back other mothers, other mothers like these maternal caregivers, these people who care, maternally for the community." There is a clear connection between Julia's perspective of distance learning opening up possibilities and Renee's outlook as an unsatisfactory learning modality. In Renee's situation, she was an essential worker; she did not have the privilege to stay at home and direct her children. Just as Julia states, "I don't think anybody's going to have that type of investment in the possibility of our kids beyond mamas." Renee is the mama. She has the investment in her child; she potentially had the ability to offer direct insight into her daughter's learning. Instead, the husband's girlfriend oversaw her education. Not only is she not the mother, but she also lacks the cultural context of being a Latina woman, which is essential for understanding the nuances of Latina identity. Oftentimes Renee states, "my daughter is constantly comparing herself to her [the girlfriend's] daughter; she is the same age as her [they were six in March 2020], and she is a blonde hair, fair skin, blue eyed little girl. My sweet girl is a dark-skin Mexican-American child. It seems she never feels good enough in that household." Her daughter's sense of belonging in her father's home with the new extended family offered challenges. The realities of racial differences and the impact on her self-esteem within the blended family dynamic signifies the material realities young children face from a race and gender perspective. Similarly, Renee's observation of her daughter's challenges in education and identity may indicate a potential inferiority complex in her mothering practices. She has little to no control over what happens in her ex-husband's household, and the negative

self-images stemming from racial makeup pose a challenge for both herself and her daughter to overcome. Alternatively, her son was thriving online. She said, “He was in eighth grade and he realized if he got his work done early, he could enjoy the rest of his day. He did not need continuous structure or reminder to stay on task.” She did not compare her two children; however, I wondered if the gender dynamic has ever played a part in how she views her older “smart” child versus her daughter. Literature suggests that “a mother’s favoring the son over the daughter stems from the mother’s deep-rooted desire to receive all the rights and privileges afforded to men…the Chicana daughter who witnesses her mother’s favoritism is left hungry for her mother’s love and devotion.” I am not attempting to articulate that Renee intentionally glorifies her son; these two children are different maturity levels, abilities, and skills; however, I do want to articulate the internalized angst that Latina women may develop due to their unhealthy mother-daughter relationships and this can be a form of intergenerational trauma response or engagement with patriarchal standards of excellence for young girls: white, beautiful, able body/mind, and subservient to an education system. There were clear challenges during this time as a mother and a COVID-19 essential worker attempting to simultaneously engage in motherwork, domestic labor, and productive labor.

Resilience in the Face of Challenges

I wondered how she continued to parent and support herself during the pandemic as she stated that she had reduced hours in the beginning of the pandemic and financially things were difficult. She states, “my aunt… If I need anything she'd be the next person I would go to. If I needed her to grab my children it was never an issue to ask for her

support. I was able to count on her to supplement my pay during the difficult times because I was a single mother, working full time, and only receiving minimal support from my child's father. Her ability to fill in the gaps kept me in a financially stable position throughout the pandemic." As they continued to navigate through the pandemic, Renee and her ex-husband disagreed on vaccinations. However, Renee ultimately left the decision up to her ex-husband who was considered high-risk. He wanted to get the children vaccinated because he worried about his own personal health. Renee felt conflicted because she heard horror stories of children experiencing debilitating negative effects from the vaccine. She stated that her son ended up getting extremely sick from the vaccine, "he had a bad reaction to it, he was super sick, he couldn't eat, he looked like a zombie, he just couldn't handle it, it was bad." The act of caring for her ex-husband through allowing the children to get vaccinated demonstrates an ethic of care that embodies Renee's character as a mother, friend, and caretaker. She reflects on her upbringing and her Mexican-American identity as an important decision maker in the ways in which she engaged with her ex-husband, co-parenting, and labor.

Renee's narrative sheds light on the complexities Latina women face through motherhood. Coming from a working-class background and becoming a teenage mother, she grappled with feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Society's expectations weighed heavily on her, influencing her perceptions of what it meant to be a "good" mother. Despite these challenges, Renee leaned on kinship networks and othermothering strategies to care for her first child, Steven. Over time, she evolved as a mother, finding strength and support within her community. The pandemic further highlighted the

importance of these networks, allowing Renee to navigate motherhood as an essential worker while maintaining stability for her family. With her younger children, Renee felt more confident in her abilities, having grown and learned from her past experiences. This recount of Renee's mothering practice illustrates the ways in which motherhood can engage in a fluidity of experiences and connect to the intricacies faced by a race, class, and gender analysis.

Martha's Vignette

I met Martha when our kids were in kindergarten in August 2018. Her daughter and my son were in the same classroom at a predominantly white, upper-middle class, Catholic school. Martha, like me, comes from a Mexican Catholic family and sending her child to a Catholic school was important to her. The school has 645 students and 422 families. 80% of the students identify as Catholic. 53% are White, 24% are two or more races, 19% are Hispanic, 1% Black/African-American, 1% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native. The school ranks in the top 20% of Catholic schools in the state from the Iowa Assessment and Cognitive Abilities Test, along with their reading and math scores. The faculty hold 100% valid teaching certificates and 80% of their teachers hold advanced degrees; they have the highest percentage of faculty with advanced degrees in the state. Additionally, the school is the oldest founding date in the State, for a Catholic school[57]. In comparison to the neighboring public school district, the demographics of race are 45.2% White, 5.5% Black, 1.4% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, .02% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 7.2% of students who are two or more races (Madison Elementary District, n.d.). "98.5% of their teachers are certified. 50% of their elementary students tested at or above proficient level for reading, and 40% tested at or above that level for math. 49% of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 40% tested at or above that level for math" (Madison Elementary District, n.d.).

[57] I am not citing the above reference information from the school's website to keep anonymity for the mothers that participated in the focus group or 1:1 interviews.

As a Latina mother of a multiracial child in Phoenix, Arizona, I felt it was important to send my child to an excellent school. However, I had to think critically about what constituted "excellent." I reside near the Madison School district, and many of my White friends choose to enroll their children in Madison public schools. When our children were babies, it appeared to be a natural decision for me to follow suit and send my son to the same schools. At that age, these children seemed so similar that it was difficult to perceive any distinctions between myself and my White friends, whether from a racial or socioeconomic standpoint. Yet, the closer the children go to kindergarten age, I began questioning public education in Arizona. The #RedforEd movement originated in 2012, focused on strikes and walkouts that protested teacher pay, teacher retention, and Arizona's overall commitment to public education. Some of my friends were public school teachers, and despite their genuine belief in public education, they faced challenges with the state legislature's direction and the funding process for delivering exceptional education in the state. Furthermore, our state consistently ranks between 45th and 48th in the nation for education quality, with 50 being the worst state to enroll your child in public school. Thus, we were perilously close to being among the worst. Basically, I said to myself, "nope, I am not sending my multi-racial, Black and Latina child to a public school in Arizona to watch him fall through the cracks of the system and engage in the potential for a school-to-prison pipeline[58] - I just won't set him up like

[58]The school-to-prison pipeline is a process where students, particularly those from marginalized communities, are pushed out of schools and into the criminal justice system; this is a form of systemic violence on Black and Latina communities, as they often suffer the most from the structural system of public education (Morris, 2016). This phenomenon is an important aspect of racist tactics within our public school system

that." I researched Montessori schools and tested my son for a kindergarten program at a nearby Montessori school, which my middle-class White neighbor sent her daughter to. At the time, he was four years old and attending preschool on a community college campus. I assumed he would excel effortlessly. However, within a few weeks, we received a letter stating that he did not qualify for their kindergarten program. The letter suggested that he would lag behind other students and would not be a good fit for the school. Needless to say, I was furious. My son was intelligent and creative; how could he not be deemed suitable for kindergarten? Then, I found this Catholic school in Phoenix, Arizona, 3 miles from my home. I instantly had a flashback to my own childhood and how much I wanted to go to Catholic school to be a part of something bigger, something ingrained in a community. Although I do not claim to be religious, I am culturally Catholic[59]. I toured the school and was immediately impressed. The teacher I spoke with, who was in her 70s and had retired but returned to teach for a few more years, emphasized the tight-knit community at the school. She shared stories of how the school network supported families during challenging times, such as when a parent faced a

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nation-wide. This dissertation does not cover this in depth, it is out of the scope of this study; it was a feeling as a mother that I did not want to impart my child in any fashion. Further reading is recommended to gain an understanding of the ways in which this materializes for Black and Brown children in the U.S.

[59] To me, culturally Catholic is someone that is raised in the religion as a child; typically, because their parents or grandparents practice the religion. In my case, my grandmother was a devout Catholic and she would dress me in fancy dresses, tights, and patent leather shoes and we would walk to church. When I would complain that my feet hurt, she would say it was penance and God would be happy we suffered while going to church. I wasn't too fond of the suffering, but I loved the building, the music, the images of the Virgin Mary and Our Lady of Guadalupe. I was sold - Catholic traditions were visually beautiful and I wanted to be immersed in the beauty of it all.

terminal illness. This sense of community and support resonated deeply with me. It was something I longed for as a child – someone to care for me, to support me, and a community to prioritize my well-being. This was the perfect school for my child.

Similarly, Martha felt similar to me in her reasons to send her child to this Catholic school. I was drawn to her because she was a Latina single mother. I wanted to connect with her and her daughter to establish a sense of belonging at a school where I felt out of place as a parent, despite knowing it was the right choice for my child. By enrolling him, I aimed to provide new opportunities that I had missed out on, particularly a Catholic private school education. Martha shared that her experience touring the school was "impressive." She stated, "I loved the building, I loved the atmosphere, and the location; it felt like a really good school and that is what my daughter needed." Martha's daughter received a full scholarship, full tuition and lunch stipend, for the entire K-8 enrollment. Martha felt as though her hard work paid off by sending her daughter to a prestigious Catholic school in Phoenix, Arizona. In the interview, she shared her background and why this was so important.

Martha was born in Mexico and lived in her hometown until she was 26 years old. She was formally educated K-12 in a Catholic school. Martha placed great importance on providing her daughter with a Catholic education. This value deeply influences her parenting approach and the decisions she makes regarding her daughter's upbringing. She stated, "I also taught my daughter that it is really important to learn a lot; that this time to learn that it's important to me, it's important for me that she has a great foundation, because this is gonna last for the rest of her life." The Catholic school she chose, in her

belief, offers a solid foundation. She mentioned that her daughter had the option to attend a different school but ultimately decided on this one. This underscores Martha's desire to engage in an ethic of care in relation to her daughter's education. She placed a high priority on a Catholic education as the foundation for the rest of her daughter's life. She believed that this school would provide her daughter with the tools necessary to attend a Catholic high school and get into an accredited college in the U.S. Her emphasis on this being important to her as a mother highlights the ways in which Latina mothers have a stake in their children's future and a sense of responsibility to see their children succeed; this was evident for Martha.

Martha holds a bachelor's degree in Mexico, yet, in the U.S. her degree is not valid. She currently works at a restaurant; she has worked at the same restaurant for 16 years. She shows loyalty and dedication to her work and has created a sense of community through her employment. She states, "my friends in Mexico question why I am doing this in the United States, instead of working in my career of choice, for what I went to school for, especially because I liked what I learned in school." Instead of stating why she prefers to stay in the U.S. and work in the restaurant industry, she states, "I am passing on the ability to obtain knowledge; learning only provides someone with more tools, the learning experience from school will benefit your life and is always good for any person." This comment was referenced back to her childhood and how she was raised. She shared that her parents, especially her father, placed a great emphasis on her education and having a career of her own. I delved into this further by asking her about

her upbringing and how she came to understand the importance of a college education and lifelong learning.

Importance of Kinship Network and Community Resources

As a Latina mother living in the United States with no immediate family, Martha needed a sense of belonging to a community. She resides in Phoenix, Arizona, in a one-bedroom apartment with her daughter. She has a community of friends in her neighborhood and is also well-connected to community groups that volunteer with the Catholic church charities, as well as a dance troupe that performs Mexican folk dances, also known as Ballet Folklórico[60]. I asked her about her background and how she ended up living in Phoenix. She states, "I am 100% Mexican. My parents were born and raised in Mexico, same as me. I moved to Arizona when I was 26 years old." Martha recounts her upbringing in a small town in Mexico. She states, "they [her parents] both were born in the same hometown. They have never lived anywhere else." Her parents married and her mother worked at an independent agency while raising Martha. Her father worked on the family farm land. This division of productive labor demonstrates a departure from traditional gender roles in the 1980s within the context of the U.S., where mothers were expected to stay at home full-time and care for their young children. However, research has indicated that Chicana/Latina women have not had the same access to luxury,

[60] Ballet Folklórico is a type of dance genre that is often performed in group or duo settings. In English, this translates to "folk dance." It means "dance of the people." The dance reflects the traditions, cultures, customs, and colors of the region in which the people originate. The dances are typically associated with regions in Mexico; they are performed to feature music from mariachi bands and the men and women dress in culturally appropriate dresses and suits to express a cultural diversity and richness of Mexican heritage. (fun fact: I danced Ballet Folklórico when I was in middle school).

privilege, or opportunities as middle-class White Americans (Herrera, 2014; Tellez, 2011; Hurtado, 2020). Martha's parents lived in Mexico, where the roles and expectations were different. Thus, Martha experienced a vastly different childhood perspective, coupled with a distinct societal outlook, compared to many U.S.-born children.

Othermothering

As a child, she recalls spending time with both her mom and dad. She states that her mother worked outside of the home, so the time she spent with her was nights and weekends. Her father had a flexible schedule since he worked on the family land. She states, "He was always there, like I say it was easier for him because he didn't have to work for anybody. And then my mom was there responsible for everything that has to do with school, you know, like having the uniforms and food and homework." Although the primary caretaker role was shared between her parents, she states, "I remember my mom left us with my grandma, during when she was at work. Also, my dad's side. One of my dad's sisters didn't have to work either. She was just at home. She was also watching me after school, or during the weekends, or when my mom had to work and I was on vacation. It was mainly my mom's mom, my aunt, my mom and my dad." Martha expresses what much of the Chicana motherwork literature suggests: class places an emphasis on how mothering practices are strategized for their productive and reproductive labor. Martha's working-class nuclear family, mom, dad, and Marth, relied on extended family members to engage in othermothering. Consequently, Martha's mother had to juggle the responsibilities of both productive and reproductive labor to fulfill her daughter's educational needs, emotional needs, and overall well-being. The

flexibility of Martha's father allowed her to have a closer relationship with him, fostering a strong bond between them. This allowed Martha to lean into his advice and life guidance. She shared that her father would often remind her, "I cannot give you much money, but I can give you the gift of education. That is the most important thing I can offer you." The guidance of her father aligns closely with Chicana feminist research, which underscores how patriarchal mothering often defers to the father for guidance and life discussions. She shares that her father had a great impact on her sense of self and identity. "My dad always had this time to talk to me. I think of my mom, as she was always working. I don't remember having many conversations with her about life and stuff like that." Her mother's productive labor was financially required for the family to live a modest lifestyle.

Her aunt played a significant role in Martha's life as an othermother. She states that she learned about mothering through her dad's sister (her aunt) even though she herself was never a mother. "She never had kids. She doesn't have kids. She taught me a lot about mothering, by whatever she probably picked from her own mom, my grandma on my dad's side. They were my teachers. They taught me a lot of responsibility." This demonstrated the interconnectedness of Black and Latina mothering practices and their need, often for different reasons, to engage in othermothering and kinship networks. Martha's aunt filled the role of caretaker, nurturer and domestic support when her mother was at work.

As a collective, her father and paternal aunt shared important life lessons with Martha. She states, "Even though I was an only child, I had so much to do. I had a lot of

tasks at home and then I had to do a lot of things for myself at a young age. They were teaching me how to be a responsible person, to save money for the future, and not to care about what other people think of you. But you have to be happy for yourself and don't try to please other people." Her father's influence permeated her expectation of herself through a lens of self-sufficiency. Her father taught her to reject societal expectations. Martha states this teaching is important for her daughter; she has passed on her father's wisdom through her mothering practices. Additionally, her aunt played an important role in her mothering. She states, "She tried to teach me a lot while my mom was working and caring for the house." Through the teachings and expectations of her family, Martha was expected to attend college and continue learning. She states, "My dad told me the only inheritance that I can give you is through giving you an education, it is the most important part of life." Martha continues, "It does not matter how much money I can give you, if you are able to do everything yourself through your education, you will be secure." She states she was a very good student, she loved school, and her parents were happy that she was able to obtain a college degree.

Martha views her formal education as one of the ways she was able to migrate to the U.S. She states, "I loved school and this was my family gift; I took advantage of it and I liked it." This gift allowed her to think creatively and bravely about the life she wanted to lead. She decided that she would move to Phoenix, Arizona because she had a cousin that lived here and she visited them often throughout the years. She moved to Phoenix in 2010 and began working at a local restaurant, where she remains employed to

this day. Her daughter was born in 2012 at a Phoenix hospital, and she has lived in the city ever since.

When Martha delivered her daughter in 2012, her mother was visiting from Mexico. She had a three-month visa to stay in the U.S. to care for Martha in the first few months of her granddaughter's life. Her mother was a kinship support network that Martha desperately needed. However, due to U.S. visa restrictions, Martha’s mother had to return to Mexico. Martha returned to work only weeks after having her daughter via a cesarean delivery. Martha felt compelled to go back to work because of financial hardship. “It was probably three weeks after I gave birth to her because I was scared of the money.” During these first few weeks, Martha’s mother stayed home with the infant. However, when her mother returned to Mexico, she had to also find someone to care for her daughter while she continued to work. Martha stated, “My main, big, and constant situation was that I had to find somebody that I can trust to watch Rachel while I have to work. Besides that, everything is pretty much like everyone else, I think.” Martha’s experience as a new mother highlights the reality of working-class mothers, single or otherwise. There is an incredible amount of economic pressure and childcare issues faced by working mothers. This example provides insight into why policies and support systems need to be put in place to address the inadequacies within the system. Martha was a scared new mother in 2012. She had anxiety about her financial situation and having to return to work only 3 weeks after giving birth. She worked as a server in a restaurant, a physically demanding job that required standing on her feet for 8-10 hours a day. To make ends meet, she had to return to work. This all-too-common dilemma for

many working mothers in the U.S demonstrates the complexities faced by working-class mothers that do not have access to maternity leave or extended maternity leave[61]. During this time, Martha was forced to find a suitable childcare facility for her daughter. After some time researching and looking for options for her daughter, she found a program called "First Things First Arizona[62]."

Martha was a recipient of a First Things First Scholarship, which she called, "a beautiful thing." This scholarship allowed Martha to enroll her daughter in a safe and healthy daycare environment so Martha could work full-time and feel confident that her daughter would be well taken care of while she was working. She stated, "she was 9 months old when I found out about this program." She states that the First Things First scholarship allowed her to feel confident that her child was cared for properly. She states, "When she started, I finally went to work without crying. I was like, okay, this is nice, this is safe." This scholarship lasted until her daughter was five years old.

COVID-19: Mothering, Unemployment/Working, Distance Learning

In March of 2020, Martha worked full-time at a restaurant in Phoenix, Arizona, and her daughter was in the second grade. During the early days of the pandemic, many

[61] There is an extensive amount of research on maternity care in the U.S. and FMLA policies, but this is beyond the scope of this research. I am including this as part of Martha's experience, which can be applied to other mothers in similar situations. However, I will not delve into the literature or details of how Family and Medical Leave Act FMLA works, who it covers, and who benefits from maternity leave in the U.S.

[62] First Things First Arizona is a non-profit agency that offers scholarships to lower-income families that qualify for tuition assistance to daycare or preschool age children. It ages infants to 5 years old. The details of qualification are outside of the scope of this research. You can find more information on their website: https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/

restrictions were in place, including the closing of restaurants. Martha worked as a server for a local restaurant in Phoenix; non-essential services were required to follow city ordinances and close until further notice. As a result, Martha was laid off from work and nervously awaited the outcome of her work situation. At the time, her mother was visiting from Mexico because it was her daughter's Spring Break. Although her mother did not intend to stay for months on end, she ended up sheltering-in-place with Martha and her granddaughter. Martha was nervous about the loss of her income because she was the sole financial provider for her household. She stated, "I had a friend share information about unemployment. I have always worked and I had never heard of unemployment benefits. He told me to go to the office and file for unemployment, and I did." Martha was able to get $200 a week in benefits. She states, "I don't care if we are eating beans and rice at home, as long as we are all safe and together at home." During the first few weeks of uncertainty, Martha states, "so, basically, we were just trying to figure out what to do. What was the next step?" She recalls feeling nervous and expressed her concern about mental health. "Because I remember, we were all kind of crying and thinking and then hearing people say that they got sick, and people were dying. So, the only thing was that I got stressed about my daughter getting it [COVID-19] and her beginning to learn at home." She stated, "I just thought, is it better to learn from school or be alive. I think staying alive is more important, two plus two equals four. So, I guess we can do whatever we can to stay healthy." Martha had to compartmentalize her emotions in front of her child. The intense stress and fear surrounding COVID-19 was indicative of the widespread panic and anxiety experienced by many people during the early stages of the

pandemic. Like many, her primary concern was trying to be healthy and trying to maintain a sense of calmness. However, the growing concern of the pandemic, the closures of businesses and schools set Martha into a frenzy. “I was stressed all of the time; I felt like we were not going to make it out of this okay - even if we didn’t get COVID-19, I felt like we were not going to be mentally okay. It was a really hard time.” However, her thought of two plus two equals four suggests that she realized she needed to rely on her survival instincts to move through a pandemic. She recalled the moment when she realized they would be okay, she said, “do you remember these people buying all the toilet paper and paper towels and all the things we needed?” I laughed, because it was such a strange thing to think people wanted toilet people above all else. She continued, “yeah, such a strange thing. We did not need a lot, it was just the three of us, so I finally calmed down and decided we can figure this out.” Martha exhibited a sense of adaptability to the overwhelming situation. She was able to reframe her thinking and rely on her mother for support.

Distance learning posed a challenge for Martha’s daughter. At the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, Martha did not have access to a computer or the internet. Martha shared that her daughter had to use her phone to follow the daily lessons and homework agenda. In the fall of 2020, six months after the pandemic started, the school eventually provided tablets for the children who needed them. However, they did not provide internet access. Therefore, Martha had to connect the internet in her apartment, which was an additional expense to her already stretched budget. From a Chicana literature and Black Feminist theoretical perspective, Martha’s experience underscores

the complex challenges faced by Black and Latina mothers of color, particularly working-class mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for her daughter to access homework assignments, emails from her teacher, and school announcements from the phone demonstrates the material reality of the digital divide that disproportionately affects marginalized communities. This struggle, especially during a global pandemic, further highlights the ways that systemic inequalities intersect with race, class, and gender. As a Latina mother, Martha is experiencing a double-burden, ensuring her daughter has access to education and financial barriers to being unemployed for several months due to the state and federal laws closing non-essential workplaces.

The Catholic school shifted from in-person learning to distance learning to end the 2019-2020 school year. In March, April, and May, first-grade students were tasked with completing weekly worksheets and makeshift projects, as well as following a weekly grid schedule of tasks to complete while at home. I recall texting a few moms, including Martha, and expressing my frustration: "WTF. My kid will not do any of these worksheets. He's looking at me like I'm crazy. What about you?" At the time, I was in my third year of my PhD program and working as a graduate student. I simply didn't have the time to become a second-grade teacher.

So, I decided to email the school and inform them that I wouldn't pay tuition if I had to assume the role of teacher. Needless to say, that didn't go over well, but I sent the email anyway. In response, I asked if there were any scholarship funds available to offset the cost of buying my child a computer, which was now required for distance learning.

To my surprise, I received a reply stating that I now only owed $600, which felt like a small victory.

I emailed the teacher, expressing my concerns that my son wasn't learning and was refusing to do the worksheets. I asked for guidance on how to proceed. *Essentially, I was wondering how she wrangled this kid and 25 others? Magic.* Can you sense the frustration? Distance learning and loads of worksheets just weren't effective. I eventually handed my son an iPad and instructed him to play some games while I focused on my work. And that was it – he never "officially" passed first grade.

Similarly, Martha said, "do you remember those worksheets and trying to turn all of those things in? That was a nightmare." She said, "I was trying to teach her like she was a teenager, I didn't want her to be at home and become lazy, you know, like do nothing. The school sent home hundreds of pages and I thought to myself how are we gonna do that? It was like no time for anything, just hundreds of pages, copies and more copies. I was like, this is crazy." To add to the stress of a global pandemic that was sweeping across the nation causing illness and death, the extra layers of pressure on parents to sit their young children down and educate them while working full-time was overwhelming. Although Martha was temporarily unemployed - she felt the expectations to complete the assignments were an excessive approach to distance learning. Yet, she felt the need to hold her daughter accountable and to high standards because she is on a scholarship to a well-established Catholic school and she felt her position there was precarious. Martha stated, "I just didn't want to lose her scholarship or make her look bad, I wanted her to continue to learn and submit all her work." This experience was

entirely different from mine; although during this time I was financially tight with money, I also had the agency to email the school and ask for what I needed. Martha, a working-class mother that relied on the scholarship of the school, was tied to their expectations. This demonstrates a broader expectation for working-class parents to hold their children to a higher standard because they are at the mercy of the school system; at any time, the school could deem her child unworthy and she would lose the scholarship. That is unsettling. Her daughter did much more school work than my son. My son became an expert at Minecraft and sleeping in… her daughter submitted the worksheets and held close to the expectations of the school. This demonstrates the intersectional experiences of Latina mothers. As a professional-class mother, I felt emboldened to fight for what I needed and also made it clear that he would not be doing worksheets. However, as a single working mother, it was nearly impossible to hold both me and him to that standard. However, Martha, a working-class single mom with her daughter on a scholarship, experienced the stress of COVID-19 in a substantially different way.

In the Fall of 2020, her daughter was in the second grade. The school spent the summer working on online learning strategies to hold 8-3 traditional school hours. The school opted for a Google Classroom learning environment and every student would be required to log in and share their screens with their teacher and peers. Their school work would be online, worksheets on Google drives, and submissions were all electronic. The world had shifted. My son loved online distance learning; he thought it was so cool he could be "at school" "at home." I actually loved it too. I did not have to spend hours on the road, commuting to various places across the valley. I did not have to find childcare

for my son due to school and work. It was just much easier. Martha felt the same way. She said, “once they figured out how to do Google Classroom it was much better.” I asked Martha if Sarah enjoyed the classroom setting and if she felt as though she was learning. She said, “she didn’t love it; she thought it was okay. She missed her friends and being at school.” I asked if her daughter ever mentioned other people’s homes or backgrounds. She said her daughter would say, “oh my gosh, I saw someone else’s bedroom and it is so cute or I saw someone else’s kitchen and it's so nice.” During this time, children were subjected to sharing their backgrounds; in her daughter's case the realization that her small apartment was substantially different from other people’s rooms, kitchens, and homes. The parallel between her and her peers shifted. The “sameness” of the physical classroom environment shifted into a differential of class status among the Google Classroom.

Although Martha did not share her perception of how her daughter felt about her peers' homes, there was a sense of inadequacy as a mother laced in her response. Her mothering practice was reactive in the sense that she wanted to make sure her daughter felt proud of her space. She stated, “we live in a little apartment, we don’t have beautiful scenery for a Google classroom, you know, to show your whole class about your private space.” She felt as though children were comparing their homes to see who had nicer spaces. She stated, “it was also something that I didn't think about; I haven’t said this until I think now that it was so stressful for me to have her and prepare for a place that she's able to connect with everybody that it was presentable, you know, to be something that you gotta make sure, she will have, specifically for video. So yeah, that was a lot of

stress for me to have a little corner that looks nice and good for her that she liked to show." This moment underscores Martha's resilience in her mothering practice. She wanted her daughter to feel empowered and proud of her space, even if it was a small corner of the dining area. She crafted a way to share items that illustrated her daughter's personality and things that would be cute to show in the background. This demonstrates the resilience of Latina working-class mothers and their desire to offer their children as close to the same experience as their peers. All of that while navigating through the complexities of race, class, and gender. She shared one of the reasons she appreciates Catholic school is due to the school uniforms, she stated, "so different situations for everybody. And then I think like, when you're at school, and you have uniforms, I think that's the main idea for uniform. So, people can be more equal, you know, when you get to school, during school in your uniform, you're all equal." This perception of equality through school uniforms, whether realized or not, was an important factor to sending her daughter to a private school. Online learning thwarted that perceived level of equity in the classroom.

Similarly, in my son's digital learning environment, I noticed that his room was really yellow. The walls had this strange tint to them on camera. Although it was slightly embarrassing, what was I going to do about it? I certainly was not going to paint walls. Sorry, kid, you have pee looking walls. It builds character. Although this seemed trivial, I knew my house did not stand up to the standards of many of these other families; and they were peeking into our home. Even though I was slightly embarrassed, I took a pragmatic approach, I engaged in a mothering practice of resilience and let it go. During

this time, the school had the students' recording videos and uploading them to the Google Classroom. This particular assignment took place in our kitchens. Once again, my kitchen is very middle-class and not remodeled. Imagine an early 2000s kitchen—that's mine. As I'm recording my son, I'm noticing all of the imperfections, how ugly the paint color is on my cabinets, and how cluttered the counters are; small historic homes don't have lots of space. Once again, oh well. I can't remodel this kitchen because of a cooking experiment for my elementary school-aged child.

Once the videos were submitted, I noticed I had access to every single uploaded video. Score. I poured a large glass of wine and watched every last video - I looked into every single person's kitchen and judged them all. The nicer the kitchen, the more annoyed I was with them. Ugh, whatever. The more the kitchen looked like mine, the more inclined I was to befriend them. It became a little game I played for over two hours, watching these cute children cook in their kitchens. What a blast. I think social media calls this behavior: #wokebutpetty.

As a single-mother struggling to balance financial responsibilities and productive and reproductive labor, this was the highlight of my semester. Tying this to Martha's experience, my agency and aspirational class status provided me with a different perspective. I didn't worry about my child's less-than-desirable background—our kitchen isn't perfect. Although I was slightly embarrassed, I knew I earned it on my own. I bought my house with my own income, without any financial assistance from others, not even my husband at the time. I was proud of this little historic home, imperfections and all. My class status afforded me that response; however, her working-class status did not. Even

so, Martha persisted and worked through difficult times. She returned to work once the government cleared restaurants to open and she shifted back to full-time employment while caring for her daughter full-time. This complex interplay of juggling productive and reproductive labor continued as the pandemic persisted.

Resilience in the Face of Challenges

I asked Martha to share any new hobbies or moments of joy she and her daughter shared during the pandemic. Martha stated, "I found out that I have a green thumb; I had the most beautiful garden ever. I keep doing this because gardening is something different than watching TV or reading. We started with one plant, and then we collected so many we started to give them away. We weren't able to walk outside of the apartment, or on the stairs, we had so many plants." She continued sharing the story with pure joy in her voice,

> Oh my God, it was like a miracle, like a magical thing. Then we were saving the eggshells by putting them on top and saving the coffee. My daughter loves painting, she loves coloring and creating home projects. We went to Saint Vincent de Paul's family center during COVID-19. They had a drive-through food bank that we went to and they would hand out science projects and crafts. They made the experience of driving by and getting food and crafts so much fun, they wanted kids to have fun at home while they were not allowed in their schools. It was a special time because as a family we were so worried, but this gave us something to look forward to.

Martha shared that the pandemic offered several learning opportunities; besides the time to garden, she was able to watch shows with her daughter and mother. She said that her neighbor shared his Netflix password and they watched shows in a marathon series manner. She relished the time she spent with her daughter and mother. She did not have the chance to share long periods of time or bonding with her daughter because she went

back to work at 3 weeks postpartum. Additionally, when Martha's mother came to visit in the past, Martha leaned on her as an othermother and relied on her to care for Rachel in her absence. This time was different; she was able to sit in the same space with her mother and child and relax, enjoy, and care for herself and her family. She stated, "I think I learned that health is the most important thing that you actually own. People would ask me, in Spanish, how are you guys doing. And I would answer, 'I feel great!'." She said her response confused others and they clarified, "what do you mean?" She said, "I feel great because I am healthy. So, I guess people nowadays, the rich people are the people that are healthy nowadays." She also reflected on the judgment she received for not vaccinating herself or Rachel. She shared, "she [a family member] really judged me because I have no vaccination. I did not vaccinate myself until today, not even one. And I didn't do that to my daughter either. And they were telling me that I was really ignorant, and I was really selfish and tried to kill the world by not doing my job." She was conflicted with the news, media, pressure from her work to get vaccinated. Ultimately, she decided against the vaccination and chose to stay at home and follow strict orders to keep her family safe from the virus. Her place of employment was incentivizing their staff by paying them $150 to get vaccinated. Martha stated she was so tempted to take the money and give up on her beliefs of not getting vaccinated. "I needed that money. I wanted that money." She struggled with her decision, "should I do what everyone else is doing? I am going to go against something I said I wasn't going to do for money. No, I am not gonna do it." Martha highlights a difficult choice to not vaccinate herself and her child for personal beliefs; yet, she felt societal pressure and financial considerations. She

needed the money; it would have positively impacted her. However, the risk was not worth the reward and she stuck to her intuition. This is a clear stance of mothering practice for Martha; she was not willing to allow the influence of the news, media, and pressure from her workplace to prioritize their beliefs over her own. She instead continued to practice safety measures that were put in place since the beginning of the pandemic.

In addition, she also reinforced the importance of mental health. She said,

> I think mental health is super important. Same as physical health. It was a slap in my face. Don't forget this. You need to be fine and you're in your head first than anything because you're gonna go crazy. You're gonna start overthinking about this and then you need to, you know, have your mom and daughter and you just have to breathe in and breathe out. And, you know, because even though we were at home safe, we didn't contract COVID-19 but had had so much stress. I think I also learned that you have to, you just have to be calm in the moments that are really stressful for everybody.

Martha demonstrated her act of resilience and thriving by thinking critically about the effects of mental health and wellness. In the face of adversity, Martha did not quiver. She connected back to her sense of self and ways of being, likely from her childhood experiences. Her self-awareness, determination for her daughter to succeed in light of a global pandemic, and the emphasis on staying calm during stressful times speaks to the resilience Latina mothers cultivate in managing their own emotions while caring for their children. Martha's insights offer a glimpse into the strength and resilience inherent in Latina mothering practices.

Alexa's Vignette

The interview with Alexa was nerve-wracking. I met her when my son was playing baseball at the Catholic school he attends. She was stunning - a beautiful Black woman with impeccable style. She exuded fierceness and always appeared put-together. I was sitting on a bench during one of my son's baseball games when she approached me and said, "Are you Z's mom?" We quickly became friends. I couldn't believe I had never seen her before. Our friendship has been incredibly meaningful. As a Black mother navigating a Catholic private school with three boys, she has a wealth of experience. Her youngest son is the same age as mine, and her oldest had been at the school since preschool; he was in 7th grade when I met her. Alexa knew the ins and outs of the school, and I have heavily relied on her guidance with school experiences.

Although I was confident that this private Catholic school was the ideal choice for my child, I harbored doubts about their capacity to genuinely educate and relate to a multiracial child. This school, like numerous others across the country, merely educates about Black History Month by centering MLK Jr. Day. Yet, while acknowledging Dr. King Jr. is crucial, limiting Black history to just MLK's legacy remains unsettling for many Black Americans. Needless-to-say there were moments that I took a pause to reflect, is the lack of diversity worth the education that he is receiving at this school? I truly struggled to find the right answer. The education, in my opinion as a mother at the school, was above average. I often compared activities, assignments, lessons, or projects with other friends that sent their children to Madison Public Schools and it seems this school was ahead; additionally, my son was scoring in the 90 percentiles in English,

Science, and Math. Academically, this was the right fit. Socially, I was not convinced. However, when I met Alexa, it was like the puzzle pieces aligned. She shared her experiences with the school over the years and assured me that diversity was represented in the curriculum and the mindset of the teachers. To this day, she continues to mentor me not only as a mother within the school but also outside of it.

Alexa is a biracial, half Black and White, single mother to three boys. During her interview, she emphasized the significance of her Black identity and culture, fully embracing her Black identity. Alexa was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. She grew up in Central Phoenix in a predominantly white neighborhood. She said, “my dad was the first Black man to live in this neighborhood; some people did not like it.” It was the 70’s and segregation was still alive and well, even if there were laws protecting Black homeowners. She said, “my dad didn’t care; he would make friends with anyone, as soon as they got to know him, they liked him.” In her interview, she discusses her childhood, her parents' background, cultural differences, and her experience as a biracial person growing up in a nuclear family with a blended extended family. She relates her family’s upbringing and cultural experiences to her own mothering and survival skills during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importance of Kinship Network and Community Resources

Alexa’s parents had a profound impact on her, shaping both her identity and her mothering practices. Her mother came from a nuclear, white, middle-class family in Phoenix, Arizona, while her father was born and raised in Macon, Georgia. Determined to escape the racial tensions and discrimination of the South, her father left Georgia in the

1960s and vowed never to return. At a young age, her father was "forced into an adult world." Alexa states he was an only child of his mother and father, attending school only until the third grade and then working on the family's farm. At the age of 18, he left Macon, Georgia, to move out west.

Alexa's father's migration story is noteworthy. He left his hometown and the only family he knew due to the racial oppression that he faced on a daily basis. He constantly told Alexa, "you do not want to go to the South; don't ever go there." In the 1960s the racial discrimination was deeply embedded in systemic racism within employment, housing, education, and travel. There were still remnants of segregated schools and white-only neighborhoods. A young man, not even out of his teenage years, would have to be extremely brave to move to a new region; the world he would leave behind, he would never settle in again. He left his mother and father to find a new way of living; the hope was for him to break the shackles of the oppressive South. Alexa said,

> He wanted to leave ever since he was a young child, and he stayed for his parents. He stopped going to school in the third grade. He started working for his grandfather and father on their farm [in the third grade] and they also had a gas station that he would work at. And then when my dad's mother passed away, that's when my dad decided to move West and try to find some work and to get out of the South. So, he originally moved to San Francisco. Then he went to LA and then he tried Denver, and then he went to Tucson, and ended up finally, in Phoenix. So, he bounced around all over the place before he settled here.

Alexa's father's migration story echoes the experiences of many Black Americans during the Great Migration. In an interview with Isabelle Wilkerson, a Black author that researched and wrote about The Great Migration, she contextualized the Great Migration as,

> … an outpouring of six million African Americans from the South to the North and West. It was, in many ways, what I call a defective from the Jim Crow caste system; the system that rules the lives of all people – even White people – who were living in the South. The caste system held everyone in a fixed place. And so there was an outpouring of people who left the South for all points North and West from 1915 to 1970, when the initial reasons for the migration were no longer in effect – meaning the caste system essentially came to an end, legally. (Gates and Wilkerson, 2010)

Alexa's connection to the Jim Crow South stemmed from her father's narratives and shared experiences. He remained steadfast in his decision not to take her to the South to witness his origins firsthand. Consequently, her comprehension of racial oppression and segregation was understood through his storytelling and shared historical accounts. These narratives profoundly influenced her upbringing as a Black child and later as a Black woman in the Southwest. The interplay of race, gender, and class contributed to shaping her perception of her social positioning and identity.

Alexa’s parents as a couple had a great influence on shaping her identity. Her parents met and married in the 1970s. Although Phoenix, Arizona was technically more progressive than the segregated Jim Crow South, there was still an incredible racial divide within the metropolitan Phoenix area. Alexa stated “my grandfather disowned my mother once she met and married my dad; my mom didn’t care – she took the risk and knew it was the right thing. My dad was the best thing that happened to her.” As a researcher engaged with intersectional work and history, I know this story all too well. A white well-to-do family such as her mother’s feels betrayed when a Black person is wed into the family. It tarnishes the reputation of the family. In Alexa’s mother’s case, she

followed her instinct and her family apologies for their racism towards her husband.

Alexa stated,

> …And I think by the time my parents got married and then when they had me, my grandfather was obsessed with me, and then he went to my dad and apologized, and told him that he was wrong. And that he was raised really horribly, and that he knew it was wrong. And he wanted to make amends. And my dad was like, great - he didn't harbor any ill feelings or he wasn't upset. And honestly, my grandfather and my dad became best friends after that. And to this day that my grandfather died…they were together all the time. They did everything for each other. Yeah. It was just a complete 180.

Alexa's recounting of her grandfather's transformation highlights the complex dynamics within families when confronting ingrained racist beliefs. The pivotal moment when her grandfather "made amends" and her father responded without harboring resentment showcases her father's care for his wife, Alexa's mother. It also reflects the acknowledgment that despite her grandfather's upbringing in a racist environment, he was able to evolve and shed his overtly racist attitudes towards his son-in-law. This narrative underscores the potential for families to reconcile and integrate, even in the face of past racism, as individuals learn to accept others and overcome prejudiced tendencies. Even more remarkable is her mother's unwavering commitment to following her intuition despite knowing that it would lead to the loss of friends and family members due to engaging in an interracial relationship. This underscores the strength and resilience demonstrated by her mother.

Alexa emphasizes that her mother served as her ideal role model and source of mothering inspiration. Her mother epitomized maternal care, prioritizing quality time with her children over household chores. Alexa's mother cherished spontaneity with her two girls and their friends, making the most of their childhood. "She was the type a mom

that you would like, see on TV, she was like, very just overly loving, overly generous, like, I mean, she wasn't just that way with me or my sister, she was that way, with everybody with like, all the kids in the neighborhood." When asked about her experience growing up with a white mother as a biracial child, Alexa highlighted her mother's proactive approach. She constantly sought advice from friends familiar with Black culture and raising Black girls. Alexa recalled her mother asking numerous questions about caring for her daughters' hair, selecting appropriate products, and navigating instances of anti-Blackness and racism.

Alexa's mother's proactive mothering sought out ways to educate herself on the racial experiences her two biracial daughters would encounter. This highlights the importance of maternal support in shaping Alexa's sense of self, especially as she embodies a position that differs significantly from her White mother. Her mother's approach to mothering demonstrates resilience, ensuring her daughter knows her value and worth in a racist and sexist society.

Alexa states that her racial identity was not at the forefront of household conversations. She states, "I mean, obviously, I knew I was Black. I knew my dad was Black, I knew my mom as White. But it was normal for me." Her initial recognition of any racial issues occurred during her kindergarten years. Alexa recounted a time when her kindergarten teacher singled her out and stated, 'Oh, my gosh, you must go through so much being like half black half by like, I can't imagine.' As she reflected, she stated, what she was basically saying is that I should have some sort of trauma or something. Alexa stated she was "taken aback because I didn't even think of it like that." Up to that

point, she had embraced her Blackness and her identity. However, this demonstration of what her teacher likely thought was white allyship proved detrimental for Alexa. Her teacher, possibly intending kindness, inadvertently caused Alexa to view her identity as a problem, leading to questioning her social location. The teacher's lack of sensitivity and understanding of racial identity constituted a form of racism and microaggressions.

I wondered how her parents handled racial aggression or microaggressions. I asked, "what did your parents do, or say?" Alexa said,

> Oh, I mean, my mom's kind of feisty. Like she's really feisty. So she'd be like, F-THEM. Both of my parents were very like, you don't ever let anybody disrespect you like my dad was telling me to fight girls. He was like, not the best when it came to that. He'd be like, oh, somebody ever called your name. You just punch him in the face. And I'm like, I mean, I remember being called Oreo on the bus, stupid stuff. My mom would just be like, those boys are such idiots. They probably just like you. Like, stupid kids' stuff. But I mean, yeah, my mom was so interesting because she wasn't whitewashed. My mom was very, like culturally aware. I mean, I grew up in a home where we were listening to Motown, The Supremes. And that, like, wasn't influenced by my dad. That was my mom. Yeah, you know, and like, my mom worked at Herbs Underground when she was a teenager, which was a Black club. She was a cocktail waitress. She was very much in the culture. She was in it.

Alexa shared that her parents, especially her mom, really infused the idea that the world is a diverse place and this is your unique position in the world. This response is in line with mothering practice and an ethic of care. Her mother demonstrated resilience and defiance (in a positive way) by encouraging Alexa to stand up for herself and not allow others to disrespect her. Although her father's approach was confrontational, its sentiment was the same, do not allow people to take advantage of you because of their racist comments. Her mother's cultural awareness was key to her upbringing; she was

able to lean on her mother's exposure to Black culture which shaped her identity and sense of belonging in the culture. She stated her mom

> …did a really good job of like, really, like infusing, like, our black side, if that even makes sense. I mean, you know, even though I wasn't raised around my dad's family, I still had a lot of like, black cultural references, and she would take me to the stores and we would buy books for me. And like, because that was also my interest. Yeah. So, she supported my interest in that way. She would buy me like, you know, history on the black experience. I remember I wanted a black Barbie. So, we went and looked at all the stores for a black Barbie. Back then - that was really rare.

This illustration of her mother's care for her as a Black girl demonstrates an ethic of care and an acknowledgement of the intersectional oppressions her daughter may face through race, gender, and class. Despite being a White woman who couldn't fully relate to her daughter's racial identity, Alexa's mother created an environment where Alexa could explore and embrace her identity with support. Since her father left the Jim Crow South, Alexa didn't meet his side of the family. Her mother took proactive steps to educate herself, sought advice from friends familiar with raising Black bi-racial children and encouraged Alexa to explore her identity in ways that resonated with her.

Alexa acknowledged that her mothering practice mirrors that of her mother's,

> I think one thing that my mom was really, really big on was like, just the details, she was like, very detail oriented, like, as far as like, how she would take care of me, she would always make sure that my hair was nice, she would always make sure that my clothes were nice, like, she was very particular about just, I don't even know how to explain it just very like to make sure I ate well, that, you know, I was always like, bathed that, you know, all of the little things. And like, devils in the details, that's how she was. And I think I think I am like that, because that's how my mom was. So, I'm really like that. I was really like that with my kids, when they were growing up, like just very, and still am you know, just making sure that they're just taking care of like in all aspects.

Alexa's reflection of her mothering illustrates societal expectations of the "perfect mother" and the standard of patriarchal mothering. This is underscored by the fact that her mother held herself to exceptional standards such as being detail oriented, meticulous with her daughter's appearances, and "the devils in the details." Alexa shared that her own mother's biological mother left her at a young age with her father. Alexa indicated that her mother did not remember much of that time. She shared, "she was really young. And my grandmother, who I call my grandmother now, I think they got married when my mom was like, four or something so pretty young. And then she raised my mom as it was her own child. Um, so yeah, I don't really know much about my maternal grandmother, um, except that she was a total mess. That's all and she ended up moving to Oregon and we never really had any contact with her after." Her mother's perception of motherhood was through the lens of her adoptive mother. Alexa's nonbiological grandmother mothered her mom throughout her mother's entire life. Her grandmother is still alive today. Alexa shared,

> … [my grandmother] she was also like an extreme homemaker. She was like, I mean, we joke around about it now. But she's like Martha Stewart and Betty Crocker in one person. She's almost OCD in a way like she's just so everything is perfect. And if you go to her house, you feel like you're in a museum or something. It's on another level but she raised my mom and her sisters like that. So it's kind of crazy. She cooked every single day. She cleaned every single day she did laundry. She did everything. Yeah, everything. And she took care of my grandfather and he was kind of high maintenance. So, she was a rock star.

The timeframe for her grandparents' marriage and childrearing was circa 1950s. This expectation of patriarchal mothering was the norm. Adrienne Rich and Andrea O'Reilly write extensively about patriarchal mothering within a white middle class social

location. O'Reilly states, "for the past twenty-five years, I have taught a women's studies course on mothering and motherhood that examples how patriarchal motherhood is oppressive to women and how women may resist it through empowered mothering." The connection here denotes the need for the study of motherhood to research the ways that women experience motherhood through oppressive expectations. "Similarly, individualization causes such mothering to be the work and responsibility of one person, whereas naturalization assumes that maternity is natural to women (i.e., all women naturally know how to mother) and that the work of mothering is driven by instinct rather than intelligence and developed by habit rather than skill. In turn, normalization limits and restricts maternal identity and practice to one specific mode: nuclear family. Wherein, the mother is a wife to a husband, and she assumes the role of the nurturer, whereas the husband assumes that of the provider (2016, p. 1). In Alexa's grandmother's case, she depicted the norms of patriarchal mothering to provide an idealized life for both her husband and her children. This characterization of motherhood is deemed "intensive mothering" (O'Reilly, 2016, p. 1).

Intensive mothering is all encompassing and expert driven (O'Reilly, 2016). Alexa's grandmother worked full-time; it was less common for middle-class White mothers to work outside of the home during this time (Rich, 1976). The social norms idealized the mother as nurturer, stay-at-home, domestic laborer, caretaker and homemaker while the father as the breadwinner (O'Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1976). This description of the expectation of motherhood can be mapped onto Alexa's grandmother and passed down to her own mother. Alexa underscored the differences between her

grandmother and mother being significant, she stated, “I mean, she wasn't, she wasn't very big on like, the cleaning all that stuff. I think like being raised by my grandmother, like kind of just made her like, ‘I'm not ever gonna be that.’” Her mother’s departure away from her mother’s “perfect” mothering practices may have been an act of defiance and a shaping of her own identity as a mother.

When Alexa's first son was born, she chose to leave her job in finance to focus on caring for her newborn. She described her decision, saying, "I made the choice to stay home with my oldest, and then my middle one was born almost two years later." Despite feeling fulfilled by her career, she found staying at home initially challenging, stating, "I think staying home was kind of like, okay, this is weird... I had to just readjust myself and kind of like, find my place again." Alexa expressed frustration with societal attitudes towards stay-at-home moms, noting, "people looked down on it... I felt like it was embarrassing... people just assumed that you didn't really have anything going for yourself... fully living through your man." She was also shocked with her friend’s perceptions of her as a new mom, with some saying, "I could never picture YOU [emphasized] as a stay-at-home mom." This devaluing of her identity and role as a stay-at-home mother pushed her to deepen her engagement with her mothering practice.

In the United States, there is a societal devaluation of the role of mothers who choose to be full-time stay-at-home caretakers. In her book *“The Second Shift,”* Arlie Hochschild brings to light the unequal division of household labor and caregiving within heterosexual relationships - her research uncovers the ways that mothers experience invisible labor and the devaluation of reproductive labor within the home (1989; 2012). It

seems that Alexa was struggling with the reality that she put her career on hold due to the devaluation of motherhood, sans career. However, once she embraced her positionality, she flourished.

She contemplated returning to work while raising her young children but felt burnt out from her finance career, considering a potential career shift or the choice to stay at home. She stated, “I'm to be very honest with you, at the time, I felt really burnt. I've always been in finance and all of that. And when the crash hit, it was just mentally taxing. Yeah, I just felt like, I don't even know if I wanted to do it anymore. The corporate crap; I was burnt. I was like, okay, I either just need to totally go into something else, or I need to just take a break. Her capacity to reassess her circumstances exemplifies privilege, as she had the luxury of fully caring for herself during pregnancy and quitting her job to take a less stressful one. Alexa acknowledges her privilege to have time with her kids, recognizing that many mothers don't have that chance. She states,

> It was really nice. It was really nice. It was the break I needed. And so, I worked at the florist until I had him. And then after I had him, that's when I just wasn't working for a while. And it was good. I mean, I think that it was nice to have that time with my kids. It's like, you can't get that time back. And I’m really grateful that I was even able to do that. I know a lot of moms don't get that chance. So, I didn't want to take that for granted.

She returned to the workplace when her youngest son was in preschool. Her return to full-time work marked a shift after spending approximately eight years at home with her children.

Othermothering

In this study, Black and Latina mothers relied on a kinship network or other mothers to assist in the raising of their children. Alex was no exception. In Alexa’s case,

her parents lived just a few houses away from her. She stated, "I will fully…fully admit that I relied on my parents a ton, a ton. I mean, from the time that I got separated [she separated from her husband in 2019 and divorced in 2020], from you know, that whole transition. I think my youngest son was only in preschool three days a week. My parents took care of him the other two days. They stepped up big time." Her parents, especially her mother, engaged in othermothering practices for her youngest child while the others were in school. During this time, Alexa was engaged in productive labor outside of the home. When she returned to the office full time [pre-COVID-19], she stated, "it was a big transition. It was exhausting. It was a lot." She stated her parents were there to support her emotionally and through care work. She stated, "But I mean, my parents never batted an eye. Like, if I needed something, I wouldn't even have to finish the sentence. And they'd be like, yes, we'll help you wherever you need, they would come to my house." She stated that her mother would come to her house in the morning, wake the boys up for school, make them breakfast, and drop them off and pick them up from school. Alexa's working hours were 7:30 AM until the evening, and she did not have the flexibility to take her children to and from school when she was required to be in the office. She stated that was her reality for quite some time until she was able to transition to a better schedule. Alexa shared, "yeah, it was a lot of juggling." All the juggling and prioritizing her children's care was her responsibility. She asked her parents for support, managed her full-time work schedule, and engaged in reproductive labor each night to ensure her children were cared for the next day. Once COVID-19 became a reality, she was able to work from home full-time and is still working remotely today. She stated, "working from

home was a game changer. It changed my life and my ability to engage in more productive work and be present with my children." Alexa experienced increased productivity and was able to be more present for her children, she found a better balance between productive and reproductive labor. This shift not only affected her productive labor performance but also her personal fulfillment and ability to prioritize family time. This shift due to COVID-19 restrictions were transformative and had positive implications for her whole family to enjoy.

COVID-19: Mothering, Remote work and Distance Learning

During the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, Alexa's boys were in 5th, 3rd, and 1st grade. Alexa had previously been a stay-at-home mother when her boys were babies and returned to the workforce after her youngest son went to preschool. She is divorced and co-parents with her ex-husband, who resides in Phoenix, Arizona. They were divorced when the pandemic hit, leaving her as a single parent raising three boys while working full-time. She describes this time as "hectic." As a supervisor with a financial firm, Alexa has several employees reporting to her. She explained, "My job was very demanding...everyone else was losing their jobs, it was really tough. But for whatever reason, we had an influx of work, and we were hit hard. I was working 12-hour days, logging in from 7 AM until 8 or 9 at night. We just couldn't get ahead of it." She shared the stress of working full-time in a demanding job while her kids were engaged in virtual learning from home. "It was crazy. I mean, I was being pulled into meetings, and I had to make sure that my youngest child was logging in on time and that he was where he needed to be. And then, I kind of just let the other two fend for themselves." As a single-

parent, even with her parents' support, Alexa still struggled to manage all aspects of productive and reproductive labor. The stressors of COVID-19 and the ongoing racial tensions in the U.S. were all encompassing for Alexa due to her social location as a Black woman raising mixed-raced children.

In March 2020, the pandemic was altering the lives of many US Americans. At the same time, the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer was swarming news outlets, social media, and inciting protests across the country and the world. Much of the news coverage was fighting for airtime with COVID-19 outbreak statistics and deviation it was having on working families and children. It seems as though we were witnessing a global health crisis, a pandemic, alongside a dual pandemic in the US, police brutality. Part of the COVID-19 experience and the stay-at-home orders allowed the increase of news watching, social media connection, and consumption of digital content. As a mother during this time, Alexa shared that the “George Floyd situation was first and foremost in our house. It was the top issue, even above COVID. My kids knew everything - they were in it. They wanted to know what this meant and how did this happen and what happened to this man? They watched the protests and we had many, many conversations about it. It was a big deal in our home.” Alexa’s ancestral roots to the Jim Crow South formed her perception of the world in which she lives. Her position as a Black mother during yet another brutal murder of a Black man in the U.S. highlights the complex experience Black individuals encounter in a racist society. Her heightened attunement to intersectional forms of discrimination stems from her father’s experience growing up in the South and her mother’s experience as a White mother raising a bi-

racial child in the Phoenix area. Alexa noted that she did not shield her children from the atrocities of racial unrest within the U.S. during that time. She took it upon herself to have in-depth conversations with her children to ensure they understood the gravity of what was happening. This ethic of care and added layer of burden was unique to Alexa and other Black mothers in this study. Although the Latina mothers discussed the horror they witnessed seeing another Black man murdered by the police, they did not discuss the details of the lynching, nor use terminology that led to the detailed understanding that Alexa's children acquired. This double burden or double consciousness is uniquely placed on Black mothers. The ongoing education provided by Black mothers highlights how society may view their children as violent, criminal, or deviant due to their identity as Black men in America, a unique experience shaped by their race and gender.

In addition to the challenges of balancing productive and reproductive labor, Black mothers also grapple with what W.E.B. Du Bois termed as "double consciousness" — a psychological conflict experienced by Black Americans as they navigate their identity in a society that views them through a racialized lens (McAuley, 2019). It is important to note that their oppression is faced due to systemic racism and the social structures that are in place that reinforce racial, gender, and class stereotypes and inequities. Thus, Black mothers are forced to shape their children's experiences with the outside world to that of a system that places them in a marginalized position. This exacerbates the labor that Black mothers face, on top of the double burden of simultaneous productive and reproductive labor.

During this time in history, Black mothers found themselves wrestling with COVID-19 restrictions such as sheltering-in-place, distance learning, and remote working. Drawing on Black feminist research, this intricate scenario underscores the significance of intersectional analysis. It allows the deconstruction of the experiences of a Black mother, who, while engaged in middle-class employment, is also navigating the complexities of parenting multiracial children. Witnessing the murder of a Black man serves as a stark visual representation that sheds light on the deep-rooted atrocities and inequities pervasive within the American policing system. I asked Alexa if she thought it would be a different scenario if her children were at school, under “normal conditions" and not at home due to COVID-19 - would they have been exposed to the news of George Floyd’s murder in a similar way. Alexa stated, “

> I think it would have been different. I think that I would have been different, I'm not sure. But I think that the whole world was on pause. And I think that it forced everybody to stop and actually pay attention and to understand, like, the tragedy of it, and put the historic value behind it, to put the pieces together and to understand the vastness of it. I think the news cycles go so fast in this country, it's overwhelming. And I think that COVID actually forced people to maybe pay more attention than they normally probably would have. So I think yeah, I think that COVID it created a really weird, like, perfect storm almost for it. I think it was a very unique time in history for sure. For sure. I mean, you know, tragedies happen all the time. And police brutality is nothing new. But I think it got the attention of certain groups that didn't probably wouldn't normally have. Yeah. And so, I think that kids were impacted as well, because everybody was, you know, in the same boat.

Alexa discussed the murder with her father, too. She stated, “my dad was like, yep, same old shit. I’m not even surprised.” Her dad shared stories of when he was pulled over by the police and shared the common experience that he shared with many Black men. Alexa shared, “‘It could be anybody’ [any Black man in the US] he told me.” She

lives in an area that is commonly used for public events, parades, and marathons. Alexa said during this time that there were several protests and her streets were shut down. She says, “it was like everywhere. I remember my dad saying, ‘I'm just so overcome by how much this generation actually cares. I would never have thought I would see that day.’ He shared that in previous generations they hid it away.” Alexa shared that this gave her dad hope that her sons, his grandsons, would grow up in a different US then he endured. Her father said, “honestly this actually gives me hope that these kids are good people.” Alexa said he had several conversations with her father and he would tell her that she would never understand how racist this country is, how disgusting, wrong, and vile racism is and it is accepted. Alexa said, this was the first time that I could remember my dad having some sense of hope by seeing people with Black Lives Matter signs and protesting in the streets. Alexa said her father said, “it makes me feel good.”

Alexa's upbringing provided her with a profound understanding of the significance of her father's experiences growing up in the racially segregated Jim Crow South. She recognized the progress, although incomplete, that had been made since he left his homeplace. Alexa felt a deep sense of pride knowing that her father had worked tirelessly to ensure a better life for his family. She was particularly moved by the fact that her children were growing up in an era where there was greater attention and concern for the lives of Black men.

Resilience in the Face of Challenges

It was an incredibly challenging time for Alexa and her children but they found some resolve in the structure of the distance learning school days and spending time with

each other. Alexa said "for the most part, 99% of the time, they were responsible for themselves and they did a really good job." Her younger son needed much more support navigating the online classroom environment. She dedicated her break times and between meetings to assist her youngest son with virtual learning, ensuring he logged in correctly and addressing internet problems. When she couldn't assist, her older sons stepped in to help, rotating throughout the day to support their younger brother. She said, "we were all hands-on deck." The support from her oldest sons enabled them to develop responsibility and maturity. In addition to assisting their younger brother, they also started helping their mom with household chores. Her oldest song took an interest in cooking and decided he would cook for the family on many nights of the week. "He took it upon himself and made a ton of our dinners, he was so good about that." Alexa said, "that was his thing and it helped a lot." She said, "As far as breakfast and lunch, we were just winging it." Even though she loosely took care of the other meals, there was a sense of calmness in her voice. Through this, it seemed that the mornings and afternoons were not chaotic once they found a rhythm to their days. The boys engaging in household responsibilities and distance learning allowed Alexa to prioritize her work day and spend leisure time with them during their breaks and lunches. In time, she learned to love this new routine. She stated, "it made me aware of just how much time I was spending away from my kids." She is referring to the normal 9-5 office schedule that many US Americans have normalized for themselves to make a living. Additionally, US Americans that live in a metropolitan area spend at least 30 minutes commuting to work each way (Commute Shed Reports, n.d.). This time was spent in traffic, rushing from morning drop off into the

office at a specific time, or rushing to pick up their children after a workday. When COVID-19 stay-at-home orders began, a large portion of US American office workers were required to do their work at home. Alexa's was one of those employees. She stated, "I was no longer just sitting in an office that I had to drive 30 minutes away to get to and then rushing my kids out the door, the lifestyle I was living then… it just really opened my eyes to the fact that there's a different way. It doesn't have to be like this. There is not one way you have to do it. I really was glad to have the opportunity to work remotely." This level of privilege was not extended to all US office workers and was most certainly not afforded to essential workers. However, the landscape of the quintessential office worker drastically changed due to COVID-19 measures. Alexa stated, "I was actually worried when I had to go back; I thought to myself, this is going to be really hard. It is just nicer to be close to your kids." She was still able to keep a remote position post-COVID-19 restriction. When her children returned to their school campus, she was able to work from home in a remote capacity. She stated, "If something comes up and they're sick, it was a whole ordeal when I worked from the office. I would have to call my dad or call my mom or my ex-husband and hope someone was around to pick them up from school. Or, I would frantically end my work day and spend 30 minutes on the road to get to my kids." This type of chaos is the reality of many working parents; there is not enough bandwidth to work full time in an office and account for the many times a parent needs to engage in care work for their children. Alexa stated,

> I felt really fortunate to have that option to be at home. Because I knew that I was actually way my performance was actually better at home than it was in the office for something for whatever reason, I just felt like I could focus better. And it's like, I could take the breaks that I wanted. And

> I wasn't on a regimented office schedule. And then I could really, like get in and like, get my work done. And then, you know, whatever. However, I wanted to like, schedule myself, I just felt I don't know, just felt better for me. So, I was glad about that.

While her eldest two boys thrived and demonstrated self-sufficiency during the stay-at-home orders, they eagerly requested to return to in-person schooling as soon as it resumed. When they went back to school during COVID-19, Alexa stated "we just fell into a new normal. That part was better - how we got here was horrible, though. That part was not good." The new normal was an adjustment, as with every turn during COVID-19, however, Alexa says, "it's funny because when I go through things in life, and I am done, I discard it. I'm like, I lived through that and never need to think about that again." In retrospect, as she shared her experience during the peak of COVID-19, she acknowledged that much of the information remained unprocessed. She navigated through it in survival mode, reaching the other side. Now, she has the opportunity to reflect on the positive aspects of the pandemic, particularly appreciating the valuable time she spent with her children.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, many households, especially those headed by Black and Latina mothers, demonstrated remarkable resilience and the ability to thrive. Alexa reflects on the special moments she shared with her children. She stated,

> I miss having their collective attention. My two sons would cook and put on music. Nobody was on their phones, everyone was engaged, and we had really good conversations. They were not asking to go to their friends' houses or get on FaceTime to entertain themselves. I could just tell they really wanted to feel the closest to me. I was their true north during that time. I do miss that feeling. The older the kids get the more they want to

> do their own thing. They want their independence, which is great. But that is what I miss about them being young.

During this time each of her children picked up a new skill, hobby, or talent. It was the hardest on her younger son because he is really athletic and missed playing team-oriented sports. However, he was able to run around the yard and their nearby park to get his energy out. Additionally, they had a friend that they shared playtime with - this neighborhood friend was already in contact with the family and each parent decided it would be safe to allow the children to play together during the stay-at-home orders. Alexa stated,

> The boys did have one neighbor friend that lived in the country club, she's the one friend that they did spend time with during COVID. They had just been with her from the beginning. I mean, she would come over all the time, and they would go over to her house all the time. So, it was like, by the time everything hit, we were already around her. But that was pretty much it. We kind of cut off everybody.

The ability to keep close contact with a few friends in the neighborhood allowed her son to play in the park, continue to share friendship with someone outside of his immediate family, and continue to create community with others. Alexa ended her interview with sharing a piece of advice her dad shared with her during the really tough time; she said that he told her ‘Hey, you have your job. You’re very, very privileged. You’re very lucky and you need to look at the big picture here.’ Alexa recognized the hardships brought about by COVID-19 in the lives of many individuals and emphasized the heightened pressures faced by Black and Latina mothers due to their race, gender, and class statuses. However, she also pointed out how certain aspects of COVID-19 contributed to her thrivance as both a mother and a daughter.

Denise's Vignette

Denise, a Black mother of one daughter, lives in Laveen, Arizona. She married her husband in 2012, but they divorced in 2019. Their living arrangement is unconventional; despite being divorced, they continue to cohabit in the same household. Denise and her ex-husband live a comfortable upper middle-class lifestyle. They both work at a local community college and are college educated. This is the same community college where Denise and I met each other and became friends. Denise holds a master's degree and is an instructional designer for the college. Her ex-husband is in IT. Their living situation is not due to financial reasons as they both can afford to live comfortably as single parents. However, due to the nature of their adoptions process, they felt it was better to cohabitate for their vulnerable daughter. The decision to remain in the same household has its challenges and Denise shared these experiences to highlight the ways in which her mothering practices, although unique, demonstrate an ethic of care for her daughter and their family unit.

In her interview, Denise emphasizes the significance of sharing a home with her daughter and ex-husband which she attributes to her own upbringing. She noted that there are cultural and social pressures on Black women to maintain household unity, fostering strong bonds between parents and children. Denise stated it's vital to honor these cultural norms by preserving the family's cohesion through shared living arrangements.

Denise's mother moved to Arizona in 1950; her family was originally from Louisiana and migrated North and West during the Great Migration. She said, "Oh geez, that's historical! My grandmother's parents left Louisiana and moved to Oklahoma, once

my grandmother married, she moved to California and had my mother and then they moved to Arizona when my mother was a young girl." Her father moved to Arizona to go to Arizona State University, where he met Denise's mother, around the 1950s. She said, "I don't know much about my dad's people - just that they were from Texas." Denise is a first-generation Phoenician. Denise shared interesting aspects of her mother's side of the family. She noted a family split due to the brothers marrying non-Catholic women, leading to a division between the Christian and Catholic side of the family. It's intriguing and significant that Denise's family originally adhered to Catholicism, given the prevalent association of Black Southerners with the Southern Baptist Church. In our collaborative projects, I've gained insight into Denise's family background. Knowing she attended Catholic school in both elementary and high school, I wasn't surprised by her family's Catholic heritage. However, Denise disclosed that her mother belonged to the Christian side of the family, not Catholic. When I expressed my surprise, Denise explained, "I know. But that was to get a better education." Arizona's low national ranking in education prompts many to perceive private Catholic schools as superior to public education. While this dissertation doesn't take a stance on private schooling, it's noteworthy that many women in this study advocate for private education for their children of color, citing various reasons.

Denise's parents are both college-educated and met while playing doubles tennis. Denise states, "They're both super athletic. Another thing that I let my mom down about, because I'm not athletically inclined, and both of them were." Denise shared her mother had a sense of disappointment or perception of failure; this weighs heavily on her as she

emphasized, another thing - meaning there are several reasons why her parents were disappointed in the woman she was becoming. The broader societal expectations about body image, athleticism, and physical ability are interconnected to the ways that Black women are treated if they do not perform a particular way within the culture. Colorism and fatphobia are deeply ingrained in patriarchal mothering within the Black community. In her book, "*Fat Girls in Black Bodies"*, Joy Arlene Cox (2020) discusses the gendered expectations for young girls and women to conform to particular body sizes and those that do not are outwardly ridiculed and shamed for their appearance. Cox highlights the ways that Black communities' fat shame through everyday interpersonal conversations with their families and even in sacred spaces such as church. As I was listening to Denise talk about the shame she felt due to not following in her parent's footsteps with tennis, it dawned on me that this was more than a sporting disagreement. Denise, a Black woman with a full-figured body, is keenly aware of the social expectations regarding body size within different cultural contexts. As friends, we've had numerous conversations about body image, our diets, and the pressure to lose weight. I, too, experienced fat-shaming within my own family. I can vividly recall struggling with body image as early as 8 years old. At the age of 10, during a doctor's appointment for my stepmother, my father encouraged me to step on the scale. Initially hesitant, I finally relented and saw the number: 100 pounds. I was mortified. Unsure of what a 10-year-old should weigh, I knew deep down that this number was not ideal. Then, my father instructed my stepmother to weigh herself. The scale read 120 pounds. I was stunned. It was a moment that left a

lasting impact on me, instilling a sense of shame and embarrassment that I have never forgotten.

Parents can have a profound effect on their children's identity and body image. Cox (2020) discusses the intricacies of how families engage in fat-shaming their children as a means to encourage them to eat less, exercise more, and conform to societal norms. Denise’s experience mapped on to my own demonstrates that Black and Latina women can engage in unhealthy body images through the lens of their family. Denise said, “to this day, I think about what I eat, how it affects my body, and I barely eat, but I don’t lose weight - I don’t know what is happening.” The unhealthy relationship with food and body is directly linked to her childhood experiences with her family. It is also why she works exceptionally hard to compliment her daughter on her intelligence, support her eating habits in a healthy way, and encourage fun movement. She said, “I never want her to feel the way that I felt as a young girl; she’s just so active in a fun way, why would I crush that?”

Denise’s mothering strategies were a combination of her mothers, her maternal grandmother’s and her own development. She stated, “when my parents divorced, we moved in with my [maternal] grandmother…you know, a Black grandmother. She was the matriarch. Everybody congregated there. All the aunts, the uncles, the cousins. My mom was one of four kids. And she's the oldest daughter.” Denise mentioned that there was always family around and “all these family members were highly influential in the raising of Denise. Highly judgmental. So, it was I guess, not unheard of, to have everybody in your business. Which at the time, was obviously annoying. And I guess for

me, I wanted my mom to be more supportive." Denise's feeling of having her family involved in her life choices without her mother being more supportive highlights the ways that Black and Latina mother-daughter relationships can be complicated. In Renee's vignette, she too shared a disdain for her mother; it seems as though it was easier for her to love her at a distance and the experience is the same for Denise.

After Denise's parents' divorce, it was difficult because she was the only child and always had her own space in the home. "I had my own room, my own space in the living area, and just more peace in general; when we moved to my grandmother's house, I had to share my room and space with others." Denise shared that although this was irritating in many ways, she came to love being around her young cousins and babies. During a time when Denise's older cousin was unable to care for her baby, she asked family members in the household to take care of the child. Denise recalled, "when I was around 10 years old, my 21-year-old cousin had a baby. She wanted to live her life and not be a mom. So, she would leave her baby at home with the family. When my aunt left [her cousin's mother] I got my own room. So, my cousin would leave her daughter with me. So, I ended up taking care of her. I took care of her until she was around 9 or 10 and then her father gained parental custody of her." Denise's situation demonstrates that her family engaged in othermothering strategies to raise Denise's baby cousin. The child wouldn't be abandoned; she would receive proper care within the family structure and through kinship relationships. However, at a young age, Denise took on the responsibility of caring for the infant. After school, Denise would tend to the child, much like an older sibling would. This kinship arrangement, where the oldest child cares for the younger

ones, is highlighted in this research and other Black and Latina feminist studies. It reflects a complex interplay of race, class, and gender dynamics. Similarly, Renee's story underscores the racial, gender, and class dynamics at play when her working mother had to depend on her to care for her seven siblings. In the same way, Denise found herself caring for her cousin's baby. This situation illustrates the adultification[63] of young girls, who are burdened with caregiving responsibilities beyond their years due to gender stereotypes associated with nurturing and maturity. These expectations force them to mature quickly and rely on hyper independence to manage school, caregiving, and domestic duties at a young age. The reliance on young girls to care for younger siblings or family members shapes their identity and frames their mothering practices.

Denise shared that when she completed her degree and married her husband, she was ready to have a baby right away. She said, "I always wanted to be a mom. We tried for several years to conceive and it just wasn't happening." Then, her husband received a call from his father and learned that his sister had given birth to a baby girl who was in CPS custody in Atlanta, Georgia. The child would be placed in foster care unless there was a next-of-kin who was willing and able to take her in. After lengthy discussions, Denise and her husband agreed that they would begin the adoption process. Denise shared, "it was important to me to be able to have a legal pathway to adoption because I had temporary custody of my niece and nephew [they are young cousins by blood relation but Denise refers to them as niece and nephew] and they were taken away from

[63] If you are interested in the research of adultification see: work from Dr. Rebecca Epstein, Dr. Jamilia Blake, and Dr. Thalia González in their 2020 report called Girl Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood.

my home because their parent decided that they were ready to parent them again." She shared how devastating it was for her as an othermother to see the two young children go back to what she deemed was an "unfit situation." She said, "I couldn't do that again, get my hopes up of adoption and then it fell through." In this case, there was a pathway and they were set up with a caseworker. A caseworker flew the 5-month-old to Denise and her husband's home in Phoenix Arizona. The baby was placed in their care and they started the adoption process. During the time of the interview, their daughter is 8 years old and legally adopted by both Denise and her ex-husband. I was a little confused on the relationship timeline, so I asked when they got divorced. She said, "We're divorced now. But we separated at that point [when they were asked to take the baby] and then got back together but ended up divorcing in 2019." Their daughter was born in 2016, they began fostering in 2017 and the adoption was final in 2018. The adjustment was quick - she said that the first day was difficult but they began a routine at home and her daughter adjusted very well. She said, "Just like any parents, Jim and I were getting used to co-parenting. That was the most difficult. We're still working on that, to be honest." I asked her, "why do you think that part was so difficult?" She said, "probably because it wasn't something we had ever talked about. And I think one of the things was and I think it was something his dad said. He told him specifically that to let her get used to me too. And I don't know. If like, he was ready to adjust to a child who wasn't born of him." The complexity of bonding with an adoptive child may have been more difficult in her husband's perspective than a biological child. Although this research does not indicate that it is proven to be more difficult or not, it is important to note that Denise's husband struggled

with caring for a child that was not his biological daughter. In their case, their relationship suffered due to the nuances of adoption. Also, Denise had to let go of the idea that she would ever birth a child. She shared several times, “I wanted to be a mother” and when a friend offered alternative methods to pregnancy or surrogacy, she would say, “I want a family. I just don't want a kid. I have this ideal of wanting a family.” Their daughter soon would be the center of their family dynamic and their co-parenting strategies would shift significantly. Denise said, “...having her get used to a routine. It was fine. And just like any parents, Tim and I are getting used to co-parenting that was the most difficult. We're still working on that, to be honest. The challenges of the early years strained Denise's marriage, leading to their eventual divorce. They decided on an unconventional living arrangement for their child; they chose to continue co-parenting their daughter in the same home to keep her routine and structure in place. In this way, Denise prioritized stability for her child, opting not to disrupt her life with a move or divide her time between parents' homes.

Othermothering

When COVID-19 struck and shelter-in-place orders were enacted, Denise's job transitioned to remote work. She could work from home, while her husband, an IT worker, was deemed an essential employee and continued to work outside the home. Once the preschool that her daughter attended was initially permitted to remain open for essential workers, but this allowance was soon revoked. Consequently, her daughter remained at home with her while she worked full-time. Denise said, “my mom was trying to be helpful but she was an older parent, my parents are in their 70s, they just couldn’t

do much to help me during this time." Similar to many of the Black and Latina mothers in this study, Denise needed support to engage in productive and reproductive labor. She said, "My mom asked me 'what are you going to do? This is gonna be really hard on you.' And, I said, 'it is.' Denise's mother acknowledged that this would be exceptionally difficult for Denise to take on with a full-time job and full-time care work but she was not able to offer her support. Denise said, "I had to figure out what to do; my ex's life didn't change. Mine changed dramatically." This highlights the double burden faced by Black and Latina mothers in the absence of kinship support or othermothering strategies. The emotional toll and unseen labor required to navigate the significant changes brought about by the global pandemic fell disproportionately on mothers' shoulders. Denise was tasked with managing both caregiving duties and fulfilling her paid work responsibilities. The gender disparity is evident in the fact that Black women continue to shoulder more caregiving responsibilities compared to their partners, illustrating an inequitable distribution of labor. Even as an upwardly mobile Black mother enjoying middle-class status with a comfortable home, car, and stable career, Denise still experiences oppressive challenges due to race and gender. Denise would need to figure out how to manage this and she relied on her kinship network to provide support.

Denise shared that she had a long conversation with her daughter's best friend's mother. She stated,

> I had a discussion with my daughter's best friend's mom. So, it was another mom and mom discussion. So, all the moms have discussions and then I had a discussion with my husband. Yeah, and so my mom was like, 'Okay, I'm gonna buy Gia a bunch of stuff.' So, she bought her workbooks and things that she could do to keep herself busy. And then Gia's best friend's mom, Lisa was

> like, you know, she can probably start kindergarten early. So, I was like, oh, yeah, that is right. So, then I started reaching out to the school district. And that's how we set her up to test. And I talked to my husband about that.

Decision making in families is often through the many conversations that mothers have with other mothers. Denise stated, “I don’t think a discussion ever happened between my husband and I. It was me and my mom.” The interconnection of mothering practices is shared within a social network or kinship network and then once decisions are made; the mother will include the father. This was the case for Denise. Even though she did not have an othermother in place to care for her child; she had othermothering practices and strategies to keep her daughter engaged in learning while she would engage in productive labor inside of the home. Additionally, she strategized on how to get her child into kindergarten early to be sure that she had a structured environment to succeed; this was important when Denise adopted her daughter and it was crucial for her during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19: Mothering Practices and Distance Learning

Denise disclosed during our interview (July 2023) that she had contracted COVID-19. When I offered to reschedule, she declined, stating, "No, why? This is what mothers do - we work through anything." Despite her illness, she attempted to quarantine in her bedroom, but her daughter, returned from school, intruded into her personal space immediately. Denise remarked, "It’s harder on my daughter than I thought it was gonna be. There’s no way for me to quarantine." She emphasized that having COVID-19 did not alter her responsibilities; she continued to work remotely, care for her ex-husband, daughter, and dog, and manage all household reproductive responsibilities. She noted,

"my ex-husband did go grocery shopping for me. Because he does everything outside of the home. I asked him to get my chicken noodle soup and some medicine, so he picked that up for me." Denise's experience with COVID-19 underscores the significant pressure and expectations thrust upon Black and Latina mothers. Her determination to persist despite illness highlights the societal norm of patriarchal mothering, where mothers are expected to overcome any obstacle and fulfill their caregiving responsibilities. Denise's affirmation, "we work through anything," speaks to the inequalities experienced by women as both caregivers and productive laborers. This situation exemplifies the challenges faced by Black and Latina mothers, especially during times of illness or crisis, and the persistent expectation for them to prioritize the needs of their families above their own.

During the lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, Denise felt a need to maintain a calm atmosphere in her home. Although she found this type of mothering practice somewhat unusual for her, there was a strong desire for tranquility and stress reduction. She explained, "when I would get really stressed out, I would make arroz con leche. Or, at bedtime, I would make warm milk and cinnamon." These actions were aimed at creating a sense of safety, control, and certainty, following her mother's advice. Denise also mentioned her concern about her daughter's lack of exercise during the day, prompting her mother to remind her to give her warm milk. Moreover, Denise utilized a lemon tree outside her home. When she felt symptoms like a scratchy or sore throat coming on, she would pick a lemon and make lemon water with honey. She clarified,

"it’s not like I thought it would cure COVID or anything, but that’s just the things I would do."

Denise's experiences during the lockdowns reveal the intricate ways in which mothers, particularly Black and Latina mothers, adapt their caregiving practices to foster a sense of calm and security amidst uncertainty. Despite finding some of these strategies unusual, Denise sought to maintain a serene environment in her home and focused on alleviating stress with these strategies. Her actions reflect a deep-seated desire to create a sense of safety and control, echoing the advice passed down from her mother. Additionally, Denise's incorporation of natural remedies, such as lemon water with honey, demonstrates her resourcefulness and proactive approach to addressing health concerns. This underscores the resilience and adaptability of mothers in navigating challenging circumstances while prioritizing the well-being of their families.

COVID-19: Resilience and Joy

As a divorced mother residing with her ex-spouse amid a global pandemic, Denise relied on the support of her mother and friends to navigate parenting while juggling full-time work and caregiving responsibilities. When I inquired about the specific impact of the pandemic on her as a Black woman engaged in both productive and reproductive labor, she reflected on the ongoing uncertainties. Denise acknowledged that while the full extent of the pandemic's repercussions may not yet be apparent, she thought about the resilience of women of color, particularly mothers, in adapting to challenges. She noted, "being adaptable and flexible as women of color and mothers...helps you weather the storm." This sentiment underscores the necessity for Black and Latina

mothers to continuously adjust to adversities without expecting systemic change to accommodate them. She continued, “It makes me wonder. In general, not just from the perspective of COVID…it is just one more thing we’ve had to adapt to…with my daughter, I kept her schedule the same. So, to answer your question, knowing how to be flexible and changeable and not expect everybody else to change for you.”

Denise expressed appreciation for the changes COVID-19 brought to her daily routine. Previously, as a full-time employee required to spend 40 hours per week on campus, she felt her schedule was dictated by her job. However, with the shift to remote work prompted by the pandemic, Denise now has greater control over her schedule. She remarked, "I like being able to be in control of my schedule. When I work from home, I am in control." Denise found that she is more productive at home, without the distractions of the office. She explained, "When I'm at home, I know exactly what I got done today." This ability to hyperfocus on her work is particularly valuable for Denise as a working mother. Additionally, working from home allows her to more effectively manage reproductive labor and complete her professional deadlines. She noted, "It's easier for me to set out these tasks and get the stuff done." Furthermore, the flexibility of remote work has enabled Denise to prioritize self-care. She shared, "I started exercising again, I started going back to therapy." This shift reflects a broader trend observed during the pandemic, where individuals have reclaimed time previously spent commuting and invested it in personal well-being. The traditional office environment often contributes to stress, fatigue, and a sedentary lifestyle among workers. For working mothers like Denise, balancing professional commitments, childcare responsibilities, and self-care has

long been a challenge. The transition to remote work brought about by COVID-19 has alleviated some of these pressures, allowing mothers to more effectively manage their work and family responsibilities.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Uncovering the Interconnected Survival, Resilience, and Thrivance of Black and Latina Mothers as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Black and Latina mothers in Phoenix, Arizona provided a unique perspective on life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection of focus group and individual interview participants offered this qualitative research a lens through which to examine the racialized embodiment of these mothers in relation to their gender and class. The intersectional framework coupled with motherwork theory placed their positionality as Black, Latina, mother, and wage-laborer at the center. Their social location as Black and Latina signifies their marginalized position within the constraints of the U.S. capitalist and patriarchal structure. These two systems, capitalism and patriarchy, continue to oppress Black and Latina mothers, materializing through their employment and their pressure to uphold "good" mothering through intensive mothering practices. However, COVID-19 offered these women an opportunity to reconsider their time, mothering practices, employment strategies, and connection to intergenerational mothering strategies. It provided a pause—a chance to explore alternatives to the patriarchal structure of mothering. Despite the disproportionate burden of productive and reproductive labor falling on mothers, they leaned into their othermothering practices, kinship relationships, and community networks, tapping into intergenerational mothering practices that facilitated survival and thrivance as a way forward.

The dynamics of intergenerational care work was woven through the stories of both Black and Latina mothers. This underscores how these mothers continue to rely on an ethic of care and a system of othermothering to ensure the well-being of their children. The challenges brought on by the pandemic disproportionately impacted both working-class and professional class mothers. Regardless of their class, the mothers in the study

greatly depended on othermothering, community mothering, and kinship networks in order to survive and engage in strategic mothering practices. Black and Latina mothers spoke to their employment status as non-negotiable; they were required to be productive wage-earning laborers in their family. It did not matter if the mother was married, coupled, co-parenting, or single, the mothers in the study overwhelmingly stated that they would not have survived or made it through COVID-19 without the support of a network (biological or otherwise). The research on Black Feminist Scholarship, Chicana M(other)work, and Indigenous methodologies connect back to intergenerational teachings and the passing down of strategies and ways to engage in resistance that leads liberation. Mothering in this context cannot be discounted or undermined. The movement forward from a Black and Latina experience, especially during a global pandemic, was due to the ingenuity, creativity, and persistence of these mothers. The ethic of care, acts of resistance, and demonstration of invisible labor that became visible due to COVID-19 were all carried by these mothers.

Black and Latina women have consistently been connected with controlling images, scapegoating, and being blamed for the ills of our society. This research study offered a way to view Black and Latina mothers in connection to their authentic productive and reproductive labor. Their racialized, gender, and aspirational class dynamics as an interwoven social location offers a reckoning with racist, sexist, and classist patriarchal perspectives. These mothers are highly engaged in their mothering practices, their productive labor, their community engagement, their education and their children's education. Their upward mobility is seen through their determination to

continue their employment during a global pandemic and demonstrate their resilience and calm through an uncertain time. Their children greatly benefited from seeing their mothers engage in simultaneous labor - the act of finding joy and creating joy for their children during an unprecedented time, speaks volumes about their m(other)work. This work uncovered the interconnection of working class and professional class; one cannot exist without the support and connection of the other. This is an important finding and a way to connect Black and Latina women at all class experiences. Existing scholarship predominantly focuses on elite labor studies, often overlooking the experiences of professional class and aspirational class Black and Latina mothers. It is important to recognize that class is not synonymous with poverty, and the impact of socioeconomic factors extends beyond traditional labor studies discourse. Within this literature, there exists a gap in understanding the experiences of upwardly mobile Black and Latina women.

This demographic is notably understudied in the context of productive and reproductive labor research and socioeconomic analysis, highlighting the need to examine the experiences of educated Black and Latina mothers who are actively achieving upward mobility. In her anthology, "*Lavender Fields: Black Women Experiencing Fear, Agency, and Hope in the Time of COVID-19,*" Julia S. Jordan-Zachery highlights the myriad of ways that Black women experienced the pandemic through their sense of identity, social location, family, and community. The stories within her book illustrate the ways in which Black women were already battling systemic oppression and engaging in resistance strategies; the pandemic further exacerbated their

positions through race, class, gender. One of the most poignant arguments in this book is written by Brown et al., and states, “socioeconomic class does not protect you from societal relief for professional class Black women” (p. 118). This research mapped onto these data sets in this study highlights how Black and Latina mothers, regardless of their class status, were not shielded from gender oppression, racial oppression, or the double bind labor expectations of simultaneous productive and reproductive labor. And yet, they persisted and found balance, joy, and thrivance in their mothering practices.

This work directly aligns with Black Feminist Theory, Reproductive Justice, and Chicana M(other)work, each of which utilize intersectionality as a framework to deepen our understanding of marginalized communities. While existing literature has explored the intersections of race, gender, and class, there remains a gap in connecting the experiences of Black and Latina mothers from an aspirational class as a distinct population for study. I acknowledge the diversity within these groups but argue that their experiences are interconnected through shared systemic oppressions in the broader U.S. context.

Through this study, I have examined how Black Feminist Theory explores the matrix of domination, intersectionality, othermothering, and mothering practices, while Chicana M(other)work delves into parenting strategies, gendered labor negotiation, and community-driven activism. By applying these theoretical lenses, I analyzed the experiences of aspirational class and professional class Black and Latina mothers to uncover their intersections.

Key Findings

The findings reveal that Black and Latina mothers faced similar challenges during the global pandemic, including increased stress, pressure on their mothering practices, decision-making regarding their children's education, and strategies to balance productive labor. While the nuances of their experiences are detailed in the research, the overarching connection between these demographics underscores the interconnectivity of Black and Latina mothers in urban settings like Phoenix, Arizona.

Black and Latina mothers employed creative strategies to fulfill their productive and reproductive labor responsibilities during the pandemic. They embraced an ethic of care to ensure the well-being of their own children and to support other children in their communities. In the Introduction of this dissertation, I wrote, "the status of mother within a Black or Latina community holds a particular position within a community (Anzaldúa, 1999; Caballero et al., 2019; hooks, 1984; Collins, 1991, 2000; Hurtado, 2020; Jones, 2010; Nash, 2021); characterized by strength, resilience, strategy and resourcefulness." The data details various ways that Black and Latina mothers connect their work as a mother to the efforts of their community and much of this work was done in the homeplace. The efforts of Black and Latina mothers demonstrated ingenuity in addressing their children's education; their agency through education, kinship networks, community resources, and their creativity offered their children a way forward. One mother converted her garage into a micro-school, another discovered online Zoom courses focusing on Black Feminist Theory, yet another opted for homeschooling and observed her son flourishing in this environment, while another tapped into community

resources to engage her daughter in fun activities and started a flourishing garden. Ultimately, these Black and Latina mothers found their stride during COVID-19. Once they found their groove, they reported moments of joy, reduced stress, the ability to work remotely, increased exercise, more family time, more home-cooked meals, and a focus on themselves and their children.

The challenges were evident; there is no denying that the global pandemic was incredibly difficult for many. However, this study highlighted how mothers were forced to take on the role of elementary school teacher's aides while juggling productive and reproductive labor. Our labor was essential; it mattered; our children mattered. We, as mothers, were the ones to carry the burden. We relied on the resilience strategies passed down from our foremothers. When it came down to it, we drew on our historical past to navigate the present. We leaned on othermothers, kinship networks, digital connections to keep our friends and family close, and embraced an ethic of care for ourselves and others. The "we are in this together" was a phrase that seemed to only connect privileged communities; yet, through this research, it seems as though Black and Latina mothers were in this together; they leaned on the strategies that worked in the past because they were essential in the global pandemic. These strategies lead to their thrivance. Even in the wake of a global pandemic, Black and Latina mothers were able to thrive. As Denise said, "...it makes me wonder if being more adaptable and flexible as women of color and mothers and knowing how to be flexible and changeable and not expect everybody else to change for you. Helps you weather the storm, I guess."

I am continually impressed by all of the women in this study. Since the study focus group and individual interviews commenced, Martha was hired at Margarita's law firm. Margarita jumped in my car after our kids' drop off one day and lamented on the work ethic of a particular person in her office. She said she needed someone reliable, effective, smart and a quick learner, and someone that spoke Spanish. Right away, I thought of Martha. Within a week, Martha was interviewed and hired in the law firm. Martha called me and thanked me over and over again. I said, "I didn't do a thing - it was all you. You are so talented and smart. You deserve the absolute best and you are the best for Margarita's firm. I know it." Then, Margarita and I shared a text and phone exchange about Martha and how well she was doing - she was flourishing. Margarita thanked me for making the connection. Similarly, Renee was promoted from her position at her medical office and is now the office manager of a lucrative dental office. This position greatly changed her financial position and offered her more autonomy in her workday. Denise was able to continue to work remotely and her daughter has thrived in her global learning environment. She mentioned that being able to work remotely from home provides her with the flexibility required to focus on her daughter and cherish her childhood. For me, this research has meant breaking barriers that were set forth for many Latina little girls like me, the barrier of education and the barrier of professional work and mothering. I have learned that I was not alone during COVID-19, even though there were so many moments that I felt alone. As I listened to these women's stories, I felt more connected to a greater purpose than ever before. As a mother, an educator, a community member, I have the responsibility to share these stories and offer a lens of

Black and Latina mothering that is often hidden. Black and Latina mothers can and do engage in thrivance. They are “good” mothers, some of the best.

Limitations and Future Research

This study had several limitations, including the exclusion of non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, and non-able-bodied women, as well as a small sample size. Additionally, the sampling method was convenience-based rather than randomized, which could impact the reproducibility of the results. The limitations of this study could impact its generalizability and reproducibility. Excluding certain demographics such as non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, and non-able-bodied individuals may result in only a particular representation of the experiences of Black and Latina mothers. Additionally, the small sample size and convenience sampling method could introduce selection bias and limit the extent to which the findings can be applied to a broader population.

Future research should aim to address the limitations identified in this study by adopting more inclusive and robust sampling strategies to capture a diverse range of experiences among Black and Latina mothers. This may involve recruiting participants from various demographic backgrounds, including non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, and non-able-bodied individuals. Additionally, employing randomized sampling methods could enhance the representativeness of the sample and improve the generalizability of the findings. By addressing these limitations, future research can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Black and Latina mothers.

Black and Latina women serve as powerful role models, demonstrating to their children the importance of perseverance, self-advocacy, and solidarity in the face of

adversity. By embodying resilience and determination, they inspire their children to dream big, pursue excellence, and contribute positively to society.

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APPENDIX A

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Self-identify as Black or African American OR Latina OR can be of mixed-race status that includes these identities • Must have been a mother during the time of COVID-19 • Must have been a mother of at least one primary school-aged child(ren) in grades K-6 • Can be single and/or in a relationship during the time of COVID-19 • Must have been employed during the time of COVID-19 and working in the U.S. during 2020-2022 o May or may not have worked from home • Must have lived and/or worked in a major metropolitan area (preferably Phoenix) during the time of COVID-19	• Mothers in same-sex or polyamorous relationships • Mothers whose children passed away during COVID-19 or who lost their mothering status during the time of COVID-19 • Persons that had less than 50% of custodial responsibilities during 2020-2022 • Mothers who did not have a at least one child in grades K-6 during 2020-2022 • Persons who do not speak English • Mothers who lived in rural (non-urban) areas during 2020-2022

• Must be able to speak English (full mastery of English not required) • U.S. citizen or of legal status • Persons that had more than 50% of custodial responsibilities during COVID-19 • Must have been a mother to at least one living child during 2020-2022 under the age of 13 • Can be biological mother, foster mother, or step-mother	

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT TEMPLATE FOR EMAIL

Hello,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Mako Fitts Ward in the Gender Studies Department with the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to better understand the experiences of Black, African-American, and Latina mothers during the time of COVID-19 in the state of Arizona.

I am recruiting individuals to engage in a 90-minute focus group interview with women who identify as either Black, African-American or Latina mothers who parented a child or children in grades K-6 and worked full or part time during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022).
You are being contacted because I know you personally, or you are a friend or family member that has expressed interest in this research study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have questions concerning the research study, please call me at (480) 200-0613.

If you meet the inclusion criteria, I would be thrilled to include your experiences in my research. The following criteria must be met in order to continue with the interview process:

1. Do you identify as Black, African American, or Latina, or a racial mix of Black, African-American and/or Latina?
2. Were you a mother (biological, foster, step-mother) during the time of Covid-19 (2020-2022)
3. Did you have at least one primary school child during the time of Covid-19 (Grades k-6)
4. Your relationship status can be married, coupled, single, but you must be heterosexual. Are you heterosexual?
5. Were you employed during the time of Covid-19 and working in the U.S. during 2020-2022?
6. Did you live in a major metropolitan area during the time of Covid-19?
7. Do you speak English and/or understand English?
8. Are you a U.S. citizen or have legal U.S. status?
9. Did you have more than 50% custodial responsibilities during Covid-19?
10. Are you at least 18 years or older?

I am scheduling focus groups in May and June. If you are interested, please respond to this email with the best time of day for your schedule and a preferred day of the week.

For example: I am typically open Monday and Wednesday early morning 7AM-9AM and later in the evening from 6PM - 8PM.

I greatly appreciate your time and efforts and I look forward to connecting and learning more about your experiences during the pandemic as a working mother in Arizona.

Thank you,

Amber Green

APPENDIX C

SEMI STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Questions

1. What is your ethnicity and/or nationality?
2. Where did your parents grow up?
3. Where did your grandparents grow up?

Parental Skills

1. In what ways did your mother or grandmother teach you to mother?
    1. Were there other mothers in the community that helped raise you?
2. What parenting struggles did you experience before Covid-19?
3. What were the first few days or weeks of the pandemic like for you as a mother and an employee, both before lockdown and once lockdown began?
    1. Did you use any parenting strategies from your upbringing?
        1. Did the use of these skills surprise you?
4. What parenting strategies did you learn during Covid-19 that you have continued post-lockdowns?
5. How did the lockdown and the broader COVID-19 pandemic period change how you parent?

Support Systems

1. How did you lean on your support network?
2. Who was your support outside of the home?
3. Who was your support inside of the home?
4. What support did you need that you did not have access to?
5. What support systems did you have in place in the case of contracting COVID-19?
    a. If you did not contact COVID-19, what support did you give if someone in the family contracted it?
6. In what ways did your partner share in childcare responsibilities during COVID-19?
    a. If no partner, did you feel as though single-parenting during COVID-19 was difficult, if so, in what ways? If not, what made it easier to parent during this time?
7. What was your experience with the loss of physical connection with people outside of your home (friends, relatives, work-colleagues)?
    a. Did that loss impact your children? If so, how did you handle those emotions as their parent?
8. What were some of your biggest worries during Covid-19?
9. How did you cope with these uncertainties?

Financial Resources

1. What ways did the pandemic affect your finances?
    a. Did you experience a reduction in hours?
        i. Was this reduction in hours due to care work and/or child care?

   b. If you did not experience financial hardship, in what ways were you worried about economic stability or access to goods and services that you were accustomed to – house cleaning, tutoring, after school care, youth sports, school lunches, play dates, for example.
2. Dual income households – did the income remain consistent?
   a. If there was a loss of income or working hours, did the person with less working hours and/or loss of income do more care work in the home?

<u>Culture Connections</u>

1. Did you rely on any cultural teachings or passed down mothering strategies during COVID-19?
   a. In what ways did these teachings help you parent during COVID?
   b. In what ways did your COVID experience mirror the strategies of your ancestors during difficult times?
2. Did your children rely on cultural teachings and/or strategies for caring for themselves in the case that you or your partner were unable to parent?
   a. For example, if the parents were sick, did an eldest child care for the youngest children?
3. Did your mother, grandmother, or other mothers in your life offer supportive strategies during the pandemic?
   a. If so, what were they and how did they relate to their own mothering or other mothering strategies?

APPENDIX D

SEMI STRUCTURED – FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. At the beginning of the pandemic the risks of contraction were uncertain, how were you getting your information and what decisions did you make because of this information?
2. Did you or anyone in your home contract COVID-19?
3. What support systems did you have in place in the case of contracting COVID-19?
    a. If you did not contact COVID-19, what support did you give if someone in the family contracted it?
4. What ways did your biological family support you during COVID-19 lockdowns, shelter in place, or quarantine?
    a. What ways did your kinship network (non-biological friends/community) support you during COVID-19 lockdowns, shelter in place, or quarantine?
    b. Did you have a built-in kinship network due to religious or cultural practices – such as comadres, compadres, or Godmothers/Godfathers – how did these built in roles support you during COVID-19?
5. Did you feel supported by your spouse or partner during COVID-19?
    a. If you were single during the pandemic, did you have a co-parent?
        i. If you had a co-parent, how did you manage safety strategies and sharing time?
        ii. If you did not have a co-parent, how did you manage safety strategies alone?
6. Did your spouse/partner change or adapt to life circumstances and the uncertainties of the pandemic?
7. What strategies for survival did you utilize during the pandemic?
    a. Survival can be mental health, physical health, grocery shopping, exercise
8. How did you handle school shut downs and children being at home?
    a. (If partnered) Who spent more time with the children (cooking, cleaning up after them, school tasks, down-time when school was still in session (snack break, lunch break, "PE")?
    b. Who spent more time doing after school care?
9. Did you children have to learn a level of independence due to COVID-19?
    a. Did your child learn to cook for their younger siblings or care for their younger siblings while you or your partner worked?
    b. Did your older child or children have to help their younger siblings with homework/online learning/after school care?
10. Did you change your work flow when you worked from home? Did you lose working hours due to children and/or partner being at home?
11. Where did you set up your home office?
12. Where did your children set up their "classroom"?
13. How was your space compromised (private space or shared space)?
14. Did COVID-19 help reframe parenting responsibilities and roles?
    a. Did the time at home allow you to build different parent/child relationships?
15. Did your sense of time change?

16. How did your control of your time change?
17. How did you transition from working outside of the home to inside of the home?
    a. If you worked outside of the home and your employment temporarily stopped, how did you handle this loss of income and/or temporarily loss of employment?
        i. How long did you lose your income or work?
        ii. What accommodations did you have to make when you "went back" to work?
18. Loss of family, loss of income, and loss of structured school environment created a deep sense of crisis. How did you handle multiple dynamics of crises and continue to mother?
19. How did your child's school handle online learning?
20. What kind of mental health work did you do during the pandemic?
    a. How did you care for yourself?
21. March 2020 was a precarious time for the U.S. There were marches, riots, and protests due to the killing of George Floyd. What conversations did you have during the pandemic about race, racism, and social movements?
    a. What impact did this have on your children?
22. Did you have disagreements with your immediate family living in the home (partner, children, others) about COVID-19 restrictions?
    a. How did you resolve those?
23. Did you have disagreements with people outside of your home that caused issues or tensions in your decision making about COVID-19?
24. Did you have any change in relationships?
    a. Partner/spouse
    b. Parents
    c. Siblings
25. Once the restrictions lifted (summer and into fall 2020) how did you feel about entering public spaces and reengaging with family and friends?
    a. Did you ever encounter anyone that told you were doing the pandemic "right or wrong"?
        i. What did that judgement feel like as a mother?
26. How have you rebounded from the 2020 pandemic lockdowns, shelter-in-place, and quarantine restrictions?
    a. Is there anything that you miss about that time?

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Mako Ward
CLAS-SS: Social Transformation, School of
(SST) 480/965-8597
mfw@asu.edu

Dear

MakoWard:

On 5/1/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Mothering through a pandemic: Intersectional analysis of race, gender, and class
Investigator:	Mako Ward
IRB ID:	STUDY00017867
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Black & Latina Mothers Individual Interview Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • CITI social behavioral, Category: Non-ASU human subjects training (if taken within last 3 years to grandfather in); • CITI training, Category: Non-ASU human subjects training (if taken within last 3 years to grandfather in); • Email recruitment, Category: Recruitment Materials; • FINAL DRAFT Green Amber Individual Semi Structured Interview.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • FINAL DRAFT Green Amber Semi Structured Focus Group.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Inclusion Screening Criteria ERA.pdf,

	Category: Screening forms;
	• Version 4 Green IRB Social Behavioral .docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Zoom Verbal Consent Black & Latina Mothers Focus Group Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-identifiable) on 5/1/2023.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB

Administrator cc:

Mako Ward
Amber Green