Stress, Burnout, Compassion Satisfaction, And Compassion Fatigue Among Resident Assistants At The University Of Mississippi

Lionel Maten

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STRESS, BURNOUT, COMPASSION SATISFACTION, AND COMPASSION
FATIGUE AMONG RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Department of Higher Education
The University of Mississippi

By
Lionel Maten

May 2020
ABSTRACT

The study explores the lived experience of Resident Assistants at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue to help improve paraprofessional development. The study addresses a scarcity of research on the prevalence and severity of RA’s stress and burnout in their roles as caregivers. A qualitative design approach was designed for this study to investigate insightful perspectives and implications of the complexities of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi. For this study, 15 RAs were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews to facilitate for further probing questions and ascertain more in-depth responses to open-ended questions. Furthermore, participants were required to have served as an RA for a minimum of one semester in order to participate in the study.

Findings indicate that RAs’ abilities to cope with stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue clearly correlate with residents' successes that closely link to the rigors of RAs’ roles, duties, and job descriptions. Another finding suggests how building cohesiveness among RAs during staff training in early August was critical for duty and family crisis backup availability and readiness. Findings do not suggest that participants directly knew when they were experiencing compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue; however, their responses infer that caring for residents exposed RAs to many facets associated with the factors. The findings further reveal a significant need to help RAs identify resources to engage in self-care take time away from their residence halls, and acquire the necessary sleep to meet goals and objectives from the university, Department of Student Housing, residents, and participants.
In sum, results from the findings are underpinned by participant comments. Participants provided rich and informative information that will benefit professionals working in the Department of Student Housing to gain a better understanding of the unintended consequences for RAs as paraprofessionals, while simultaneously supporting the development of other students, as far as elevated risks of RAs to develop stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue.
DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this dissertation to the four most influential, and beloved people who have shaped my life: my mother, my wife, my son, and my daughter.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I offer this endeavor to GOD ALMIGHTY, for without his grace and mercy, nothing is possible.

To my mother, Mary Hall Maten, while you may have transitioned, your words, guidance, and straight talk have kept me on a bright, focused path. I know you are proud of my achievements and looking down with joy. All I ever wanted to do was put a smile on your face. I love, miss, and think about you every day.

To my wife, Rose Marie Maten, there is not enough paper to articulate into words what you mean to me. We are so strong together and have achieved more that I think either of us could have ever imagined when we started out as newlyweds. I hope that as we both approach graduation in May, we continue to set a strong example and resilient foundation for Jayden and Kayla. I truly consider it a miracle that I have been gifted and blessed with sharing this wonderful life journey with you!

To my son, Jayden Amir Maten, my man. Growing up without a father, all I wanted was a son. I know now that the yearning was to fill a void that I so desperately desired. Thank you for constantly reminding me of my words when I wanted to quit and return to a normal life. I have definitely recognized over the last year that you are starting to become part of the teacher in our relationship, and not just the learner. I love you, my man!

To my daughter, Kayla Elise Maten, my twin. I thought all I wanted was a son until you
brilliantly came into my life one miraculous May morning. After holding you for the first time, I knew there was something special about you. I have told you on countless occasions that you are my guarding angel. Your determination and desire to be like your daddy pushes me beyond what I can ever logically conceive. There is nothing more special than a daddy/daughter relationship, and I am thrilled and honored to have you on this jubilant journey. Your kind heart and constant inquiries about when I am going to finish this dissertation have served as the wind beneath my wings to push me through and empowered me. Thank you, Kayla, and please know that I love you!

Mom, Rose, Jayden, and Kayla: I am truly the luckiest one to have you all in my life. God has a way of giving each of us something that we do not deserve. God gives gifts to those who He thinks will protect and care for them. I hope I have done that for each of you.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues who continue to nudge me to continue to write and stay the course.

To the students who volunteered their time to share their lived experiences with the hope that through your testimonies, we will promote change and foster awareness to these issues. You have played a key role in impacting paraprofessionals in the RA position. It is my hope that due to your selfless dedication; you will receive your rewards at a later stage in life.

Finally, I want to thank the esteemed members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Whitney Webb, Dr. Katie Busby, and Dr. March Showalter. I want to especially extend my heartfelt gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. John Holleman, for your mentoring, guidance,
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STRESS, BURNOUT, COMPASSION SATISFACTION, AND COMPASSION FATIGUE
AMONG RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI
MANUSCRIPT ONE
Lionel Maten
The University of Mississippi
Thick Description, identifying components of Stress, Burnout, Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue

It is mid-term, and first-year students are becoming weary due to mid-term examinations and lack of preparation. A roommate conflict is starting to manifest between two childhood friends, who high school friends convinced they could room together in college. Another student is contemplating the backlash of sharing with others that they are bi-sexual. Furthermore, some residents are struggling with adjusting and acclimating to the campus community. One resident is struggling to find a social fit within the community to the point that each time the Resident Assistant (RA) returns to the hall, the resident is waiting to talk or play a video game. After hearing about another resident’s attempt to commit suicide last night, the RA, feeling partially responsible, is hesitant to leave the resident alone in her room. The RA was recently asked to attend a formal but had to decline due to being on duty. While on duty, another RA stops by to inform the RA of the great time she had at the formal and how much she was missed. Class assignments are increasing, and administrative work is mounting to the point that the RA feels her energy has been depleted. Feeling depleted, there is a knock on the door, and the RA is embraced by another resident, accompanied by his parents, wanting to thank the RA for being such a positive role model for their child.

Key Operational Definitions

**Burnout:** Burnout is a state of exhaustion, which is experienced in response to prolonged and excessive work-related stressors (Leiter & Maslacha, 2016).

**Compassion Fatigue:** Compassion fatigue occurs when the RA cares for residents adjusting to college or experiencing trauma. The RA is impacted cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically (Yaseen, 1995).
Compassion Satisfaction: Compassion satisfaction occurs from the pleasure an RA derives from caring for residents, in general, and residents experiencing trauma, in particular (Hopper, Craig, Janvrin, Wetsel, & Reimels, 2010).

Contemporary style residence halls: A contemporary style residence hall is a building structure that is generally organized whereby two residents share a bedroom that includes a bathroom inside the room.

Residence Assistant, Paraprofessional, RA, and CA: For this study at the University of Mississippi, the definition means an undergraduate employed to reside on the floor of undergraduate and graduate students. The RA is hired to help acclimate new students to the campus, connect students to resources, offer programs to enhance the overall student experience, and help students solve issues they might encounter while residing in the residence halls.

Residential Learning: Residential learning is the administrative unit that has administrative oversight for managing RAs.

Stress: Stress is the role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and number, frequency, and impact of abusive events experienced by RAs working with residents (Schuh & Shipton, 1983).

Traditional style residence halls: A traditional style residence hall is a building structure that is generally organized whereby a group of residents share a large community bathroom.

Introduction

Stress is a major problem in American culture, and it is difficult for some people to find strategies to manage it. There is a growing body of literature that addresses this phenomenon and the importance of finding solutions to address this issue in the workplace (Jetha, Kernan, & Kurowski, 2017). Lindholm (2006) suggested dynamic working conditions, and ever-changing complexities in business have given rise to higher levels of work stress for employees. People who have human service occupations face high levels of stress and are susceptible to emotional exhaustion, such as in situations where employees feel depressed and powerless (Abu, Mohd, Muda, Ahmad, & Manshor, 2016). Employees and companies recognize all too well the impact stress-related illnesses can have on absenteeism, employee turnover, and diminishing productivity (Batson, 2011).
There remains uncertainty about what causes stress among those students who choose to be RAs. The college environment itself is a likely venue for burnout among students due to the intensity of stress (Hardy & Dodd, 1998). College students must deal with demands of classwork, choosing a major, and going to class while fitting in social networks (Martin, Cayanus, Weber, & Goodboy, 2006). Notably, in addition to managing the various stressors associated with being a student, by accepting the role of RA, students assume responsibilities as front-line employees for a student housing department. These responsibilities might include upholding student conduct, peer mentoring, managing roommate conflicts, understanding Title IX compliance issues, and upholding university honor codes and creeds (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003). Every student, before taking the leap to become an RA, has to consider the top priorities for his or her acceptance of the position offer. These considerations usually include, but are not limited to, reducing financial commitment to school, on-the-job training and development, or the influence of a current RA. However, whether or not his or her considerations are met, the RA quickly recognizes the unforeseen challenges in the position. Blimling (2003) explained how certain residents demand all of the RA’s time, placing the RA in a problematic situation in which he or she has to learn how to balance his or her time, while not alienating residents. No training can prepare the RA to face the challenges that come with finding a balance between creating personal space and fulfilling the needs of the residents living on the floor. Frustrations from finding a balance and the other aspects of the position can cause these levels to increase; as frustration increases, so do the RA’s stress and anxiety levels.

Both the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) and its regional affiliate, the Southeastern Association of Housing Officers (SEAHO), have identified a need to appoint professionals to study the RA position and determine changes needed
to create more of a work-student balance. Myrick (2018), during her acceptance speech as the 2018 President of SEAHO, announced she would be appointing a committee to review the RA position. Also, during the 2018 meeting of Southeastern Conference Senior Housing Officers meeting held at the University of Mississippi, many in attendance agreed that more needed to be done to understand factors influencing stress in the RA position. In fact, based on my experience as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director of Housing at the University of Mississippi, there is a strong possibility RAs are experiencing work-related stress and burnout that is not being managed.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to investigate work stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi because the University has an ethical obligation to the students serving in these frontline roles. Second, RAs are important to the success rate of campus housing and the University in supporting and retaining other students. Finally, the focus of this study is to explore the sources and place of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi.

Problem of Practice

RAs are paraprofessionals, as well as students. Thus, RAs are exposed to many stressors, including trying to meet the expectations from an institution’s dependency on RAs in his or her position as front-line employees. Because they are exposed to stressors generally experienced with being a student and are on the front line in helping other students manage their stress, it is to be expected that higher levels of stress are observed within this group of staff members. Although these stress factors are a concern, there is a scarcity of research on the prevalence and
severity of stress and burnout among RAs in their role as caregivers. Furthermore, research regarding compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, while well documented among frontline responders, has been neglected regarding the investigation of the impact these factors has on the RA role. To add to this body of literature about stress among RAs, this study will consist of an investigation of the stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue experienced among RAs at the University of Mississippi.

While being an RA has many benefits, there are challenges. Therefore, it is important to understand how stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue impacts the RA’s ability to balance the competing demands of addressing traumatic issues as frontline employees, while managing the challenges that come with being a student, in general. Caring for others and oneself may come with a personal cost, making the RAs vulnerable due to working in the same environment in which they live. A better understanding of how RAs at the University of Mississippi are impacted by stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue has intrinsic importance and value to student housing practitioners. Furthermore, the research project will be beneficial to professionals working in student housing, informing them of the different warning signs and heightening the awareness of these issues. This research will provide baseline information on stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs.

**Research Questions**

Considering the importance of this study on shaping program design for the Department of Student Housing at the University of Mississippi, the following research questions offered insights into the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue:
1. In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi?

2. In what ways do RAs undergo burnout at the University of Mississippi?

3. What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position?

4. While fulfilling the position’s requirements, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction?

Positionality Statement

Central to this study are ways in which my personal and professional experiences influence how I interpret and draw conclusions in this study. This section contains a description of how, through my family upbringing, work ethic, cultural experiences, work tasks, and maturity, I am informed about and view the problem of practice in this research.

Family Upbringing

In reflecting on my upbringing and how it might influence my positionality, I discovered that I have become aware of my subjectivity related to the lens through which I view this research. I am an African American who grew up in rural Louisiana. I was raised by a single parent who instilled in me the importance of work at an early age. It was common practice for me to feed cattle before riding the bus to school each morning. Poverty was so commonplace that members in my community did not realize we were living in poverty because we all shared the same experience. No one in my immediate family finished college, nor had the resources to send me to college. My mother, raising two boys alone, demonstrated the need to work through whatever problems that arose and never complained or quit. My brother and I have adopted her strong work ethic and ability to persevere despite obstacles. The challenge is that as much as her
sacrifices are appreciated, and her strong work ethic has opened many doors, we also inherited her propensity to not take time for our own self-care. A failure to care for self has likely led to times of considerable frustration, stress, and burnout both personally and professionally. Despite this failure for self-care, I was exposed to the importance of comradery at celebrations. A sense of place in our community was instilled in me at an early age as my mother was viewed as caring and loving, traits I feel have shaped my relationships, work-ethic, and leadership.

Attending college was not forced upon my brother nor me during our upbringing. My mother allowed us to be independent thinkers in that sense. Once I decided to attend college, it was clear that being successful was expected, as I represented her excellent name and needed to respect it in the manner given. In fact, I recall most of our conversations centered on graduation and being willing to sacrifice whatever was required to complete my degree. As a result, I understood my mother’s expectation for me; graduating from college had farther reaching objectives than my own. She may not have communicated it, but I realized I was fulfilling a sixth grade educated woman’s dreams and desires. That understanding would shape how I would perform throughout my college career.

At the University of Arkansas at Monticello, I was both a student-athlete and a RA. This dual role with the pressures and time commitment required for me to be successful at both contributed to feelings of isolation and unwelcomeness among my peers as an undergraduate. This unspoken social awkwardness silently put me in a space whereby I did not feel connected to any group. I felt compelled to uphold the expectations of the college paying for my right to be in college, and, conversely, I did not see any gray area whereby I could not follow all rules assigned to living on campus. My membership in these communities, combined with my mother’s
expectations, meant that I focused on requirements in these areas, sometimes abandoning my self-care, as there was a higher purpose with finishing college.

**Resident Assistant**

My role as an RA was in a residential facility that housed a majority of athletes. I acquired the job after complaining to the Hall Director about the baseball team, staying up late and being rambunctious, which was a disregard for the track team’s early morning training demands. I am sure the Hall Director thought that by me being a student-athlete, I would handle conflicts and gain respect from the residents in the building. The fact is this was the first time I was asked to serve in a role of leadership outside of athletics. Members of the athletic community expected me to allow rules to be broken, while administrators expected to see improvements on the floor I was tasked with managing. Also, while at practice, I perceived my role as a leader of the track team paramount to our success. I was aware that how I carried myself around team members would set an example for younger athletes and could help obtain the respect needed to make changes on the floor I was hired to manage. These student leadership roles demonstrated that my identity was not one-dimensional. I had to recognize how to create boundaries and identify how I would manage being a student, a student leader, and a student-athlete, simultaneously. However, not understanding I had the right to negotiate what was best for me, I worked through my stressors making certain my residents were happy, the team felt I was loyal, and my mother was pleased with my grades. What I failed to understand was the satisfaction I felt through ensuring others’ needs were met came with a sacrifice of my own well-being.

**A Career in Housing**

My entire career has been in student housing. I directly supervised RAs as a graduate hall
director at Murray State University, and as a full-time hall director at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. In addition to these roles, I have worked in multiple administrative functions, which I was directly responsible for outcomes in the RA position. The outcomes included but were not limited to: crisis management, community building, staff well-being, student conduct, work-school balance, and compensation.

**Association of College and University Housing Office International**

ACUHO-I serves as the international governing body for professionals working in campus student housing. I am a member of a group of student housing professionals commissioned by ACUHO-I to study our traditional live-in positions in student housing. These positions include RAs, and Resident Directors (RD). Leadership in ACUHO-I charged the committee with the following:

1. Establishing a baseline knowledge of these roles. This includes gaining a better understanding of the RA and RD roles through an in-depth analysis of available resources that speak to their past, present, and future, and an examination of the different models that are currently being employed on college and university campuses around the world.

2. Identifying areas in which further research is needed. In tandem with the literature review being conducted to establish our baseline understanding of these roles, is the need to identify where further research is needed to understand the current state of these roles (e.g., new/innovative use cases).

3. Providing recommendations for next steps/further action. The white paper will contain concrete and actionable steps/recommendations for the Board to take in order to share this information with the broader membership (e.g., deliverables that address
current and emerging practices within the scope of these roles that lead to successful student outcomes).

Director of Housing

I am the Director of Housing at the University of Mississippi. Each year, we select 142 RAs who serve in the most crucial roles in our organization. These important members of our team have a unique role in enforcing rules and dealing with crises in the environment in which they live. If that is not enough, these same staff members are expected to also build community and care for students in a manner that causes students to feel a sense of belonging to the university. My role as director provides me direct responsibility and authority for ensuring RAs receive proper training on job functions and have the adequate support needed to fulfill the purposes of their job. My role as director allows me the freedom to re-create the position of RA in whatever manner is deemed necessary to ensure success in the position.

Assumptions

My upbringing and life-long career in student housing has informed my work in various ways. Writing my personal positionality has caused me to reflect across a long span to identify how I present myself through my identity. Reflecting across my span of life has led me to four assumptions I have about RA stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. My first assumption is that the RAs in my study will be able to identify stressors leading to burnout in the resident position. I think RAs will not recognize the resources they are trained to recommend to students are also available to RAs during times of need. Second, I presume the participants in my study will indicate they have experienced burnout in the position. I expect that the demands of the position, combined with their academic expectations and the expectations of others, will be the main reasons given for burnout. Third, I believe RAs participating in my study
will identify with compassion satisfaction. These RAs will understand how compassion satisfaction informs the work they provide as student leaders in the residence halls. It will become evident to them that they have a passion for helping others, sometimes at the cost of their well-being. Finally, participants in this study will discover how the satisfaction they get from helping others can also drain viable resources from them, which is compassion fatigue. I anticipate that through this discovery RAs will want to discuss how to help future staff members avoid compassion fatigue. If they cannot create solutions to prevent compassion fatigue, they will want to be a part of building support systems to aid in the care of RAs at the University of Mississippi.

**Analysis of Assumptions**

Through this analysis of my positionality, I have broadened my thinking in how to best counteract the stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue RAs at the University of Mississippi may encounter as a direct result of their role as student and student employee. While my own experiences as an RA and career in student housing is a solid foundation from which to work, this research has challenged me to recognize and appreciate the importance of the RA’s voice. I recognize the need to probe RAs in identifying strategies and solutions around these topics. By utilizing my authority and intellectual inquiry regarding these topics, I can create a space for innovation and generate a pipeline for the betterment of students working as RAs. A failure to address these topics that have always plagued RAs is a failure to adequately address the academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being of our most important front-line student employees.

**Conceptual Framework**
The first part of this section contains a discussion of stress and burnout. Next, is an explanation of the Compassion Fatigue Resilience Model (CFRM) as a framework regarding RA stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. Last, the study under investigation is presented with relevant research questions posed.

**Stress**

Hans Selye is credited with being one of the early pioneers of modern stress theory (Jackson, 2014). It took until 1970 for his findings to be accepted by Physiologists (Viner, 1999). Initially termed General Adaptation Syndrome Model, Hans Selye recognized three series of stages that an organism under stress goes through to regain stability. As shown in Figure 1, Hans termed these three steps Alarm Reaction Stage, Resistance Stage, and Exhaustion Stage (Higuera, 2017). During the Alarm Reaction Stage, the body’s natural response is to try and combat the stressors, often called “fight-or-flight.” It is the first reaction identified in Hans’ three stages of how the body reacts to stressful situations. An example that best describes this would be the feeling and response one would demonstrate if walking alone and someone jumped out of the bushes attempting to attack. One would likely perspire, accompanied by increased heart rate and faster breathing (Higuera, 2017). The second phase, resistance stage, occurs when one’s body starts to try and compensate for the stressors. During this stage, one’s tolerance level to trivial matters can become short, and a person can become irritable, frustrated, and show signs of poor concentration (Higuera, 2017). The third stage, exhaustion, arises from the body experiencing stressors for prolonged periods. During this stage, it is possible for the body to become receptive to diseases, which can put a person in a heightened state for stress-related illnesses (Higuera, 2017).
Figure 1. Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome

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Burnout

Burnout has long been a significant topic in the workplace. Gorievski and Hobfoll, (2008) credited Freudenberger for conceptualizing burnout in the workplace, defining it as having a direct correlation with excessive work and its impact on the depletion of an employee’s energy and social resources. Later, Maslach, along with other scholars believed burnout was the direct result of environmental and organizational factors. Maslach and Leiter (2008) identified six key domains in which the work environment contributed to
burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (figure 2). As employees engage with these six domains, increases in mismatches between the domains and the employee increase the likelihood for burnout (Berry, 2017). The first domain is workload, which directly impacts the RA position. The workload for an RA can range from having to work desk hours, 2-3-hour long staff meetings, on-call rotations, and administrative responsibilities. Of the six domains, workload is the singular domain most congruent with exhaustion (Leiter & Maslacha, 2016).

Figure 2. Areas of worklife (AWS) and burnout (MBI) model. https://ars.els-cdn.com/content/image/1-s2.0-S2213058614200179-gr1.jpg

Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue

No framework exists for compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue related to the RA position, indicating a gap in knowledge and theory development. However, to gain a clearer understanding of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, one will have to review the vast research done with social workers, nurses, and other front-line professionals that work with humans impacted by secondary traumatic stress. In a similar fashion as nurses, RAs are drawn to their work through the ability to help others to experience success. The RAs can accomplish this through developing compassion for their residents through the bonding that results from programs, floor meetings, eating together in the dining halls, and late-night binges or playing video games (Hodge, 2016). Despite the satisfaction gained from these bonding experiences, the
RAs can also experience compassion fatigue, through secondary traumatic stress from the same relationships they have worked interminably to develop.

**The General Model of Compassion Fatigue Resilience Model**

The General Model of Compassion Fatigue Resilience Model (CFRM), figure 3, is based on the premise that those in helping profession roles demonstrate some level of compassion for the persons they are tasked with serving (Figley, 2014). In a similar manner as nurses, RAs may experience satisfaction from serving persons exposed to stressful and secondary traumatic circumstances; thus, the Compassion Fatigue Resilience Model (CFRM) will be used as a conceptual framework for this study. Created by Figley, CFRM is a model that is used to explain compassion fatigue experienced by workers who care for others suffering trauma (Figley, 2014). Applying to all human service workers, CFRM can be viewed as a useful model in predicting who among these workers may be vulnerable to burnout, compassion fatigue, and various trauma (Figley & Figley, 2017). Figley (2014) asserted that there are 11 metrics in helping to identify if a worker is subject to compassion fatigue, “exposure to the client suffering, empathic ability, concern for client, therapeutic response, residual compassions stress, self-regulation, compassion satisfaction report, compassion fatigue resilience, prolong exposure to the clients, effective management of traumatic memories, and new and chronic stressors” (Figley, 2014, p. 1).
This qualitative study uses a post-positivist approach; an approach that assumes reality is objective and expressed through observation (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Though the focus of CFRM is designed for social workers, military personnel, and animal care workers, the model can be applied to front-line paraprofessional staff serving students in trauma. Each of the 11 metrics in helping to identify if a paraprofessional staff member is subject to burnout and compassion fatigue is important, thus confirming the reality that RAs experience stress from students they are hired to care for. This qualitative approach with the use of the CFRM will help to develop interventions to recognize and establish support systems regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi.

**Review of Literature**

This section includes the literature review of the paraprofessional role of the RA in higher education. The literature review consists of an examination of the (a) historical overview of student housing; (b) Student Housing dependence of the paraprofessional RA; (c) Secondary
Trauma and the Role of the RA; (d) The Working Student; (e) RA Motivation; (f) RAs and Harassment; (g) Sources of Stress and Burnout; (h) Compassion Fatigue; and (i) Compassion Satisfaction.

**Historical Overview of Student Housing**

Researchers and authors have extensively documented the relationship between universities and the evolution of student housing. Blimling (2003) noted that residence halls can trace their lineage back to the Middle Ages when thousands of students flocked to universities in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford. Many of these communities were small, with the number of students enrolled at these institutions far exceeding those living in the township (Blimling, 2003). Cowley (1934) offered a picturesque view of how times may have been for students flocking to these campuses. He described the scenery to be one of gross overcrowding, with the majority of students identified as poverty-stricken and not exceeding 15 years in age. While sons of the wealthy were able to acquire lodging, the poverty-stricken teens remedied their lodging dilemma through boarding with masters and townsmen, renting garrets, and a few were able to secure the rental of entire homes (Cowley, 1934). Expansion had to occur, and it is in the twelfth century, in Bologna, that the early stages of an organized housing structure occurred (Cowley, 1934). Eventually, without university involvement, these students began to leave rental houses and organize into self-governing lodges (Cowley, 1934). Residents were not only required to meet the financial obligations for living in these properties, they were expected to abide by disciplinary regulations and processes for rule enforcement (Cowley, 1934). Colleges and Universities recognized the need to provide similar lodging for less-resourced students (Blimling, 2003). They gradually capitalized on this development by asserting their authority on election of principals and creating lodges to eventually live in (Blimling, 2003). Within the
properties, self-governing lodges were set-up in a democratic model to establish rules and houses selected by the students (Blimling, 2003).

The beginning of the American student housing profession was brought on by the English colonization of North America, and their bringing along the traditions and concepts of education learned in England (Blimling, 2003). In 1636, at Harvard University, the first residential college system was established (Ovathanasin, 2015). Cowley (1934) suggested that while the English system may have experienced systems in Oxford and Cambridge, the expectation for faculty to serve as disciplinarians and classroom instructors proved to be challenging to implement successfully. One of the reasons that the residential college system did not experience immediate success was due to the youthful independence of students, which translated into behavior that did not align with the scholarly pursuits of American faculty and university leadership (Ovathanasin, 2015). Several presidents condemned the model in favor of the German educational system, which focused on research and teaching (Blattner, Cawthon, & Baumann, 2013). Under the German model, the faculty and university leadership contentiousness with disciplinary concerns of students and university influence over non-classroom activities became nonexistent, and students were left responsible for meeting their demands for housing (Rong, 1998). However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the second wave of university interest in student housing ensued. Blimling (2003) pointed to the establishment of private universities for women, the convergence of the ideas regarding college life, such as: law, debate, academic societies, and the need for students to participate in extracurricular activities as having a significant influence on the rejuvenation of student housing. The next major breakthrough in the rapid expansion of student housing came through the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, which provided, for the first time, resources from the federal government in the form of loans to build residence halls
(Blimling, 2003). It should be noted that it is during this later development of residence halls that the RA position became more popular and broadened to reflect the needs of the growing student population living in residence halls.

**Student Housing Dependence of the Paraprofessional RA**

Student Housing, in the fulfillment of the educational mission of the institution, - a complex and variable mix involving socialization, retention, outreach, and crisis management, - relies heavily on the RA to achieve these outcomes. At the University of Mississippi, RA job responsibilities include documenting student interactions, building a community among residents, planning educational and social events, and communicating pertinent dates and deadlines ranging from registering for classes to the semester closing of the residential facilities.

Student Housing also relies on the RAs to fulfill other administrative functions such as creating bulletin boards, decorating doors, and attending meetings. The RA position is a demanding job requiring the paraprofessional to facilitate the social, academic, and personal adjustment of students, while simultaneously balancing his or her own schedule and priorities as a student. With these responsibilities, it is easy to recognize how stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue can become commonplace among RAs.

**Secondary Trauma and the Role of the RA**

Novotney (2014) pointed to survey results from the 2013 National College Health Assessment, indicating that in the last 12 months, about one-third of U.S. College students had difficulty functioning due to depression, and more than one-half felt overwhelming anxiety. Being on the frontline of crisis response, RAs are frequently confronted with the realities of trauma life-altering events experienced by students residing in the residence halls. Lynch (2017b) identified these life-altering events to include severe mental illness, substance abuse,
sexual violence, and hate crimes. Similarly, Dexter, Huff, Rudecki, and Abraham (2018) posited that college students, especially first-year students, experience stressors arising from the challenges related to transitioning into college life. Some of these challenges might include changes in social engagement norms, roommate conflicts, academic rigor, and the discovery of one’s identity.

Other than enforcing discipline, no other role produces significant strain on the RAs than dealing with a student in trauma (Nowack & Hanson, 1983). Novotney (2014) drew attention to the finding that more than 30 percent of students who are seeking out counseling services report serious consideration to committing suicide. Novotney provided one reason for the increase in students needing more help to the fact that enrollment in degree-seeking institutions has increased by 32 percent from 2001-2011. In addition, Novotney asserted that students who may not have otherwise attended college previously due to depression and other development or behavior concerns have begun attending as better treatment strategies are being developed.

Lynch (2017b) contended that although administrators have responsibility for the creation of protocols and other support resources for students experiencing trauma, it is the RA who shoulders most of the burden and responsibility that comes from living in the building with students experiencing trauma.

The Working Student

Researchers who study the working college student and their juggling of myriad roles can better address stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs. A search of relevant literature indicated that although many published studies describe the impact of working and academic success among students, inclusion of the RA position in this body of research has not been well documented. Perna (2010) reported a real paradigm shift in the
growing number of hours worked by college students. She pointed out that the full-time undergraduate student working fewer than 20 hours weekly has declined by fifteen percent, while the number working between twenty and twenty-five hours per week has risen to 21 percent. Even more staggering is that twelve percent of students surveyed work at least thirty-five hours per week (Perna, 2010).

Researches have conducted studies involving working students to determine if their work load has an impact on their grades. In an exploratory study of over 281 students under the age of 24 at two urban commuter campuses in Indiana, researchers examined student work patterns and academic success (Torress, Gross, & Dadashova, 2010). The results, with respect to cumulative GPA, show students with an “A” average worked fewer hours, while “B” and “C” worked more hours per week. The researchers also attempted to account for academic preparation through the use of regression models by accounting for SAT scores. They concluded that less academically gifted students tended to work more hours and validated previous research that the optimal number of hours a student should work is 10-15 per week (Torress et al., 2010). Working within 10-15 hours per week becomes challenging for the RAs in large part due to their living on the floor they are charged with managing.

**RA Motivation**

Aside from leadership development, building their resume or participating in the overall betterment of residence halls, compensation is thought to be the major reason many students apply to become RAs. Bierman and Carpenter (1994) conducted a study to evaluate work motivation factors among RAs. Participants were chosen at random from 46 four-year institutions. All 46 institutions, public and private, were members of the Southwestern Association of College and University Housing Officers (SWACUHO), a regional organization
for student housing professionals living in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. The researchers revealed a strong correlation between RAs working at more extensive programs and how they rated items about the pressures of work (Bierman & Carpenter, 1994). Specific to this study, in a larger institution, the RA/resident ratio can leave RAs feeling overwhelmed with responsibility, administrative duties, and the overall management and care for residents residing on their floor. The researchers concluded their findings by stating that as the position increases in numbers and responsibilities, factors influencing work motivation among RAs will need to be addressed.

In another study, Boone (2016) sought to determine RA workplace motivation factors at Mid-Atlantic residence life programs. Boone used the Resident Assistant Motivation Questionnaire (RAMQ) created by Deluga and Winter in 1991, to analyze 231 respondents, representing 46 different institutions. RAMQ uses a 5-point Likert scale to respond to 24 questions that are split into six factors: helping behaviors, career development, desire for power, personal growth, financial obligations, and RA cohesiveness. The helping behaviors factor is used to determine if the mindset of helping others impacted the RA interest in applying for the position (Boone, 2016). The career development factor refers to the mindset of the RA regarding motivation that the RA job would lead to a job or graduate school admissions. The desire for power factor measures the level by which a person needs to control others, which serves as motivation for them applying to become an RA. The motivation of personal growth refers to the mindset the RA placed on the importance of personal and professional growth as a motivator in applying for the position. The financial obligation factor is used to indicate the mindset the RA placed on finances as a driver for applying to the position. Finally, the RA cohesiveness factor refers to the mindset regarding the degree of attraction to the team goals and other characteristics
aligning with the RA position as motivating factors for applying for the position (Deluga & Winter, 1991).

Boone (2016) found “that helping behavior and RA cohesiveness remained in prominence, similar to the study administered by Deluga and Winter in 1991. While helping behavior and RA cohesiveness remained in prominence, financial obligations leaped to second, after having been second to last in the previous study. Having power remained the least in prominence; this has been the case for the survey throughout the years administered, and finally career development, while having a higher score than Deluga and Winter remained constant (Boone, 2016, pages 88-90).”

**RAs and Harassment**

In the context of stress, harassment, “is defined as interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another” (Bowling & Beehr, 2006, p. 1). Keashly, Hunter, and Harvey (1997) posited that despite extensive research being paid to RA role ambiguity and role conflict, the topic in research that has focused on the hostile interpersonal interactions between the RA and the residents remains unaddressed. In fact, a thorough review of new research regarding emotional and physical abuse towards RAs was sparse and dated back to 1997. Yet, in organizational psychology, workplace harassment research is proliferating under various labels, such as bullying, social undermining, and abuse (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). RAs, as frontline employees, often face demands related to student success in the residence halls. While the RA-resident interaction is positive in most aspects, occurrences involving visitation violations, alcohol consumption, and other disciplinary issues can increase the likelihood of the RA experiencing being harassed by a resident, member of their family or friend.
Harris and Daunt (2013) conducted a study of 24 frontline employees and 64 managers. Collectively they claimed customer misbehavior was an important cause of stress in their working environment. Furthermore, the customer whose behavior was harmful towards the employee not only negatively influenced the employee's attitude during the occurrence, but determined how the employee’s interactions throughout the day went. Managers interviewed for the study voiced a concern with staff recruitment and retention due to harassing behavior towards frontline employees. Finally, the behaviors took up considerable time for managers, increasing their role in providing informal counseling and improving staff morale (Harris & Daunt, 2013). Therefore, challenges arising from harassing behavior can result in the RA emoting feelings of anger, frustration, irritation, sadness, and even depression (Harris & Daunt, 2013).

Schuh and Shipton (1983) studied over 163 RAs at Indiana University, Bloomington who remained employed the entire 1981-82 academic year. The results showed that when addressing verbal abuse encounters, over 50 percent of the RAs interviewed had obscenities directed at them. Researchers also noted that Black RAs reported experiencing racial slurs more than the non-minority groups. Women also stated they had encountered more sexual slurs than their male counterparts.

Similarly, when asked for a response to physical abuse encounters, overwhelmingly, RAs reported malicious pranks followed by property damage as being most prevalent. Male RAs reported more malicious pranks and Male RAs and Coeducational RAs experienced more frequent reports of property damage. The fact that many of these responses are likely still prevalent is a justification for further research to provide support for RAs facing these challenges.
In another study, Keashly et al. (1997), in an effort to understand specific verbal and non-verbal abuse behaviors and their relationship to job satisfaction of undergraduate students, surveyed 76 RAs at a mid-sized Canadian university. The researchers looked at four stressor areas relating to the position: responsibility and demands, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. The study of 76 RAs consisted of 45 females and 31 males. Surveys were distributed to all RAs during staff meetings. Although the RAs experienced many positive events over a six-month period, when they did have a negative encounter with students, the encounters happened with occasional frequency and had a negative impact on the RA. The researchers pointed to a previous study for comparison, whereby undergraduates employed outside the RA position reported less frequent abusive events (M=4.85) over 12 months than the (M=10) encounters the RA had experienced over six months. The researchers concluded that there was evidence that emotional abuse as a stressor, especially when experienced frequently, has a broad range of effects on the RA position.

**Sources of Stress and Burnout**

Berry (2017) discussing employees, in general, asserted that researchers found a decline in work productivity and an uptick in employee turnover as significant factors impacting burnout. Combine this with the student worker conditions and myriad tasks to complete, and it becomes clear how the RA position can be taxing to these paraprofessionals. Some of the factors impacting these student workers include: (a) the mounting pressures of academic pursuits, (b) the administrative tasks of socializing residents into the broader campus community, (c) maintaining physical safety, (d) conflict management, (e) role-modeling, (f) managing financial difficulties, and (g) providing academic encouragement (Manata, DeAngelis, Palk, & Miller, 2017). The
complexity of stress and burnout experienced by these paraprofessionals belies the notion that responsibilities in the RA position are simple and only need adjustments to be corrected.

Paladino, Murray, Newgent, and Gohn (2005) pointed out that there exist factors that can predict and contribute to burnout within RAs. The researchers surveyed 193 undergraduate RAs: 150 RAs employed at a large public university in the southeastern region of the U.S., and 40 RAs employed at a midsize southern university. Participants were administered a modified Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS): a 22-question survey designed to measure levels of burnout in human service professionals. With the researchers determining RA burnout arises from occurrences in the personal life, training, and work environment, they sought to use the MBI-HSS to determine burnout scores on three subscales: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment. Findings indicated that RAs at the midsize university showed a high level of depersonalization—cynical feelings towards their residents (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). It was thought that this factor existed due to the RAs having fewer levels of staffing, thus resulting in the RAs at the midsize university being more cynical. Additionally, it was determined that male RAs had higher levels of depersonalization than female RAs. In addition, although survey participants were mostly white, non-white students tended to show higher levels of depersonalization. The researchers felt these results could be closely tied to non-white students feeling isolated and alienated from residents, staff and the university as a whole.

Data indicate that hall configuration was a key factor in feelings of exhaustion among RAs. RAs who are working in traditional-style halls, with its long corridors and community, shared bathrooms, showed high levels of emotional exhaustion with the RAs, feeling they had depleted their ability to give any more of themselves on a psychological level (Maslach & Leiter,
A higher level of emotional exhaustion was also seen in first-year residential facilities. The researchers stated that these findings were in line with previous studies and suggested RAs in these facilities, due to being extended, are at a higher risk of burnout.

It is important to understand how role ambiguity and conflict in the RA position, particularly the roles of serving as paraprofessional counselors and crisis interventionists, impact job performance. With the growing mental health and other trauma issues on a college campus, the RA is often asked to perform these duties, many times lacking the necessary training to fulfill the requirements needed for the position (Owens, 2011). Owens interviewed nine RAs to gain an understanding of their perceptions as paraprofessional counselors and crisis interventionists. He discovered that as the number of RAs being interviewed increased, so did his realization that burnout was a recognized part of the RA experience. Similar to Paladino et al. (2005), Owens discovered low personal accomplishment, exhaustion, and depersonalization were prevalent in most of the RA comments. Many of the participants in his study expressed feelings of being exhausted from lack of sleep, high volumes of visits from the same high need students daily, and feeling they were in a student position that did not provide a distinction between when they were students and when they were paraprofessionals. These factors describing role ambiguity and conflict in the RA position began to define answers RAs gave for their declining performance (Owens, 2011).

**Compassion Fatigue**

There has been significant interest in examining the relationship between compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among student affairs workers; however, its impact on RAs is unknown. RAs nationwide engage in human encounters that bring them face to face with students who are eager to share how their RA made a difference in their academic success and
social connections on campus. These same RAs come face to face with students who experience trauma, ranging anywhere from feeling socially unfit to suicide. In the nursing field the terms for these experiences were coined, it is not uncommon for some nurses to experience stress from working with traumatized patients. The repeated stress later resulting in burnout before manifesting into compassion fatigue is a condition whereby one becomes negatively impacted and experiences feelings of low self-worth (Craig & Sprang, 2009). Yet, given the same environment, some nurses feel motivated and a sense of professional growth from the experience, which is described as compassion satisfaction. Circumstances and outcomes may vary by individual experiences, but what is most important is the realization that frontline exposure to those experiencing trauma can have direct emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impact on one person helping another (Craig & Sprang, 2009). Because both nurses’ and RAs’ experiences are similar in some ways, it is possible to classify the RA among this group of professionals. The relationships RAs have with residents during their best and most challenging times can serve as a stimulus that depletes or motivates the RA.

**Compassion Satisfaction**

“My heart is in the work” -- Andrew Carnegie

These words will forever call me to action. They are the words that were penned by Andrew Carnegie in the founding of Carnegie Mellon University. They are also the words that I think about whenever the term compassion satisfaction is mentioned. Students can pen the same words when they are elevated to the role of RA. I have personally witnessed calls home to family, tears of joy, and social media announcements, when students receive notice that they have been chosen to serve as an RA. This passion continues throughout most of their training and may start to decline slightly as the realization of job duties and responsibilities begin to settle
in. The energy is again heightened with excitement as the RAs prepare for their residents, and move-in day is in full swing. Stamm (2010) described compassion satisfaction as the extent to which an employee perceives gratification from performing one’s work at the highest level he or she perceives is possible. Compassion satisfaction research among RAs is nonexistent. To gain an understanding of how this phenomenon exists, there needs to be a recognition of how working with humans and their emotions, and the passion human service professionals get from serving their peers, links this paraprofessional position to other emotionally intense professional positions (Bemiller & Williams, 2011). Employing RAs who are competent in their roles is an integral part of any student housing organization. RAs are vulnerable to compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction due, in large part, to emotions from direct interaction with the residents.

Klein (2016) posited that selective attention on the negative impacts of working in an emotionally intense position negates the adrenaline rush and motivation that some employees face when helping those experiencing trauma. In a mixed study administered to 110 Title IX Administrators (95 completed surveys, and 15 phone interviews) it was determined that there was low to average burnout and secondary traumatic stress, as well as average to high levels of compassion satisfaction (Klein, 2016). While the researcher studied Title IX Administrators, similar sentiments of this group are applicable to students serving in the RA role. For example, 9 of the 15 Title IX Administrators responses illuminated their inability to find a balance between their work life and their personal life. They struggled with defining how to employ basic self-care practices such as setting boundaries within their roles. Those interviewed expressed how difficult it was to make the transition to home life without bringing work to the dining room table. Other notable outcomes from those interviewed included a lack of supervisors modeling self-care. Several respondents indicated a feeling of their institution being under constant
scrutiny and in crisis mode. As a result of these feelings, Title IX administrators participating in the study felt that it was challenging to submit requests for leave time.

Although Klein (2016) found that many of these administrators were experiencing high levels of compassion satisfaction, and lower levels of burnout and compassion fatigue, they lacked vital resources to help them strike a balance between their work life and personal life. Klein recommends opportunities, such as pairing of younger staff with older staff in a mentoring role, having social spaces for sharing coping strategies, providing information on compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction or approaches that can set staff up for success.

Jacobson (2006) investigated compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and burnout reactions among employee assistance professionals providing workplace crisis intervention and disaster management services. The over 800 respondents revealed Employee Assistant Professionals (EAP) experienced low levels of burnout, moderate levels of compassion fatigue, and high potential for compassion satisfaction. Jacobson posited that EAP employees suffering from symptoms associated with compassion fatigue may become impaired and unable to perform important tasks needed for the safe execution of their duties in crisis situations. Another finding in the study was the discovery that while EAPs are trained and spend a significant portion of their jobs educating his or her clients on such topics as self-care and positive coping, it remains unclear how what they are teaching translates to his or her personal stressful situations. Another discovery was the lack of intervention to help these employees cope with the stressors often present after a crisis. Jacobson suggested programs such as creating a space that the “debriefer” has an opportunity to discuss and analyze. On the national level, there is an established program whereby the EAP volunteers support others via email and telephone conversation who may be
experiencing a crisis, such as Hurricane Katrina. The researcher reported that respondents found the service to be overwhelmingly positive and encouraging.

This section contained a critical review of relevant literature regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs. As evident in the literature, there has been myriad studies about stress and burnout exposure by RAs, however research remains limited into how compassion fatigue impacts their role as students and paraprofessionals. This review of literature began with an historical overview of housing, and the working role of the student and paraprofessional. While the RA position may have once been limited to programming and social engagement, through this research, I have come to understand the complexity of RAs experience, such as resident abuse and increased responsibility for students in their community. This increase in complexity and the likelihood of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RA at the University of Mississippi is what I propose to discover.

Finally, due to a gap in the literature and research about how compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue are present within the RA role, studies from other helping professions, such as Title IX administrators and EAP working in crisis situations were studied. This study will fill a need for these paraprofessionals by resulting in recommendations to managers that they can use to create support systems to help RAs cope and recover from secondary traumatic situations.

**Methodology**

This section contains a detailed description of the research design chosen for this study. The design, rationale for its use, participant and sampling plan, interview approach, setting, and protection provided to human subjects used in this study are identified. Additionally, plans for data collection, data analysis, and analytical will be discussed. The focus of this study was to
explore the stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue experienced by RAs at the University of Mississippi. Understanding the perceptions of RAs at the University of Mississippi and the stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue RAs identify in their role is challenging since the position is transient. However, it was necessary to pursue this inquiry if we are to inch closer towards a substantive and comprehensive understanding of the impact stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue has on the RA position at the University of Mississippi. Considering the importance of this study on shaping program design for the Department of Student Housing at the University of Mississippi, the following are research questions for this study:

1. In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi?
2. In what ways do RAs undergo burnout at the University of Mississippi?
3. What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position?
4. While fulfilling the requirements of the position, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction?

**Design**

Research for this study was conducted using a qualitative research method approach. A qualitative design is considered appropriate to investigate insightful perspectives and meaning of the complexities of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi. Qualitative research, in this study, provided an opportunity for the researcher to examine the thoughts and feelings of research participants (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By analyzing this data, the researcher afforded the opportunity to develop themes to gain a better understanding.
of RAs’ experiences and behaviors to design programs to support this frontline staff group.

**Rationale for Methodology**

Jackson (2014) suggested that at the core of the social sciences is the opportunity to investigate and discover new or different ways of understanding answers to questions, via observation, and the changing nature of lived social realities. Saldana, Leavy, and Beretvas, (2011) posited that outcomes derived from qualitative research are most often composed of key findings in the research literature from various research participants to understand their shared qualities and experiences. The resulting outcome is that the researcher can gain a clearer understanding of program effectiveness, human meanings, and individual complexity within a given environment (Saldana et al., 2011). The focus of this aspect of the study was to analyze and synthesize the perceptions RAs have on the topics of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue at the University of Mississippi and how it impacts their role as students and paraprofessionals. The findings from this study will be useful in designing programs and support systems that are essential for overall wellbeing and continued competence enhancements within the RA position.

**Participant and sampling plan**

For this study, the researcher selected 15 RAs willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview format is appropriate for this study because it allowed for pre-determined questions which follow a specified order, allowing for further probing questions of participants to provide in-depth responses to open-ended questions, as needed (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

The participants were selected through a criterion-based sampling process (Patton, 2002). The purpose of using criterion-based sampling is to choose a sampling size that meets some
criterion in this case; all RAs must have been employed for one semester. Using the criterion-based approach in this study ensures quality assurance efforts are met, that interviews produce information-rich responses that may unveil department challenges, and to identify areas where departments should direct resources for improvement (Patton, 2002). The profile below was developed based on my understanding of the RA’s position, reading of literature, and discussion with colleagues in the student housing profession. Fifteen RAs were selected for the study based on the following criteria:

1. The participant was an RA for a minimum of one semester when the study took place.
2. The participant was an RA on a floor with a minimum size of 30 residents when the study took place.
3. The participant does not have any prior documented job performance concerns within the department.
4. The participant will have provided written confirmation, to the department, that he or she is not returning to the RA position after the 2019-2020 academic year.

It is anticipated that data collection will take place between January 2019 and May 2019. Participants in the research study were employed as RAs at the University of Mississippi during the time of the study.

**Research Site and Selection**

The study was conducted at the University of Mississippi, in Oxford, MS. The University of Mississippi is the Flagship University for the State of Mississippi that enrolls over 23,000 diverse students (24% from underrepresented populations). It is a public research institution with 16 academic units, including a major medical school, law school, and regional campuses in Booneville, Desoto, Grenada, and Tupelo Mississippi. At the University of Mississippi, the
Department of Student Housing provides accommodations for 5,100 students in seven traditional halls, six contemporary halls, two residential colleges, and one apartment building. More than 142 RAs are employed within the department of student housing. Each RA has the responsibility for a floor, wing, or area of a residence hall or apartment community. Helping with the personal and academic concerns of each student, the RA should be a person who cares for residents and who works to make the residence hall or apartment community a respectful, safe, and inclusive home for all who live there.

**Data Overview and Collection**

After obtaining approval from the University of Mississippi Internal Review Board, the researcher coordinated all logistics involving the interview of each participant. The preferred location was chosen by the participant in a place and at a time convenient for them. Participants agreed to a signed informed consent form acknowledging they waive the right for me to check their documented job performance. Furthermore, the RAs, by signing the informed consent form, acknowledged they had informed their supervisor that he or she was not returning to the RA position after the 2019-2020 academic year. Also, each participant agreed being audio recorded before the semi-structured interview. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Each interview was planned for 40 minutes, with 20 additional minutes allowed for follow-up questions depending on the interviewee’s responses.

Each participant was audio recorded, and the researcher took field notes during the interview session. In addition to transcribing interviews and analyzing the data gathered through the coding process, looking for relevant themes, a review of notes made from participant observations to questions during the interview session was documented.
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STRESS, BURNOUT, COMPASSION SATISFACTION, AND COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

MANUSCRIPT TWO

Lionel Maten

The University of Mississippi
The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of Resident Assistants (RAs) at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue to help improve paraprofessional development. This chapter contains an introduction, description of the sample, participant characteristics, interview participants, and data analysis that guided the study. Also included are the limitations of the study, emerging themes, and a summary of the chapter.

**Introduction**

This chapter consists of a discussion of the findings from the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi, relating to the sources and places of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. A qualitative methods design was an appropriate design for this study to achieve the goal of gaining a better understanding of the lived experience among RAs. Patton, (2015) posited that through in-depth qualitative inquiry, researchers interpret how people and groups construct the meaning-making process. According to McCusker and Gunaydin (2014) researchers who use qualitative research aim to explore phenomena and gain a better understanding of the what, how, and why when addressing the problem of practice that is being investigated. Furthermore, McCusker and Gunaydin (2014), asserted that with a qualitative study, the researcher, who must interpret data after they are acquired, is integral to the quality of the process and must, therefore, maintain a high quality to ensure the process is exceptional. Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) confirmed that most social science studies rely on data from coded in-depth semi-structured interview
transcripts to investigate results of a study. Finally, Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer (2010) pointed out that semi-structured interviews are appropriate for conducting formative program reviews, whereby the researcher may want to conduct one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, including front-line service providers. Accordingly, the semi-structured interview method was appropriate for this study to explore the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi relating to the sources and place of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue.

**Research Questions**

Considering the importance of this study on shaping the program design for the Department of Student Housing at the University of Mississippi, the following primary research questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi?
2. In what ways do RAs undergo burnout at the University of Mississippi?
3. What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position?
4. While fulfilling the requirements of the position, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue?

**Description of the sample**

The population (N=15) for this qualitative study consisted of RAs currently employed at the Department of Student Housing at the University of Mississippi. To be eligible to participate in the study, each participant needed to be an RA for a minimum of one semester when the study
took place. The participant could not have had any prior documented job performance concerns within the department. Also, each participant had to have been on a student housing floor with a minimum of 30 residents when the study took place. Finally, each participant had to provide written confirmation to the department, stating that he or she will not be returning to the RA position after the 2019-2020 academic year.

After receiving the University of Mississippi Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct research, I requested and received a list of 53 RAs who fit the criteria and were eligible to participate in the study. Emails were sent to all eligible participants seeking their participation. Each participant was informed that voluntary participation would involve consenting to an interview with the researcher in a private setting where the conversation would be recorded and transcribed. The initial responses received from students willing to participate in the study totaled 15, which was the number of respondents predetermined for this study. RAs agreeing to participate in the study were contacted, via email, and asked if they wanted to be interviewed outside of the student housing setting. All participants indicated that they approved of the interview site, thus not viewing it as a risk or concern. After securing a site for interviewing, times were set to accommodate each participant’s schedule. Interviews took place during the Spring 2019 academic semester. Prior to and upon arriving at the interview, each participant was informed that the research design of this semi-structured interview would consist of one (1) in-depth one-on-one audio-recorded interview that would be approximately 40 minutes in length. Their participation would involve consenting to an interview with me in a private setting where the researcher would use a tape recorder to record our conversation. Each participant was also notified that he or she had the option to not respond to any questions that he or she chose or withdraw entirely without penalty or loss of benefits. Additionally, participants were notified that
their participation was voluntary, confidential, and that all interview materials would have their pseudonyms, instead of their names. During the transcription phase, any identifying information shared was edited and bracketed. Interviews were recorded on a Sony ICDUX560BLK Digital Voice Recorder and included field notes of the office environment, as well as noticeable, non-verbal responses. After the interviews, all information collected for the study was labeled with each participant’s pseudonym and kept in a locked and secure space in my home office. For their participation in the study, participants were given a $25.00 Amazon gift card.

**Participant Characteristics**

The targeted population for this study were RAs employed at the University of Mississippi during the time of this study. The participants who volunteered to participate in this study must have completed a minimum of one semester as an RA. All participants (N=15) who responded and signed a consent form began their interview by answering demographic questions to determine their age range, gender, ethnicity, semesters of employment, and facilities worked at during employment. All participants ranged in the 18-22 age profile, thirteen were undergraduate students about to graduate with a bachelor’s degree from the University, with only two leaving the position and continuing with their undergraduate studies. The participants were working within their second semester or higher, with the average number of semesters work being four semesters, dedicating a combined 62 semesters of RA experience to the department. Additionally, the type of facilities where they were employed covered the current housing portfolio for the department: apartment, traditional, and contemporary. Table 1 contains the characteristics of the participants’ age range, gender, ethnicity, semesters of employment, and facilities worked at during employment. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each student participating in the interviews.
Table 1

Demographics of participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Semesters of Experience</th>
<th>Facilities Employed*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>18-22</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinne</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C, T, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C, T, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jayden</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
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<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>T, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>18-22</td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (C) Contemporary, (T) Traditional, and (A) Apartments
Interview Participants

RAs interviewed for the study participated in face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in which they answered questions to assist the researcher in gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue to help improve the paraprofessional development and overall job functionality. All interviews occurred in the researcher’s office at the University of Mississippi and participants were afforded freedom of choice regarding place and time for the interview. A second time, RAs verbally communicated the location chosen was non-threatening, hence this did not cause any harm or impact their ability to be open and honest regarding the lived experience being an RA at the University of Mississippi. I was careful in making sure to remove any descriptive identifiers. Each interviewee was informed about the purpose of the study, and with his or her permission, a digital voice recorder was used to record the conversations during the interview process. A second recorder was used as a backup in case of primary recorder malfunctioned. All interviewees accepted being interviewed and were asked the same initial question, “Why did you choose to become an RA?” The following section contains a brief description of each participant’s motivation for applying to become an RA,

Ruth. Ruth indicated that she chose to become an RA because, during her freshman year, her RA was not as resourceful as she felt she could have been. Ruth knew her RA existed but was never compelled to be open to her about the things she was experiencing during her first year. She resolved that her RA was an authoritative figure and not someone that could help her solve personal issues. Due to not experiencing any compassion from this encounter, Ruth began to view the RA as the alcohol police. Having this experience, Ruth applied for the RA position with hopes of being a compassionate figure for her residents.
Mary. Mary’s motivation for applying to become an RA was that she was an out of state student and viewed the RA position as a strategic way to afford housing and meals while attending university.

Willie. Willie, knowing that he wanted to live on campus for his sophomore year, and having an excellent relationship with his RA, was inspired to apply for the position. He credited his RA’s handling of situation’s with grace and compassion, while at the same time being hilarious and helpful as a motivator for his application. Another trait Willie admired in his RA was his ability to remember everyone’s name.

General. General’s motivation for becoming an RA was to have a job that provided structure and consistency in maintaining a schedule. Also, being Christian, General found pleasure in helping build relationships with others. Finally, like Mary, General also viewed the position as a means to cover his cost for room and board.

Carrie. Carrie, determined to live on campus during all four years of college, viewed the RA position as a means to guarantee her academic goals would be met.

Corinne. Corinne, an out of state student, felt disconnected starting her first year at the University of Mississippi. Other students residing on her floor were Corinne’s first campus community, and she credits her RA as the first person to positively impact her college experience by creating an environment where everyone felt engaged in the community. It was through observing the efforts of her first year RA that Corinne became inspired to become an RA.

Maggie. Maggie, wanting to help her family cover expenses in attaining her degree, credited her positive first-year experience in the honors college, a need to find a job that matched her schedule, and the many friends she made from living in a positive community, as motivators to apply to become an RA. She desired to re-create what she experienced with other first year
students coming into the community.

**Shirley.** Shirley attended a boarding high school and had experienced her fair share of RAs there. Shirley entered the University of Mississippi knowing that she wanted to give the RA position a try.

**Milton.** Milton’s inspiration for becoming an RA is credited to his brother. While visiting his brother at another institution, Milton witnessed first-hand the impact his brother had on residents and was hooked. Having a willingness to help others, Milton felt the RA position embodied everything he was and came to college prepared to serve in this role.

**Rose.** Rose was asked by a friend, who was an RA at the time, to consider applying to be an RA. The friend and current RA sold Rose on the benefits of receiving compensation and being allowed to live on campus for another year. Rose was also not impressed by her own RA and felt she could perform the job at a much higher and efficient level.

**Kayla.** Kayla’s initial motivation for becoming an RA was financial. It was during move-in that Kayla met her RA and felt led to consider applying to become an RA. Knowing she wanted to be involved on campus, and further contact with other RAs provided the motivation Kayla needed to apply for the position.

**Jayden.** Jayden, not having transportation, was looking for a job that would allow him to live on campus. Jayden was also motivated to become an RA because he had not met many people during his first year and this position would create opportunities for him to interact with diverse people from many cultures at the University of Mississippi.

**Dorothy.** Dorothy became an RA mainly because of her association with other RAs. During her freshmen year, all her friends were RAs and motivated her to apply. They continued to work with her once she was hired to help her hone her skills.
**Herman.** Herman saw the RA position as a means to further develop his leadership skills. The added benefits of being able to financially cover his room and board was another motivator for Herman’s interest in becoming an RA.

**Nancy.** Nancy revealed that she was interested in becoming an RA because she wanted to be more engaged in the campus community. Describing a reliable RA who was always there for her community, Nancy felt inspired to return the favor for a new cohort of first-year students.

**Data Analysis**

This section consists of a discussion of the data collection and analysis procedures used in this semi-structured interview, qualitative study. To answer the four questions guiding the research study, interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy before being entered into QDA Miner v5.0 to begin coding. Also, the data collected from each interview were collated with specific interview questions that related to the four research questions guiding the study. Table 2 provides the relationship between each primary interview question and the central research question guiding this study. The relationship is necessary in generating responses to address the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi relating to the sources and place of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue in this qualitative study.
Table 2

**Research Question and Interview Questions relationship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Primary Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening Question</td>
<td>Why did you choose to become an RA?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **RQ1**: In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi? | **IQ1.** What kinds of pressures, if any, might trigger stress for a person working in the RA position?  
**IQ2.** Tell me about a time, if applicable, when it became difficult to take time off during the RA position to take care of a personal or family matter. |
| **RQ2**: In what ways do RAs undergo burnout at the University of Mississippi? | **IQ3.** What does burnout look like for a person working in the RA position?  
**IQ4.** Given what you have reconstructed about what burnout looks like for an RA, what experience, if any, have student attitudes, needs and behaviors contributed to RAs feeling burned out? Explain your answer. |
| **RQ3**: What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position? | **IQ5.** Tell me about the avenues available in the RA position, if any at all, where it is permissible to discuss stress-related issues?  
**IQ6.** What can be done to support RAs in managing their well-being after working with students experiencing trauma? |
| **RQ4**: While fulfilling the requirements of the position, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion satisfaction and fatigue. | **IQ7.** Describe the three factors, if any, that you consider essential for you to be satisfied, energized, and productive in the RA position.  
**IQ8.** If applicable, can you please describe when you had to counsel a student experiencing trauma in their life, or something very significant? Please explain the feelings of fatigue that may, if at all, have occurred during that situation.  
**IQ9.** Describe your ability to take care of yourself while providing for others? What type of activities, if any, do you do to maintain balance in your role of as RA and Student? |
| Closing Questions | **IQ10.** What do you identify as the most significant judgment or criticism others have about the RA position and why do you think this is the case?  
**IQ11.** Knowing what you know now, is there something you would do differently as an RA?  
**IQ12.** Knowing what you know now, is there something you would do differently as an RA? |
In this study, the participants were asked to reflect and respond to the questions posed during their interviews. They were challenged to think about their personal experiences and their colleagues in sharing the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi relating to the sources and place of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. To further protect the confidentiality of the participants, the complete interviewee transcriptions were not included in this study. Nevertheless, the RAs’ lived experiences are present with the themes. Noticeably, specific themes emerged from the invariant constituents of the interviewees’ responses, descriptions, and reflections on their experiences in the role of an RA. These themes provided an understanding to fulfill the research purpose of exploring the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi, which answered the research questions. This section reflects limitations of the study, interview highlights and the most prevalent themes and patterns that emerged, categorized by the research question and interview question.

**Limitations of the study**

There are two significant limitations that must be taken into consideration when examining the findings of this study. First, the qualitative research conducted for this study represented front line employees and their lived experience, as RAs at the University of Mississippi, relating to stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. For this study, being able to capture all voices is important in helping to shape the University of Mississippi RA program’s processes and procedures that are designed to improve the lived experience for this group of paraprofessionals to help improve the paraprofessional development and overall job functionality. Findings in this study may not reflect the views representative of the various cultures and ethnic groups existing within the resident assistant team during the time
the study was conducted. For example, while recruited, international students and black males are not represented here, but their perspectives could potentially highlight a different lived experience that could have been helpful during the analytic process.

The final limitation for this study, although necessary to reduce researcher bias, was the recruitment of RAs not returning to the position next year. Due to this purposive sampling procedure, many of the participants had worked more than four semesters. Thus, it is conceivable that RAs participating in this study were seasoned paraprofessionals and may not have fully captured the challenges associated with being a newly hired RA. The following criteria defined the parameters for participating in the study,

1. The participant was an RA for a minimum of one semester when the study took place.
2. The participant was an RA on a student housing floor with a minimum size of 30 residents when the study took place.
3. The participant did not have any prior documented job performance concerns within the department.
4. The participant has provided written confirmation to the department stating that he or she would not be returning to the RA position for the 2019-2020 academic year.

All participants reflected that their lives changed when they were hired as RAs. This is because the new position places the RA in the center of a partial sharing of responsibilities for the building of community, programming, processing administrative paperwork, assessment, and many needs of residents throughout the time they serve. However, using words queried during the coding process, thirteen prevalent themes emerged. These emerging themes related to ways
in which RAs at the University of Mississippi experience stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue (Table 3).
**Table 3**

*Emergent themes based on analysis of semi-structured, open-ended questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Team Cohesion</strong></td>
<td>Rose said, “…something that has stressed me in work as an RA, are my coworkers sometimes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2: Student or Paraprofessional</strong></td>
<td>Nancy said, “…I figured, I will have all night to study. However, we had back to back incidents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3: On-call stress and anxiety factors</strong></td>
<td>Milton said, “…When you need to get somewhere quick, but you are on duty, then it is hard.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4: Living where you work</strong></td>
<td>Herman said, “…It is stressful because we live where we work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5: Harassment</strong></td>
<td>Carrie said, “…I think they are wanting a mom away from home for their child.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 6: Workload Management</strong></td>
<td>Mary said, “…burnout comes from the administrative items that we have to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 7: Expectations and Values</strong></td>
<td>Corinne said, “…I feel like the department always says you are a student first, but that was not how I was treated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 8: Social and cultural issues within the community</strong></td>
<td>Ruth said, “…I noticed that a lot of the residents have conservative regalia in their rooms.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 9: Sleep Deprivation</strong></td>
<td>Willie said, “…there is so much running through your head and sometimes it is hard to sleep at night.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 10: Structured support systems</strong></td>
<td>Nancy said, “…having a case manager for housing or having someone we know that we can go to, is amazing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 11: Unstructured Support Systems</strong></td>
<td>Maggie said, “… I think for me it has been helpful that my best friend is a CA and one of the other girls on our staff is one of my closest friends.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 12: Being called to serve</strong></td>
<td>Carrie said, “… I could not be there for her the way that I wanted, because I could not talk about it since it included another resident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 13: Unappreciated and Undervalued</strong></td>
<td>Herman said, “… the most significant judgment that we get is that we are narks.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme One: Team Cohesion

All participants identified team as a source of stress if not appropriately managed. Rose indicated,

Something that has stressed me in work as an RA, is my coworkers sometimes. These sources of stress come from miscommunication, or staff having a different interpretation of information communicated during training.

Corinne revealed,

I feel like as the year goes on, incidents pop up. You have problems with the way someone handled a certain situation or things that are logistical. These incidents can create an environment where staff can start head-butting, and someone does not feel included anymore. However, it depends. My first staff, I felt, were very cohesive, but this year’s staff, I feel, are a bit more of an isolated island than a cohesive team.

Finally, as Maggie put it,

In my experience with talking to other RAs, there is always that one staff member who is the slacker that everyone does not like because they do not show up for duty or cover their desk shifts. What sucks is that the slackers become what unifies the other team members, and that is not complete team cohesion.

Theme Two: Student or Paraprofessional

A strong response that emerged from participants in expressing a source of stress, drew from a constant challenge to balance being a student while performing the responsibilities of fulfilling the duties associated with the position.

Ruth recounted,

In my junior year, I had pledged a sorority, and then the next semester, I was taking my senior capstone course so this whole year was really overwhelming. Along with taking my capstone course, I was also taking upper-level classes in my department. That was a lot, and probably one of the toughest years. Moreover, on top of that, being an RA with 40 residents, yeah, that was a stressful year.

Nancy revealed how being an RA may sometimes collide with the responsibility as a student,

Well, last semester, I had an exam, but I was also on duty, so I figured, I will have all night to study. However, back to back, we had incidents, and we were calling the police, and doing transports. But you know, when you are in the middle of it when you have had three incidents and you are behind on rounds you cannot ask someone, hey can you switch with me? You know in the middle of the night.
Carrie describes the pressures of the RA triggering stress in this manner,

I think sometimes the whole saying, we are students first kind of gets put on a back burner when it comes to certain instances. My duty partner and I have the same class schedule because we are in the same major, so it is has been several times where we had a test, or we had quizzes the next day, and we were up at 6:30 a.m. The class was not until 10:00 am and we were like, so do we stay up until ten? or do we try and get some sleep, risking oversleeping and missing class? RAs are students first and when you get in a groove of studying and starting to understand everything, it is hard to get back into it if you are interrupted.

Finally, in contrast, Shirley revealed a different perspective on balancing student and work as an RA,

I feel like there is an opportunity to get your homework done. I mean like this weekend, I worked eight hours and only worked on homework for 30 minutes of that day just because it was the weekend and I did not want to. But that is more on me than on housing being given the opportunity to and that is one of the advantages I have found with working morning desk shifts, because no one's coming to check-in, so you do not have to stop what you are doing to like check someone in, and there is not a whole lot of people coming in the building. Everyone is leaving for classes, so you are not having to like monitor people coming in and out as much. I find I am more productive on those desk shifts than mid-afternoon or evening shifts.

**Theme Three: On-call stress and anxiety factors**

In addressing Research Question 1, being on-duty generated responses for a majority of participants in identifying sources of stress. RAs at the University of Mississippi are required to work a minimum of 6 hours at the desk each week for duty. At the time of this study, RAs are required to be on duty from 5:00 pm to 8:00 am during the weekday, with weekend duty starting on Friday at 5:00 pm, and releasing the RA from duty at 5:00 pm on Sunday. The duty included taking rounds of the building at set hours and addressing any occurrences that may have happened in the halls. Two of the participants expressed the difficulty in rescheduling duty in order to travel and visit a family member who was ill. Mary shared the stress being on duty caused her when she was unable to find someone to trade with her to visit a family member who had become sick,
I have a staff member that I work with, and I can always put a duty change out to them to see if they are willing to trade, but this year, especially, I have noticed that people are not as flexible. This made it difficult to take time off duty and be with my aging family member. It turns out my Friday classes were optional for attendance, so I thought, the opportunity cost was higher for me to go home than to go to class, but it turned out that I was on duty that weekend and I put in the Group Me, and I brought it up at a staff meeting if anybody would be willing to switch weekends with me, and I would take one of theirs later on this semester. But nobody was able or willing, so I had to stay.

Maggie spoke out about the challenges of being on duty and unable to leave due to there being no one willing to share,

For me, there was a time last semester (Fall 2018), when my grandfather who had lung cancer was on hospice and for me I was on duty that weekend and I found out he was on hospice on a Wednesday or Thursday and I was willing to trade duty days for me to be able to go home the next weekend, but I ended up having to work. It was stressful because I wanted to make sure I saw my grandfather before he passed away, and I ended up seeing him the next week and on Sunday, and he passed away on Tuesday. That was the most stressful I think I had it because I wanted to be with my family. There are sometimes where duty nights are inconvenient, and you have to work around the inconvenience, but planning helps with those.

Underpinning Maggie’s comments regarding on-call stress and anxiety factors, Milton mused,

Definitely there have been many times when it was difficult to take time off in the position. When a person or family matter comes up last-minute, and you need to get somewhere quick, but you are on duty, then it is hard. I would say that those last-minute times in emergencies, it can become difficult to find coverage. For example, I had a family member who had a flat tire. I was the only person able to help. I was on duty, could not find anyone immediately to relieve me, so it was embarrassing that I could not help my family member. I was able to find someone and help my family member eventually. So much depends on the staff, how supportive and understanding your staff is of you. However, I would say, it is difficult in short matters, but it is not an insane challenge.

Theme Four: Live where you work

In reviewing the data, “live where you work” was a recurring theme concerning stress among many of the participants. Koval (2016) stated that paraprofessionals, which RAs are, often find themselves relating to students and their issues, while at the same time managing a professional demeanor that reflects credibility for the program that they have been hired to work.
Koval discovered when interviewing RAs, a role-conflict in RAs on how they behaved when they were in their role (or the fishbowl) and how they behaved when outside the high-profile student leadership role. Deluga and Winters Jr. (1990) further address the conflict that might arise from the RA balance in the duality role of being a friend and leader in the same environment they must live and work.

Herman described the stress,

> We all go through stress from school, relationships and family. It is stressful because we live where we work, so it is like you can never escape. So, when you live and work in the same place, they kind of intertwine together.

Willie, shared concerns about how this role-conflict serves as a stressor in his paraprofessional role,

> I stress about when am I am an RA, and when I am me. I have gone to events that have had alcohol, and I am like, ooh, I see residents here and so I will stay only for five or ten minutes because it is a gray area and I do not know what to do in that situation. My response was to remove myself from the situation.

Corinne described the RA fishbowl in this manner,

> I think it is a rough balance to have work and home be the same, not to use vulgar language but do not [expletive] where you sleep. If you have problems that occur within your floor or your building, there is no escaping it because it is where you live. You do not have the opportunity to leave campus in those situations. Your daily routine remains the same, and you move from your academic building, and back to your dormitory. As an RA, living on campus is both a challenge and a benefit at the same time. The Department of Student Housing operates, obviously, on office hours Monday-Friday, but the CA position is 24 hours all the time, all day, every day.

**Theme Five: Harassment**

Another theme that became apparent was the stress RAs felt from being harassed from combative students and their parents. Shirley shared that she believes “student attitudes are a big thing in the residence hall, not only for the residents on your wing or floor but the residents making up the entire building.”
As Shirley continued,

There was one on my Alabama weekend, the worst weekend, when my duty partner and I were walking around. It was visitation rounds, 2:00 AM., and we had like 30 people still checked in. I mean it was insane how many doors we were going to have to knock on. And so, we were going around knocking on doors and we knocked on the door of this pair of roommates, and it woke them up. They came to the door in their boxers, and were like, ‘What do you want?’ and we were like, ‘You have a guest checked in.’ Moreover, they were like, ‘No, he is overnight.’ We were like, ‘Well, did you tell the desk worker that he was an overnight guest when you checked him in?’ Also, he said, ‘No.’ I was like, ‘Okay, well then I am going to need him to give me the green badge and I am going to take it down, get him the correct badge and put him in the system as overnight so that you will not get your door knocked on.’ The students went off. My duty partner stayed up at the room while I went downstairs and he said that they were cursing me up and down, calling me a dike. I mean, all kinds of ridiculous things, just for asking these students to verify that they had guest passes.

In exploring the impact of stress in the RA position, Kayla shared an encounter with a parent,

I had an encounter with a father, who told me that his resident needed to have an emergency room change because there was some discomfort with her roommate. Upon further conversation with him, I was able to identify that they did not need an emergency room change, they did not want to live with a person of color. The resident herself did not really want to communicate with me at all when I would try to talk to her directly. Her father would interject, and then continue to threaten to sue the Department of Student Housing.

Participants provided a variety of responses, with three of Machla’s and Lieters’ six domains standing out, in the research as participants discussed how RAs perceived burnout at the University of Mississippi. The three domains included workload (workload management), control (social and cultural issues within the community), and values (expectations and values). Also, sleep deprivation was identified as a theme contributing to burnout.

**Theme Six: Workload Management**

Maslach and Leiter (2008) defined workload as the sustainable overload from work that can be difficult to recover. Examples within workload that were found among interviewed participants included, completing administrative paperwork, designing bulletin boards,
expectations for documenting visits with students titled, and intentional interactions.

Mary divulged,

To me, the burnout comes from the administrative items that we have to do. I understand rounds and desk and stuff like that, but I am talking about all the paperwork that is involved that does not have to do with incidents. So that the weekly report and the bulletin boards and the Passive Educations Opportunities (PEO). Like I understand those are important, but at the same time, I think they kind of fall lower on the totem pole, at least for my building and in my experience. So, all these administrative and extra crafty things that we have to do to me is very draining and very monotonous, and especially since I have been doing it for three years. I do not want to make another bulletin board or another little flyer to pass out. While I understand this job has a lot of responsibilities and expectations, the extra workload and paperwork can be a little too much.

Issues arose concerning the frustration from working several hours to construct bulletin boards that were not recognized or were torn down by residents.

Maggie remarked,

I know CAs will make bulletin boards and they will be interactive and you can write on it, but I have seen where some CAs have done that, and the residents will write negative or derogatory writings on it.

Mary explained an observation she had while conducting rounds through her building,

I walk through the hall on duty rounds and find bulletin boards torn off the walls, and it reaffirms that the residents do not stop to look at it, they do not stop to pick it up. They walk past it on the floor and in their way, so they are going to walk by it if it is hanging on the wall.

Aside from comments from several participants regarding the prolonged challenges with constructing bulletin boards, Nancy discussed the importance of bulletin boards within the halls,

I enjoy bulletin boards because I feel like the residents enjoy them. I do prefer to complete them once a month to avoid having to hurry up, and just throw something up that is slapped on there to meet the deadline. A lot of us will make them interactive where the girls can write on them, which they seem to enjoy and laugh at. I feel like doing something interactive or a PEO each month, is good. I like bulletin boards. I like doing bulletin boards, and I think they are important for the residents to see their community changing a little bit and things like that.
Infusing modern technology, in place of bulletin boards was also an essential solution for communicating with today’s students. Barbatis (2014) asserted that with today’s students’ making decisions, on their smart phone devices, regarding what to eat for dinner, or what college to attend, it is crucial that student affairs departments maximize technology advancements to reach students better. Herman added, “I think that my generation is more familiar with technology and that is something that student housing should explore and implement, and it is a lot less creative minded.”

Milton elucidated,

I would say that they (bulletin boards) do not fit the market. They do not fit that attention-grabbing device that students look for now. You are not going to grab most of your residents’ attention, so I would say that, honestly, the most effective way that I have gotten information out to students, is just through GroupMe. RAs do bulletin boards because it is required. They do not use that to distribute information, but they use that to get the job requirement off and then use GroupMe to distribute information.

As part of the residential curriculum, the Department of Student Housing, officially defines intentional interactions as an engagement strategy whereby residential learning staff get to know residents and help them as they adjust to life in college. Furthermore, the department aspires, through staff members, to provide guidance and celebrate important milestones with each residential student. The data provided convincing evidence that RAs approached the recent change with the repetitiveness of documenting these intentional interactions as a source of burnout.

Corinne retorted,

I think intentional interactions, to be brutally honest, is a hunt for numbers. It has been presented to me (by my supervisor) as a great way to get to know more about the community and learn more about what is happening in each hall. Logistically, I get told on a weekly or monthly basis, where my numbers are in comparison to everyone else. I get told if I am behind or where other communities are and where we should be. So, I do not think that they are effective. I have caught myself at times where I need six more
intentional interactions jotting something down. I live in an apartment community. I am not going to knock on people's doors and interrupt their day. It is easier to sit there and plug in, and just fake it. I do bump into a lot of my residents, so most of my reports are genuine but I often do not have the numbers that I am supposed to.

Jayden is confident,

I think most of the RAs were having intentional interactions before they became the rule. It was that no one was having them three times a semester with every student, which, I believe, is what the new expectation is, as far as I can gather.

Nancy expanded, “I think a problem for some RAs is that intentional interactions can come off as fake. I feel like residents can tell when you are digging for information to fill a quota.”

At the other extreme, however, it is equally clear that another source for burnout RAs undergo due to workload is having to deal with residents returning to the building drunk. Herman described challenges RAs come across in working with drunk residents.

And there's a reason why having back to back weekends can just lead to burnout, it's because a lot of it has to do with obnoxious, rambunctious residents. Their behavior, inherently leads to incidents and then incident response and you're constantly on guard and then, again, losing sleep. All of that and especially on loud weekends, when residents are drunk or have come back from parties or anything like that. Our game weekends, you know, they are rambunctious, they are loud, and they sometimes get into fights. While it is not directed at me most of the time, just that behavior creates incidents and incidents leads to stress, that's certainly a big contributor to feeling burnout.

Shirley added,

At nighttime is when we get residents, returning from the square, being carried by their friends, and they need someone to check on them. Although we are told we do not have to, it is difficult to know when to leave. Yeah, those situations can be very scary.

Theme Seven: Expectation and Values

Another important aspect when discussing the ways an RA experiences burnout was that the matter in which the department communicates value for them being students first and RAs second is not always held to the level, they understand it is communicated earlier in August.

Corinne articulated,

I feel like the department always says you are a student first, but that was not how I was treated. I felt like I was treated more of you are an employee-first before you are a
student before you are a person. I did not necessarily agree with it, but that was how my supervisor decided to go about handling things.

Mary acclaimed,

I think one thing that I hear hush-hush that CA’s whisper about is that the department makes us seem very disposable and I understand that we are. But when the words, come up and that is the response we get, we hear the words like job actionable all the time. I do not feel comfortable talking about my burnout and stress because I do not want it to be misinterpreted as, oh my gosh, this job is so awful, I never sleep, I never eat, I always have to be in the building, I do not have a social life. Because that is not what it is. However, there are weeks where it does seem like that.

Another value-driven aspect that RAs perceived to contribute to burnout were when the broader campus community brought into question the role RAs play in the halls. During the writing of this dissertation, an article in the Daily Mississippian, the local student newspaper titled, “Students criticize campus housing for involving UPD in minor offenses” challenged student housing to refrain from calling UPD for what was described as minor incidents. This researcher was interviewed and quoted in this article. Participants’ responses to the article and how it was contributed to their burnout were evident. Dorothy discussed how the DM article, “…made the RAs look like bad people.’ It makes it seem like we are always calling the cops and that we (RAs) are always doing bad things to residents, intentionally.” Dorothy continued, “The entire campus was talking about it (the article), and that causes an issue. You can try and tell your friends that it is not the case, but that is about all you can do.”

**Theme Eight: Social and cultural issues within the community**

Another theme that arose in ways RAs undergo burnout was the social and cultural issues derived from the RA trying to build community. An RA’s desire for building community perhaps is these paraprofessionals’ most significant work task for drawing positive energy from the position. As anyone who has worked in student housing can attest, residential hall communities are far from passive; instead, these communities are highly interactive, engaging, and immersive.
environments. Residence communities are places where students from diverse backgrounds come into a living environment and learn how to blend in to make friends and meet new people. Communities in residence halls are also where students’ identities are being formed, and their social norms and beliefs may be challenged for the first time. Frequently, leading students through these developments is the RA, however, how does burnout manifest when the views or actions of the individual and community negatively impact the RA?

In investigating the responses from participant interviews, Ruth described the intensity she faces being a person of color as follows,

This is something I thought about the other day. When we were doing room checks for spring break, I noticed that a lot of the residents have conservative regalia in their rooms. As a person of color, I was like okay, I am living amongst people who have completely different political views, and, I do not think they would feel as much as I do being a person of color. There is another person of color on staff who is extremely conservative, and sometimes we will have political debates but I do not say anything disrespectful even if I want to say something rude.

Surprisingly it was a male participant who voiced concerns for female RAs being harassed by males within the community.

Herman asserted,

Most cases of feeling harassed that can lead to burnout are unfortunately with the female RAs when they are at the desk and a resident, sits there trying to talk to them, and it is unwanted. That can burn you out over time.

Corinne discussed how one incident can turn a community sour and create an environment that can burn the RA out from trying to re-establish the community,

They are paying for the experience of living here. They are paying to live in our residential facilities, and, you, as the RA, are supposed to cultivate this community and create a cohesive environment where people are supposed to be learning. But the moment that relationship gets broken, it is ruined.

When asked to provide an example, if she had any, Corinne described,

I smelt weed, called UPD, and the student was arrested. I am required to write up an incident, that is the protocol you must follow. But, you know once that resident comes
back, they are coming back to pack their bags. They are not coming back to be re-entered into the community. They are coming back to leave. You feel like you have ruined that student’s life and others in the community may be upset with you.

**Theme Nine: Sleep Deprivation**

Lund, Reider, Whiting, and Roxanne (2010) reported that among health professionals, little doubt exists concerning the importance of sleep in maintaining quality physical and mental health. Also, they indicated that troubled sleep is directly tied to ominous signs of many illnesses. Pagnin et al. (2014) confirmed that while sleep restores one’s body, sleep disturbances may promote burnout or mental health functions because of the compromise to those same restorative functions.

Commenting on the issue of sleep, Willie stated,

> There is so much running through your head and sometimes it is hard to sleep at night. When you wake up the next day not as well-rested, yet you still have to go to school, and do your duties as an RA sometimes it can snowball.

General, when asked what burnout looked like, commented,

> For me, being on duty is one of them. The only reason is just that I already do not sleep well. Being up all hours of the night tends to make me a more bitter person when I wake up the next morning. It behooves supervisors to take duty a little more serious and realize that sometimes we are up all hours of the night.

Herman agreed,

> We do not sleep well. Even on nights that we have off, it is still difficult to get into a pattern, you know, a good cycle where we can sleep. You know? Some nights you are up until midnight, past midnight, some nights you are not, and then it is just hard to find regularity in that because you are not sleeping well.

Each year, the American College Health Association surveys to inform its audience on the health of college students. The Fall 2018 data, used in this study, had a response rate of 17% or 88,178 participants. The students were asked what topics impacted their academic performance, which was defined as lower grades on exams or projects, incomplete or dropped class, or a significant disruption in a thesis, dissertation or practicum work. The top six reasons given included: Stress (31%), Anxiety (25.9%), Sleep Difficulties (20.2%), Depression (16.9%),
cold/flu/sore throat (12.9%), and Work (12.5 %). Except for absence due to a Cold/Flu/Sore Throat, all other reasons given have been prevalent in the participants’ responses. Moreover, not only are RAs helping students to navigate these factors, but also, they too are students and are experiencing many of these factors themselves. Therefore, understanding the resources available to discuss stress-related factors while performing tasks in the job are important. There were two themes related to the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position: support structured support systems, and unstructured support systems.

**Theme Ten: Structured Support Systems**

RAs were able to identify multiple avenues to discuss stress in the residential community. These were prescribed channels communicated to them during training however, while they were made aware of these resources as a resource when caring for residents, none of the RAs were able to identify a former process whereby they were informed of these resources as a tool for RAs. One tool most of the interviewed participants could readily identify was the hiring of a case manager resulting from the researcher’s discovery as a result of this study. While everyone could identify the case manager as a tool, RAs showed different feelings about how they thought about the hiring of the case manager. Nancy, similar to many of the participants, expressed a positive outcome with the hiring of the case manager as a favorable decision by the department, and replied, “having a case manager for housing or someone we know that we can go to, is amazing. I feel like she can be a beneficial resource. She is here to support us when we are going through stuff.”

While Rose, identifying the case manager as a resource, expressed concerns with trusting her as a resource,
I do not know her by her official title, but as “Anonymous”. She was just hired in the Spring. I would say that would be a resource. I have not gone to her to discuss stress-related issues, but if I were to think about it a little bit more, I do not know if I would feel comfortable going to her because I still feel like she works for the department. I do not know if it would be like an unbiased, interaction. I do not know if it would help me or if it would frustrate me even more.

Some participants spoke excitedly of other organizational avenues in place by the department to discuss stress-related issues. Ruth admitted to the importance of one-on-one’s as an organizational support system, to discuss stress-related issues,

I have always loved my one-on-ones with my bosses, all three of them. They are really cool and so wise. They have been in my position. So, if I tell them I am going through something that I do not know how I am going to deal with they are always very knowledgeable, and there to help me, and I have those little light bulb moments. It is, like, ah, I did not think of that! You are smart.

Kayla agreed,

When I am overwhelmed, I appreciate having my one-on-ones with my boss every week. It is very relaxing to get all that off my chest. It is nice to be able to talk to superiors that are in the building with me, and they know exactly what I am going through. They can offer me advice and always support me afterwards because they know what has been happening.

Willie admitted to being complimentary about the ten free therapy sessions offered through the Counseling Center, and said:

The fact that I have ten free or I think it is ten free therapy sessions is a phenomenal outlet if I am feeling super stressed. I think there is a good majority of our RAs that are comfortable with the counseling center and are willing to admit that they have used the counseling center, but I do think that there are some, RAs that are not comfortable. They are not at that point where they feel like they can go to the counseling center for things of that nature. So, having a case manager for housing, someone we know that we can go to, I think that is amazing.

Nancy discussed the recognition of the counseling center as an avenue to discuss stress-related issues, but admitted to roadblocks that many RAs experience with going to the counseling center,

We always get told that you can go to the Counseling Center, and we also tell our residents that, but we never go there ourselves. It is far, and you must set appointments and you have to figure out a time not only between your full-time academic schedule, but with your full-time RA schedule to go. It is limited to ten appointments, so you are like ‘Oh, well maybe I should save those for when I need them,’ but you never push to go.
Corinne was unable to pinpoint paths to discuss stress-related issues,

I do not feel that there are avenues to discuss stress-related issues. It is hard because you are the student, and then your supervisor is a boss. If you have broken protocol or you have broken a rule or you did not necessarily do something in the best capability, that person, I feel, is no longer someone you can communicate within full discussion. You cut that tie, so once that person is no longer someone you can talk to, it is over.

Finally, for some RAs, it can be challenging to discuss stress-related concerns for fear of losing their jobs, or the fear of being judged unfairly. Mary experienced these feelings in the RA position,

I do not feel comfortable talking about my stress because I do not want it to be misinterpreted as, ‘oh my gosh, this job is so awful. I never sleep, I never eat, I must be in the building, I do not have a social life.’ Because that is not what it is. But there are weekends where it seems like that.

Theme Eleven: Unstructured Support Systems

Some RAs reported that discussing stress-related issues among colleagues was a permissible way to discuss stress-related concerns about their position. General added that “We often vent to each other a lot.”

Maggie agreed and admitted discussing her concerns with friends who are RAs,

I think for me it is been helpful that my best friend is a CA and one of the other girls on our staff is one of my closest friends. And that way I am able to relate to them because not many people know the aspects of the job and it is hard to explain what a duty night entails and you have to work desk hours, and it is hard to explain your hours to people who do not have experience in the residential community. But, you are talking to another RA, so it is helpful to have a community within the RAs, either department-wide or in building-wide.

Ruth admitted to her residents that having such a close-knit floor is a channel where it is possible to discuss stress-related concerns over popcorn or a movie.

We just sit down in the lounge, have girl talk, and watch movies and spend time together. I find it de-stressing for me, because it is, like, I can take a step out of my hectic life and enjoy a movie with my girls. Just having time with them and not worrying about academics or being professional.

Willie explained,
I go talk to my friends, and regardless of the type of day that I am feeling, I feel better afterward. I cannot talk to them about work issues necessarily, but I can talk to them. I would be like, ‘It was just a stressful day because I had to deal with something,’ and they will be like, ‘Awesome,’ and I think the support is so important.

**Theme Twelve: Being called to serve**

Weintraub, Geithner, Stroustrup, and Waldman, (2016) described compassion satisfaction as the fulfillment a professional gets from helping another person. The theme of caring and being placed in a difficult position of caring emerged through the interview process. (Boone, 2018) stated that for many RAs, helping others is the top motivating factor for becoming an RA. Each participant spoke to feelings of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue as a purpose or calling for serving others. For example, General, when discussing an incident in his community, demonstrated a pattern of compassion satisfaction and stated,

I enjoy and appreciate helping people with their problems. So, it did not negatively affect me, but another RA, might have been stressed that this was going on in their building and did not know about it. But for me that real interaction between the students or the residents and the RAs about helping them with their problems, about actually trying to develop a community or relationship, I feel like that helps with satisfaction for me. I did not feel fatigued by it as I felt energized, because I was finally doing what I wanted to do. I was helping people out.

Ruth demonstrated compassion satisfaction through the support she received from her residents while studying for the LSAT,

I have the best girls in the world. I remember once, it was the night before I was taking the LSAT, and I was in the study room. I was studying, but I was so overwhelmed that I started crying. And then they saw me, and came and brought me a cake, and it was so sweet. They stayed up with me while I studied. So, it is, like, if you take care of them, they will take care of you.

While RAs may gain energy from helping others, that same compassion can also put themselves at risk of fatigue. It is easy for the RA to become so attentive to their residents that they forget to be attentive to their own needs and state of mind (Rothschild & Rand, 2006).

Carrie shared,

I did have a situation within my first semester of being an RA, where I had a girl who was sexually assaulted. I wanted to be there for her, but there was another girl, also involved in that sexual assault, so I could not talk about it to her. I could not be there for
her the way that I wanted, because I could not talk about it since it included another resident who was I guess, the accused. That was tough, because I want to be there for her, but I could not because this is a whole legal case involving another resident. So that was just, like I felt terrible and burdened that I could not be there for her.

Mary agreed,

I have had a student who experienced trauma that then affected me. Sitting there listening to it and watching them hurt suffer. Like anybody with compassion, sympathy and empathy can be affected by that.

Nancy, described the importance of how her desire to care for a student, brought her to tears,

One of my first incidents was a suicide attempt. She was okay, but when I first got the call, it was another RA, and she said, ‘My resident just took a whole bottle of pills, can you please help her.’ I was running, and I did not know if this girl was going to be conscious or what. Every time after that, I would have like a panic attack when my phone rang, thinking it was going to be another incident like that.

Nancy, became emotional when she described another incident,

There was another student who kept saying she wanted to commit suicide. We completed a Person of Concern report and talked to her to let her know that we were there for her. She was saying things about how she could not even motivate herself to go to class. I was like, ‘How about I walk to class with you like from now on.’ I walked her to class one morning and then I never heard from her again. She never texted me back or called me again. I could not sleep because I was like, ‘Did I handle this situation correctly? Is this girl going to kill herself because I did not handle it right?’ I had been dealing with it for days, and then, someone called me and asked me if I knew her and I said, ‘Yeah.’ They could not tell me what was going on, they just wanted to see if I had written a report. It was not until almost a week later, I found out that her parents came and got her moved her out of the residence halls. They like sent her to some rehab facility in another state, but I never saw her again. I did not even know her before that night, but it was just knowing that if she had committed suicide, I was going to feel like it was my fault and I did not do enough. From then on, I kept my phone on vibrate because I would start panicking when my phone went off and I was on duty.

**Theme Thirteen: Unappreciated and Undervalued**

Participants began to share how feelings of being misunderstood were factors that could lead to feelings of fatigue. One example was the fatigue many of the participants wrestled with because it related to the residents they cared to serve, describing the RA role as being narks out to get residents into trouble. This led to the RA becoming more judgmental of themselves and the roadblocks they now faced and, maybe, the price they were willing to pay to be liked or accepted.
Herman said,

The most significant judgment that we get is that we are narks. You know, that we are nothing more than reporters of criminal behavior. This is problematic when residents have that perception of us, and they are less likely to approach us with issues such as home sickness or, you know, just not feeling great, and we want to be the sort of people that they can approach for that so that we can address those issues. We have a policy that we have no choice but to enforce. When we smell marijuana, we must notify UPD. When we witness alcohol, and we see it, we must call UPD, our hands are tied. There is no leeway and there is no, ‘We can be good people. We could be nice.’ Our hands are tied in those situations. You know, other situations, maybe we have more leeway to present ourselves as friendly people, people who they can come to with problems. When our hands are tied, animosity prevails, and that creates a barrier and distance between students and an RA. Now we are stressed about them not coming to us about issues. It sometimes keeps me up at night knowing that I probably do not have the best relationship with my residents because they do not want to come to me, so what are they not discussing with me? You know? Are any of them feeling suicidal or are any of them homesick or are any of them under much academic stress? I wonder about those things a lot, and it is because I am afraid that they might think I am not a friend to them or someone that they can approach.

Summary

The results chapter contained the lived experience regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi. Fifteen RAs participated in the study through 40-minute semi-structured interviews that were later transcribed and coded. Several themes emerged from data collection and analysis of the qualitative interviews: team cohesion, student and paraprofessional, on-call stress and anxiety factors, living where you work, harassment, workload management, expectations and values, social and cultural issues within the community, sleep deprivation, structured support systems, unstructured support systems, being called to serve, and unappreciated and undervalued.

In Chapter 5, these findings and the conclusions drawn will be discussed, as well as recommendations for future research and implementation of processes and procedures to improve the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue.
LIST OF REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Appendix
Interview Protocol

**Title of the Study:** Stress, Burnout, Compassion Satisfaction, And Compassion Fatigue among Resident Assistants at the University of Mississippi

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**Date:**

**Time:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:** Lionel Maten

**Interviewee:**

**Standard Procedures**

The research design of this semi-structured interview will consist of one (1) in-depth one-on-one audio recorded interview of approximately 45 minutes in length. Before the interview, each participant will be handed a consent form to be reviewed and signed, giving consent to participate in the study. After receiving consent, the digital recorder will be turned on, and we will begin a discussion based around the questions contained herein. While the goal is to ask each question in the order prescribed below, the conversation will determine what order questions will be asked. Given the semi-structured nature of this interview process, more probing questions may be asked by the interviewer to gain an in-depth understanding. After questions, the interviewer will thank the participant for participating in the interview and will issue the participant a $25.00 Amazon Gift Card. This will conclude the interview process.

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**[Introduction]**

Welcome. My name is Lionel Maten. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

**[Informed Consent Process]**

I have planned this one (1) in-depth one-on-one audio recorded interview not to exceed 45 minutes in length. I have identified several questions during the time allotted. If time escapes us, and we find ourselves running behind, it may become necessary to reduce response times in order to forge ahead and complete the path of inquiry.

Taking part in this interview is entirely voluntary. If you become uncomfortable, you have the option to not respond to any questions that you choose. You can inform the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview. Taking part, deciding to withdraw, or take a break does not, in any way, change your current status or benefits at the University of Mississippi. Your participation, withdrawal, or temporary stoppage in this interview will remain confidential.

Are there any questions you have at this time?
I am interested in understanding the lived RAs experience and the demands and pressures they may encounter. I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts about stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among RAs to the University of Mississippi. I will now begin with questions:

**[Demographic Questions]**

1). Please circle your gender
   A. Female
   B. Male
   C. Other (please specify):
   D. Prefer not to say

2). Please specify your ethnicity.
   A. White
   B. Hispanic or Latino
   C. Black or African American
   D. Native American or American Indian
   E. Asian
   F. Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander
   G. American Indian or Alaska Native
   H. Other

2). Please Select your age from the following ranges:
   A. 18-22 years old
   B. 23-26 years old
   C. 27-30 years old

3). How many semesters have you be an RA?
   1-2_____
   3-4_____
   4-6_____
   6-8_____
   9+_____

(Turn on Digital Recorder)
[Introductory Question]

Why did you choose to become an RA?

[Research Question One]

Interview Questions related to RQ1: In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi?

IQ1. What kinds of pressures, if any, might trigger stress for a person working in the RA position?

IQ2. Tell me about a time, if applicable, when it became difficult to take time off during the RA position to take care of a personal or family matter?

[Research Question Two]

Interview Questions related to RQ2: In what ways do RAs perceive burnout at the University of Mississippi?

IQ3. What does burnout look like for a person working in the RA position?

IQ4. Given what you have reconstructed about what burnout looks like for an RA, what experience, if any, have student attitudes, needs and behaviors contribute to RAs feeling burned out. Explain your answer.

[Research Question Three]

Interview Questions related to RQ3: What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position?

IQ5. Tell me about the avenues available in the RA position, if any all, whereby is it permissible to discuss stress-related issues?

IQ6. What can be done to support RAs in managing their well-being after working with students experiencing trauma?
[Research Question Four]

Interview Questions related to RQ4: While fulfilling the requirements of the position, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion satisfaction and fatigue.

IQ7. Describe the three factors, if any, that you consider essential for you to be satisfied, energized, and productive in the RA position.

IQ8. If applicable, can you please describe when you had to counsel a student experiencing trauma in their life, or something very significant? Please explain the feelings of fatigue that, may, if at all, occurred during that situation.

IQ9. Describe your ability to take care of yourself while providing for others? What type of activities, if any, you do to maintain balance in your role of as RA and Student?

[Closing Questions]

IQ10. What do you identify as the most significant judgment or criticism others have about the RA position and why do you think this is the case?

IQ11. What can be done to provide better opportunities for RA self-care after working with students experiencing trauma?

IQ12. Knowing what you know now, is there something you would do differently as an RA?

Thank-you Statement

Thank you for your time and talents. Today’s interview has been both rewarding and purposeful in helping me to gain a better understanding of the factors impacting RA regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among Resident Assistants at the University of Mississippi. Should you later determine that you would like to share additional information with me, do not hesitate to give me a call or schedule a meeting? As we conclude, I want to pause here and ask if you have any questions for me at this time? Seeing there are no further questions, again thank you for your time and efforts with this study. Before you leave, I would like to offer you this $25.00 honorarium for your time.
STRESS, BURNOUT, COMPASSION SATISFACTION, AND COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

MANUSCRIPT THREE

Lionel Maten

The University of Mississippi
Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experience of Resident Assistants (RAs) at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. In sum, this study, was designed to gain an in-depth analysis of the real-world contexts and regular workday descriptions of RAs at the University of Mississippi (Yin, 2016). Fifteen in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants selected for the study based on the following criteria:

1. The participant was an RA for a minimum of one semester when the study took place.
2. The participant was an RA on a floor with a minimum size of 30 residents when the study took place.
3. The participant does not have any prior documented job performance concerns within the department.
4. The participant will have provided written confirmation, to the department, that he or she is not returning to the RA position after the 2019-2020 academic year.

Research Questions

Considering the importance of this study on shaping program design for the Department of Student Housing at the University of Mississippi, the following research questions offered insights into the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue:

1. In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi?
2. In what ways do RAs undergo burnout at the University of Mississippi?

3. What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position?

4. While fulfilling the position’s requirements, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction?

Manuscript 3 contains a restatement of the problem of practice, participants’ characteristics, overview of findings and interpretations, emerging themes and responses to research questions, as supported by the literature review. Manuscript 3 also includes implications, recommendations for future research, reflections of the researcher, and a conclusion.

**Problem of Practice**

The dual role of RAs as paraprofessionals and as students is complex. Thus, they are exposed to many stressors, including trying to fulfill expectations from an institution’s dependency on them being front-line employees. Because RAs are exposed to stressors generally experienced with their status as students and simultaneously on the front line in helping other students manage their stress levels, the researcher expected higher levels of stress would be observed among this group of staff members. Although these stress factors are problematic, there is a scarcity of research on the prevalence and severity of compassion fatigue among RAs in their role as caregivers. Research regarding compassion fatigue, while well documented among front-line responders, has been neglected regarding the investigation of the impact of compassion fatigue on the RA overall. To add to the body of literature about RAs, this study consisted of an investigation of the stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue experienced among RAs at the University of Mississippi.
While an RA affords many benefits, this position also embodies challenges. Therefore, it is important to understand how stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue impact RAs’ ability to balance the competing demands of addressing traumatic issues as frontline employees, while managing the challenges as a student, in general. Caring for others and oneself may exacerbate personal problems, thus making the RAs vulnerable since they are required to work and reside in the same environment. A better understanding of how RAs at the University of Mississippi are impacted by stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue has intrinsic importance and value to student housing practitioners. Furthermore, the research findings will be beneficial to professionals working in the Department of Student Housing, to inform them of the different warning signs and foster awareness of these issues. This research will provide baseline information on stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs.

**Participants’ Characteristics**

The targeted population for this study was comprised of RAs employed at the University of Mississippi during the time of this study. The individuals who volunteered to participate in this study must have completed a minimum of one semester as an RA. All participants (N=15) who responded and signed a consent form began their interview by answering demographic questions to determine their age range, gender, ethnicity, semesters of employment, and facilities worked at during employment. All interviewees ranged in the 18-22 age profile. Specifically, all participants were undergraduate students, with 13 having an imminent graduation date to obtain a bachelor’s degree from the university; two participants left the position and are continuing with their undergraduate studies. The interviewees were working within their second semester or
higher, with the average number of semester work reflecting four semesters, they represented a combined 62 semesters of RA experience to the department.

Additionally, the type of facilities where participants were employed encompassed the current housing portfolio for the department: apartment, traditional, and contemporary. Table 1 depicts the participants’ characteristics such as ages range, gender, ethnicity, semesters of employment, and facilities worked at during employment. Pseudonyms were used to protect student identities for all interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Semesters of Experience</th>
<th>Facilities Employed*</th>
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<td>Mary</td>
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<td>Jayden</td>
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<td>Herman</td>
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<td>Nancy</td>
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<td>Black or African American</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (C) Contemporary, (T) Traditional, and (A) Apartments
Overview of Findings and Interpretations

The RA plays an important, vital role on today’s residential campuses. These paraprofessionals are normally considered in a campus’ retention and sometimes recruitment efforts. These paraprofessionals are exposed to the current “high touch, high impact” systems designed to engage students in the larger campus community and can sometimes become troublesome and an administrative encumbrance. Faced with challenges, such as, finding balance in pursuing their academic pursuits, embracing limitations placed on their social engagement opportunities, and grappling with family obligations versus job responsibilities, all participants were eager to share their lived experiences personally encountered while employed as RAs at the University of Mississippi.

Participants provided two overarching reasons for their objectives to become RAs: (a) desire to serve a community of residents, and (b) financial incentives. Additionally, several participants shared that their RA was a huge influence on their subsequent employment application notwithstanding whether the RA fulfilled the duties of the job as trained. In further analysis of the data, the researcher found that while financial incentives may have been a primary influence, the purpose varied for each participant. For example, one participant expressed how financial incentives would allow her to accomplish a goal she had set for herself to live on campus during her tenure as a student. In contrast, another student had the forethought to become an RA to subsidize her family’s financial commitment to funding her education.

There was also direct evidence that participants sacrificed their own resources, and practice behaviors that were not sanctioned by the Department of Student Housing. One participant admitted to spending one’s own money on a bulletin board to avoid walking across campus to the resource room. The participant resident’s unwillingness to acknowledge the
amount of work and time he had put into constructing the bulletin board presented a major source of stress for him. Another interviewee shared how they grappled with a decision to call UPD for student policy violations. This resulted in the RA not confronting first time violations due to the RA feeling guilt in ruining a student’s chance at being successful in life.

Additionally, participants provided insights associated with major feeling of stress, burnout and compassion fatigue. Participants mentioned bitterness, exhaustion, feeling used, frustration, laziness, procrastination, and thoughts of quitting the RA position. These feelings resulted in RAs’ confessions to skipping rounds, neglecting the completion of reports whereby duty responsibility was not executed, disconnecting with the team, neglecting building community, doing the least amount possible, and totally abandoning duties at the end of the year. By contrast, the study’s results indicated that the intrinsic rewards associated with compassion satisfaction included: satisfaction from a great supervisor, affirmation from residents who were participative in the community, and fulfillment from working on a team willing to accommodate others when unexpected issues arose. Success for participants in the study was clearly connected with residents’ successes experienced as a direct result of living in the participant’s community.

**Emerging Themes**

The observations from this study provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi about the impact of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue on paraprofessional aptitude in these roles. The themes occurred across multiple questions were designed to answer the four research questions. Thirteen themes specifically emerged from the data: (a) Team Cohesion, (b) Student or Paraprofessional, (c) On-call stress and anxiety factors, (d) Living where you work, (e) Harassment, (f) Workload management, (g) Social and cultural issues within the community, (h)
Building community (i) Sleep deprivation (j) Structured support systems, (k) Unstructured support systems, (l) Being called to serve, and (m) Unappreciated and undervalued.
Table 3.

*Emergent themes based on analysis of semi-structured, open-ended questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples of Student’s Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Team cohesion</td>
<td>Rose said, “…something that has stressed me in my work as an RA, are my coworkers sometimes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Student or paraprofessional</td>
<td>Nancy identified, “…I figured, I will have all night to study. However, we had back to back incidents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: On-call stress and anxiety factors</td>
<td>Milton remarked, “…When you need to get somewhere quick, but you are on duty, then it is hard.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Work where you live</td>
<td>Herman disclosed, “…It is stressful because we live where we work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Harassment</td>
<td>Carrie expressed, “…I think they are wanting a mom away from home for their child.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Workload management</td>
<td>Mary revealed, “…burnout comes from the administrative items that we have to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7: Expectation and values</td>
<td>Corinne admitted, “…I feel like the department always says you are a student first, but that was not how I was treated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8: Social and cultural issues within the community</td>
<td>Ruth cited, “…I noticed that a lot of the residents have conservative regalia in their rooms.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 9: Sleep deprivation</td>
<td>Willie confessed, “…there is so much running through your head and sometimes it is hard to sleep at night.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 10: Structured support systems</td>
<td>Nancy mentioned, “…having a case manager for housing or having someone we know that we can go to, is amazing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 11: Unstructured support Systems</td>
<td>Maggie highlighted, “…I think for me it is been helpful that my best friend is a CA and one of the other girls on our staff is one of my closest friends.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 12: Being called to serve</td>
<td>Carrie said, “… I could not be there for her the way that I wanted , because I could not talk about it since it included another resident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 13: Unappreciated and undervalued</td>
<td>Herman proclaimed, “… the most significant judgment that we get is that we are narks.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1. In what ways do RAs experience stress at the University of Mississippi? Four themes emerged from the participants’ responses:

1. Team cohesion

2. Student and paraprofessional

3. On-call stress and anxiety factors

4. Living where you work

Shea and Guzzo (1987) asserted few activities within an organization occurs without group participation. Moreover, Carron and Brawley (2012) suggested that to understand the dynamics of the group, the importance of group cohesion must be recognized. Carron and Brawley defined cohesion as a process whereby a group bonded together for the purpose of achieving specific tasks or goals. It is possible, within groups, that conflicts might cause tension and an unwillingness to work together (Jehn, 1995). While tentative, there was a connection whereby participants in this study believed a strong connection existed between a cohesive team and factors impacting stress within the RA position. Several participants felt that willingness for teams to work together was essential to a successful academic year. As discussed in the review of literature, participants confirmed that when a team member showed an unwillingness to fulfill his or her responsibilities and go the extra mile when problems emerged, this uncooperative attitude impacted the overall team’s morale and cumulative job satisfaction. One participant mentioned that training was the optimal time to develop cohesion, while another participant was torn between whether there was a science to team cohesion among RAs or did it magically happened, with little effort.
One participant reiterated how the onset development of staff cohesion must begin with the Department of Student Housing selection process. The participant described their feeling as follows:

“Like when the Department of Student Housing goes and sit down to pick staff, pick people who will collaborate well and who will definitely want to get along. I have worked on staffs that did not get along. It was like everyone was complete opposites on the same staff. So, pick people you think would be really collative. My staff is now, and it feels like a happy little family.”

The strong desire for housing teams to focus on team cohesion emerged as one of the major themes related to this research question. The participants who expressed a need for staff cohesion also discussed the importance of supportive staff and the impact on their ability to manage stress during a time of great need. Finally, the results of this study suggest there is an opportunity to dedicate resources designed to build cohesiveness among RAs during staff training in early August.

Answers provided by all fifteen participants addressed the challenges often associated with serving both as a student and a paraprofessional. Moreover, many participants expressed a personal gripe with the inability to strike a balance between being a student and paraprofessional. When asked about these barriers, participants voiced a concern that the position felt like a full-time job. The rationale provided for their feelings was emphatically articulated by participants who had experienced academic pressures, student trauma, and personal life crises while employed in the position.

Although RAs’ intended goals and purposes within the position were to lead by example in managing pressures as a student and fulfilling the RA requirements, many participants admitted to sacrificing their academics to be viewed positively by their supervisors. Participants acknowledged that the RA position, given a minimum 2.75 GPA to apply, attracted more
leadership inclined students who tended to possess highly demanding academic workloads. Moreover, these students also wanted to serve as positive role models and be contributing team members. Beyond this, there were academic pressures on these RAs by the Department of Student Housing to uphold certain academic standards to maintain the position. Simultaneously, RAs were managing administrative tasks, building community, and having to stop their academic schoolwork to acknowledge students’ needs and concerns. Several participants admitted that this combination of academic and paraprofessional pressures was overwhelming and caused the RAs to feel like the department neglected its commitment that RAs should see themselves as students first and RAs second.

Some RAs admitted that when the pressures of work and academics intersected, bitterness often manifested, with the RA tasked with finding the sole solution for overcoming the bitterness by completing merely the basic workplace requirements. Regrettably, when this occurred, duty rounds, desk hours, care for residents, and going the extra mile in creating a strong residential community often suffered.

Regarding personal life crises, many participants struggled with trying to balance crises in their lives, which increased the difficulty in managing the residential communities they were hired to oversee. It is also noteworthy that participants defined a personal crisis in the form of personal relationship break-ups, prolonged illnesses, or being torn between job and family expectations. One student recalled attending a family member’s funeral, and later feeling torn between her mother wanting her to spend more time with family, but the RA felt compelled to return to campus to fulfill her job responsibilities. This episode caused the participant to question the importance of a job that did not allow time for her to focus on her family’s needs. The RA decided to come back and fulfill her job responsibilities; another RA who experienced a similar
issue decided to stay home and accepted the risk of being placed on probation. As for the kinds of support participants felt the Department of Student Housing might consider accommodating, family crises were most prevalently identified. In response, the department might consider other workplace environments whereby paraprofessionals and professionals are afforded the benefits of taking off for family crisis and or bereavement.

Participants reported that the typical sources of stress that can lead to burnout in the RA position are being on duty, scheduling of duty hours, and finding coverage as graduating RAs. Most participants singled out the scheduling of duty hours, in particular, as being most stressful. Their justification was that seniors may not have the schedule flexibility that students in the lower classifications are afforded. There are also times in the year, nearing graduation, that require students to be involved in a myriad of activities that take away from their focus on RA duties. One participant shared that if they had been given the option to schedule duty time sooner into the semester, it would have eliminated some of the team conflicts during the semester due to required academic requirements for graduation.

Regarding duty nights, a typical, structured night for many RAs would include completing duty rounds and having time for study and sleep. Most participants in this study felt that in general, duty nights were not horrible, unless a rule violation or student need occurred. However, when a violation or need happened, any of an RA’s former plans for the night would likely be compromised and impact one’s academic and personal goals and progress. Moreover, participants did not feel like others understood the volume of incidents that created an imbalance in what they had planned to accomplish and how these incidents stifled the outcomes. One participant shared how the uncertainty of what might happen while on duty prompted several
RAs to find places to sleep outside the residence halls when they were not on duty or otherwise expected to be in the residence hall.

Some participants confirmed that finding coverage for short periods or last-minute situations exemplified a significant source of stress. Responses seemed to reflect a consensus that as the last-minute issues transpired, the RA was the one student position identified without a predetermined option where the participants were confident that their needs could be met. Overall, participants appeared to agree that staff are given the opportunity to trade and pick dates, however, finding someone was daunting during last minute changes. One possible suggestion was to hire “RAs-in-training” whose sole responsibility would be to cover last minute shift changes. Another interesting proposal was to consider reducing the number of RAs on duty hours. The recommendation was given to address RAs’ concerns about feeling restricted in their mobility during weekend coverage, whereby RAs typically begin duty at 5:00pm on Friday and are released of duty at 5:00pm Sunday.

When comparing the RA position to other on-campus student employment paraprofessionals, Mclaughlin (2018) asserted that it offers competing demands when living in the environment where one works and that this situation is unique to the residence life paraprofessional. Mclaughlin further noted that the RA position shifted during the 1970s from being disciplinary in nature, to offering peer mentoring and care for residents. Moreover, this shift added complexity to the role, thus placing the RA at the center of increased stressors (Deluga & Winters, 1991). Martin, Cayanus, Weber, and Goodboy (2006) further acknowledged that an RA in the residence hall may encounter students in trauma, conduct violations, roommate conflicts, or just students who want to discuss their previous night’s adventures.
This study’s findings suggest that RAs find it difficult to separate from work as a major source of stress in the position. The opportunity to reenergize by returning to the residence halls between classes or anywhere else on campus, was not seen as readily available to participants. Moreover, several participants indicated there was an expectation to always exude a happy disposition, by greeting residents frequently, and inquiring about the residents’ day, which then increased to resident dependency on the RA always being available. One participant discussed how she was interrupted in the library with questions regarding her role as an RA. Other participants indicated the constant questions and interactions from their residents throughout the campus community as an overwhelming source of burden that negatively impacted their ability to focus on academic, social, physical, and personal pursuits.

Participants also contended that areas designated for college students to unwind were off-limits to RAs due to the frequency of residents often participating in unwanted behavior, such as underage drinking. Areas identified relating to this unwanted behavior include, but were not limited to, sporting events, fraternity parties, of which several are members, and other social gatherings on and off campus. Specifically, RAs recalled while attending these events, they faced ethical dilemmas watching residents’ participating in unacceptable behavior. RAs described how residents may sometimes offer RAs drinks, cigarettes, or highlight the fact that residents are drinking and mingling with their RAs at these social events. It is, therefore challenging for many participants in this study to find balance in being a student and paraprofessional, how to build and sustain meaningful relationships, and ways to enjoy the overall college experience.

**Research Question 2. In what ways do RAs perceive burnout at the University of Mississippi? Five themes emerged from the participants’ responses:**

1. Harassment
2. Workload management
3. Expectation and values
4. Social and cultural issues within the community
5. Sleep deprivation

As discussed in the literature review, research remains sparse concerning resident harassment, and other disrespectful behavior towards RAs. Arguably, the most identifiable pathway that harassment impeded the RAs’ roles was through enforcement of policy infractions. Wilson and Hirschy (2003) posited that due to the emotional and social dependency by which students deem the RA as an extension of their support system, this perception can make the role of rule enforcer appear as disloyal and unsupportive. Everett and Loftus (2011) found that 53.1 percent of participants in their study classified the RA role as somewhat or quite difficult when it came to enforcing policies against residents for which RAs had a close, personal relationship. Similarly, in this study, most participants underscored the difficulty they have in proactively managing the role of rule enforcer, and that the strong desire to fit in with their residents challenged the RAs’ abilities to enforce policy among closer relationships with residents. Also, participants shared that some residents prefer their RA to compromise job responsibilities and the safety of residents, even going as far as screaming in the RAs’ faces, pitting other residents against the RA, and sometimes confronting the RAs with a hostile parent or aggressive family member.

In sum, participants discussed how parental involvement and institutional expectations for RAs to serve as an extended support system can lead to burnout. This expectation not only hindered the participants in this study but also can challenge all college professional and paraprofessionals in how to best manage this partnership. Carney-Hall (2008) posited that
today’s parents are highly invested in their student’s educational experience. This parental involvement will likely impact many aspects during the college years including personal development, rules and polices that govern a university, and organizations and services rendered by the university.

To illustrate, one of the facets for parental influence pertains to on-campus residential facilities. Residential facilities occupy a great amount of a college student’s time, such as studying, socializing, and sleeping. Because the residential hall environment is such a critical and highly social space for students living on-campus, the RA is often on the receiving end of an angry parent when a behavioral dynamics present, such as interpersonal conflict among roommates (Everett & Loftus, 2011).

Participants further discussed how a difference in parental expectations and student realities often complicate RAs’ roles. For example, participants shared examples where parents expected RAs to ensure their son or daughter followed a prescribed curfew, avoided certain allergies, and followed medical guidance issued by a health care professional. Moreover, participants in this study provided examples of being approached by mothers requesting the RA to reveal specific Greek affiliations to determine if residing on the floor with an RA increased a student’s chance for membership in a particular organization.

Another challenge, contributing to burnout are parental visits to the residence halls. Regarding this issue, RAs expressed challenges assuming the role of negotiator when confronting parents expecting the RA to “fix” problems facing their son or daughter, especially conflicts with a roommate. Participants explained that a parental discomfort with a roommate disagreement often resulted in parental demands for an immediate roommate change. When the RA tried to explain policy and student’s rights, in such cases, the RAs likely received negative...
responses from screaming, demanding, and hostile parents, which increased RAs feelings of being intimidated. Additionally, participants discussed how these encounters with parents produced negative consequences on RA/resident relationships. For example, two participants highlighted how their once close relationships with residents became distant and resulted in them being treated with a rude attitude for the remainder of the year. When probed to suggest how the department could better assist RAs in this area, participants mentioned that clear training and concise expectations on how the RA can disengage from these encounters without fear of losing his or her job would empower the RA to better manage these combative occurrences.

RAs are now working during an era when retention and data collection are a powerful presence on college campuses, resulting in a strong desire by housing professionals to keep a predetermined number of returning students on campus to help with occupancy management (Li, Sheely II, & Whalen, 2005). These pressures lead to a growing reliance on RAs to carry the burden of administrative tasks assigned by the Department of Student Housing and other campus departments. Understanding the role and impact on the RA position is essential for Department of Student Housing to reduce RA burnout from workload management. One way to view how these administrative tasks contribute to burnout is to review the responsibilities assigned to a twenty-hour week paraprofessional. While prospective RA candidates are attracted to the position due to their interest in programming and building community, the institution should be mindful of the challenges facing such a paraprofessional position. The need for the RA to track down students to register for classes, perform last-minute surveys, and complete increasing demands to document interactions with residents reported by interviewees as contributing factors for RA burnout. There was increasing evidence as the interviews progressed that participants were unaware of the high-volume workload from the RA position prior to employment. Several
participants expressed how workload had increased during their tenure, with no recognition for discontinuance of other job responsibilities. When probed about what tasks might be considered for discontinuance, most of the participants referenced intentional interactions and completing bulletin boards.

Intentional interactions represent a strategy the department implemented to document RAs’ interactions with students throughout the year to plan activities and other efforts to help students be successful while living in the residential halls. However, when asked about their feeling towards implementing this administrative task, participants responded that there was too much redundancy associated with this task. They explained how RAs are required to document students exhibiting behaviors that warrant intervention from a university official. Additionally, participants felt that reaching a quota to satisfy job requirements undermined the desire to build community, which was a primary driver to become an RA. Moreover, two participants explained how difficult it was to meet a quota while employed in the apartment complex. The participants felt it was a struggle to encourage residents to leave their apartments and socialize with others living in the complex.

Another factor contributing to workload management is the creation and maintenance of bulletin boards. While there was strong support among participants that bulletin boards remained relevant, they were not effective for communicating timely information to students. Shier (2005) advocated technology to connect in ways that student affairs professionals may not have been afforded previously. Against that backdrop, there was an underlying need among participants for the Department of Student Housing to shift to technology as a vital means to communicate information to students. Several participants appreciated the Department of Student Housing’s willingness to allow the use of GROUPME™ to communicate with residents. One interviewee
possessing a marketing background reported frustration with her bulletin board’s relevance during a time when information dissemination is changing rapidly. While the role of the bulletin boards may have remained the same for the Department of Student Housing, data reported from this study affirms that digital communication with and among residents can positively impact operational processes.

RA’s are expected to adhere to several expectations in an increasingly demanding work environment, which include assisting with promoting departmental community development objectives, students’ personal growth outcomes, and implementing the institution’s policies that ensure a positive academic environment. While duties may be described differently at each institution, many of the following job functions traditionally used to define the role of RA are similar: administrative tasks, community and student engagement, resources and education, facility management, policy enforcement, and crisis response. Moreover, there is an expectation for the RA to be a leader on one’s floor, in the campus and local community, and including away from the campus and local environment, such as when traveling with friends during spring break.

Participants mentioned the presence of contrasting differences between expectations set for them as students and expectations of them as RAs. The department expects RAs to achieve academic success while performing the RA position’s tasks. Participants shared that during training, RAs are informed the department values them as students first and RAs second. Interviewees also reported that immediately following training, these expectations are reiterated through supervisors’ interest in the RAs majors, academic projects, and plans for graduation. However, respondents reported that as the semester continued, supervisors progressively disengaged and demonstrated less interest in the RAs’ academic pursuits and seemed more interested in fulfillment of their positional duties. Respondents expressed the shift from being
valued as students first to employee foremost was a contributor to burnout in the RA position. Interviewees suggested inadequate RA’s job performance if the RA had other plans when issued tasks without advance notice. These unplanned duty directives conflicted with RAs’ pre-planned social engagements, academic pursuits, and family outings. Moreover, this is compounded in that the RA position tends to attract students more inclined to be active in other university organizations and opportunities. Given the difficulties and complexity associated with the RA role, being able to negotiate and determine how to successfully balance student and paraprofessional roles did not appear to be evident among the participants. As department values shift, levels of RA satisfaction and performance effectiveness in the position declines. Bitterness, laziness, procrastination, and wanting to quit were terms shared by participants to describe how they responded to feeling devalued as students first by the Department of Student Housing.

A major RA role is to build community among residents. This peer-lead approach has been viewed as an essential strategy for acclimating students to a university. Furthermore, establishing environments where students feel a connection to their university has proven to positively contribute to retention and social connectedness (Schudde, 2011). For example, residents connected to the community are constantly enhancing experience interaction with one another. These interactions benefit the resident by informing the student of campus activities and resources that will benefit them academically, socially, personally, and professionally. Additionally, Schudde (2011) confirmed that through participation in the residential community, the student learns to more effectively live within a community of their peers. Possible outcomes that may help the student learn to live within the community include learning how to register for classes, facilitating opportunities for exchange of information about faculty and classes, and campus employment. Despite such benefits for the resident, two of the female respondents of
color expressed how sometimes it can become difficult for the RA to feel connected to the community they have worked so hard to cultivate.

Interview data revealed distress among RAs when confronting situations and circumstances that would be inconsistent with RAs personal value system. For example, participants discussed how they had spent significant time with residents on their floor to later visit the student’s room and confronting Southern heritage as decorations, such as racist images and the Confederate flag. Interviewees impacted by these encounters felt challenged and unable to share personal concerns with residents who displayed offensive Southern artifacts due to the expectation they remain in the role of a helper responsible for remaining positive and, thus, refraining from challenging a resident’s identity or choice of artifacts. Such constraints functioned as a major source of burnout in the RA position. When probed if they had discussed these concerns with a supervisor, one interviewee confirmed how the RA discussed the concern with a supervisor, while another reported they discussed concerns with friends or other RAs.

Buboltz, Brown, and Soper (2001) pointed out that sleep deprivation among college students hinders academic pursuits and causes mood swings. Similarly, Orzech, Salafsky, and Hamilton (2011) posited that students with poor sleep qualities experienced higher episodes of anxiety and depression related illnesses. They reported a strong correlation between adequate sleep and a person’s ability to positively interact with others through cheerful and outgoing experiences. These same correlations were described by participants in this study, and they felt it was necessary to have adequate sleep to be a successful RA. Therefore, understanding the lived experience of participants and their perception of sleep deprivation provides new information on how this phenomenon impacts their academic pursuits, health, social engagement, and overall satisfaction with the RA position. Specifically, information derived from their comments
provides evidence of how poor sleep quality contributes to increased irritability, burnout, and overall decreased performance issues.

Buboltz, Brown, and Soper (2001) further reported that sleep deprivation and altering of sleep patterns has the potential of becoming a self-perpetuating cycle. Considering sleep deprivation as a source of burnout, participants identified two areas in which sleep deprivation was likely to occur for an RA: worrying about residents and managing unanticipated occurrences during duty nights. For example, several RAs described how they often thought and worried about their residents’ issues before falling asleep. This was even more concentrated in cases when the RA was responsible for documenting residents who were arrested or potentially dismissed from the university. A second major finding of this research regarding sources of burnout and sleep deprivation involves the high rate of being awakened during duty nights to address policy violations and other occurrences. Participants explained how sleep deprivation as an RA continued to impact their sleep patterns during periods not serving in the position, such as winter recess and during the summer months when not attending classes.

Research Question 3. What are the levels of knowledge and awareness by which an RA feels it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns in his or her position? Two themes emerged from the participants’ responses:

1. Structured support systems

2. Unstructured support systems

Employees who perceive their organization as caring for them are more likely to show a deeper commitment to the organization and its objectives (Claudia, 2018). Job commitment, cohesiveness among team members, and a supportive supervisor were areas identified by
participants in this study as indicators of commitment by the department to enhance the overall welfare of RAs. Given how RAs’ social, physical, and academic endeavors intersect with their work environment, evaluating the impact of stress-related concerns experienced in their position will help the department better understand how support systems enhance the overall lived experience for RAs at the University of Mississippi.

In this study, participants were able to identify the quality of university resources in the work environment that were avenues for addressing stress related concerns. A trusting relationship with the immediate supervisor was overwhelmingly the top resource identified by interviewees in which to discuss stress related issues. Examples of avenues to discuss stress related issues with their supervisor included, one-on-one meetings, and casual conversations occurring in the supervisor’s office. In contrast, responses were mixed when discussing RAs’ willingness to discuss stress related issues with the case manager and counseling center staff. For instance, several interviewees had not visited the case manager, a new position established during this study, based on the fear that comments might be shared with departmental leadership that could adversely affect continued employment.

While a couple interviewees had previously visited the counseling center to discuss stress related issues associated with their role as RAs, many had not. A reason cited by respondents was the perceived stigma correlated with an RA seeking counseling services. The participants discussed how it is ingrained into staff that RAs are supposedly strong individuals and should be able to manage all issues the position warrants. In contrast, staff who reported seeking consultation through the counseling center felt the services were helpful. One participant shared how she became overwhelmed and academically impacted after a resident left campus due to several personal issues. She had been close to the resident and was unable to determine what had
happened to the student from university leadership. This left the RA feeling as though she had failed the student and department. The interviewee reported that seeking services through the counseling center was initially uneasy, but the sessions allowed her to proactively manage her mental health and well-being.

Even though higher education is undergoing significant reform, few researchers have investigated how the RA manages these issues. Studies have been done to investigate job satisfaction among these paraprofessionals and specific assist the RAs. However, literature is scarce in unstructured avenues whereby these factors within the structured avenues to paraprofessionals feel it is permissible to discuss stress-related concerns. Similar to the structured systems, understanding these unstructured resources can help the student housing professional better understand how to support these paraprofessionals. When asked from what sources, if any, they viewed as avenues to discuss stress-related issues, participants identified two areas outside the Department of Student Housing and University’s resources: other RAs and friends without housing experience.

Seeking other RAs to discuss stress-related issues was important to those interviewed for the study. One reason was the familiarity of the issues and an embedded trust among colleagues with a shared experience. Being able to discuss stress-related issues with other RAs also removed the barrier of fear participants had if they took the same concerns to a supervisor. When probed about what types of conversation occurred among RAs related to stress within the position, fear of confrontation, lack of job performance by other RAs, questionable decisions that impacted a student’s enrollment, and conflict with a supervisor or the Department of Student Housing were more prevalent. Discussing stress-related issues with friends unaffiliated with the Department of Student Housing were also cited. Interviewees shared that conversations with friends are
typically vague in nature, but necessary to gain a different perspective from someone without ties to the department or work. When asked what topics might be discussed with friends, common responses were residents’ crises, team dynamics, and supervisor conflicts. Finally, discussions with RAs and friends created an opportunity for staff to be open about aspects of the position without repercussions.

**Research Question 4: While fulfilling the requirements of the position, can the RAs recognize when they are experiencing compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction?**

**Two themes emerged from the participants’ responses:**

1. Being called to serve
2. Unappreciated and undervalued

Since early 2000, research studies centered around compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue involving frontline employees have increased. Professionals within varied fields serving those experiencing trauma have largely contributed to research on these topics. Yet there is a limited amount of literature directly related to the RA position within the higher education sector. Findings from disciplines such as nursing and social work align with the RA position and can further the understanding of why these individuals choose to work in the helping professions. For example, Radey and Figley (2007) explained how social workers having deep desires to make a difference are often guided by a compassion for humanity. Participants depict compassion satisfaction as those moments when they witness residents’ happiness. Resident happiness can come in the form of passing a test, being accepted into an organization, or witnessing a resident overcome a personal issue. Participants also shared that compassion satisfaction can be felt when the floor community is working together, residents are helping with events on the floor, and when residents acknowledge the RA as an important figure in their lives.
Previous studies have shown that frontline employees are a high risk for experiencing compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002). According to the American College Health Association (2018), college students reported the top six factors affecting their academic performance: Stress (31%), Anxiety (25.9%), Sleep Difficulties (20.2%), Depression (16.9%), Cold/Flu/Sore Throat (12.9%) and Work (12.5%). Thus, working with students experiencing mental health concerns is unavoidable for many paraprofessionals in the RA role. Furthermore, it is believed that as these factors manifest, the RA is an initial point of contact for students seeking a solution to their problems. While it is easy to identify the RA experiencing stress or burnout in these situations, fatigue from caring about the student may go unnoticed by the supervisor. An interviewee shared there was a need to place oneself in the student’s situation to gain a better understanding of how he or she was feeling. When probed for more clarity, the participant discussed how the RA felt morally obligated to see the issue through the student’s point of view, which increased stress for the RA, potentially adversely affecting their own well-being. This becomes most complicated when the resident is referred to professional staff or the counseling center, because the resident may be less forthcoming about an issue and the result may leave the RA feeling somewhat powerless. Finally, after an incident has occurred, the RA can become emotionally and physically spent. When probed as to how the department might assist in these cases, interviewees shared the need for opportunities to debrief. However, they did not feel the department had been willing to provide resources to help them after an incident. Moreover, participants emphasized that team members may not recognize when they have lingering feelings from an incident and those feeling that can impact them academically, socially, physically, and emotionally.

Another issue contributing to compassion fatigue occurs when an RA feels undervalued and underappreciated by the residents. Around the clock, RAs interact with students when
providing care that contributes to the residents’ overall development and satisfaction in college. Usually, the care provided for others comes at the expense of the RA neglecting his or her own needs. In this study, participants described how it can become frustrating when they sacrificed their own personal needs to address those of residents. One of the experiences that participants had was residents calling the RAs’ “narks” and the “social police,” which was reported in the *Daily Mississippian*, the student newspaper at the University of Mississippi. Participants emphasized a need for the news story to contain factual information about how the RAs also spent late nights helping students overcome personal issues, saving students from alcohol poisoning, or other work-related responsibilities contributing to students’ success. Additionally, participants expressed that the Department of Student Housing missed an opportunity to show support and teach the campus community about the complexities of the RA position. When asked about what, if anything, housing could have done differently to support RAs during this occurrence, the top three suggestions provided included: a message sent to RAs from leadership reaffirming the importance of the RA role, a discussion during a staff meeting attended by leadership, or an advertisement in the *Daily Mississippian* affirming support for the RA position.

**Implications**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experience of RAs at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. The findings of this study may be useful for the University of Mississippi housing professionals in gaining a better understanding of the unintended consequences to which these paraprofessionals, while supporting the development of other students, may experience stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. According to Deluga and Winters (1991), due to the work environment characterized by long work hours and responsibilities, RAs
are likely to become more receptive to burnout. Furthermore, Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, and Whalen (2003) asserted that in addition to managing stressors as a student, the RA must also balance job demands that include upholding student conduct, peer mentoring, managing roommate conflicts, understanding Title IX compliance issues, and fulfilling university honor codes and creeds, even in cases where the RA may conflict with the creed or code.

Findings from this research study confirmed that participants experienced stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. Gaining a better understanding of these factors and their impact on the RA position may help both professionals and paraprofessionals design training, form focus groups, and engage RAs in learning self-care and coping strategies to better engage and manage the challenges in their work setting. A conclusion drawn from the study also indicated a gap in training provided by the Department of Student Housing in how to proactively manage these factors in the work setting. This can become problematic, especially when an RA experiences secondary trauma and is left to debrief alone. A possible strategy is for the case manager to implement a set weekly session for RAs to come by and debrief. The session does not need to be organized after an incident happens, but as a free-flowing event, allowing the RA to interject when he or she is ready to engage.

A moderate redesign in the RA position allows for greater focus on the individual RA and reduces some of the issues participants shared that contributed to stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Because duty constitutes such a vast majority of the concerns participants shared, an examination of how to reduce weekend load to promote more flexibility for staff to reenergize and take care of personal and academic issues outside the hall should occur. Another redesign is the emphasis on creating policy and procedures that allow RAs to request time away from the position in an emergency or family crisis. Having RAs work during these periods of
crisis does not serve the RA, students, or the Department of Student Housing well. Deciding between a request from one’s parent to stay with family for one night following the death of a family member or return to campus to serve on duty and manage numerous residents’ issues should not conflict. A possible solution might be to create a database of RAs throughout campus who are willing to volunteer in these cases to provide coverage. A special incentive could be provided to RAs expressing interest in participating, such as a higher pay scale. Finally, it is necessary to provide clear expectations and ongoing training on how duty schedules are created. Participants expressed frustration with scheduling and believe the Department of Student Housing should consider each RAs’ academic commitments over the department’s preferences for scheduling organization meetings and duty coverage. Having these procedures in place would reduce the tension that exists among staff each semester, when the duty schedule is created.

Another implication likely to influence how RAs best manage stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue is having the Department of Student Housing provide them with structured support systems and resources that will help them cope. When interviewing each participant, it was mentioned that the immediate supervisor had a significant influence on the RA’s management of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue associated with the position. Furthermore, it is imperative for the Department of Student Housing to create training to equip the immediate supervisor with tools that help the RA identify self-care strategies to be successful in the RA position and future career opportunities. One tool recommended for working with RAs when identifying appropriate self-care strategies is motivational interviewing (Rollnick & Miller, 1995). According to Mills et al. (2017), motivational interviewing is a client driven-centered approach, led by a counselor who guides the client by exploring thoughts, feeling, and attitudes, with the desired goal of achieving a positive
behavioral change. While there are numerous studies conducted to examine the effectiveness of motivational interviewing interventions for reducing alcohol use and abuse in college students, no studies were found in the review literature that involved investigating the use of motivational interviewing as a framework for working with RAs in developing self-care strategies. The immediate supervisor, already having the trust of one’s team, can serve as a key role in helping RAs develop the necessary motivation to create a self-care plan to manage stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue and maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle while employed in the RA role. Motivational interview sessions with the RA would involve embracing the four principles of motivational interviewing: expressing empathy, supporting self-efficacy, rolling with resistance, and developing discrepancy (Limbers, Turner & Varni, 2008). Being properly trained and through the utilization of one-on-one meetings, the supervisor can become equipped with using the four principles to lead RAs through purposeful positive change. For example, the supervisor can express empathy by showing interest, and being accepting, understanding, nonjudgmental, thus allowing the RA to be the catalyst for his or her own change (Bundy, 2004). However, merely being cognizant of what changes need to occur is inadequate, so it is essential to work with the RAs to build self-efficacy and confidence into their skillset so they can implement the self-care strategies and reach the desired goals (Jones, Burckhardt & Bennett, 2004).

Another principle of motivational interviewing supervisors can use when helping RAs deal with challenges they face is “rolling with resistance.” The premise of this technique is that merely confronting or attacking someone is inadequate. Rather, other approaches utilizing positive outcomes, such as validating the person’s concerns, encouraging the person to come up with solutions to the problem, and alternate ways to behave during stressful and challenging
situations (Resnicow & McMaster, 2012). The approach would allow the supervisor to avoid conflictual encounter with the RA (Westra & Aviram, 2013). For example, RAs may be able to vent remorseful feelings to the supervisor when asking a resident to leave one’s room, even if the resident has overstayed his or her welcome. When this happens, the supervisor can use the “rolling with resistance” technique and thereby avoid confrontation by allowing the RA to develop solutions to his or her own problems (Bundy, 2004). Applying the fourth principle, developing discrepancy, consists of the supervisor being prepared to work with the RA in setting appropriate and reachable goals (Bundy, 2004).

The final principle of motivational interviewing, developing discrepancy, involves helping the person understand the difference between his or her current behavior and the desired or ideal behavior (Bundy, 2004). The supervisor should work with the RA to set appropriate and reachable goals to change undesirable behavior while also being careful to avoid being perceived as shame-inducing and a negative reinforcement (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2008). By focusing on values and behaviors, the supervisor can utilize the four principles for motivational interviewing can be essential in helping RAs reduce the factors impacted by stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue.

Orzech, Salafsky, and Hamilton (2001) suggest limited literature exists about college students’ lack of sleep. While most of the participants in this study claimed college students at the University of Mississippi do not get enough sleep, all participants admitted that the RAs lack of sleep is even greater. Li, Wu, Gan, Qu, and Lu (2016) conducted a meta-analysis to determine if insomnia increased the risk of depression. The thirty-four cohort studies totaling 172,077 participants concluded that insomnia was significantly associated with a heightened risk of depression. The findings from Li et al.’s study has significant implications regarding the lack of
sleep associated with an RA role. The physical and mental exhaustion from being awakened throughout a duty night to assist with incidents was identified as having a negative impact on the RA’s ability to perform job and academic tasks at peak performance.

Additionally, similar patterns of being awakened throughout the night were prevalent in residence halls where the respondents emphasized that a strong sense of community exist. This was likely due to residents feeling more comfortable discussing such issues as roommate conflicts, relationship distractions, or other occurrences with their RA due to the built-in trust that existed. The Department of Student Housing has an opportunity to partner with campus recreation programs and the counseling center to provide sleep management strategies to provide opportunities to improve the overall RA health and well-being. Additionally, there are also abundant opportunities for the case manager to collaborate with RAs to develop strategies that ensure RAs get sufficient sleep. For example, an “importance of sleep” campaigns can be instituted during training, and napping pods being installed in the case manager’s office suite to provide a place for RAs to rest or nap between classes. Another option might be to allocate a room, managed by the case manager, whereby RAs can spend the night if feeling overwhelmed and in need of sleep.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The goal of the current research was to provide a glimpse into the lived experiences among RAs at the University of Mississippi with regards to stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. Although the results will add to the body of research relating to the RA position, additional research to explore stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among this group is necessary. Studies should be replicated across various campuses by sampling RAs from institutions of different sizes, similar housing
populations, and comparable demographics to gain a better understanding of how these environmental factors influence the work, academic, and social progression among these paraprofessionals. In addition, a more detailed investigation into sleep deprivation and its impact on the academic performance of these paraprofessionals is strongly encouraged.

In conclusion, although participants in this study described the factors of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue, there was little reference to whether interviewees were able to identify when they were experiencing compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, at least in the same manner as they were able to identify and discuss stress and burnout. Further research involving compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue should improve the RAs’ understanding of these phenomena.

**Reflections of the Researcher**

The study has brought a renewed focus to the researcher’s understanding of the complexity of the RA position at the University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. As an administrator with over 30 years of experience in housing and residence life, the researcher has a direct responsibility to understand the impact of the RA position on the overall mental, physical, and social well-being of these paraprofessionals who are trusted with being the frontline leaders within our residential facilities. The participants’ lived experiences also impact many university outcomes, including retention and student satisfaction. The findings of this research should be important to housing professionals whom depend on these paraprofessionals to administer paperwork, help students navigate the collegiate landscape, confront inappropriate behavior, and assist students experiencing trauma. The participants’ responses are also relevant in helping housing
professionals understand their lived experiences, and provide wrap-around services to ensure this
group of paraprofessionals are empowered to manage their own health and well-being.

Before this study, the researcher’s view of care for this group primarily involved calling
or emailing staff after a major incident to thank them for their services. As a result of this study,
the researcher has been inspired to continue to be an advocate for RAs and become more
sympathetic to the impact that this position has on their overall student experience. Additionally,
analyzing the data reported by the interviewees has motivated the researcher to encourage
University of Mississippi’s Department of Student Housing professionals to integrate findings of
this study into trainings and program design.

Conclusion

This qualitative study was conducted to add to the body of research related to RAs at the
University of Mississippi regarding stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion
fatigue. One purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which these paraprofessionals
experience the many facets of working and living in a residence hall. Another purpose of this
study was to obtain responses to questions from 15 RAs willing to participate in semi-structured
interviews at the University of Mississippi. RAs are important to the success rate of campus
housing and the University in supporting and retaining other students. The main focus of this
study was to explore the sources and place of stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and
compassion fatigue as well as the degrees and magnitude of stress, burnout, compassion
satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among RAs at the University of Mississippi. The responses
from the 15 participants were rich with information about their experiences as RAs, which led to
viable suggestions for housing professionals working in the Department of Student Housing at
the University of Mississippi.
The resulting themes emerged from each participant represented critical views of working within a residence hall on the frontline. The interconnectedness resulting from the data analysis was directly tied to the models listed in Manuscript One, particularly the General Adaptation Syndrome Model relating to stress, Maslach’s and Leiter’s Areas of worklife (AWS) and burnout (MBI) model in which the work environment contributes to burnout, and the General Model of Compassion Fatigue Resilience Model relating to compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. Although the results of the study did not indicate participants directly knew when they were experiencing compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, their responses did reflect that their caring for residents exposed RAs to the many facets associated with these phenomena. Conversely, participants were aware of their feelings of stress and burnout. Understanding the differences in each phenomenon can help guide the Department of Student Housing professionals in providing appropriate training and relevant services for these paraprofessionals.

The results from the study revealed a significant need to help RAs identify resources to engage in self-care take time away from their residence halls, and acquire the necessary sleep to meet university, Department of Student Housing, residents, and their own goals and objectives. There is a need for housing professionals to consider setting aside rooms that could be used by RAs to separate themselves from their buildings, get away to study, or used for sleep and relaxation. It is also suggested that the experiences shared by participants in this study be used to formulate policies and guidelines that address the concerns and expectations of RAs working at the University of Mississippi.

Another finding of the current research study was that while a support system to discuss these factors was prevalent, RAs using these services largely depended upon their relationship
with supervisors. In cases when the relationship was viewed supportive, RAs found structured systems such as individual and staff meetings to be appropriate for addressing important issues, both personally and professionally. Conversely, when the relationship between supervisor and RA was viewed as negative, staff relied on others outside the department for support. Leaders in the Department of Student Housing should consider the results from this study to develop tools for the supervisor that can be implemented to empower the RA to develop goals and objectives for self-care and overall well-being. Additionally, self-care campaigns and in-service training sessions should be designed to further RAs’ and supervisors’ knowledge about best practices for helping paraprofessionals to better balance social, academic, and physical and psychological work-related pressures.

There exists a plethora of research related to student’s working and the impact of employment on their academic pursuits (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parkins, 2006). While there may not be conclusive evidence as the right mix of hours worked for academic success, having a strategy to manage the workload for RAs was evident in the participants’ responses. The respondents expressed how being asked to reschedule their academic obligations to address unexpected needs of the department and university impacts their service as RAs. These tasks may include distributing and collecting surveys, tracking students down to register for classes, and being available to help students, among other tasks. Helping the campus community better understand the limitations of the RA role can free up time for staff to concentrate on developing communities and assisting students in trauma. These changes could also be critical in modeling for RAs the value of setting boundaries and creating personal expectations for others when they enter the professional workforce.
In conclusion, I have discussed the implications and recommendations from the findings in Manuscript Two. The participants who shared their knowledge and lived experiences with the researcher have helped to heighten the awareness of the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi relating to stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue. Furthermore, heightening the awareness of the lived experiences of RAs at the University of Mississippi has reinforced the need for the Department of Student Housing professionals to take the appropriate actions to help these paraprofessionals fulfill expectations on the job, while maintaining proper health and well-being.
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VITA

Lionel Maten

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management
University of Mississippi  
July 1, 2019 – Present
Selected for the position to provide strategic direction, administration, fiscal responsibilities, development, assessment and improvement of campus enrollment, financial aid, student housing and student disability services.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

➢ Administrative oversight for implementation of Chatbot™
➢ Administrative oversight for implementation of CRM
➢ Administrative oversight for implementation of Campus Logic™
➢ Covid-19 Student Services workgroup, Co-chair

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
University of Mississippi  
July 2013 – June 30, 2019
Selected for the position to provide strategic direction, administration, fiscal responsibilities, development, assessment and improvement of campus enrollment and financial aid functions.

Provide experience in data-driven enrollment operations that result in sustained growth in enrollment, diversity, financial aid leveraging, and academic quality. Manage budgets totaling $6M and provide all aspects of human resource management within area of responsibilities. Accountable for the oversight of Admissions, Admission Processing, Financial Aid, orientation, campus visits and Luckyday Scholars programs. Participate in institution-wide strategic planning and policy development, recommending policies and procedures to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the Mississippi Institution of Higher Learning (State Colleges Governing Board).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

➢ Serve on the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Leadership team and represent the division at numerous campus and community events.
➢ Direct supervision of eight professional staff members; supervisory oversight for over 107 full-time professional and operating staff members, as well as 20+ graduate student
➢ employees and over 400 student employees.

➢ Oversight for the fiscal management of operating budgets more than $7 million, and financial aid allocations more than $280 million.

➢ Responsible for undergraduate enrollment goals and strategies.

➢ Serve on a myriad of committees/working groups, including Non-Resident Admission Review, University Growth Committee, Chancellor Committee on Accessibility, Academic Calendar Committee, Sustainability Committee, and Childcare Task Force.

➢ Respond to requests from the Board for the Institutions of Higher Learning and provide guidance on system policies.

➢ Served as University liaison with the City of Oxford; most recently serving on the Oxford, MS Bicentennial 2037 comprehensive city strategic planning committee.

➢ Secured institutional scholarship offerings totaling $4.36M since fall 2013.

➢ Serve on City of Oxford Executive Housing Committee, a 13-member committee to oversee the development of affordable housing around the city.

➢ First time, full-time enrollment has grown 13% since fall 2012; fall 2014 was the largest first-year class in University history.

➢ Executed University Admissions Plan. This plan was the first time the University has ever had a recruitment plan.

➢ Served on a Growth Management Planning Committee.

➢ Enterprise Risk Management - Student Affairs Representative.

➢ Ruffalo Noel Levitz Consultants - Main Contact.

➢ Chaired Division of Student Affairs Reorganization Committee.

➢ Chaired committee that set the vision for and implemented an alternative enrollment program in collaboration with Northwest Mississippi Community College.

➢ Re-envisioned the Mississippi Outreach to Scholastic Talent (MOST) Conference; aimed at recruiting and mentoring underrepresented students, as well as developing trust and confidence among parents of first-generation students. Committee exceeded projections by 300 students.

➢ Served as part of a team effort to develop a closer relationship with Phi Theta Kappa International Headquarters, resulting in hosting their annual Advisor Training at the University of Mississippi.

➢ Provided leadership for new student facility projects, including five new residence halls totaling more than 100M dollars and 1780 beds.
➢ Chaired committee that created the campus first Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT).
➢ Served on the sexual violence working committee to effectively respond to shifting federal and state legislation.
➢ Served on the City of Oxford Strategic Planning Committee (Vision 2037).
➢ Served as University Liaison with City of Oxford Public Officials.
➢ Creation of a Residential Curriculum, involving extensive faculty involvement.
➢ Implemented TMA iService Desk.
➢ Served on Shorelight Committee - Third party partner for recruiting international students.
➢ Created office to manage departmental student housing inventory.
➢ Integrated Comprehensive Security program throughout 2M sq. ft. student housing portfolio.
➢ Installed TotalCard access controls to every student room (nearly 3000).
➢ Deployed security cameras in all residential facilities (19).
➢ Implemented guest check-in system at all front desks (19).
➢ Implemented “infield” maintenance electronic work order system.

Director of Student Housing
University of Mississippi  
June 2012 – June 30, 2019
Provide visionary leadership and direction for the department; administers and manages the student housing program for the University; directs departmental operations; oversees the department budget; sets department goals; coordinates assessment efforts; and establishes learning outcomes and implementation strategies for the department.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
➢ Lead, direct, and plan the operations of self-funded, University-owned and operated undergraduate residence halls and graduate/family apartment housing including supervision of Conduct, Communication, Diversity and Inclusion, Facilities, Information and Assignments, Information Technology, and Fiscal Management.
➢ Provide visionary, strategic, innovative, flexible, and change-oriented leadership for the department that includes approximately 5,100 beds, housing undergraduates, graduate, and families.
➢ Oversight for the fiscal management of operating budgets more than $28 million.
➢ Direct supervision of Business Manager, Associate Director for Housing Facilities, Associate Director for Housing Operations, and Associate Director for Residential
Learning.

**Director of Housing and Residence Life**  
**University of Texas at San Antonio**  
June 2009 – May 2012

Responsible for the overall management of housing and residence life; provided fiscal management for a $12M department budget; Administered oversight for design and construction of a 618 bed, $43.5M facility; supervised professional and support staff policies, procedures, standards, and laws. Created RFP documents for feasibility studies and financial consultation in preparation for new construction. Evaluated and assessed university housing occupancy, retention, and projection trends; oversaw the residential facilities to maintain a safe, secure, and healthy living environment; confirmed that all room assignments and billings were completed and communicated to students. Developed and oversaw residential communities that utilized best practices in student development and research to create engaging, learning environments. Ensured the security and safety of students; responsible for crisis and risk management. Established long-range planning mechanisms; represented the department and established a collaborative relationship with other university departments and local community organizations.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

➢ Developed University's first student housing marketing plan.

➢ Created the following special interest groups: Honors, Engineering, Leadership and Service and Music.

➢ Developed a Residential Curriculum.

➢ Directed a team through the removal of mold in AC units for a 1000 bed residential complex.

➢ Developed fall move-in day plan. This plan was the first time the university has ever had a move-in day plan.

➢ Implemented a mail package management system.

➢ Implemented TMA iService Desk.

➢ Secured funding for new positions.

➢ Re-envisioned Residence Hall Association (RHA).

➢ Constructed 43.5M residential facility.

➢ Implemented STARREZ.


**Director of University Housing**  
**Oakland University**  
October 2006 – 2009

Managed a nineteen-hundred-bed university’s housing and residence life program; provided fiscal management for a $12M department budget; supervised professional and support staff,
ensured efficient operations and programming, and ensured compliance with all relevant policies, procedures, standards, and laws. Developed ongoing management of a 10-year Capital Asset Management Plan (Preventive Maintenance). Created RFP documents for feasibility studies and financial consultation in preparation for new construction. Presented annual student housing rate adjustments to the Universities Board of Trustees. Negotiated bargaining agreements with union representatives. Evaluated and assessed university housing occupancy, retention, and projection trends; oversaw the residential facilities to maintain a safe, secure, and healthy living environment; confirmed that all room assignments and billings were completed and communicated to students. Developed and oversaw residential communities that utilized best practices in student development and research to create engaging, learning environments. Ensured the security and safety of students; responsible for crisis and risk management. Established long-range planning mechanisms; represented the department and established a collaborative relationship with other university departments and local community organizations. Provided management oversight of university rental properties and Meadow Brook Faculty Subdivision, sales, rental and maintenance.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Established International Student Housing community.
- Established Housing for Law Students community.
- Established Fraternity and Sorority Housing community.
- Increased revenue through increased occupancy and operation efficiency.
- Chaired President appointed Summer Student Employment Committee.
- Created a ten-year facilities Preventive Maintenance Plan.
- Collaborated with athletic staff to create a student cheer section for basketball games.
- Establish housing student welcome group.
- Expanded Honors College Housing.
- Collaborated with academic advising to establish tutoring labs in residence halls.
- Chaired Student Housing Master Plan Committee.

**Associate Director of Housing Facilities**

**University of Louisville**

November 2003 – October 2006

Budget responsibility included oversight of an operational budget over $2.7M annually. Hired and completed a facility audit for renovations of buildings within the housing system. A ten-year facility forecasting model for repairs in residence halls and apartments was completed and reported to higher administration. Created and implemented a procurement plan for furniture and equipment. Developed collaborative working relationships with internal university departments-housing, residence life, contract administration, University Fire Marshall, purchasing, facilities, Campus Informational Technology, maintenance, and design and construction and external architectural, engineering, construction, vendor and local fire department personnel. Served as the contract administrator for Cable, Telephone, Security,
Laundry, Cleaning Staff, Security Guard, Pest and Vending contracts. Housing representative involved in negotiating, monitoring, and evaluating facilities service agreements. Supervised one full-time Information Technology Coordinator, one full-time administrative staff member, and eight student employees.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

➢ Created and implemented a furniture replacement/recondition plan.
➢ Oversaw multiple renovations and capital improvement projects.
➢ Served on the university team for P3 housing construction projects.
➢ Enhanced physical security in residential facilities.
➢ Establish Fraternity and Sorority Housing.

**Associate Director of Housing Services**

Carnegie Mellon University  
November 2000 – November 2003

Assisted with forecasting and monitoring of an operational budget more than $23 million. Administered and directed all activities associated with the operations of Carnegie Mellon Office of Housing Services (Marketing, Assignments, Desk Services, Electronic Keys, Off-Campus Housing and Support Staff). Managed the day-to-day operations of twenty-eight residence halls and rental properties totaling 3700 residents. Oversaw the supervision of personnel, which included work allocation, training, and problem resolution; evaluated performance and made recommendations for personnel actions; motivated employees to achieve peak productivity and performance. Participated in departmental policy formulation and updated published policy statements. Chaired and served on departmental/student committees and task forces as assigned. Served as departmental liaison with other university departments. Assisted Assistant Vice President of Enrollment in the development of both short and long-plans for maintaining and improving the physical facilities of university housing.

**Area Coordinator**

The University of Southern Mississippi  
July 1997 – October 2000

Administrator for five buildings housing twelve hundred residents; Resident’s classifications consist of first-year students and sorority women living in traditional style facilities. Responsibilities included recruitment, selection, and training of five graduate hall directors, twenty-seven resident assistants, one part-time secretary, fifteen custodial staff, and seventy-five student employees. Developed and managed a budget of nine thousand dollars annually, adjudicate conduct cases, diversity awareness, advised programmatic endeavors within the area, property management, facility rehabilitation/restoration, furniture purchase, policy creation and enforcement, and counseling students. Additional responsibilities have included teaching a leadership course designed for first-year students, organizing Hall Director selection, developing training modules for paraprofessional training, teaching an RA class, summer school operation, and summer conference operation.

**Resident Director/Student Development Specialist**
University of Arkansas at Monticello  
Coordinated a 350-bed residence hall facility, selected and trained twenty resident assistants, implemented programs, diversity awareness, adjudicated conduct cases, counseled students, prepared complex budgets, advised and motivated hall council members and directed front desk operations. Counseled students concerning academic and career pursuits, coordinated national testing administrations, supervised paraprofessional staff, instructed a college course class that was designed for at-risk students, presented programs on resume writing, coordinated career day events, coordinated graduate school recruitment day, career advisement, and assisted with campus-wide tutoring program.

Graduate Hall Director  
Murray State University  
August 1992 – May 1994  
Coordinated a 320-bed male residence hall, selected and trained nine resident advisors and five security guards, implemented programs/activities, diversity awareness, adjudicated conduct cases, counseled students, prepared budget, directed front desk operations, selected and trained four desk workers and a full-time secretary, advised and motivated hall council members.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

*American College Personnel Association*  
Attended Student Affairs Assessment Conference in 2007

*Mid Atlantic Association of Housing Officers*  
Attended first MACUHO conference in 2001

Presented “Furniture, how to select and purchase residence hall furniture”. Program won best new professional award.

*Association of College and University Housing Officers-International*  
Faculty Selection Search Committee, 2016  
National Housing Training Institute Faculty, 2012, 2016  
ACUHO-I Magazine Spotlight, 2012  
Chief Housing Training Institute Graduate in 2008  
Attended first ACUHO-I conference in 1996  
Serviced as National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Liaison in 1997

*Southeastern Association of Housing Officers*  
Pro/Am Mentor, 2015, 2016, 2017  
Vendor Training Volunteer, 2015  
Host Committee Member in 2007  
Nomination Committee in 2006  
Program Committee in 2005  
Attended first SEAHO conference in 1998  
Co-chaired SEAHO 1999 annual conference in Biloxi, Mississippi

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Appointed Human Relations Chair in 1999
Co-developed Southern Placement Exchange in 2000

Mississippi Association of Housing Officers
Conference Host Committee, 2016
Presenter, 2015
Awarded the Tony Cawthorn award in 1999 (Outstanding Professional of the Year)
Attended first MAHO conference in 1997
Elected treasurer at 1997 conference

National Housing Training Institute
2016 faculty at University of South Florida
2012 faculty at University of Georgia
1998 attendee

PRESENTATIONS
2019 Mississippi Outreach to Scholastic Talent (UM Program) – Guest Speaker
2019 National Intramural Recreational sports Association – Panelist for directors institute.
2018 Student Affairs Student Advisory Board - Enrollment Management
2018 Ole Miss Alumni Association - Board of Directors Meeting
2018 Greenville High School - Junior Class
2018 Holmes Community College Phi Kappa Theta induction ceremony
2018 Men of Excellence Teach, Inspire, Empower Conference (T.I.E.)
2017 Men of Excellence induction ceremony
2016 Mississippi Outreach to Scholastic Talent (MOST) summer enrichment program
2014 UM Student Affairs Family Association Meeting

SERVICE

Committees
University of Mississippi
Academic Calendar Committee
Chancellors Standing Committee on Accessibility
Chancellor’s Standing Committee on Recruitment, Admissions, Orientation and Advising
Transfer Student Task Force
Non-Resident Admissions Review Committee
Childcare Task Force
Sustainability Committee

Search Committees
University of Mississippi
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Inclusion
Associate Provost Director of Research, Assessment, and Planning - Student Affairs
Director of Facilities Management
Director of Fraternal Leadership and Learning
Director of Parking and Transportation

City of Oxford Vision 2037 Advisory Committee
Planning Community for Oxford, Mississippi

Committees
*University of Texas at San Antonio*
Athletics Council
Football Gameday Committee
Sustainability Committee
Emergency Management Committee

Committees
*Oakland University*
Student Employment Task Force Chair
Learning Outcomes and Assessment Team
International Students and Scholars Advisory Committee

Committees
*Carnegie Mellon University*
Access Center Feasibility Committee
Diversity Advisory Committee
Andy Awards Nominating Committee
Committee of investigation – Sexual Harassment
Staff Council

Committees
*The University of Southern Mississippi*
Affirmative Action Mediation Team
Fraternity Reconstruction Task Force

Committees
*University of Arkansas at Monticello*
International Education Advisory Committee
American Disability Act Compliance Committee
EDUCATION

Master of Arts
Department of Community Leadership and Human Services
Major: Recreation and Leisure Services
August 1992 – May 1994
Murray, Kentucky

Bachelor of Science
School of Education
Major: Wellness Leadership
August 1987 – May 1992
Monticello, Arkansas