

UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTIONS OF MATTERING, FEELINGS OF BURNOUT,  
AND JOB SATISFACTION OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT  
FOUR-YEAR MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITIES

by

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

# UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTIONS OF MATTERING, FEELINGS OF BURNOUT, AND JOB SATISFACTION OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT FOUR-YEAR MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITIES

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Since first conceptualized in the 1970s, employee burnout has received much scholarly attention in various service-oriented fields. While some disciplines have benefited from an abundance of burnout research (e.g., nursing, education), other specific jobs have received limited attention. One such position is the Resident Assistant (RA) job on college campuses. RAs serve a critical, service-oriented role in higher education and have a wide range of difficult job responsibilities. As such, RAs are not immune to burnout.

The limited existing research on RA burnout has failed to address the foundational cause of burnout; that is, the relationships between RAs who provide care and the residents to whom RAs are responsible for providing care. Therefore, this study addressed this “relationship gap” by using the theoretical framework of mattering to explore the relationships between RAs and their residents. On the most fundamental level, mattering asks if others are aware of us, find us important, and rely on us.

This study surveyed RAs at four four-year Midwestern institutions. The collected data

were analyzed using quantitative procedures to assess differences in RA mattering and burnout between gender, community composition, and employment choice; to determine the relationships between RA mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction; to develop models of RA mattering predicting RA burnout; and, to develop models predicting RA job satisfaction through RA background characteristics, mattering, and burnout.

The results of this study reveal that RAs who chose not to return to their position the following year perceive lower levels of mattering to their residents and increased feelings of burnout. Additionally, mattering was found to significantly predict two of the three burnout dimensions: depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Combined with the three dimensions of burnout, select components of mattering significantly predicted a substantial amount of the variance in RA job satisfaction. Recommendations for research and practice are shared.

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Throughout this process, often I heard the best dissertation is a done dissertation. That statement frequently troubled me by simplifying and in some ways, marginalizing, what should become the crowning achievement of an academic career that also provides evidence of earned membership in the research community. I never wanted for this to simply be done, but rather to be something of which I was proud. Both of these are now true, thanks almost exclusively to my dissertation chair and committee. Drs. Zhang, Tobolowsky, and Hardy: A few crafted words in the front matter of this dissertation will never come close to acknowledging your contribution to altering the course of my academic and professional life. I could write and write about specific contributions, so I'll simply leave it at this: Thank you for giving me attention and being aware of me, for making me feel that exploring this topic was important and meaningful, for sharing my feelings of excitement and frustration, and, for giving me an academic support system on which I could unconditionally rely. For these reasons this endeavor is done, but far more importantly, I am proud of the content presented here, because of each of you. You have, and always will, matter to me.

## DEDICATION

My dad once wrote that like many tasks and initiatives in higher education, completing a doctoral program is similar to eating an elephant: It is done one bite at a time. Reflecting on that, I dedicate this dissertation to those who helped me manage each bite along the way.

To my parents, who offered unconditional love and support. Also, for their timely reminders that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, and how that light was not actually a train bearing back down on me. Often I thought of Granddad Stoner, who in so few words (three to be exact), was able to consistently communicate just how much each individual member mattered to the entire family.

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Retaining college students is a complex issue (Tinto, 2006). Numerous studies have explored factors that affect student retention, including institutional support services (Astin, 1993), increased student-faculty interactions (Kuh & Hu, 2001), established social networks (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993), academic involvement (Tinto, 1993), and various student characteristics (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). Another extensively documented area in higher education that contributes to positive student outcomes and retention is involvement and engagement by students in their campus environment (Astin, 1999; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). While the responsibility of student retention does not fall on a single person or department on university campuses (Tinto, 2006), one area within the higher educational landscape known to have a positive impact on college students is university housing (de Araujo & Murray, 2010; Nicpon et al., 2006). On-campus housing provides opportunities for college students to have higher levels of engagement (Astin, 1977) and increased opportunities for social interaction (Berger, 1997), both of which lead to higher persistence and retention rates (Blimling, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Tinto, 1993). Social integration and student engagement in college residential environments are facilitated, in part, by intentional academic and social programming provided by residence life staff (Fotis, 2013).

One of the most critical positions in university housing is the Resident Assistant (RA) (Elleven, Allen, & Wircenski, 2001). RAs are student employees whose job duties include building relationships with residents; assisting with the formation of groups and building community among residents; providing programmatic opportunities to residents; enforcing

policies; disseminating information; and, serving as a counselor, teacher or educator, and role model (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Walen, 2003; Blimling, 1998; Denzine & Anderson, 1999; Fedorovich, Boyle, & Hare, 1994; Fotis, 2013; Hovarth & Stack, 2013; Winston & Buckner, 1984). However, among their many responsibilities (Blimling, 1998; Jaeger & Caison, 2006), “[p]ossibly one of the most important roles of an RA is to positively influence the development of students” (Denzine & Anderson, 1999, p. 247).

The wide variance in RA job responsibilities is accompanied by many challenges and stressors (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988), making it a difficult position for student employees (Roussel & Elleven, 2009). Additionally, the sometimes conflicting nature of the RA role can cause further stress (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn, 2005). For instance, when RAs are expected to document students who violate policy while also building positive relationships with those same students, the resulting conflict can be “severe” (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988, p. 29). The stress associated with having varied and conflicting job responsibilities can lead to burnout among RAs (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Paladino et al., 2005).

Burnout research began in the mid-1970s in “care-giving and service occupations, in which the core of the job was the relationship between provider and recipient” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 400). Considerable literature in the fields of nursing (e.g., Laschinger, Leiter, Day, & Gilin, 2009; Leiter, Harvie, & Frizzell, 1998) and teaching (e.g., Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Fisher, 2011) have documented burnout and associated factors as contributing to early departure (Maslach et al., 2001; Moore, 2000) and lower job satisfaction (Fisher, 2011; Laschinger et al., 2009; Scanlan & Still, 2013) for these types of employees. Studies have also demonstrated that RAs experiencing burnout are rated lower on job

performance by the residents in their communities (Nowack, Gibbons, & Hanson, 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983).

Substantial literature demonstrates that burnout arises from the relationships between people in the work environment, most notably within the interactions of the caregiver and the recipients of their attention (e.g., Freudenberg, 1974; Maslach, 1976; Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 2001). However, little is known about the RAs' relationships with their residents and how it influences their level of burnout. The limited scholarly attention paid to RA burnout is dated and has focused on physical and personal variables such as gender, race, residence hall type, health habits, employment duration, stress, and university type (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989; Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983; Paladino et al., 2005). The closest researchers have come to investigating the relationships RAs have was a study done in 1985 by Nowack et al. that explored size of and satisfaction of RA's social support networks; however, this study focused neither on support networks exclusively within the residential community nor specifically on the residents with whom RAs directly work. Therefore, a gap in the literature exists surrounding the relationships between RAs and their residents as contributing to RA burnout.

One framework that may address this "relationship gap" in RA burnout literature is the concept of mattering, components of which are based on the relationships with surrounding individuals (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981), such as in residence hall communities. Mattering is defined as "the feeling that others depend upon us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165). People who perceive that they matter feel that others notice and pay attention to them (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981), invest in their well-being now (France & Finney, 2010) and in the future



(Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981), and feel that others depend on them (Elliott, Kao, & Grant, 2004; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981).

These components of mattering are important in gaining a better understanding of how RAs feel about their jobs and the associated stressors of many of their job responsibilities, such as building relationships with residents (Arboleda et al., 2003; Denzine & Anderson, 1999). Since the little existing research on RA burnout fails to address the main cause of burnout (the relationships between RAs and their residents), this study used mattering as a theoretical framework in which to explore this relationship gap. In doing so, housing professionals not only have documented research on environmental factors contributing to burnout, but also on how relationships within the RA work environment may contribute to or combat against burnout. Thus, housing professionals can better shape the policy and practice surrounding the RA position in terms of staff training and supervision, which in turn may further impact the success and job satisfaction of RAs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In employment settings, burnout leads to negative outcomes such as lower job satisfaction and increased attrition. Despite vast amounts of research on employee burnout, limited research exists exploring burnout experienced by RAs. Even more concerning is that the scarce available research on RA burnout fails to address the fundamental underpinning of burnout – the relationships between RAs who provide care and the residents to whom RAs are responsible for providing care. This relationship gap is noteworthy because burnout research emerged from observed phenomenon in disciplines where the job function was relational in nature (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach et al., 2001). Existing literature focusing on RA burnout has been inadequate in addressing RAs' relationships by ignoring this key component established

in the totality of burnout literature. Furthermore, despite plenty of literature existing on the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction in other disciplines, this relationship has been neglected in RAs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Since previous RA burnout research has neglected to focus on the fact that burnout arises due to the relationships between service providers and service recipients (Freudenberg, 1974; Maslach, 1976; Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 2001), the main purpose of this study was to begin addressing this “relationship gap” in RA burnout literature. To address this gap, the theoretical framework of mattering (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981) was used as a lens to evaluate the relationships between RAs and the residents for whom they are responsible as related to RA’s associated feelings of burnout. More specifically, this study first sought to examine the descriptive differences between background characteristics and RA’s perceptions of mattering to their residents and RAs’ feelings of burnout. Next, the study sought to describe the relationships between the components of mattering—*awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance*—and the dimensions of burnout—*emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment*. Once these relationships were determined, this study determined if RA mattering predicted RA burnout. Finally, due to previously established relationships between job satisfaction and both mattering (Connolly & Myers, 2003; Dixon Rayle, 2006a) and burnout (Fisher, 2011; Laschinger, Leiter, Day, & Gilin, 2009; Scalan & Still, 2013), this study investigated if RA mattering and burnout significantly predicted RA job satisfaction above and beyond RA background characteristics alone.

### **Research Questions**

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does level of RA mattering and burnout vary by gender, employment choice, and community composition?

**Research Question 2:** What are the relationships between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction among RAs?

**Research Question 3:** Is mattering a significant predictor for RA burnout?

**Research Question 4:** Are RAs' background characteristics, perceptions of mattering, and feelings of burnout significant predictors for RAs' job satisfaction?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to a better understanding of the RA experience on college campuses. Since RAs play a vital role in the residential experience by providing opportunities for their residents to be engaged and socially integrated in the college environment, both of which contribute to the overall success and retention of college students, the findings of this study have implications for enhancing the overall RA experience.

This study also strengthens the understanding of RA burnout relative to the relational component of the RA job. Instead of simply looking at demographic variables, the findings of this study begin the discussion on addressing burnout from the supervisory standpoint, specifically in how RAs interact and reflect on their relationships with residents. This study is one of the first efforts to explore burnout related to mattering in RAs, thus allowing for the development of interventions addressing RAs' perceptions of residents being aware of them, RAs' perceptions of being important in the lives of their residents, and RAs' perceptions of their residents depending on them.

In addition to guiding future practices among housing professionals, this study provides

implications for future burnout research, not only specific to RA burnout, but also more broadly to other disciplines where the primary job function is service-oriented. Put another way, based on the findings, this study warrants replication and investigation into the perception of mattering as it relates to burnout among other service-oriented careers such as nursing, teaching, and counseling.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since limited research drawing parallels between burnout and perceived mattering exists, the following literature review will explore the two topics separately; first looking at burnout and then the theoretical construct of mattering. This chapter concludes with a review of the literature surrounding Resident Assistant (RA) job satisfaction.

### **Burnout**

This review of burnout literature begins with the origin of the burnout construct and the subsequently identified dimensions of burnout, followed by a discussion of the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), the original instrument frequently used across disciplines to measure burnout. Next, research studies on burnout from various disciplines are examined and reviewed, specifically focusing on the relationships between burnout, job satisfaction, and staff retention. This section concludes with a review of research studies on RA burnout.

### **Origin of Burnout**

Literature on the phenomenon of burnout emerged from two perspectives in the 1970s: the clinical perspective and the social psychological perspective (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The clinical perspective was pioneered by Freudenberger (1974) through reflections on his personal experiences in the clinical setting. Freudenberger (1974) first observed the physical symptoms of burnout to include “a feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, being unable to shake a lingering cold, suffering from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, sleeplessness and shortness of breath” (p. 160). He also noted the behavioral signs of burnout included irritation, frustration, paranoia, stubbornness, inflexibility, depressive outlook, cynicism, and

lack of accomplishment compared to the number of hours worked (Freudenberger, 1974).

According to Freudenberger (1974), those prone to burnout are “the dedicated and the committed” (p. 161) because employees who fit those criteria are willing to make personal sacrifices and work long hours for the individuals with whom they serve. Additionally, employees in relationship-based service professions have “a need to give” (p. 162). These observations were based on Freudenberger’s (1975) experience in the clinical field, where he recognized that those populations had great and excessive needs. Freudenberger (1974, 1975) noted that feelings of burnout typically manifest after the first year of employment.

Freudenberger (1975) extended his observations to include burnout in alternative arenas (such as business or industry) and personality types (authoritarian, administrator, over-committed, and the professional). With this expansion, other behavioral signs were introduced such as decreased charisma and increased doubt in abilities (Freudenberger, 1975). In his updated conceptualization of burnout, Freudenberger (1975) included the need to be constantly available, performing repetitive work tasks, being over-committed, reporting to an authoritarian supervisor, and being overworked as contributing to burnout. A major limitation surrounding Freudenberger’s work was that there was no empirical evidence to support his claims.

Maslach, a social psychologist, was one of the first to use empirical data to analyze burnout. Her work focused on the other emerging perspective, the social psychological perspective. She and her colleagues “observed 200 professionals at work, conducted personal interviews and collected extensive questionnaire data” (Maslach, 1976, p. 16). Maslach (1982) explained that professionals in various disciplines coped with stress by distancing themselves from their work and clients. She also observed that employees experiencing burnout often express cynical attitudes towards other people. Thus, the feeling of burnout either was caused by

or directly affected the relationships employees had with their clients, often leading to detachment (Maslach, 1976). This separation generally manifested through terminology changes such as dehumanizing their clients and using derogatory language towards them (Maslach, 1976). Following a similar vein, Maslach (1976) found that employees suffering from burnout also referred to their clients as scientifically as possible, thus minimizing the client's humanity. The example Maslach cited was a doctor saying "[h]e's a coronary" (Maslach, 1976, p. 17), indicating that the medical concern is the only important thing about this patient while negating all the personal aspects of the patient's life. Maslach (1976) also noted that physical distancing was another relational behavior exhibited by employees with burnout; they would stand far away from their clients to avoid physical involvement. These symptoms of burnout were then classified into three distinct dimensions of burnout, which is discussed in the following section.

### **Components of Burnout**

Burnout begins with mild symptoms and accumulates over time if no intervening forces counteract the initial symptoms (Gentry, Baranowsky, & Dunning, 2002; Maslach, 1982). These symptoms, identified in Maslach's (1976) early interviews, suggested three dimensions of burnout, which later became the cornerstones for empirical research on burnout: *emotional exhaustion*, *depersonalization*, and lack of *personal accomplishment*.

Emotional exhaustion is characterized by "feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101) or being "depleted of one's emotional and physical resources" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). Emotional exhaustion is the most apparent symptom of burnout, as those who experience burnout most often report a generalized feeling of exhaustion and associated stress (Maslach et al., 2001). Because of this, Shirom (1989) suggested emotional exhaustion is the only meaningful measure of burnout, at

least compared to the other two dimensions. However, Maslach et al. (2001) responded that, the fact that exhaustion is a necessary criterion for burnout does not mean it is sufficient. If one were to look at burnout out of context, and simply focus on the individual exhaustion component, one would lose sight of the phenomenon entirely. (p. 403)

Depersonalization, sometimes used interchangeably with “cynicism” (Maslach et al., 2001), is characterized by “unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one’s care or service” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101) or “feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). This is illustrated when employees distance themselves emotionally from their clients (Maslach, 1976). Depersonalization is closely tied to emotional exhaustion, with many research findings typically revealing a strong relationship between the two (Maslach et al., 2001). This supports Shirom’s (1989) claim that measuring burnout outside of emotional exhaustion may be unnecessary.

The personal accomplishment dimension of burnout is characterized by “feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). It is important to note that the measurement of the previous two dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) is positively related to burnout (e.g., higher emotional exhaustion scores indicate a higher level of burnout) whereas personal accomplishment is negatively related to burnout, meaning employees with lower personal accomplishment experience higher burnout. Although sometimes reverse scored and reported as “lack of personal accomplishment,” Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) recommend leaving the dimension as is. Argued to be the most complex dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), personal accomplishment may be comprised of the previous two dimensions, either both individually or as a combination of the two (Byrne, 1994; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). The feeling of



self-efficacy naturally decreases as employees become exhausted and are less attached to their clients (Maslach, 1978).

Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment are distinct dimensions of the burnout phenomenon. Since little research exists documenting the relationships between the dimensions each dimension must be considered independently of each other and should not be combined (Maslach et al., 1996). Despite their recommendation, some researchers have still combined the dimensions into a composite burnout variable.

### **Maslach Burnout Inventory**

Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) due to the “enormous amount of interest in the phenomenon of burnout, but very little in the way of guiding theory or empirical research” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 1). The MBI is now considered “the leading measure of burnout” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 1). The MBI has since been modified into three different tools for use in varying populations: (a) MBI–Human Services Survey (MBI–HSS), for personnel working in human services (Maslach & Jackson, 1996); (b) MBI–Educators Survey (MBI–ES), adapted to use with personnel in educational settings (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996); and, (c) MBI–General Survey (MBI–GS), a generalized version for use with personnel in occupations without day-to-day interactions with people (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). The MBI–ES is identical to the MBI–HSS with the exception of the term “student” replacing “recipient” throughout the MBI–ES. The MBI–ES has been validated by other researchers (Gold, 1984; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) modeled the original MBI after the Hassles Scale (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977), where each item was measured on two scales: frequency (measured on a 6-point scale ranging from *a few times a year* to *every day*) and intensity (measured on a 7-point

scale ranging from *very mild, barely noticeable* to *very strong, major*). If a respondent never experienced the listed item, a separate box was checked, which then scored the individual item as a 0 in both frequency and intensity of that item (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). However, the most recent versions of these MBI instruments (MBI–HSS, MBI–ES, and MBI–GS) only assess the frequency dimension because “there is now sufficient evidence that shows fairly high correlations between these two dimensions when subscale scores are computed” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, pp. 1011). Frequency was selected over intensity for the MBI–ES and MBI–HSS for two reasons:

- (a) The frequency format is least similar to the typical format used in other self-report measures of attitudes and feelings; therefore, spurious correlations with other measures, due to similarities of response formats, should be minimized.
- (b) The seven points on the frequency dimension are all explicitly anchored for the respondent, creating a more standardized response scale; therefore, the researcher can be fairly certain about the meanings assumed by respondents for each scale value. (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 11)

The intensity scale anchors were: (0) *Never*; (1) *A few times a year or less*; (2) *Once a month or less*; (3) *A few times a month*; (4) *Once a week*; (5) *A few times a week*; and, (6) *Every day*. By contrast, the intensity scale only had three labels—*very mild, barely noticeable; moderate; very strong, major*—for seven choices (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The MBI–ES and MBI–HSS both measure burnout on three distinct subscales: *Emotional Exhaustion*, *Depersonalization*, and *Personal Accomplishment* (Maslach & Jackson, 1996; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996). Similarly, the MBI–GS measures burnout on three subscales: *Professional Efficacy*, *Exhaustion*, and *Cynicism* (Schaufeli et al., 1996). All three MBI inventories include items such as “I feel emotionally drained from my work” (Maslach &

Jackson, 1996; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996; Schaufeli et al., 1996). Both the MBI-HSS and MBI-ES include items with direct statements about the service recipients (or students) compared to the MBI-GS, such as “I feel I treat some recipients [students] as if they were impersonal objects” (Maslach & Jackson, 1996; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996).

### **Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Staff Retention**

Research specific to RA burnout, staff retention, and job satisfaction is non-existent. However, burnout research is common in the nursing field due to the “alarmingly high rate of burnout and turnover in their first few years of practice” (Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2012, p. 1267). The same is true of the education field, where teachers are retained at a significantly lower rate compared to other professions (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). Nursing and teaching have fundamental similarities to the RA position; most notably the structure of the jobs having a service provider (the nurse, the teacher, and the RA) and a service recipient (the patient, the student, and the resident). Therefore, this section of the literature review will examine select research on burnout, job satisfaction, and retention in the nursing and teaching professions in an attempt to better understand RA burnout.

In one study, Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) used measures correlated to position attrition, such as job satisfaction, burnout, and organizational commitment. Using a controlled design, 92 individuals participated in the research study. The participants were randomly selected for one of two treatment groups or a control group. Each group participated in a stress management workshop and a peer-collaboration workshop; however, the order and timing of each workshop varied depending on the group assignment. Treatment Groups 1 and 2 attended workshops during data collection. The control group attended the workshops after data collection ended.

Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) found that while the order in which the participants in both

treatment groups attended the workshops had no effect on attrition, participating in both workshops in either order lowered the likelihood of departure compared to the participants in the control group. That is, those who received the treatments reported higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and lower burnout after the workshops compared to the control group. Therefore, workshops on stress management and peer collaboration were effective at creating positive changes in the studied variables, which ultimately led to lower attrition (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

Fisher (2011) researched factors influencing stress, burnout, and retention of secondary teachers attending an Advanced Placement professional development workshop. Stress and burnout significantly predicted job dissatisfaction. Further investigation revealed years of experience, job satisfaction, and burnout significantly predicted stress. Finally, job dissatisfaction, lower teaching preventative coping skills, and stress significantly predicted burnout. Comparing teacher experience level (novice vs. experienced) revealed “novice teachers are particularly vulnerable” (Fisher, 2011, p. 27) to burnout and stress. A limitation of this study is the possibility of a sampling bias in terms of the composition of the students in the participants’ classrooms. Because these teachers taught Advanced Placement courses, Fisher (2011) suggested the likelihood of their students already being college-bound (thus having higher academic motivations), made the teachers less likely to face the same challenges as teachers in non-Advanced Placement courses.

Another discipline where burnout research is prevalent is the field of nursing. Laschinger, Leiter, Day, and Gilin (2009) conducted a study of 612 staff nurses from five different organizations that looked at structural empowerment, workplace incivility, and burnout as related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. They found emotional

exhaustion and *cynicism* (or depersonalization; see Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) combined with supervisor incivility, significantly predicted nurses' intentions to leave their position. The cynicism component of burnout, combined with empowerment and supervisor incivility significantly predicted lower job satisfaction and lower organizational commitment. As a whole, empowerment, workplace incivility, and burnout significantly predicted a moderate amount of variance in each of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to leave. As far as limitations of the study, the authors noted that the cross-sectional design surveying at one specific point in time limited the study's findings; thus they recommended future research to focus longitudinally to investigate changes over time (Maslach et al., 1996).

Scanlan and Still (2013) included gender in their investigation of burnout among Australian occupational therapists, specifically looking at job satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. To assess burnout, the researchers used the Olenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003) instead of the MBI. The Olenburg Burnout Inventory measures burnout in two dimensions: disengagement and exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2003). The sample included 34 occupational therapists from one hospital. Disengagement and exhaustion were both significantly and highly correlated with turnover intention, with females reporting significantly higher exhaustion compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, participants who reported being stressed or fatigued were more likely to report lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intention, increased disengagement, and higher levels of exhaustion.

Although this section of the literature review includes only a small sample of the vast amount of research on burnout in various service-oriented employment settings, the studies from disciplines outside of the college housing environment demonstrate burnout is a serious issue in service-oriented work settings. Burnout seems to be a leading cause of staff turnover, or at least a

leading cause of staff intending to leave (Laschinger et al., 2009; Scanlan & Still, 2013). Burnout is also related to lower job satisfaction (Fisher, 2011; Laschinger et al., 2009; Scanlan & Still, 2013), although one study did show how intervention methods can alleviate intentions to leave and reduce burnout (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). Since RAs play a similar role as teachers and medical professionals in terms of working with individuals on a daily basis, these findings emphasize the importance of further study of RA burnout. The existing research on RA burnout, which does not address job satisfaction and retention, was examined in the following section.

### **Resident Assistant Burnout**

Much of the scholarly attention on RA burnout occurred in the 1980s, and as several studies from that time period indicate, RAs are not immune from experiencing burnout (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989; Nowack, Gibbons, & Hanson, 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983). Similar to other service-oriented jobs, RAs work directly with large numbers of individuals on a daily basis (Denzine & Anderson, 1999). There is a notable difference, however, in the RA's work environment.

Specifically:

[RAs] live and work with people 24 hours a day. They live and work with peers, students, and supervisors in an environment where it is difficult to distinguish work from personal time. The possibility of constant interruptions allows little opportunity for relaxation or self-indulgence, and there is always the potential for more work to be completed.

(Hetherington et al., 1989, p. 266)

Furthermore, Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) stated "the role of resident assistant (RA) in university residence halls is one that might produce significant strain" (p. 244). In addition to their other duties, RAs provide counseling, identify residents in need, and direct them to the

appropriate resources (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003; Fotis, 2013; Hovarth & Stack, 2013). All of these factors can contribute to RA burnout, because as Roussel and Elleven (2009) noted, the RA position is difficult to perform well. Unfortunately, since the 1980s, little research has focused on RA burnout (i.e., Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn, 2005).

### **Job Performance**

Scholarly exploration into RA burnout began in the early 1980s with two studies (Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983) that were conducted at the same large, public university in the western United States. The first study investigated the relationship of burnout, stress, job performance, and health (Nowack & Hanson, 1983) while the second one investigated the relationship between social support, health-related coping habits, psychological distress, job performance, and burnout (Nowack et al., 1985).

Both studies demonstrated that RAs who experienced higher levels of burnout received lower job performance evaluation ratings from their residents (Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983). Specifically, there was a significant, moderate relationship between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout and job performance while there was no significant relationship found between personal accomplishment and job performance (Nowack et al., 1985). Combined with stress, illness, and Type A personality type, burnout significantly predicted RA job performance, accounting for over 46% of the variance in job performance as rated by their residents (Nowack & Hanson, 1983). “RAs [who reported] greater emotional fatigue, cynicism, and negative feelings tended to receive lower evaluations of their job performance” (Nowack at al., 1985, p. 141).

Both studies are limited by two issues. First, both had small sample sizes from a single

institution: There were only 43 responding RAs in the 1985 study (Nowack et al.) and 37 RAs who participated in 1983 (Nowack & Hanson, 1983). Therefore, applying the results to other settings should be done with caution. The second limitation is related to how job performance was measured; that is, residents were evaluating RAs. This could be problematic because residents are not trained on RA job duties and expectations; therefore, residents are not positioned to accurately (and objectively) evaluate the performance of an RA compared to the RA's direct supervisor. Despite this limitation, the evaluation of RAs as perceived by residents provides some insights into their relationships. Additionally, research in other disciplines reveals similar results where higher burnout is related to lower performance evaluations when evaluated by supervisors (Demerouti & Bakker, 2014; Taris, 2006; Verma & Verma, 2012).

## **Gender**

Research studies report conflicting findings on RA gender related to burnout. In a study conducted at a midsized university in the Midwestern United States, Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) found that female RAs experienced higher levels of burnout intensity (specifically in decreased personal accomplishment and increased emotional exhaustion) compared to their male RA counterparts, which aligns with the previously discussed study on occupational therapists (Scanlan & Still, 2013). However, the frequency of experienced burnout was not different between RA genders. Hetherington et al.'s (1989) study of 113 RAs at a large, Midwestern university support the finding that female RAs' experienced increased emotional exhaustion compared to their male counterparts. It is unclear if the MBI instrument administered in Hetherington et al.'s study measured frequency or intensity of the burnout dimensions.

Hardy and Dodd (1998) replicated and expanded these studies and determined there was no significant difference between male and female-reported burnout scores. The conflicting



outcomes of these studies could be attributed to a couple notable factors. First, at the time of Hardy and Dodd's (1998) study, nearly a decade had elapsed since the first two studies (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1989). Cultural and social changes related to RA job expectations may have occurred over the course of the preceding 10 years. Second, while all three studies occurred in Midwestern institutions, Hardy and Dodd (1998) were the first to study RA burnout at a private institution. The previous two studies (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1998) were conducted at public institutions, so the discrepancy in findings may also be attributed to institutional type. Last, Fuehrer and McGonagle found significant differences in *intensity* of burnout, the scale of which was eventually dropped in favor of the *frequency* scale (Maslach et al., 2001).

### **Community Composition**

Scholarly findings on RA burnout based on residence hall type are also mixed. In a study of 281 RAs at a medium-sized Midwestern state institution, Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) found that RAs working in first-year residence halls reported higher levels of burnout compared to RAs working in residence halls predominately populated by upper-class students. For this study, the original MBI was administered, which measured both frequency and intensity of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and (lack of) personal accomplishment. Recall that current permutations of the MBI eliminated the intensity measurement due to high correlations between the two subscales (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Specifically, type of residence hall significantly predicted small to moderate amounts of variance in frequency and intensity of lack of personal accomplishment (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988). Contrary to those findings, Benedict and Mondloch (1989) found that there was no significant difference in the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout between RAs in

first-year halls compared to upper-class halls at a large southeastern public university. Although Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) found higher levels of overall burnout among RAs, they reported no significant differences in the emotional exhaustion dimension based on building type, which is contrary to Benedict and Mondloch's (1989) findings determining that RAs in first-year residence halls experienced significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Exploring the effects of building type on the specific dimensions of burnout, RAs on first-year floors had significantly higher depersonalization scores and emotional exhaustion scores (Hardy & Dodd, 1998). Similarly, RAs on single gender, first-year halls reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to single gender upper-class halls and mixed gender halls (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989).

Paladino et al. (2005) studied 153 RAs from a large, southeastern university and 40 RAs from a mid-sized southern university and found a small, but significant relationship between RAs placed in traditional residence halls (defined as an entire residence hall floor sharing a communal bathroom) and the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout. No correlations were found for the dimensions of burnout and suite-style residence hall configurations. However, this finding is limited by the small sample size of 58 residents who worked in suite-style residence halls.

### **Employment Duration**

The three dimensions of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) do not have a significant relationship with duration of RA employment (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989). A possible explanation for the lack of significance is that RAs who experienced burnout self-selected to not return to the RA position at the conclusion of the previous academic term, and thus would not be included in the RA sample. This finding is also limited by the duration of employment variable measurement. RAs are also

limited in duration of employment (due to graduation), thus there is very little variation in the possible responses when measured by year. For example, it is rare for RAs to work more than two years and as such, responses to number of years employed would be limited to “1” or “2.” Paladino et al. (2005) used number of semesters’ compared to the number of years of experience, but still found no correlational relationships between duration of employment and the dimensions of burnout, so further investigation of this variable is warranted.

### **Limitations of RA Burnout Research**

Much of the research on RA burnout has been limited by small sample sizes (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983) and single institution, cross-sectional studies (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Hetherington et al., 1989; Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983). Additionally, RA burnout research has become dated, as there has been limited literature published in the past decade.

Furthermore, up to this point, all the studies reviewed focused on physical attributes such as environmental factors, demographics, and personal variables. The closest any research study on burnout has come to studying the relationships RAs have with residents was Nowack et al. (1985) who stated “social support networks are expected to improve as the quantity of and satisfaction with relationships increases” (p. 142). RAs reported more personal accomplishment and less depersonalization based on higher satisfaction with their social support network (Nowack et al., 1985). Still, these findings are limited by the lack of definition for social support network. As the authors note, to investigate the size of social support network, participating RAs were asked to list the initials of every person in their network, which was then counted by the researchers to create the continuous variable. For instance, if an RA wrote six sets of initials, the

researchers counted that RA as having a social support network size of six. However, this method negates the ability to determine the number of people within the RAs' social support network who, if any, actually lived in the residence halls.

The lack of research on the relationships between RAs and residents is noteworthy because burnout research emerged from observed phenomenon in disciplines where the job function was relational in nature (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach et al., 2001). The development of the burnout construct began, in part, by analyzing the relationships “between provider and recipient and on the situational context of service occupations” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 400). Service providers, such as RAs, experience emotional exhaustion because of the direct relationships they have with those with whom they work and for whom they care. This is due to the high need and intense involvement with service recipients (Maslach, 1978), the dedication required of those working in service fields (Freudenberger, 1975), and the workplace environment being focused on individual interactions (Maslach et al., 2001).

Burnout not only manifests itself from pressure from supervisors but also subordinates (Valent, 2002), or in the case of RAs, their residents. Unfortunately, scholarly work in the area of RA burnout has neglected both relationships. While investigating both of these gaps in the literature is important, the current study focused on the relationships between RAs and their residents. One conceptual framework that may begin to address to this gap in the existing literature is perceived mattering because mattering is based on the perceptions of one's relationships with others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). The current study addressed this gap by using the theoretical framework of mattering, which is discussed in the next section of this literature review.

## **Theoretical Framework of Mattering**

This section of the literature review begins by exploring the origin of mattering and the components originally proposed by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981). Over time, additional and alternative components were suggested, and these suggestions and modifications are examined next. Although originally developed for use with adolescents, mattering has more recently been applied to the higher educational setting. Therefore, this section concludes with a review on college student mattering, specifically in regard to aspects of the RA position, namely involvement, engagement, and mental health.

Much of the research on the concept of mattering in employment settings has occurred in disciplines that overlap with the study of burnout: psychology (e.g., Elliott, Kao, & Grant, 2004), education (e.g., Dixon & Tucker, 2008), and counseling (e.g., Powers, Myers, Tingle, & Powers, 2004). Therefore, mattering is an appropriate theoretical framework to use due to the natural overlap between the two concepts.

### **Mattering Defined**

The theoretical concept of mattering was born out of Denzin's (1966) recognition that as people, we pay more attention to those who are more significant (or matter more) to us compared to those who are less significant to us. Yet there was no understanding of the reciprocal relationship (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) defined mattering as "the feeling that others depend upon us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension" (p. 165). Put another way, Elliott et al. (2004) claimed mattering is,

the perception that, to some degree and in any of a variety of ways, we are a significant part of the world around us. Surely, it is central to our sense of who we are and where we

fit in to be able to say that others think about us (at least occasionally), seek our advice, or would care about what happens to us.

In contrast, if people do not share themselves meaningfully with us, if no one listens to what we have to say, if we are interesting to no one, then we must cope with the realization that we do not matter. (p. 339)

Mattering not only references the perceived significance to other individuals (or *interpersonal mattering*), but also the perceived significance to society as a whole or larger organizations of which people have group membership (or *societal mattering*) (Rosenberg, 1985). This could include college environments or residence hall communities. Although Rosenberg acknowledges both interpersonal and societal mattering, interpersonal mattering occupies most of his theoretical attention due to his belief in mattering's significance to psychological well-being (Rosenberg, 1985).

Both interpersonal and societal mattering have received scholarly attention in conjunction with different variables. For instance, interpersonal mattering related to friends (Demir, Özen, Doğan, Bilyk, & Tyrell, 2010; Doğan, Özen, & Demir 2012), parents (Marshall, 2001), and significant others (Mak & Marshall, 2004) have been explored. Other studies looked at interpersonal mattering to parents and friends (Marshall, Liu, Wu, Berzonsky, & Adams, 2010), and more generally with mattering to others (Taylor & Turner, 2001). Although interpersonal mattering has received the most attention in the literature, societal mattering is still represented (e.g., Amundson, 1993; Corbière & Amundson, 2007; Dixon Rayle, 2006b; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). France and Finney (2010) conceptualized societal mattering in the university context: Do college students feel as if they make a difference and are valued members of their university community? Specifically, this study builds off France and Finney's (2010)

conceptualization, but focuses directly on residential communities within the broader university community.

### **Core Components of Mattering**

Although other components have since been researched and proposed for inclusion, the original theoretical framework of mattering consisted of three components: *attention*, *importance*, and *dependence* (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Stated as the most basic form of mattering, attention is “the feeling that one commands the interest or notice of another person” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 164), or “when others realize that we exist” (Elliott et al., 2004, p. 340). Increased feelings of mattering in the area of attention may be felt when we are absent and people notice. Conversely, a lack of awareness by others, such as not being noticed at a social gathering, signifies a lack of mattering to others. As an illustration, an RA would perceive that he or she mattered if a resident commented on the RA’s absence when away from campus for a weekend.

The second component of mattering is importance (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Importance is the belief that other people “care about what we want, think and do, or is concerned with our fate” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 164) or more generally, when we are “an object of other’s concern” (Elliott et al., 2004, p. 343). Unlike attention, a cognitive experience in which others realize we exist, importance is a characteristic of relationships (Elliott et al., 2004; France & Finney, 2010). Relationships are bidirectional in which each side gives to and receives from the other. The importance component of mattering represents the “taking” or “receiving” side of the relationship (France & Finney, 2009). For example, when we receive care and concern from others and when they invest time or energy in us (Elliott et al., 2004), it shows we are important to them. Or, directly related to RAs, when residents care about the success of

an RAs' program, an RA may feel as if they matter more due to an increased feeling of importance.

Similarly, the third component of mattering, *dependence*, is also relational in nature. Dependence represents the “giving” side of the relationship (France & Finney, 2009) and is characterized by others relying on us or needing us (Elliott et al., 2004; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Thus, we matter when our contributions to others are recognized. In this component, RAs would perceive that they matter when a resident comes specifically to them needing a specific referral of which the RA can provide. On the extreme end of the dependence spectrum is over-dependence, where an RA places the needs of others ahead of his or her own needs, creating additional pressure and stress (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989).

While validating a general mattering scale, Elliott et al. (2004) substituted the term *awareness* for attention and the term *reliance* for dependence. These modified terms were both used in the subsequently validated University Mattering Scale (UMS) (France & Finney, 2010) for use among college populations. The new terms represent the same idea as the original terminology. Henceforth, to eliminate confusion, the remainder of this dissertation uses the terms awareness and reliance.

One critique about the development of the theoretical framework of mattering was the dataset originally analyzed. Because data were collected for other motives, the variables within the dataset were not designed to test for this conceptual framework and were perhaps too narrow in scope (Elliott et al., 2004). And while the measurement of mattering is broad in application, the formulation of the theoretical construct was based on adolescent data (Elliott et al., 2004). Another limitation of mattering research is the measurement of mattering itself. It is important to



note that whether or not someone actually matters is not measured. Rather it is the perception of mattering that is felt by each individual that is measurable.

### **Expanded Mattering**

Since first introduced, researchers have sought to further define the theoretical framework of mattering. For instance, the concept of ego-extension, or people responding to situations in the manner as we do and exhibiting similar emotions as us (Rosenberg, 1985), has drawn attention within the realm of mattering. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) originally included ego-extension as a part of importance; however, Rosenberg (1985) later placed ego-extension into a separate component unique from the previously identified components of mattering.

Rosenberg (1985) also separated the “feeling of being missed” from the attention component of mattering. It can be argued that being missed is the inverse of attention: “[I]f people are aware of us, they should also notice when we are not present. Thus, being missed is not theoretically distinct from the other components of mattering” (France, 2011, p. 20).

According to Jung (2015), it is difficult to determine if Rosenberg intended for these two new “expressions” (p. 197), ego-extension and the feeling of being missed, to be considered distinct components or simply subcomponents within the original framework warranting additional dialogue. However, a confirmatory factor analysis on mattering revealed that a four-factor model of mattering, including ego-extension as a distinct component, fit more significantly compared to Elliott et al.’s (2004) three-factor model without ego-extension (France & Finney, 2009).

Subsequent validation by France and Finney (2010) supported the separation of ego-extension, noting that “importance became *more* related to awareness without the ego-extension items” (p. 61). The findings of their examinations (France & Finney, 2009; 2010) support inclusion of using a model of measuring mattering that includes awareness, importance, reliance, and ego-

extension.

Schlossberg (1989) proposed the inclusion of *appreciation* as a component of mattering based on interviews conducted with 24 participants ranging in age from 16 to 80. Appreciation is a way of acknowledging the value and the investment of others (France & Finney, 2009), by offering gratitude or thanks. Including *appreciation* as a distinct component of mattering is debatable, as evidenced by a lack of coverage in subsequent literature. Elliott et al. (2004) stated that *appreciation* manifests itself within the core components importance and reliance, specifically when others acknowledge their need of us with positive affirmation or recognition.

### **Mattering in Higher Education**

Mattering has deep implications on college campuses. Institutions of higher education serve as larger organizations of which students have membership, thus students can feel a sense of societal mattering in the college environment (France & Finney, 2010). According to Schlossberg (1989), mattering exists on a continuum with marginality, or a lack of belonging, on the opposite end. Students who perceive they matter are more engaged in the college environment (Schlossberg, 1989). Institutions of higher education seek high engagement levels among students to increase persistence and retention of their college students (Astin, 1977, 1999). Less engaged students are more likely to depart the institution prior to completing their education (Tinto, 1993). Furthermore, students who feel as if they matter have an enhanced sense of belonging, which assists with their success in college (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999).

People feel marginal when in transitional periods of their lives, so it is natural for new students to lack a sense of mattering when entering the college environment (Schlossberg, 1989). Because mattering is a predictor of a student's adjustment in the university environment (Schlossberg, Lassalle, & Golec, 1988; Tovar, Simon, & Lee, 2009), it is important for colleges

and universities to create “programs, policies, practices, and classroom activities” (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989, pp. 21–22) that foster an environment focused on student mattering, especially for adult learners (Schlossberg et al., 1989). By doing so, students will feel valued as members of the community and recognize their important role on the college campus.

Dixon Rayle and Chung (2007) built on Schlossberg’s (1989) theoretical framework of marginality and mattering. Specifically, they extended mattering as it relates to academic stress, the college environment, and friends. The authors note that college student mattering “may also be affected by decreased levels of social support from friends and family” (p. 23). The first key finding of Dixon Rayle and Chung’s (2007) study was that friend and family support significantly predicted mattering to college friends and to the college; however, the variances explained by each were small. The second key finding was that social support from friends and family, mattering to friends, and mattering to the college significantly predicted academic stress, but again, the amount of variance explained was low. In their regression model, only the beta weight for friend support, family support, and mattering to the college were significant while mattering to friends was not significant. This result on mattering to friends is important to note relative to the RA role since RAs often befriend their residents through the function of their job (Everett & Loftus, 2011).

Another study investigated the link between perceived interpersonal mattering, friendship quality, and happiness among college students in the United States and Turkey (Doğan et al., 2012). The researchers combined the McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Friend’s Functions instrument (Mendelson & Aboud, 1999), the Mattering to Others Questionnaire (Marshall, 2011), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to survey 296 Turkish students and 273 United States students. Doğan et al. (2012) found

friendship quality was positively associated with perceived mattering. Additionally, the researchers (Doğan et al., 2012) found friendship quality and perceived mattering were both positively correlated with happiness.

### **Mattering in Employment Settings**

Connolly and Myers (2003) investigated the relationship between mattering, wellness, and job satisfaction among Midwestern and Southeastern United States business employees. A total of 82 usable volunteer responses were used to analyze the data. The first key finding of this study indicates wellness and mattering combined significantly to predict job satisfaction. Upon further investigation, wellness alone significantly predicted the variance in job satisfaction. Despite the lack of predictability of mattering by itself to job satisfaction variance, the results of the correlation analysis indicated that wellness did have a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction. The second key finding is that wellness and mattering did not significantly contribute to the variance in job satisfaction above the contributions of age, job tenure, education, skill variety, and feedback.

The small sample size warrants concern and was a limitation of Connolly and Myers' (2003) study. The authors note the small sample size "may have been too low to detect differences that actually existed" (p. 158). The sample also lacked diversity (82% Caucasian), which may be problematic for generalizing to university settings, which are oftentimes more diverse than the sample in Connolly and Myers' study. Additionally, the average age of Connolly and Myers' sample was 38.2 years, which varies greatly from the traditional college age.

Another study by Dixon Rayle (2006a) investigated mattering and job satisfaction. In her study of 388 primary and secondary education teachers, she found a significant positive relationship between societal mattering (to the collection of school administrators, parents, and

students) and job satisfaction and a significant negative relationship between mattering and job stress (that is, as mattering increased, job stress decreased). Furthermore, mattering and lack of job-related stress predicted overall job satisfaction. One limitation of this study is the lack of statistical validation (outside of determining Cronbach's alpha) of the seven-item mattering instrument developed by the author. The validation efforts only included a review by a selected panel of 24 professional school counselors.

Schieman and Taylor (2001) explored the relationship between roles, statuses, and work conditions on the perception of mattering to others. The sample included 1,393 adults in Toronto, Canada. Face-to-face interviews were conducted between 1990 and 1991 in which questions from areas of socio-demographics, occupational conditions, and role conflict were posed, with defined Likert-scale response options. This research built on the framework of mattering originally proposed by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), but also included social integration, human development theories of identity, and gender role theory (Schieman & Taylor, 2001). Most relevant to this research study was the discussion on employment and social statuses within employment. The authors (Schieman & Taylor, 2001) note there is no direct link between mattering and work conditions, but they form an argument that theoretical and empirical evidence supports "job autonomy, complexity (i.e., low routinization), fulfillment, and supervision responsibility increase[ing] the sense of mattering" (p. 471).

While many findings were presented, those most relevant to this research study focus on mattering and employment, specifically job satisfaction. On average, employed women reported higher levels of mattering compared to employed men. This reflects "the appraisal of interpersonal connectedness and affiliation" (Schieman & Taylor, 2001, p. 478). Furthermore, quality of a working social role affects mattering. Greater autonomy, complexity, and

supervisory duties increase feelings of mattering, which was the case in both men and women. Schieman and Taylor (2001) surmise that decision making, challenge and complexity within employment, and supervisory duties connect individuals to others through investment, thus promoting significance within the organization.

### **Resident Assistant Job Satisfaction**

Increasing job satisfaction among RAs has received some attention in the literature. One study investigated the effect of peer consultation sessions over the course of one semester on job satisfaction and motivation (Bershoff & Smith, 1995). The peer consultation sessions occurred on a biweekly basis and assumed that “RAs [would] use basic helping skills effectively to assist each other to develop new ideas, evaluate their own effectiveness, increase problem-solving and decision making abilities, and provide on another with support and encouragement” (p. 41).

The study found that RA job satisfaction decreased from the beginning of the introductory phase, a five-week period prior to the peer consultations, up until the point when the consultations began, “indicating that these RAs were less satisfied with their jobs once they actually experienced the day-to-day routine and responsibilities of the position” (Bershoff & Smith, 1995, p. 42). During this same time period, the results suggest that decreased motivation was related to decreased job satisfaction. While the peer consultation sessions did not increase job satisfaction, Bershoff and Smith (1995) discussed how the sessions may have stabilized or maintained the job satisfaction of RAs during this time.

Another study looked at role ambiguity and role conflict as it related to RA job satisfaction, job performance (as measured by RAs’ residents), and stress (Deluga & Winters, 1990). Deluga and Winters (1990) found that higher levels of role ambiguity and role conflict were both negatively related to RA job satisfaction; that is, RAs who reported higher levels of

role conflict and role ambiguity reported lower levels of job satisfaction. As discussed previously regarding the studies on RA burnout (Nowack et al., 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983), assessing job performance from the vantage point of their residents may be problematic.

Deluga and Winters (1991) followed up with another study in which they developed a six-factor instrument that assessed the reasons RAs were motivated to become an RA, and then investigated the identified motivations with RA job satisfaction and interpersonal stress. Of the six motivations, two were significantly and slightly related to job satisfaction: *Helping Behaviors*, or a “desire to assist students” (p. 548); and, *RA Cohesiveness*, or developing relationships with other RAs.

Denzine and Anderson (1999) investigated self-efficacy among RAs related to many variables, including job satisfaction. The results revealed a significant and moderate relationship between RAs’ perception of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. That is, RAs who believe they possess the capacity to perform and can control circumstances affecting them (Bandura, 1997) also reported higher satisfaction with their jobs as an RA.

### **Chapter Summary**

After a review of relevant literature, it is obvious that that despite much attention to burnout in service-oriented professional literature, little attention has been paid to RA burnout. The literature review also revealed that RA burnout scholarship has neglected to focus on a fundamental cause of burnout: the relationships between service providers (RAs) and service recipients (residents). Therefore, the theoretical framework of mattering was reviewed as a lens in which to begin filling this gap in RA burnout literature. A general review of mattering literature, followed by a more specific look of mattering research among college students, established mattering as an appropriate lens for the purposes of this study. Finally, due to overlap

in job satisfaction outcomes in burnout and mattering literature, the chapter concluded with a review of research on RA job satisfaction.



## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

In order to begin addressing the existing relationship gap in RA burnout literature and ultimately broaden the understanding of the relationships between Resident Assistant (RA) mattering and burnout, this study employed quantitative statistical methods. This chapter outlines the research design and analytical procedures, followed by the limitations and delimitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

This section begins with a combined overview of the selected sites and the overall sample of RAs. Next, the instrument developed and administered for this study is discussed, including details on each component of the instrument. This section concludes with the data collection methods and timeline.

### **Research Sites and Sample**

Because the potential sample size was closely related to the number of sites selected and the number of RAs employed at each site, these two topics are discussed in tandem within this subsection. Within the housing profession, departments have the opportunity to be member institutions of the professional organization Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO–I). Although not directly affiliated with ACUHOI, smaller divisions based on regional location are supported by smaller professional organizations (e.g., Southwest Association of College and University Housing Officers, Great Lakes Association of College and University Housing Officers, Northeast Association of College and University Housing Officers). This research study focused on one of those regions: the Upper Midwest Region – Association of College and University Housing Officers (UMR–ACUHO). The

decision to focus on the UMR–ACUHO region instead of other regions, or even nationally, was due to previously established professional relationships, which in turn allowed for access to potential subjects for participation. As of October 2016 the UMR–ACUHO region had an active membership of 108 institutions from eight states (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) and Manitoba, Canada (UMRACUHO, 2016).

According to Cohen (1992) and Olejnik (1984), the minimum number of participants needed to test for the desired minimum medium effect sizes for the procedures in this study ranged between 42 and 84. Therefore, the minimum sample size needed for this study was 84. In order to achieve a sufficient sample size, multiple institutions were approached to participate. This study focused on larger housing departments typically found at regional and state institutions. The number of RAs each department employed differed based on size of residential population served; therefore, to achieve the desired sample size, four institutions were ultimately selected. Table 1 reports host institution and department information. After receiving approval from The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington (see

Table 1

*Overview of sites*

<b>Institution</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>RAs Employed</b>	<b>RA Responses (%)</b>
Institution 1	Kansas	101	73 (72.28)
Institution 2	Kansas	108	50 (46.30)
Institution 3	Minnesota	68	14 (20.59)
Institution 4	Missouri	31	16 (51.61)
<b>Totals</b>	–	<b>308</b>	<b>153 (46.68)</b>

Appendix A), the IRB office at each participating site was contacted to receive the necessary authorization and approval to conduct research at each site. Documentation verifying authorization to conduct research at each host site remains on file with the researcher.

### **Instruments**

As approved by IRB, informed consent information was split between the recruitment email (see Appendix B) and the first page of the disseminated instrument. (see Appendix C). Respondents had the opportunity to voluntarily accept or decline participation in the research study. Participants who accepted to complete the questionnaire were directed to the online survey. To collect data relevant to the research study's purpose, multiple instruments were employed, including a slightly modified version of the University Mattering Scale (UMS; France & Finney, 2010); the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (MBI–ES; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996); the job satisfaction subsection of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983); and a background characteristics questionnaire. Except for the MBI–ES section, the full instrument can be found in Appendix C. Due to copyright restrictions, only three MBI–ES items are reproduced in Appendix C, with the supporting copyright documentation in Appendix D.

**University Mattering Scale (UMS).** As discussed in the literature review, the UMS focuses on mattering among college students. Specifically, France and Finney (2010) designed the UMS with societal mattering in mind, measuring if college students perceive that they matter to their institutional community as a whole. The 24 items specify the university at which the instrument was validated, James Madison University (JMU), and uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Examples of items included on the scale are “The people of the JMU community do not ignore me,” “The people of the JMU community

tend to rely upon me for support,” and “I have noticed that people in the JMU community will sometimes inconvenience themselves to help me” (France & Finney, 2010). Twelve of the items required reverse scoring; for example, “When I have a problem, people in the JMU community usually don’t want to hear about it,” and “People of the JMU community tend not to remember my name” (France & Finney, 2010). Each of the 24-items summed to create a total subcomponent score of mattering: Eight items scored to awareness, seven items scored to importance, three items scored to ego-extension, and six items scored to reliance (France & Finney, 2010). The internal consistency and reliability of the UMS was calculated using a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for each of the four subscales: awareness (.86), importance (.81), ego-extension (.71), and reliance (.87). The factor intercorrelations ranged from .73 to .94 (France & Finney, 2010).

Since the UMS was written with a specific institution in mind (JMU), it was tailored slightly for the purposes of this study, specifically focusing on residential communities. Permission to modify and use the UMS was granted by the original authors (see Appendix E). For example, the statement “Quite a few people of the JMU community look to me for advice on issues of importance” was modified to “Quite a few people in my community look to me for advice on issues of importance.” “Community” was defined in the instrument instructions as “the students in [the RA’s] specific community (e.g., [their] floor, [their] wing, [their] apartment building, etc.).”

Due to the slight modification in UMS item wording, a panel of three upper-level housing professionals was used to validate the modified instrument, specifically focusing on the consistency and the clarity of each item remaining the same as the consistency and clarity of the original UMS (see Appendix F for the validation tool). Each item was evaluated on two scales

ranging from *Not clear at all* (1) to *Very clear* (4) for *Clarity of Item* and *Not consistent at all* (1) to *Very consistent* (4) for *Consistency of Item*. If any item on the scale did not meet a minimum acceptance level (majority of responses scoring “3” or “4” on either scale, it would have been removed from the instrument altogether. However, none of the items failed to meet acceptance, thus the modified UMS was used as developed. Mattering subscale reliability and consistency results for this study are presented in Chapter Four.

**Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (MBI–ES).** Of the three versions of the MBI discussed in the literature review, the MBI–ES was selected for this study. The MBI–ES was the appropriate choice because not only do RAs work directly with students but also because one of the primary job responsibilities of an RA is to be an educator (Blimling, 1998).

The MBI–ES consists of 22 items scored on a seven-point scale (zero to six). Recall that the original MBI measured items on two scales (intensity and frequency), but the intensity scale was dropped due to the frequency being sufficient after further study and due to the frequency scale being anchored with labels at every selection choice (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996). Therefore, each item in the MBI–ES was anchored (0 = *Never*, 1 = *A few times a year or less*, 2 = *Once a month or less*, 3 = *A few times a month*, 4 = *Once a week*, 5 = *A few times a week*, and 6 = *Every day*). Of the 22 items, nine measured emotional exhaustion (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained from my work”), five measured depersonalization (e.g., “I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects”), and eight measured personal accomplishment (e.g., “I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work”).

Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) and Gold (1984) found support for the three-factor model of the MBI. Both studies used samples of teachers to reach this conclusion (469 teachers in Massachusetts and 462 teachers in California, respectively). Cronbach alpha estimates varied

slightly in each study for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment: Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) found Cronbach alpha estimates of .90, .76, and .76 whereas Gold (1984) found estimates of .88, .74, and .72, respectively. Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) stated “these reliability coefficients parallel those of the MBI–HSS” (p. 29) from which the MBI–ES was modified.

Educators working in higher educational settings report lower average levels of burnout compared to the overall population (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Specifically, postsecondary educational employees have an emotional exhaustion mean of 18.57 compared to the overall population mean of 20.99. The same is true in the depersonalization dimension of burnout, where postsecondary educators had a mean of 5.57 compared to the overall sample mean of 8.73. Finally, personal accomplishment is higher in postsecondary educators (39.17 compared to the overall sample mean (34.58) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Recall that the personal accomplishment score is opposite the other dimensions meaning lower scores indicate higher decreased personal accomplishment. Burnout subscale reliability and consistency results for this study are presented in Chapter Four.

**Job Satisfaction.** The job satisfaction subscale of the MOAQ (Cammann et al., 1983) was employed as the third component of the combined survey instrument. This subscale “uses three items to describe an employee’s subjective response to working in his or her job and organization” (Fields, 2002, p. 5). The three items on the job satisfaction subscale were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *slightly disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *slightly disagree*, 6 = *agree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The three items were: (1) “All in all, I am satisfied with my job,” (2) “In general, I don’t like my job,” and, (3) “In general, I like working here.” Item two was reverse scored. Job satisfaction subscale reliability

and consistency results for this study are presented in Chapter Four.

**Background characteristics.** A background characteristics questionnaire was created to fully explore the data. Although the focus of the study was on RAs in general and not on exploring the differences in RAs based on demographic traits and background characteristics, collecting this data allowed for the description of the sample for greater context and understanding. The background characteristics questionnaire captured data on RA gender, race and ethnicity, university classification, international student status, duration of employment, community size, community type (residence hall or apartments), and community composition (mostly freshman, mostly upper-class, and a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class).

The background characteristics portion of the instrument also contained a series of questions inquiring about the RAs' employment status in the following fall semester. The first question in the subset asked RAs to mark the answer that most closely applied to them with responses including (a) "I will be an RA again in the Fall 2016 semester," (b) "I will not be an RA again in the Fall 2016 semester," and, (c) "I have not been notified if I will be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester." A follow-up question was displayed for RAs who indicated that they would not be an RA in the upcoming semester, inquiring as to why they would not be an RA.

There were several possible reasons for an RA not returning the next semester; some were voluntary (e.g., an RA could choose not to return because of study abroad, military service, or simply chose to not return) and others were not (e.g., graduation and termination). In order to use employment choice in the comparative analysis, responses were restricted to the following options: not offered to return; graduating; studying abroad; military service; required academic commitment; required personal commitment; or other.

The final question in this subsection, "If the reason you indicated in the previous question

were not a concern, would you have chosen to be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester?” was only displayed to RAs who marked the reason they were not going to be an RA the following academic year as one of the following: (a) graduating, (b) had a required personal commitment, (c) studying abroad, (d) serving in the military, (e) had a required academic commitment, and, (f) was not offered to return to the RA position. Upon completion of data collection, this question was coded in conjunction with the data from the first question to determine which RAs chose to be an RA again or would have chosen to be an RA again if outside circumstances were not a consideration (i.e., an RA would have been an RA if not for studying abroad).

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected by an electronic survey sent to each participating institution’s RA population. The web-based survey tool Qualtrics Survey Software disseminated the instrument. The departmental contact at each of the four sites provided a list of RA email addresses to be used for survey distribution. Data collection occurred throughout a two-week period of time during the month of April 2016. Based on access, departmental priorities, and RA time commitments, a different two-week window was developed for each institution’s RAs to complete the survey; however, all data collection was completed by the end of April.

Despite having different windows of time for data collection at each host site, the same timeline was used for each institution, only varying in the start date. The institutional contact at each site sent an IRB approved email (see Appendix G) to all their RAs the Thursday or Friday before data collection began informing RAs of the opportunity to participate in the study. The variance in date was used to allow the institutional contacts to decide the best time to send the email to RAs based on their knowledge of the RA job commitments. This email also verified the legitimacy of the survey to the RA population. The initial survey and reminders were sent



following the timeline outlined in Table 2. The same email was sent for the initial survey and both reminders (see Appendix B).

Table 2

*Survey distribution and recruitment timeline*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Correspondence Type</b>
0	Thursday/Friday	Varied	Email from institutional contact
1	Monday	10:00am	Initial survey email
1	Thursday	1:00pm	Reminder email
2	Tuesday	8:00pm	Reminder email
2	Friday	Midnight	Survey Closed

*Note.* Data were collected entirely during the month of April. The timeline was relative to the actual start date of the initial survey being sent to RAs at each host site.

### **Analytical Procedures**

Data were uploaded into IBM’s Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. To analyze the data, several statistical procedures were used (see Table 3). This section details the statistical procedures used to describe the sample (and variables) and answer each research question.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Frequencies for gender, race/ethnicity, university classification, international status, area of employment, and community composition were calculated. Frequencies for the remaining demographic variables were calculated, including RA gender, race and ethnicity, university classification, and community composition. The study variables were also analyzed with

descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviations were calculated for job satisfaction, the dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) and the components of mattering (awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance).

Table 3

*Statistical Procedures*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Statistical Procedure</b>
1 To what extent does level of RA mattering and burnout vary by gender, employment choice, and community composition?	Independent samples <i>t</i> tests & One-Way ANOVA
2 What are the relationships between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction among RAs?	Bivariate correlations
3 Is mattering a significant predictor for RA burnout?	Simple Linear regression
4 Are RAs' demographic characteristics, perceptions of mattering, and feelings of burnout significant predictors for RAs' job satisfaction?	Multiple Linear regression

**Independent Samples *t*-tests and One-Way ANOVAs**

The first research question explored differences in mattering and burnout between RA demographic and employment variables. The first research question asked to what extent the level of RA mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction vary by gender, community composition (mostly freshman, mostly upper-class, and a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class), and the self-reported employment choice (chose to return vs. chose not to return). The first research question can be divided into multiple sub-questions:

**Question 1A** To what extent does the level of RA mattering vary by RA gender,

employment choice, and community composition?

**Question 1B** To what extent does the level of RA burnout vary by RA gender, employment choice, and community composition?

To address these sub-research questions, independent samples *t*-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Table 4 details all analytical procedures and variables for each research and sub-research question.

In order to analyze the data, two separate independent samples *t*-tests and a single one-way ANOVA were conducted for each sub-research question. Independent samples *t*-test procedures analyzed RA gender (male or female) and employment choice (chose to return and chose not to return) while one-way ANOVA procedure analyzed community composition (due to having three options: mostly freshman, mostly upper-class, and a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class). For the first sub-question, the dependent variable was either total mattering or the dimensions of burnout and independent samples *t*-tests used gender or employment choice as the independent variables. For the second sub-question, the dependent variable was either total mattering or the dimensions of burnout and one-way ANOVAs used community composition as the independent variable.

### **Bivariate Correlations**

Research Question 2, “What are the relationships between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction among RAs?”, was designed to inform the third and fourth research questions by providing the relationships for all the study variables. The second research question inquired about the relationships between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction among RAs. RA burnout is comprised of three variables: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) personal accomplishment. RA mattering is comprised of four variables: (a) awareness, (b) importance, (c)

Table 4

*Research Question 1 analytical procedures and variables*

<b>Research Question 1A.</b> To what extent does level of RA mattering vary by RA gender, employment choice, and community composition?		
<b>IV</b>	<b>DV</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
Gender	TM	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
Employment Choice	TM	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
Community Composition	TM	Welch ANOVA
<b>Research Question 1B.</b> To what extent does level of RA burnout vary by RA gender, employment choice, and community composition?		
<b>IV</b>	<b>DV</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
	EE	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
Gender	DP	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
	PA	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
	EE	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
Employment Choice	DP	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
	PA	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test
	EE	One-way ANOVA
Community Composition	DP	One-way ANOVA
	PA	One-way ANOVA

*Note.* IV = Independent Variable; DV = Independent Variable; TM = Total Mattering; EE = Emotional Exhaustion; DP = Depersonalization; PA = Personal Accomplishment.

ego-extension, and (d) reliance. Job satisfaction is a single variable on a continuous scale. In order to address this research question, bivariate correlations were conducted between all eight of the identified variables. Pearson's *r* was used to identify the strength and direction of the

relationships between the variables.

### Simple Linear Regression

To investigate the third research question, “Is mattering a significant predictor for burnout?”, three multiple regression models were conducted with the dependent variable for each model being one of the dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). Each model used the composite total mattering variable as the independent variable. Table 5 details the analytical procedures and variables for each regression procedure.

Table 5

*Research Question 3 analytical procedures and variables*

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**Research Question 3.** Is mattering a significant predictor for RA burnout?

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<b>IV</b>	<b>DV</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
TM	EE	Simple linear regression
TM	DP	Simple linear regression
TM	PA	Simple linear regression

---

*Note.* TM = Total Mattering; EE = Emotional Exhaustion; DP = Depersonalization; PA = Personal Accomplishment

---

### Multiple Regression

A sequential multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the final research question: “Are RAs’ background characteristics, perceptions of mattering, and feelings of burnout significant predictors for RAs’ job satisfaction?” The dependent variable was job satisfaction. Three models were established, with each adding an additional layer of predictor

variables: (a) gender, race/ethnicity, classification, and community composition; (b) components of mattering; and, (c) dimensions of burnout. Table 6 details the sequential multiple regression predictor variables and sequential steps.

Table 6

*Research Question 3 sequential steps and predictor variables*

<b>Step</b>	<b>Predictor Variable</b>
Step 1: Background	Gender
	Race
	Classification
	Sophomore
	Junior
	Community Composition
	Mostly Freshman
	Mostly Upper-class
Step 2: Mattering	Awareness
	Ego-Extension
Step 3: Burnout	Emotional Exhaustion
	Depersonalization
	Personal Accomplishment

*Note.* The dependent variable was job satisfaction.

## Limitations

As with all research endeavors, limitations exist with the current study. Despite having a larger anticipated sample size compared to previous research investigating RA burnout, findings from this study need to be interpreted with caution. Because the sample was collected from selected sites around the Midwestern United States, the results are not generalizable to all populations. Even within the Midwest, results may not be truly representative of Midwestern RAs due to the inability to survey all Midwestern RAs. Furthermore, site selection may also limit the findings, even amongst the sampled population. RAs employed in the state of Kansas vastly outnumbered the RAs from the other two participating states in the UMR–ACUHO region (see Table 1). The overrepresentation of RAs from Kansas may have masked any differences from non-Kansas RAs.

This study is also limited by the demographics of the sample. As detailed in Chapter Four, the sample lacked diversity, with approximately 80% of the participants identifying their race/ethnicity as White. Additionally, RAs identified as transgender or with another gender identity were not represented at all in this study. This subsection of the population was not neglected out of intent, but rather because of sampling. Although there was an option on the disseminated instrument for RAs to select “another gender identity,” no RA reported outside the traditional binary roles.

A major limitation of this study surrounds the cross-sectional nature of the study. Instead of a longitudinal design, this study investigated the feelings of mattering and burnout at one specific moment in time during the 2016 spring semester. Therefore, the results do not demonstrate how feelings of mattering and burnout increase and decrease over time.

Additionally, this dissertation study did not control for institutional calendar and

workload differences that may exist at each of the separate sites. Factors such as these may temporarily (or possibly permanently) skew an RA's perception of mattering or burnout, which was not accounted for in the survey instrumentation. For instance, the week the instrument was administered at one institution might have been at a time of the year when that institution's RAs had more obligations compared to RAs at another institution. Thus, RAs with additional required responsibilities might have felt more burnout due to increased emotional exhaustion related to the required workload.

The final limitation involves the modified University Mattering Scale instrument and the wording of particular items. For example, the item labeled "Quite a few people in my community look to me for advice on issues of importance" may elicit a different understanding from participants on what exactly "quite a few people" means. Additionally, some adverbs used in the instrument may be deemed ambiguous, as demonstrated by the usage of the word "sometimes" in the statement "Sometimes in my community, I feel as if I were invisible." In either example, if one participant had a different understanding of what "sometimes" or "quite a few people" means compared to another participant then the responses may not be fully reliable.

### **Delimitations**

The proposed research study was bounded by several choices made the researcher. Mattering was selected as the theoretical framework with which to explore RA burnout due to overlap in both foundation and findings of the two concepts. Foundationally, both burnout and mattering focus on the relationships between people, which made mattering an appropriate and suitable framework for the purposes of this study. Additionally, as explored in the literature review, mattering and burnout appear to have some opposing outcomes, most notably in job satisfaction and job retention (e.g., employees with increased mattering have higher job



satisfaction and employees with increased burnout have lower job satisfaction). These conflicting outcomes also guided the research questions in an attempt to understand the relationship between the two concepts.

Regarding the sample, the decision to only survey RAs at selected Midwest institutions was made due to two factors. First, initial exploration of potential sites for this study began through personal contacts of the researcher instead of random selection. Using previously established relationships at institutions of similar size and type increased the likelihood of participation while still maintaining some degree of generalizability of the findings. Second, the sample size was limited by funding. Since the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey requires purchasing a license based on an anticipated number of responses, the maximum number of responses was bounded to 300.

### **Chapter Summary**

Despite the potential limitations, the findings of this study still address a glaring gap in Resident Assistant (RA) burnout literature. Specifically it addresses the important relational component of the RA job. As discussed, both burnout and mattering are functions of the relationships between people, or in the case of this study, between RAs and their residents. This study is one of the first to explore burnout related to mattering, thus allowing for the development of interventions addressing RAs' perceptions of residents being aware of them, RAs' perceptions of being important in the lives of their residents, and RAs' perceptions of their residents depending on them.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### RESULTS

#### **Chapter Overview**

This study sought to fill the identified “relationship gap” in RA burnout research by examining RA burnout through the theoretical framework of mattering. Specifically, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how RAs from specific personal (gender and employment choice) and environmental (community composition) groups reported their self-perception of mattering and their feelings of burnout. Prior to testing any predictive models, the research variables (components of mattering and dimensions of burnout) were explored with the inclusion of RA job satisfaction to determine any relationships and to inform the appropriateness of the regression models. Once complete, mattering was tested as a predictor of RA burnout, followed by both mattering and burnout as predictors of RA job satisfaction, above and beyond select background characteristic variables.

This chapter begins with the reliability and consistency results of the instrument subscales used in this study. Next, the results of the descriptive and statistical analyses are detailed for the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does level of RA mattering and burnout vary by gender, employment choice, and community composition?

**Research Question 2:** What are the relationships between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction among RAs?

**Research Question 3:** Is mattering a significant predictor for RA burnout?

**Research Question 4:** Are RAs’ background characteristics, perceptions of mattering, and feelings of burnout significant predictors for RAs’ job

satisfaction?

### **Instrument Reliability and Consistency**

Cronbach alpha procedure was employed to determine the internal reliability of the subscales within the overall instrument. A subscale was considered to be internally consistent if the alpha level exceeded 0.7, based on the recommendation of DeVillis (2003) and Kline (2005). Each component of mattering was determined to be consistent: awareness ( $\alpha = .815, n = 8$ ), importance ( $\alpha = .839, n = 7$ ), ego-extension ( $\alpha = .737, n = 3$ ), and, reliance ( $\alpha = .843, n = 6$ ). Additionally, all subscales were combined to form the composite total mattering scale, which was also considered to be internally consistent ( $\alpha = .938, n = 24$ ). Each dimension of burnout was determined to be internally consistent: emotional exhaustion ( $\alpha = .928, n = 9$ ), depersonalization ( $\alpha = .737, n = 5$ ), and, personal accomplishment ( $\alpha = .887, n = 8$ ). Job satisfaction was also determined to be internally consistent ( $\alpha = .915, n = 3$ ). Appendix H details all statistical results and subscale items.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Of the 308 disseminated surveys, 153 were completed and usable (for a response rate of 46.68%). Table 7 presents the frequencies for gender, race or ethnicity, university classification, international status, area of employment, and community composition. Participants were allowed to mark multiple answers for the question “What is your racial or ethnic identification?” As a result of the low number of participants identifying as more than one racial or ethnic identity, all such responses were coded as “multi-racial.” Of the 149 RAs who reported a racial or ethnic identity, the majority were White (80.5%). No RAs in the sample were identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The remaining racial and ethnic identities (Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Multi-Racial) had low

Table 7

*Demographic variable frequencies*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	152	–
Male	55	36.2
Female	97	63.8
Ethnicity	149	–
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0
Asian	8	5.4
Black or African American	8	5.4
Hispanic or Latino	4	2.7
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0
White	120	80.5
Multi-Racial	9	6.0
Classification	153	–
Freshman	0	0.0
Sophomore	49	32.0
Junior	59	38.6
Senior	43	28.1
Graduate	2	1.3
International Status	151	–
Domestic	147	97.4
International	4	2.6

(continued)

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>Percent</b>
Area of Employment	153	–
Apartments	24	15.7
Residence Halls	129	84.3
Community Composition	153	–
Mostly Freshmen	103	67.3
Mostly Upper-class	22	14.4
Balanced Mix of Freshmen and Upperclass	28	18.3
Employment Choice	115	–
Yes	97	84.3
No	18	11.8

*Note.* Variations in *n* are due to missing data or participants selecting “I choose not to respond.” Percentages were calculated based on the number of completed responses for each variable category, and not the total sample.

representation: 6.0% or less representation for each group. The sample consisted of a slight majority of females (63.8%). Although the option for selecting another gender identify existed, no RA in the sample reported a gender identity outside the male–female binary; therefore, males represented the remaining sample (36.2%).

There were no Freshman RAs in the sample and only two graduate-level RAs. The remaining RAs were roughly equally distributed between Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors, with Juniors representing the majority of those groups. The sample was overwhelmingly domestic with only 4 RAs reporting international status. Of the three available community composition groups, just over two-thirds of RAs reported working in mostly freshman communities. The remaining two groups, mostly upper-class and a balanced mix of freshman

and upper-class, were roughly equal in frequency. Finally, a vast majority of RAs indicated that they chose, or would have chosen, to be an RA the following year had their commitments allowed ( $n = 97$ ) compared to just over 10% of RAs who indicated they chose, or would have chosen, not to be an RA the following year.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for employment duration and community size. As a group, RAs reported an average number of semesters employed as an RA of 2.97 ( $SD = 1.48$ ). Additionally, the average community size was 56.61 ( $SD = 39.00$ ); however, after review of this variable and the responses provided, it was determined that the question left room for ambiguity in the description of what constituted the RAs' community (e.g., the RAs hallway, a floor shared with another RA, or even their entire building). Due to this ambiguity of this variable, community size was excluded from any analysis.

Next, the study variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the components of mattering (awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance), the dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment), and job satisfaction. Table 8 presents all descriptive statistics for these variables.

### **Research Question 1:**

**To what extent does the level of RA mattering and burnout vary by gender, employment choice, and community composition?**

The purpose of this research study was to examine the identified gap in the RA burnout literature, namely the relationships between RAs and their residents and how these relationships are associated with burnout and job satisfaction. In order to do so, Research Question 1 was exploratory in nature; put another way, it was important to first understand the differences in the

Table 8

*Descriptive statistics for demographic and study variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Semesters Employed as an RA	2.97	1.48
Community Size	56.61	39.00
Burnout <sup>a</sup>	–	–
Emotional Exhaustion	22.60	11.76
Depersonalization	6.56	5.50
Personal Accomplishment	35.17	8.33
Mattering	90.49	15.13
Awareness	31.97	5.21
Importance	25.80	4.89
Ego-Extension	9.91	2.58
Reliance	22.82	4.17
Job Satisfaction	16.71	4.17

<sup>a</sup> A composite burnout score was not created because there is “limited knowledge about the relationships between the three aspects of burnout” and therefore “the scores for each subscale are considered separately and are *not* combined into a single, total score” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 5).

study variables by background characteristics. The first research question asked to what extent the level of RA mattering and burnout vary by gender, employment choice, and community composition. The first research question was divided into two sub-questions:

**Question 1A** To what extent does the level of RA mattering vary by RA gender, employment choice, and community composition?

**Question 1B** To what extent does the level of RA burnout vary by RA gender,

employment choice, and community composition?

To address these sub-research questions, null and alternative hypotheses were developed.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted when study variables were binary (i.e., gender and employment choice). Independent samples *t*-tests were appropriate to use when the dependent variable was approximately normally distributed among test groups and the homogeneity of variances was assumed. Outliers in the data were detected by calculating the *z*-score for each test variable—total mattering, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—within each grouping variable of gender or employment choice. If a *z*-score had an absolute value greater than 3.29, then the data were adjusted to the closest non-outlier (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

When testing for differences in community composition, one-way analyses of variances (ANOVA) was appropriate due to having more than two groups (mostly freshman, mostly upper class, and balanced mix). The hypotheses were tested with one-way ANOVA when there were no significant outliers, the dependent variable was approximately normally distributed for each test group, and the homogeneity of variances was assumed. In the cases where the assumption of homogeneity was violated, a Welch ANOVA was conducted instead. Table 4 lists all analytical procedures and variables.

Normality of test variable data for gender, employment choice, and community composition was determined through kurtosis and skewness statistics (see Table 9 for gender and employment choice statistics and Table 10 for community composition statistics). Variables with skewness between -1.0 and 1.0 and kurtosis between -2.0 and 2.0 were considered to be approximately normally distributed. However, according to Lumley, Diehr, Emerson, and Chen (2002), having non-normal data are not of concern in “sufficiently large samples” (p. 166), so the



Table 9

*Assessment of gender and employment choice normality in study variables*

Variable	Male			Female		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Total Mattering	55	-0.939	1.079	96	-0.756	0.061
Emotional Exhaustion	54	0.703	0.492	96	0.472	-0.455
Depersonalization	55	0.482	-0.717	97	1.060	0.623
Personal Accomplishment	55	-0.737	0.216	95	-0.522	-0.594

  

Variable	Chose to Continue Employment			Chose not to Continue Employment		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Total Mattering	96	-0.819	0.260	18	-0.392	-0.05
Emotional Exhaustion	95	0.885	0.563	17	0.532	-0.443
Depersonalization	96	0.924	0.208	18	0.184	-1.264
Personal Accomplishment	95	-0.723	-0.094	18	-0.310	-0.442

*Note.* Variations in *n* are due to missing data.

tests were conducted without transforming the data for depersonalization scores of females (skewness = 1.060, standard error = .245), mostly freshman (skewness = 1.029, standard error = .238), and mostly upper class (skewness = 1.484, standard error = .491) because the statistics were within the standard error range.

### **Research Question 1A: Differences in Mattering**

As discussed in the literature review, mattering is comprised of four distinct components: (a) awareness, (b) importance, (c) ego-extension, and (d) reliance (France & Finney, 2010). To

Table 10

*Assessment of community composition normality in study variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mostly Freshman</b>			<b>Mostly Upper-class</b>			<b>Balanced Mix</b>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Total Mattering	102	-0.739	0.207	22	-0.272	-0.893	28	-0.085	-0.097
Emotional Exhaustion	103	0.507	-0.097	22	0.914	-0.106	26	0.510	-0.711
Depersonalization	103	1.029	0.681	22	1.484	1.797	28	0.223	-1.641
Personal Accomplishment	101	-0.712	0.198	22	0.001	-1.551	28	-0.702	-0.533

*Note.* Variations in *n* are due to missing data.

analyze differences in mattering, a composite variable was created by summing the totals of each individual mattering category, which is referred to as “total mattering.” Research Question 1A was divided into three parts, one for each of the independent variables: RA gender, employment choice, and community composition.

**Mattering by gender.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were developed to guide the testing of differences in total mattering based on an RA gender:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no difference in total mattering between male and female RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a difference in total mattering between male and female RAs.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to investigate differences in total mattering scores between male and female RAs. There were 55 male and 96 female RAs for whom total mattering scores were calculated. No outliers were detected in either gender group by inspecting the gendered total mattering *z*-scores. Data distributions were determined to be approximately normal with a skewness of -0.094 and a kurtosis of 1.079 for males and a skewness of -0.756 for and a kurtosis of 0.061 for females. The homogeneity of variances for total mattering scores for male and female RAs was assumed, as assessed by Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .145$ ). The difference in mean total mattering scores between male ( $M = 89.51, SD = 13.53$ ) and female RAs ( $M = 91.29, SD = 15.92$ ) was not statistically significant,  $t(149) = -.698, p = .486$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected (see Table 11).

**Mattering by employment choice.** The following hypotheses were developed to guide the testing of differences in total mattering based on employment choice:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no difference in total mattering based on RA employment choice.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a difference in total mattering based on RA employment choice.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to investigate differences in total mattering

Table 11

*Independent samples t-test comparisons between total mattering and burnout dimensions and gender*

Variable	Male			Female			<i>t</i>	95% CI
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total Mattering	55	89.51	13.53	96	91.29	15.92	-6.98	[-6.83, 3.26]
Burnout	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Emotional Exhaustion	54	20.33	10.37	96	23.71	12.32	-1.702	[-7.29, .54]
Depersonalization	55	7.02	4.56	97	6.29	5.85	0.797	[-1.08, 2.54]
Personal Accomplishment	55	34.62	7.91	95	35.59	8.12	-0.712	[-3.67, 1.72]

*Note.* Variations in *n* are due to missing data.

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001

scores between employment choice groups. There were 97 RAs who chose or would have chosen to be an RA the following year and 18 RAs who chose not to be RAs the following year. No outliers were detected in either employment choice group by inspecting the employment choice total mattering  $z$ -scores. Data distribution was determined to be approximately normal with a skewness of -0.819 and a kurtosis of 0.260 for RAs who would choose to continue employment and a skewness of -0.392 and a kurtosis of -0.050 for RAs who would choose not to continue employment. RAs who chose (or would have chosen) to be an RA the following year scored higher ( $M = 92.27$ ,  $SD = 15.09$ ) than their RA counterparts who chose not to be an RA the following year ( $M = 83.28$ ,  $SD = 14.72$ ). The homogeneity of variances for total mattering between the two groups was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .877$ ). There was a statistically significant difference in mean total mattering scores between the two groups,  $t(113) = 2.330$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .603$ , a medium effect size according to Cohen (1988); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Mattering by community composition.** Prior to testing the final component of Research Question 1A, the following hypotheses were developed:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The mean total mattering scores are equal for all community composition groups.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** At least one community composition group has a different total mattering mean score.

RAs reported into one of three groups: mostly freshman students ( $n = 102$ ), mostly upper class students ( $n = 22$ ), and, a balanced mix of both freshman and upper class students ( $n = 28$ ). RAs with communities comprised of a balanced mix had the highest total mattering scores ( $M = 96.04$ ,  $SD = 10.55$ ), followed by mostly freshman ( $M = 90.60$ ,  $SD = 14.80$ ), followed by mostly upper class ( $M = 82.96$ ,  $SD = 18.69$ ). Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances was

violated, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .028$ ), a Welch ANOVA was conducted. Total mattering was statistically different for community composition groups, Welch's  $F(2, 45.307) = 4.981, p < .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Games-Howell post hoc analysis revealed that total mattering of RAs in balanced mix communities was significantly higher than RAs in communities with mostly upper class (-13.081, 95% CI [-23.037, -3.125],  $p < .01$ ), but no other group differences were significant.

### **Research Question 1B: Differences in Burnout**

Recall from the literature review that burnout is comprised of three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Although some research studies have reverse scored the personal accomplishment dimension to create a composite burnout score, Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) stated that due to "limited knowledge about the relationships between the three aspects of burnout, the scores for each subscale are considered separately and are *not* combined into a single, total score" (p. 5). Therefore, unlike the data analysis conducted about mattering, each dimension of burnout requires three tests (gender, choice to continue employment, and community composition) for each of the three dependent variables (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). Due to missing data, the total number of participants in each dimension of burnout varied. If a participant skipped a question, the associated dimension score was removed.

**Burnout dimensions by gender.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were developed to guide the testing of differences in burnout dimension scores based on an RA gender:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no difference in levels of burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—between male and female RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a difference in levels of burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—between male and female RAs.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to investigate differences in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment scores between male and female RAs. There were 54 males and 96 females ( $n = 150$ ) who had emotional exhaustion scores computed; 55 males and 97 females ( $n = 152$ ) had depersonalization scores computed; and, 55 males and 95 females ( $n = 150$ ) had personal accomplishment scores computed. There was one personal accomplishment male outlier that was adjusted up (changed from 0 to 14) and one depersonalization female outlier that was adjusted down (changed from 28 to 24), as determined by inspecting the associated *z*-scores as previously described. Based on a review of skewness and kurtosis statistics, all burnout data were approximately normal (see Table 9 for statistics). Table 11 displays the means and standard deviations of each burnout dimension by gender.

The homogeneity of variances for each dimension of burnout was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances: emotional exhaustion ( $p = .100$ ), depersonalization ( $p = .063$ ), and personal accomplishment ( $p = .526$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between male and female RAs in any burnout dimension: emotional exhaustion,  $t(148) = -1.702, p = .091$ ; depersonalization;  $t(150) = .797, p = .427$ ; and, personal accomplishment,  $t(148) = -.712, p = .477$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected for each dimension of burnout. Table 11 reports the statistical results of all burnout dimensions.

**Burnout dimensions by employment choice.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were developed to guide the testing of differences in burnout dimension scores based on RAs choice to continue employment the following year:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no difference in levels of burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—between employment choice groups.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a difference in levels of burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—between employment choice groups.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to investigate differences in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment scores between employment choice groups. There were 95 who chose to be RAs the following year and 17 who chose not to be RAs the following year ( $n = 112$ ) had emotional exhaustion scores computed; 96 who chose to be RAs the following year and 18 who chose not to be RAs the following year ( $n = 114$ ) had depersonalization scores computed; and, 95 who chose to be RAs the following year and 18 who chose not to be RAs the following year ( $n = 113$ ) had personal accomplishment scores computed. No data were considered outliers by inspecting *z*-scores for each employment choice category in each dimension of burnout. Based on a review of skewness and kurtosis statistics, all burnout data were approximately normal (see Table 9 for statistics).

The homogeneity of variances for each dimension of burnout was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances: emotional exhaustion ( $p = .676$ ), depersonalization ( $p = .063$ ), and personal accomplishment ( $p = .323$ ). There was a statistically significant difference between RA employment choice groups in depersonalization scores,  $t(112) = -2.856, p < .01, d = .667$ , and personal accomplishment scores,  $t(111) = 2.281, p < .05, d = .615$ . The Cohen's *d* statistic indicates a medium effect size for both variables (Cohen, 1988). However, there was no statistically significant difference between RA employment choice in



emotional exhaustion scores,  $t(110) = -1.681, p = .096$ . Table 12 displays all statistical results.

**Burnout dimensions by community composition.** Prior to testing the final component of Research Question 1B the following hypotheses were developed:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The mean score for each burnout dimension—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—is equal for all community composition groups.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** At least one community composition group has a different mean for each burnout dimension (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if emotional exhaustion was different for RAs in different community compositions. RAs reported into one of three groups: mostly freshman students ( $n = 103$ ), mostly upper-class students ( $n = 22$ ), and, a balanced mix of both freshman and upper-class students ( $n = 26$ ). Among the sample, RAs with communities comprised of a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class residents had the highest emotional exhaustion scores ( $M = 23.27, SD = 11.65$ ), followed by mostly upper-class communities ( $M = 23.05, SD = 12.47$ ), followed by mostly freshman communities ( $M = 22.33, SD = 11.74$ ). emotional exhaustion scores increased from mostly freshman, to mostly upper class students, to a balanced mix, in that order. The homogeneity of variances was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .932$ ). The ANOVA results indicated there was no significant differences between RA community composition groups,  $F(2,148) = .084, p = .920$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if depersonalization was different for

Table 12

*Independent samples t-test comparisons between total mattering and burnout dimensions and RA employment choice*

Variable	Chose to Continue Employment			Chose to Not Continue Employment			<i>t</i>	95% CI
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total Mattering	96	92.52	14.96	18	83.28	14.72	2.411 *	[1.65, 16.84]
Burnout	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Emotional Exhaustion	95	20.33	10.79	17	25.18	11.91	-1.681	[-10.57, 0.87]
Depersonalization	96	5.52	4.74	18	9.17	6.11	-2.856 **	[-6.18, -1.12]
Personal Accomplishment	95	36.26	8.00	18	31.67	6.90	2.281 *	[0.60, 8.59]

*Note.* Variations in *n* are due to missing data.

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001

RAs in different community compositions. RAs reported into one of three groups: mostly freshman students ( $n = 103$ ); mostly upper-class students ( $n = 22$ ); and, a balanced mix of both freshman and upper-class students ( $n = 28$ ). Among the sample, RAs on mostly upper-class floors had the highest depersonalization scores ( $M = 7.09$ ,  $SD = 4.71$ ), followed by mostly freshman communities ( $M = 6.55$ ,  $SD = 5.58$ ), followed by balanced mix communities ( $M = 6.04$ ,  $SD = 5.40$ ). Homogeneity of variances was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .215$ ). As indicated by the ANOVA results, there was no significant differences between RA community composition groups,  $F(2,150) = .234$ ,  $p = .791$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if personal accomplishment was different for RAs in different community compositions. RAs reported into one of three groups: mostly freshman students ( $n = 101$ ), mostly upper-class students ( $n = 22$ ), and, a balanced mix of both freshman and upper-class students ( $n = 28$ ). One outlier was identified in the mostly freshman group by having a  $z$ -score less than  $-3.29$ , thus the value 0 was adjusted up to the next closest, non-outlier value of 14 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Among the sample, RAs with communities comprised of a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class residents had the highest personal accomplishment scores ( $M = 38.54$ ,  $SD = 7.13$ ), followed by mostly freshman communities ( $M = 34.94$ ,  $SD = 7.78$ ), followed by mostly upper-class communities ( $M = 32.55$ ,  $SD = 9.10$ ). Homogeneity of variances was assumed, as assessed by Levene's test for homogeneity of variances ( $p = .116$ ). The ANOVA results show that at least one RA community composition group had a significantly different personal accomplishment mean,  $F(2,148) = 3.822$ ,  $p < .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that RAs working in a balanced mix community had significantly higher levels of personal

accomplishment than RAs working with mostly freshman ( $-5.9903, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [-11.296, -0.685]$ ), but no other group differences were significantly different.

### **Research Question 2:**

#### **What are the Relationships between Matterings, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction among RAs?**

Research Question 2 was separated into three sets of hypotheses exploring the relationships between mattering and burnout (Research Question 2A), mattering and job satisfaction (Research Question 2B), and burnout and job satisfaction (Research Question 2C). Each set of hypotheses is listed in the relevant succeeding section.

To address these hypotheses, Pearson correlation procedures were conducted exploring the relationships between the identified variables. Correlation strength was interpreted using Cohen's (1988) guidelines where  $r$  values between  $\pm.01$  and  $\pm.3$  are considered small correlations,  $r$  values between  $\pm.3$  and  $\pm.5$  are considered moderate correlations, and  $r$  values above  $.5$  or below  $-.5$  are considered strong correlations. While only the composite total mattering correlational results are reported in this section, Table 13 reports all correlational results for Research Question 2.

#### **Research Question 2A: Mattering and Burnout**

The first Pearson correlation analysis used the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and the dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—as variables. Although some research studies have reverse scored the personal accomplishment dimension to create a composite burnout score, Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) stated that due to “limited knowledge about the relationships between the three aspects of burnout, the scores for each subscale are considered separately and are *not* combined into a single, total score” (p. 5).

Table 13

*Pearson correlations between components of mattering, dimensions of burnout, and job satisfaction*

Variable	B-EE	B-DP	B-PA	M-TM	M-AW	M-IMP	M-EGO	M-REL	JS
Burnout									
Emotional Exhaustion	–								
Depersonalization	.509***	–							
Personal Accomplishment	.058	-.300***	–						
Total Mattering	-.131	-.429***	.700***	–					
Awareness	-.177*	-.397***	.593***	.916***	–				
Importance	-.156	-.407***	.637***	.948***	.821***	–			
Ego-Extension	-.089	-.349***	.532***	.810**	.646***	.779***	–		
Reliance	-.017	-.360***	.712***	.865***	.708***	.752***	.593***	–	
Job Satisfaction	-.447***	-.517***	.462***	.344***	.441***	.437***	.364***	.364***	–

*Note.* M-TM = Total Mattering; M-AW = Awareness; M-IMP = Importance; M-EGO = Ego-Extension; M-REL = Reliance; B-EE = Emotional Exhaustion; B-DP = Depersonalization; B-PA = Personal Accomplishment; JS = Job Satisfaction. *N* values range from 148 to 153 due to missing burnout dimension data.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Therefore, a correlation analysis was required for each dimension of burnout.

**Mattering and emotional exhaustion.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were tested in the first correlation procedure:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and emotional exhaustion in RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and emotional exhaustion in RAs.

The first correlation procedure used the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and the burnout dimension emotional exhaustion as variables. The results indicated that there was a small, negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and the components of mattering. The only significant relationship found was between emotional exhaustion and awareness ( $r = -.177, p < .05$ ), compared to emotional exhaustion and importance ( $r = -.156, p = .056$ ), ego-extension ( $r = -.089, p = .275$ ), and reliance ( $r = -.017, p = .834$ ). Emotional exhaustion also had an insignificant, negative relationship with total mattering ( $r = -.131, p = .109$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The null hypotheses for the remaining components of mattering (importance, ego-extension, and reliance) and emotional exhaustion failed to be rejected.

**Mattering and depersonalization.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were tested in the second correlation procedure:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and depersonalization in RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and depersonalization in RAs.

The second correlation procedure used the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and the burnout dimension depersonalization as variables. The results indicated that there were significant moderate, negative relationships between depersonalization and the components of mattering: awareness ( $r = -.397, p < .001$ ), importance ( $r = -.407, p < .001$ ), ego-extension ( $r = -.349, p < .001$ ), and reliance ( $r = -.360, p < .001$ ). Depersonalization also had a significant, moderate negative relationship with total mattering ( $r = -.509, p < .001$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted for each component of mattering and depersonalization.

**Mattering and personal accomplishment.** The following null and alternative hypotheses were tested in the third correlation procedure:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and personal accomplishment in RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a relationship between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and personal accomplishment in RAs.

The third correlation procedure used the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and the burnout dimension personal accomplishment as variables. The results indicated that there were significant strong, positive relationships between personal accomplishment and the components of mattering: awareness ( $r = .593, p < .001$ ), importance ( $r = .637, p < .001$ ), ego-extension ( $r = .532, p < .001$ ), and reliance ( $r = .712, p < .001$ ). Personal accomplishment also had a significant, strong relationship with total mattering ( $r = .700, p < .001$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for each component of mattering and personal accomplishment.

## **Research Question 2B: Mattering and Job Satisfaction**

The following null and alternative hypotheses were used to test Research Question 2B:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between the components of mattering and job satisfaction in RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a relationship between the components of mattering and job satisfaction in RAs.

A correlation procedure used the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and job satisfaction as variables. The results indicated that there was a significant moderate relationship between each component of mattering and job satisfaction: awareness ( $r = .344, p < .001$ ), importance ( $r = .441, p < .001$ ), ego-extension ( $r = .437, p < .001$ ), and reliance ( $r = .364, p < .001$ ). Job satisfaction also had a significant, moderate relationship with total mattering ( $r = .436, p < .001$ ).

## **Research Question 2C: Burnout and Job Satisfaction**

The following null and alternative hypotheses were used to test Research Question 2C:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between the dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction in RAs.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There is a relationship between the dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction in RAs.

To test the Research Question 2C hypothesis, correlation procedure used the components of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—and job satisfaction as variables. The results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and both emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.447, p < .001$ ) and depersonalization ( $r = -.517, p < .001$ ). The relationship between job



satisfaction and personal accomplishment was significant and moderate ( $r = .462, p < .001$ ).

### **Research Question 3:**

#### **Is Mattering a Significant Predictor for RA Burnout?**

The composite variable total mattering was used as the predictor variable in linear regressions. Total mattering was computed by adding all four components of mattering together. Since burnout dimensions are considered individually (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), total mattering was used as the predictor variable in a separate linear regression for each dimension of burnout, including emotional exhaustion (Research Question 3A), depersonalization (Research Question 3B), and personal accomplishment (Research Question 3C) (see Table 5 in Chapter 3 for statistical procedures and variables).

#### **Research Question 3A: Emotional Exhaustion**

Before analyzing total mattering as a predictor of RA emotional exhaustion, the following null and alternative hypotheses were established:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** RA mattering is not a significant predictor for their emotional exhaustion.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** RA mattering is a significant predictor for their emotional exhaustion.

Linearity was established by visual inspection of a scatterplot of emotional exhaustion against total mattering. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.721. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values. Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by visual inspection of a normal probability plot. Total mattering accounted for 1.1% of the variation in emotional exhaustion, which is a small effect size according to Cohen (1988). However, total mattering did not significantly predict emotional exhaustion,  $F(1, 148) = 2.602, p = .109$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

### **Research Question 3B: Depersonalization**

Before analyzing total mattering as a predictor of RA depersonalization, the following null and alternative hypotheses were established:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** RA mattering is not a significant predictor for their depersonalization.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** RA mattering is a significant predictor for their depersonalization.

Linearity was established by visual inspection of a scatterplot of depersonalization against total mattering. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.894. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values. Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by visual inspection of a normal probability plot. There was one outlier, as determined by a *z*-score above 3.29; therefore, the depersonalization score 28 was adjusted down to the nearest non-outlier value of 24 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Total mattering significantly predicted depersonalization,  $F(1, 150) = 32.629, p < .001$ . Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, total mattering was a significant predictor for depersonalization. The prediction equation was:  $\text{depersonalization} = 20.213 + (-.151 \times \text{total mattering})$ . Therefore, every point higher on total mattering leads to a decrease of .151 in depersonalization. Total mattering accounted for 17.3% of the variation in depersonalization, which is a small effect size according to Cohen (1988).

### **Research Question 3C: Personal Accomplishment**

Before analyzing total mattering as a predictor of RA personal accomplishment, the following null and alternative hypotheses were established:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** RA mattering is not a significant predictor for their personal accomplishment.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** RA mattering is a significant predictor for their personal accomplishment.

Linearity was established by visual inspection of a scatterplot of personal accomplishment against total mattering. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.964. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values. Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by visual inspection of a normal probability plot. There was one outlier, as determined by a  $z$ -score below 3.29; therefore, the personal accomplishment score 0 was adjusted up to the nearest non-outlier value of 14 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Total mattering significantly predicted personal accomplishment,  $F(1, 148) = 140.559, p < .001$ . Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The prediction equation was: personal accomplishment =  $1.850 + (.370 \times \text{total mattering})$ . Therefore, every point higher in total mattering leads to an increase of .370 in personal accomplishment. Total mattering accounted for 48.4% of the variation in personal accomplishment, which is a moderate effect size according to Cohen (1988).

#### **Research Question 4:**

##### **Are RAs' Background Characteristics, Sense of Mattering, and Feelings of Burnout Significant Predictors for RAs' Job Satisfaction?**

The following null and alternative hypotheses were developed to guide the analysis of Research Question 4:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no specific factors that predict RA job satisfaction.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** At least one factor predicts RA job satisfaction.

To answer Research Question 4, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. Prior to analyzing the data, certain variables required transformation to fit the requirements of a multiple regression analysis. As a result of a low number of responses from any individual non-

White racial group, all other ethnic groups, including Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Multi-Racial were recoded into a single minority group. Thus, RA's race/ethnicity was transformed into a dichotomous variable, with RAs identified as White (coded as 1) representing 80.5% of the sample and non-White RAs (coded as 0) representing 19.5% of the sample.

Due to the low number of graduate student RAs ( $n = 2$ ) in the sample, RAs' classification was recoded into three levels, including (a) sophomore, (b) junior, and (c) senior and graduate students, or "senior plus." This categorical variable was then dummy coded into two dichotomous variables, one was named "Classification Sophomore," where the sophomore RAs were coded as 1, and the other variable was named "Classification Junior," where the junior RAs were coded as 1. Both of the variables were entered in the multiple regression models to compare against "Classification Senior+".

The variable "community composition" describes the types of residential communities where RAs were employed. This variable was previously coded with three levels of responses, including (a) mostly freshman, (b) mostly upper-class, and (c) a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class. Similarly, this categorical variable was transformed into two separate dichotomous variables: one was named "Community Composition Freshman," where the residential community hosting mostly freshmen was coded as 1, and the other was named "Community Composition Upper-class," where the residential community containing mostly upper-class students was coded as 1. Both of the variables were entered in the multiple regression model to compare against "Community Composition Balanced Mix."

To detect multicollinearity, bivariate correlations between the independent variables were examined first. As previously reported in Table 10, some correlation coefficients between the

independent variables were quite high; for instance, between importance and awareness ( $r = .821$ ); reliance and personal accomplishment ( $r = .712$ ); reliance and awareness ( $r = .708$ ); and, reliance and importance ( $r = .752$ ). Therefore, it was necessary to assess the variables for multicollinearity in this regression analysis. Multicollinearity may occur when three or more predictor variables are highly correlated (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992).

Variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values were calculated for the predictor variables as the first step in determining if multicollinearity existed. A conventional rule of thumb is that VIFs of 10 or higher, or equivalently, tolerances of .10 or less, may indicate a threat of multicollinearity. However, according to Allison (1999), it should raise a concern of multicollinearity when VIF is higher than 2.5, or the tolerance is lower than .40 (p. 89). Following Allison's recommendation and through an overall diagnostic evaluation, two mattering components, importance and reliance, were deleted from the multiple regression analysis. Among the remaining independent variables, no VIF values were above 2.5 and because of the reciprocal relationship, no tolerance values were below .40 (See Table 14).

A sequential multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the addition of mattering components and then burnout dimensions improved the prediction of RA job satisfaction above and beyond RA background characteristic variables (gender, race, classification, and community composition). Table 15 reports the full statistics for each regression model.

There was linearity as assessed by inspection of partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values. Although there was one studentized deleted residual greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations ( $z = -3.25$ ), it was ultimately left in the analysis due to no leverage values being greater than 0.2 and no values for Cook's distance above 1 (Cook &

Weisberg, 1982). The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by Q-Q Plot and histogram inspection.

Table 14

*Multicollinearity testing: Tolerance and VIF values*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Demographics		
Gender	.929	1.077
Race	.976	1.024
Classification		
Sophomore	.594	1.685
Junior	.622	1.609
Community Composition		
Mostly Freshman	.595	1.679
Mostly Upper-class	.560	1.786
Mattering		
Awareness	.431	2.323
Ego-Extension	.506	1.976
Burnout		
Emotional Exhaustion	.609	1.643
Depersonalization	.571	1.752
Personal Accomplishment	.540	1.851

*Note.* The categorical variable RA Classifications was dummy coded (Sophomore and Junior) and compared against Senior+. The categorical variable Community Compositions was dummy coded (Mostly Freshman and Mostly Upper-class) and compared against Balanced Mix.

Table 15

*Sequential multiple regression analysis: RA job satisfaction*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Step 1: Background						
Gender	0.350	.040	0.290	.033	0.617	.701
Race	0.684	.067	0.967	.095	0.602	.059
Classification						
Sophomore	1.366	.152	0.442	.049	0.761	.085
Junior	1.736 *	.202	1.016	.118	1.545 *	.180
Community Composition						
Mostly Freshman	-0.313	-.035	0.603	.067	0.714	.080
Mostly Upper-class	-0.184	.016	1.088	.092	0.990	.084
Step 2: Matting						
Awareness			0.114	.142	-0.137	-.171
Ego-Extension			0.567 *	.351	0.356 *	.220
Step 3: Burnout						
Emotional Exhaustion					-0.149 ***	-.420
Depersonalization					-0.129 *	-.168
Personal Accomplishment					0.211 ***	.422
$R^2$	.036		.225		.538	
$F$	.879		5.053		14.373	
$\Delta R^2$	.036		.189		.313	
$\Delta F$	.879		4.174		9.32	

*Note.* The categorical variable RA Classification was dummy coded into two dichotomous variables (Sophomore and Junior) to compare against Senior+. The categorical variable Community Composition was dummy coded into two dichotomous variables (Mostly Freshman and Mostly Upper-class) to compare against Balanced Mix.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

When examining the relationship between the independent variables and RA job satisfaction, the first model of background characteristic variables revealed that only “Classification Junior” significantly contributed to the prediction of job satisfaction ( $\beta = .202, p < .05$ ). After entering the select mattering components into the second model, “Classification Junior” ceased to be a significant predictor ( $\beta = .118, p = .206$ ), but ego-extension was a significant predictor ( $\beta = .351, p < .01$ ).

When the dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—were entered into the final model, “Classification Junior” once again was a significant predictor ( $\beta = .180, p < .05$ ) and the mattering component ego-extension continued to be a significant predictor ( $\beta = .220, p < .01$ ). Additionally, each dimension of burnout entered in the multiple regression equation was also found to be a significant predictor of RA job satisfaction: emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -.420, p < .001$ ), depersonalization ( $\beta = -.168, p < .05$ ), and, personal accomplishment ( $\beta = .422, p < .001$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  for the analysis indicated that the final model accounted for 53.8% of the variance in RA job satisfaction. The increase in adjusted  $R^2$  between the first two models was 18.9%, and the increase in adjusted  $R^2$  between Model 2 and Model 3 was 31.3%. Each sequential increase in adjusted  $R^2$  means the prediction model improved at each step. Table 15 presents all regression results.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore RA burnout through the theoretical framework of mattering. Specifically, this study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how RAs from specific personal (gender and employment choice) and environmental (community composition) categories reported their self-perception of mattering to the communities for which they were responsible and their feelings of burnout. The research variables (components of



matter and dimensions of burnout) were explored with the inclusion of RA job satisfaction to determine any relationships before investigating their prediction capabilities. Once complete, mattering was tested as a predictor of burnout, followed by both mattering and burnout as predictors of RA job satisfaction, above and beyond select background characteristic variables.

In summary, the results of this research study found there were no differences in any of the study variables between male and female RAs. RAs who chose to return to their position the following year reported higher levels of total mattering, lower levels of depersonalization, and higher levels of personal accomplishment.

Next, the results of the correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between all components of mattering and every dimension of burnout except emotional exhaustion. Each significant relationship was either moderate or high, with positive relationships between mattering components and personal accomplishment, and negative relationships between components of mattering and depersonalization. The only component of mattering that was significantly related to emotional exhaustion was awareness, which was a weak relationship. Job satisfaction was also significantly related to all study variables. All relationships were positively moderate to high except for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which were both moderate and negative.

Total mattering was found to be a significant predictor for both depersonalization and personal accomplishment. On the other hand, total mattering was not a significant predictor for emotional exhaustion. The final regression model, which included RA background characteristics, select mattering components, and dimensions of burnout, revealed that while RA background characteristics are not significant predictors of job satisfaction, adding the select mattering components and then the dimensions of burnout both significantly predicted job

satisfaction. The forthcoming chapter discusses these results and provides implications and recommendations for both practice and research.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### DISCUSSION

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose and significance of the current study. Next, the results are discussed in detail with consideration to past research on burnout and mattering. Finally, implications for both practice and future research are shared.

#### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Since previous burnout research of resident assistants (RAs) is dated and has neglected to focus on the understanding that burnout arises due to the relationships between service providers and service recipients (Freudenberg, 1974; Maslach, 1976; Maslach, 1982; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), the main purpose of this study was to begin filling this “relationship gap” in RA burnout literature. To address this gap, the theoretical framework of mattering (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981) was used as a lens to address the relationships between RAs and the residents for whom they are responsible as related to RA’s associated feelings of burnout. More specifically, this study first sought to examine the descriptive differences between demographic characteristics and RAs’ perceptions of mattering to their residents and their levels of burnout. Next, the study sought to describe the relationships between the components of mattering—awareness, importance, ego-extension, and reliance—and the dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Once these relationships were determined, this study explored whether RAs’ feelings of mattering predicted their level of burnout. Finally, due to previously established relationships between job satisfaction and both mattering (Connolly & Myers, 2003; Dixon Rayle, 2006a) and burnout (Fisher, 2011; Laschinger, Leiter, Day, & Gilin, 2009; Scalan & Still, 2013), this study investigated whether

RAs' mattering and burnout significantly predicted their job satisfaction.

This study is significant because it contributes to a better understanding of the RA experience on college campuses. Since RAs play a vital role in the residential experience by providing opportunities for their residents to be engaged and socially integrated into the college environment, both of which contribute to the overall success and retention of college students, the findings of this study has implications for student retention in the residential environment.

More specifically, this study strengthens the understanding of RA burnout relative to the relational component of the RA job. Instead of simply looking at demographic variables as previous studies have done (Benedict & Mondloch, 1989; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989; Nowack, Gibbons, & Hanson, 1985; Nowack & Hanson, 1983), the findings of this study begin the discussion on addressing burnout from the supervisory standpoint, specifically in how RAs interact and reflect on their relationships with their residents. This study is one of the first efforts to explore burnout related to mattering in RAs, thus allowing for the development of interventions addressing RAs' perceptions of residents being aware of them, RAs' perceptions of being important in the lives of their residents, and RAs' perceptions of their residents depending on them.

In addition to guiding future practices among housing professionals, this study provides implications for future burnout research, not only specific to RAs, but also more broadly to other disciplines where the primary job function is service-oriented. That is, the findings of this study may warrant replication and investigation into the perception of mattering as it relates to burnout among service-oriented careers such as nursing, teaching, and counseling.

### **Discussion of the Results**

The following discussion of this study's results is generally separated thematically by

each research question. First discussed is the comparative analyses of the background characteristics and study variables followed by the relationships between the study variables. Next, RA burnout as predicted by mattering is discussed. This section closes with a discussion on mattering and burnout predicting RA job satisfaction.

### **Comparative Analyses**

This section begins with a general discussion of RA burnout compared to the general population of service-oriented employment fields and more specifically compared to other postsecondary education employees. Next, comparative analyses of mattering and burnout are discussed related to gender, employment choice, and finally community composition variables.

**Burnout.** By comparing the means of RA burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment— in this study to the published means of the overall sample and the subdivision of postsecondary education employees (see Table 16) collected by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) it becomes apparent that RAs are prone to reporting stronger feelings of burnout compared to both the overall service-oriented population and more specifically to the postsecondary education population. Because RAs serve as educators as a function of their job (Blimling, 1998), this study used the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey to evaluate burnout; therefore, the following comparisons focus on the subpopulation of postsecondary educators. The comparison population of postsecondary education employees consisted of 635 college and professional school employees (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

RAs reported a higher emotional exhaustion (22.60 vs. 18.57) and depersonalization means (6.56 vs. 5.57) compared to the reported dimension levels of postsecondary education employees. Due to the personal accomplishment scale scoring burnout in the opposite direction

Table 16

*Means and standard deviations for the MBI subscales*

	<b>MBI Subscales</b>		
	<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>	Depersonalization	<b>Personal Accomplishment</b>
<b>Overall Sample (n = 11,067)</b>			
<i>M</i>	20.99	8.73	34.58
<i>SD</i>	10.75	5.89	7.11
<b>Occupational Subgroup<sup>1</sup></b>			
<i>Postsecondary Education (n = 635)</i>			
<i>M</i>	18.57	5.57	39.17
<i>SD</i>	11.95	6.63	7.92

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<sup>1</sup> Occupations represented in the overall sample include 4,163 teachers (elementary and secondary, grades K-12); 635 post-secondary educators (college, professional schools); 1,538 social service workers (social workers, child protective service workers); 1,104 medical workers (physicians, nurses); 730 mental health workers (psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors, mental hospital staff, psychiatrists); and 2,897 others (legal aid employees, attorneys, police officers, probation officers, ministers, librarians, and agency administrators).

(higher personal accomplishment suggests lower feelings of burnout associated with the dimension), RAs reported a lower mean when compared with postsecondary education employees (35.17 vs. 39.17), thus indicating higher burnout. Unfortunately, drawing statistical comparisons between reported levels of burnout between RAs to the referenced postsecondary population was impossible due to lack of access to Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter's (1996) original dataset.

Despite Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter's (1996) published data now being dated, important conclusions can still be drawn. First, when comparing burnout among RAs to the postsecondary population, it is not surprising that RAs reported increased emotional exhaustion. The job of an RA never ends due to the live-in responsibilities and the feeling of always being on the job (Hetherington et al., 1989; Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn, 2005). Because of this, RAs rarely have an escape from their work duties. They are not like (most) postsecondary educators who have the ability to go home at the end of the day because an RAs' home is also their work environment (Hovarth & Stack, 2013). In addition, RAs take on the burdens of their community members because they are responsible for connecting their residents to the necessary and appropriate resources (Paladino et al., 2005; Reingle, Thombs, Osborn, Saffian, & Oltersdorf, 2010). This has only been amplified in recent years as current students are entering college with more personal issues including mental health concerns (Castillo & Schwartz, 2013; Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Mowbray et al., 2006), thus needing additional support. Taking on these responsibilities is, without a doubt, exhausting, especially for RAs who are still navigating their own personal development. The question then arises if it is reasonable for housing practitioners to expect RAs to successfully assist college students struggling to resolve progress through Chickering's developmental vector of establishing mature relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) when RAs themselves may be emotionally exhausted from struggling through the same developmental issues?

It is also not surprising that RAs reported lower levels of personal accomplishment. RAs experience constant interruptions and feel as if there is always more to accomplish (Hetherington et al., 1989), which may be justification enough for the reported lower feelings of personal accomplishment. Another cause for this finding is the simple fact that RAs may not realize the

true success of the residents in their communities due to limited access to college success indicators; thus RAs may not truly experience the fruits of their labors. For example, if an RA does not receive information about the GPAs of their residents, there is no concrete validation of their efforts to foster an academic environment. They may presume to anecdotally know the success of their residents based on conversations and self-reporting of those residents who chose to do so, but they would not know definitively.

**Gender.** The results of this study found no differences in *total mattering* and burnout dimensions between male and female RAs. As demonstrated in the literature review, research on RA burnout has provided mixed (and now outdated) results on the differences of burnout levels between male and female RAs. The findings of this study support most of the previous studies (e.g., Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988) that investigated levels of emotional exhaustion in male and female RAs; that is, emotional exhaustion there is no statistically significant difference in levels of emotional exhaustion between male and female RAs. Hardy and Dodd (1998) reported similar findings, as did Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988); however, it should be noted that Fuehrer and McGonagle also found significant differences in the original *intensity* scale of emotional exhaustion, but not in the *frequency* scale of emotional exhaustion, on which the current version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (MBI–ES) is based. Recall from the literature review that Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) discussed how the intensity scale was dropped in favor of the frequency scale of the MBI. The only study that disagrees with the findings of this (and previous) studies was conducted by Hetherington et al. (1989), who found that female RAs reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to male RAs.

When considering the aberration of Hetherington et al.’s (1989) findings, it is difficult to



determine a reason for the departure from the findings of the current study. For instance, both Hetherington et al. (1989) and the current study focused on Midwestern, public institutions with similar sample sizes (113 and 153, respectively). The only difference was that the current study surveyed four institutions while Hetherington et al. (1989) focused on a single institution, which may suggest an explanation. Another reason for the differences in findings may be that 25 years have elapsed between the two studies.

The findings of this study were consistent with the previous research presenting a lack of statistically significant differences between male and female RAs in the burnout dimension depersonalization (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Hetherington et al., 1989).

With regards to the feelings of personal accomplishment experienced by RAs, similar to the presentation of the emotional exhaustion results, the findings of this study are consistent with all but one previous research study (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988). Although not recommended by the authors who developed the MBI instrument (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) presented this variable as *lack of* personal accomplishment. Neglecting to provide a description of how the lack of personal accomplishment was computed or interpreted by the authors, it is difficult to ascertain if this may be the root cause of the differences in this one study.

Similarly, with respect to the self-perception of RAs feeling as if they mattered to their communities, there was no difference between male and female RAs. Although no previous literature was found examining RA gender and mattering, previous research demonstrates that college-aged males had significantly lower feelings of mattering to their friends and their college environment (Dixon Rayle & Chung, 2007). The difference is notable, but not without

warranting further attention. Although the “mattering to whom” in the current study (i.e., mattering to their community) differed from Dixon Rayle and Chung’s (2007) study (i.e., mattering to friends and the college environment), upon closer examination, that difference may be more nuanced. Since RAs often befriend their residents as a function of their job (Everett & Loftus, 2011), there is some parallel between the two studies, although not definitive.

**Employment Choice.** The findings of employment choice analysis are, for the most part, as expected. Employment choice was defined dichotomously as RAs who chose, or would have chosen had outside circumstances allowed, to return to the RA position the following year and RAs who chose, or would have chosen had outside circumstances allowed, not to return to the RA position the following year. In this study, RAs who chose to continue serving as RAs the following year reported significantly higher levels of *total mattering*. When examining their level of burnout, RAs who chose to return the following year reported significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment and significantly lower levels of depersonalization. As stated, these findings are not unexpected simply by considering the rationale for choosing to return to a particular job; in this case, the RA job. Why would someone continue with a particular job when their feelings of mattering are low, or there is a limited sense of personal accomplishment? The same question can be asked about depersonalization: If an RA distances from residents, a direct contradiction to their job expectation to develop students (Denzine & Anderson, 1999), should practitioners expect for them to return again? Studies in other disciplines support the findings related to burnout, as burnout leads to increased intention by staff to turnover (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003; Laschinger et al., 2009).

The seemingly unexpected result is the lack of significant differences in one of the burnout dimensions, emotional exhaustion levels, between employment choice groups. At first

glance, an assumption would be that, all other considerations being equal, people would elect to leave a position if exhausted emotionally; however this does not seem to be the case with RAs. One possible explanation for this finding is that the position exhausts RAs emotionally equally, and that mattering and the other dimensions of burnout are more impactful when choosing to leave the position at the end of the academic year. This seems plausible given that RAs have higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to the general postsecondary population (Maslach et al., 1996).

Similarly, perhaps the associated “feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by [their] work” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101) and being “depleted of [their] emotional and physical resources” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 399) is commonplace for the mentality of people who start the RA position in the first place. The ramifications of this suggestion are concerning, should this conclusion be correct. If the position is predisposed to having higher levels of emotional exhaustion, there is a culture problem within the RA position from day one, which certainly warrants further attention by practitioners and additional exploration by researchers.

The final consideration is that RAs are willing to continue to work in an emotionally exhausting job to continue to receive the benefits of the position. While not universally true, the RA remuneration package typically includes housing (often at no cost, but sometimes discounted), a meal plan, and a monetary stipend (Hovarth & Stack, 2013). Perhaps thinking of an alternative plan of paying for housing, food, and working another job while continuing to pursue their academic endeavors is more exhausting to consider.

This study did not consider RA mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction as predictor variables for RA retention. Perhaps a more valid retention variable would be worth future study

in this area. However, by examining employment choice differences, the findings of this study provide important implications for practitioners in shaping the support and experience of their RAs while considering the future of the returning RA staff.

**Community Composition.** Comparing the results of this study to previous studies on the levels of burnout experienced by RAs based on the composition of their community members is difficult and must be done with caution. The main challenge is that literature often defines and classifies community composition differently. The instrument developed for this study gave three options from which RAs could select to define their specific community: mostly freshman, mostly upper-class, and a balanced mix of both freshman and upper-class. Both Benedict and Mondloch (1989), and Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) looked at entire building compositions as opposed to individual floors (e.g., freshman halls and upper-class halls), while Hardy and Dodd (1998) differentiated RA floors by two categories: first-year floors and mixed-class floors.

Keeping this caveat in mind, the results of this study support the previous findings in the emotional exhaustion dimension. With one exception, regardless of how communities were classified, each found no significant differences between groups in emotional exhaustion experienced by RAs (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998). The exception was Benedict and Mondloch (1989), who reported RAs in first-year residence halls experiencing increased emotional exhaustion. The previous commentary on the lack of differences in emotional exhaustion scores based on gender seems appropriate in this case, too; that is, that RAs have consistently higher levels of emotional exhaustion across the board, regardless of background characteristics.

With respect to the depersonalization dimension of RA burnout, Hardy and Dodd (1998) found RAs on first-year floors reported significantly higher levels of depersonalization scores, in

contrast to this study, which found no differences based on the RAs' community composition. On first glance, the way community composition was defined in each study may be the obvious difference. Transforming the community composition variable in this study to more closely mirror Hardy and Dodd's (1998) study may reveal different results. This could be done by combining both "mostly upper-class" and "a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class" to represent "non-freshman" communities. While this certainly warrants further investigation, the means of the two variables included in this suggested transformation split the "mostly freshman" variable: RAs with "a balanced mix" reported the lowest means, followed by "mostly freshman," and then "mostly upper-class," with no significant differences between any of the groups.

Considering differences of personal accomplishment levels in RAs between their community composition groups should be done with increased caution, above and beyond the caveat noted previously about the way community composition was defined in all the relevant studies. This study found significant differences between RAs on mostly upper-class floors and RAs on floors with a "balanced mix of freshman and upper-class." Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988), scoring personal accomplishment as a *lack of* personal accomplishment against the recommendation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) authors (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), found RAs on first-year floors reported significantly higher levels of lack of personal accomplishment, which equates to lower levels of personal accomplishment. The results of this study placed RAs on freshman floors in the middle of the three groups, with RAs on upper-class floors reporting significantly lower personal accomplishment compared to RAs with a balanced mix of freshman and upper-class residents. The discussion about potentially transforming the community composition variable to more closely emulate previous studies from the personal accomplishment section also applies here.

## **Relationships between Mattering, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction**

As noted in the previous chapter, the results of the correlation analysis employed to investigate Research Question 2 revealed significant relationships between all of the study variables—components of mattering, dimensions of burnout, and job satisfaction—except for the relationships between emotional exhaustion and every component of mattering besides awareness. Each significant relationship was either moderate or high, with positive relationships between mattering components and personal accomplishment, and negative relationships between components of mattering and depersonalization. The only component of mattering significantly related to emotional exhaustion was awareness, which had a weak relationship. Job satisfaction was also significantly related to all study variables. All relationships were positively moderate to high except for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which were both moderate and negative. The strong relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization supports Maslach et al.'s (2001) claim that often research findings report strong relationships between the two dimensions.

The lack of significance (and magnitude) between emotional exhaustion and the components of mattering is worth further discussion, although these results do not demonstrate causality in either direction. Previously established in the discussion on Research Question 1 was the lack of differences in emotional exhaustion between RA gender, community composition, and employment choice. This pattern continues in the correlation results, providing additional support for RA emotional exhaustion existing internally and outside the relationships with others. This is troubling because emotional exhaustion is the most apparent symptom of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). When considering the role emotional exhaustion plays in the relationships between RAs and their residents, perhaps the lack of an established relationship is not surprising.

By definition, emotional exhaustion is an internal feeling, and not as directly related to the surrounding people as depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

RAs who had higher levels of job satisfaction reported lower feelings of burnout in each associated dimension (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). This finding aligns with studies conducted in other disciplines, for instance, nursing (Laschinger et al., 2009; Leiter, Harvie, & Frizzell, 1998) and education (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Fisher, 2011). For RAs, this suggests that more detailed research on RA burnout is warranted for the sake of further understanding their job satisfaction. Also important to note is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and RA mattering. As this study is one of the first to explore the relationship gap in burnout literature, these findings begin the discussion on improving employee job satisfaction, increasing feelings of mattering in the employment setting, and lowering employee burnout.

### **Predicting Burnout and Job Satisfaction**

The follow-up simple linear regression procedures in Research Question 3 were designed to evaluate if *total mattering* predicted each individual dimension of burnout. This research question was designed to substantially fill the previously identified relationship gap in RA burnout literature. The results revealed that *total mattering* significantly predicted the amount of the variance in both depersonalization (17.9%) and personal accomplishment (48.7%). On the other hand, *total mattering* did not significantly predict emotional exhaustion.

While the discussion on emotional exhaustion is interesting from a conceptual standpoint (and will be returned to later), the results of *total mattering* predicting both burnout dimensions, depersonalization and personal accomplishment, are far more illuminating in filling the relationship gap within RA burnout literature. First, this study found that *total mattering* in RAs

significantly explained nearly 18% of the variance in RA depersonalization. On one hand, the fact that mattering significantly predicts depersonalization is not surprising, due to the fact that depersonalization is defined as the “unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one’s care or service” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). This suggests that lower feelings of mattering to residents would necessarily contribute to an increase in detachment from those same residents. On the other hand, based on this definition of depersonalization, it is somewhat surprising that the amount of variance explained is not higher.

Among all the burnout dimensions, the variance explained in personal accomplishment by *total mattering* was by far the largest at nearly 49%. This study revealed that increasing the feelings of mattering among RAs also increased their feelings of personal accomplishment. Coupled with the previous discussion on the possible experienced feelings of exhaustion associated with the varying and difficult job duties of RAs (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Denzine & Anderson, 1999; Jaeger & Caison, 2006), it seems that the achievement and success of RAs through their relationships with their residents is highly important. Although this study was unable to investigate the predictive power of each individual component of mattering, it is worth noting that one component of mattering, ego-extension, by definition, may play a large role in the predictive effect of *total mattering* on personal accomplishment. Within the concept of mattering, ego-extension is defined as people responding to situations in the manner as we do and exhibiting similar emotions as us (Rosenberg, 1985). For RAs, the experience of ego-extension would manifest when residents exhibit the same positive feelings of accomplishment that RAs display for their successes (and similarly, showing empathy during their RA’s failures).

Furthermore, as far as this predictive model goes, the results of the regression model suggest that the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout is largely outside the



administrative duties accomplished by RAs (e.g., regularly submitting duty logs and incident reports); rather, personal accomplishment among RAs is largely related to their relationships with their residents and the achieving success with development of their community.

Background characteristics failed to predict job satisfaction among RAs, except for the dummy coded “Classification: Junior” variable. In this case, Classification: Junior was significant in the first model of only background characteristics and the third model, which included burnout and mattering. In other words, RAs classified as college juniors tend to have a higher level of job satisfaction when compared to sophomores and seniors.

Based on the positive relationships between the components of mattering and RA job satisfaction, and the inverse relationships between the dimensions of burnout of RA job satisfaction, it can be concluded that while burnout lowers RA job satisfaction, RA mattering raises it. Based on the previous regression models, it appears that focusing on RA mattering will have the cumulative effect on reducing burnout, which in turn will also improve job satisfaction.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The combined results of this study indicate that mattering is an appropriate lens to begin addressing the relationship gap in RA burnout research. Total mattering significantly explains the variance in both the depersonalization and personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout. When considering the role select components of mattering and burnout dimensions contribute to RA job satisfaction, ego-extension, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were all significant predictors.

The lack of significance emotional exhaustion plays in this relationship is notable, because it can be concluded that the relationships between RAs and their residents, at least as far as RAs perceiving that they matter to their residents, does not have a meaningful impact on their

feelings of emotional exhaustion. Therefore, RAs are either experiencing heightened emotional exhaustion through other aspects of their relationships with their residents or, more likely, through the non-relationship building components of their jobs generating their feelings of emotional exhaustion. As suggested, the latter may very well be the case. As RAs have a wide array of job responsibilities, many of which are vastly different in scope (Denzine & Anderson, 1999), the management and balance needed to successfully complete their tasks is incredibly difficult (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Jaeger & Caison, 2006). With such a wide variety of expectations, RAs may become emotionally exhausted if they feel they are not successfully achieving all of their competing goals. On the other hand, if RAs are not successful in all areas of the wide array of responsibilities in which they entrusted, this may instead manifest in their feelings of decreased personal accomplishment; or perhaps even in both dimensions.

This finding provides further support that the emotional exhaustion dimension may actually lay outside the relationship continuum, at least as far as mattering is concerned. This brings up an interesting point worth considering: As discussed in the literature review, Shirom (1989) suggested that emotional exhaustion was the only meaningful measure of burnout compared to the other two dimensions. Maslach et al. (2001) responded that if burnout is considered out of context and the focus is solely on emotional exhaustion, then “one would lose sight of the phenomenon entirely” (p. 402). Since both mattering and burnout arise from the relationships between people, the lack of significant prediction of emotional exhaustion by total mattering supports the inclusion of the other dimensions in the overall burnout phenomenon. Put another way, solely investigating burnout through emotional exhaustion would miss the forthcoming significant findings altogether, thus leaving housing practitioners needing to address burnout through a different lens altogether. This underscores the significance of this study by

illuminating the necessity of comprehensively investigating burnout through all three dimensions, which would be of benefit in future studies in other disciplines, too.

Although this study did not address the circumstances surrounding the RA experience, many of the recommendations are based on previous research, both specific to the RA position and throughout other disciplines. Such recommendations have proven to be helpful in other areas. Now that the important connection between mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction has been established, housing practitioners have an additional focal point with which to improve the RA experience.

### **Implications for Practice**

The research questions in this study were staged sequentially to provide additional information at each progressive step. First, descriptively describing the differences in study variables based on background characteristics. Then, the relationships between all the study variables were established. Next, total mattering was used a predictor variable for each burnout dimension. Finally, background characteristic variables, select components of mattering, and the dimensions of burnout were used as predictors of RA job satisfaction. Since each step built sequentially upon the previous ones, the following recommendations are organized thematically in the same way: first addressing recommendations for improving RA mattering, which will decrease RA burnout. The next recommendations focus on decreasing RA burnout directly, which combined with the recommendations on increasing RA mattering, will ultimately improve RA job satisfaction. Finally, some general observations and recommendations conclude this section as a summary.

### **Recommendations for Improving Mattering**

Based on the results of this study, a departmental emphasis on improving RA mattering

will have the cumulative effect of improving both RA burnout and RA job satisfaction. One limitation of mattering is that it is measured by the individual's perception of mattering and not how much someone actually matters. Thus, RAs may actually meaningfully matter to their residents, but not perceive that they do.

It should be noted that on first glance, some of the suggested recommendations may increase RA workload, which, according to Freudenberger (1975) would increase the experience of burnout among RAs. However, as noted, many of the recommendations simply modify typical practices by refocusing the supervisory conversations with RAs about their experiences. If workload continues to be a concern in housing departments, a critical look at the totality of RA position description and the varied job responsibilities should occur.

By increasing the focus on mattering from the supervisory standpoint, RAs will be more likely to recognize that they matter when previously they did not. Since this study began filling the relationship gap in RA burnout literature, the following recommendations all revolve around improving the opportunities to build meaningful relationships, but more importantly in the self-recognition of RAs and their relationships with their residents.

The first component of mattering is awareness, or, in the case of RAs, the feeling that residents know their RA exists (Elliott et al., 2004) or when RAs “command the interest or notice of [their residents]” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 164). To increase resident awareness of RAs, housing departments should, at some level, make it a priority that all residents know who their RA is and how to get in contact with the RA when needed. This can be accomplished in any number of ways, including regular floor or community meetings; community newsletters with the RA's picture, name, and contact information readily available; publicizing community development events or programs with the RA's name on it; advertising and holding dedicated

available times similar to “office hours” (e.g., every Tuesday between 4:00pm and 5:00pm the RA will be doing homework in the same location within the community if a resident wants to come study or needs anything); and, an expectation that an RA has a face-to-face conversation with every resident once a week. Depending on the institution, many of these examples are already employed to some extent; however, increased expectation and focus on the success of these initiatives from a departmental level will create a culture where residents are aware of their RAs and can use them as a resource when needed. Consistent follow-up discussions by supervisors will reinforce the purpose of these initiatives toward RAs feeling as if their residents are aware of them.

The second component of mattering is importance. Relevant to the RA position, importance is experienced when residents care about the well-being of RAs (Elliott et al., 2004; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Since RAs serve in a position of significance within the residential community, Denzin (1966) would suggest that residents would pay more attention to RAs due to the authority role. On the other hand, Elliott, Kao, and Grant (2004) would suggest that RAs matter to their residents based on the fact that residents “seek [their] advice... [and] care about what happens to [them]” (p. 339). This advice should not go unnoticed or unrecognized by RAs, and supervisors should reinforce this notion, especially in the case of residents who exhibit behavioral issues, so that RAs are unable to only focus on the negatives and depersonalize from the impact RAs are actually having.

Similarly, while not in the original conception of mattering, ego-extension was later included and found to be a distinct component within the framework (France & Finney, 2010). For RAs, the experience of ego-extension would manifest when residents exhibit the same positive feelings of accomplishment that RAs display for their successes (and similarly, showing

empathy during their RA's failures). Although distinct, recommendations for practice to improve both importance and ego-extension align. Therefore, it is recommended for RAs to be trained (and expected) to proactively share their own academic and personal goals with their residents. If RAs are not sharing their goals, when accomplished, their residents are denied the opportunity to share and exhibit similar feelings with their success; just as RAs share in the success of their residents. As a function of their job, RAs often become friends with their residents (Everett & Loftus, 2011), thus reinforcing the bi-directional relationship between RAs and all their residents will also serve to strengthen RA's social support networks, which in turn will increase mattering (Dixon Rayle & Chung, 2007).

Specifically, increasing the experience of ego-extension among RAs will have the cumulative effect of improving RA burnout, and thus by decreasing RA burnout, job satisfaction among RAs will increase. Of the two included components of mattering within the final model predicting job satisfaction, ego-extension is the only component that significantly contributed to the explanation of variance. Therefore, increased effort to raise ego-extension should be prioritized over awareness due to this cumulative effect.

The final component of mattering investigated in this study was reliance. Within the RA position, reliance is experienced by RAs when residents need or depend on them. RAs are typically one of the first people residents turn to when faced with challenges in college (Johnson & Thompson, 2011); thus one of the primary job responsibilities of RAs is to serve as both an academic and personal resource to their residents, directing them to relevant services (Reingle, Thombs, Osborn, Saffian, & Oltersdorf, 2010; Westefeld et al., 2006). While it might be obvious to an RA that he or she is important when referring a suicidal student to counseling services, less obvious would be more subtle referrals such as tutoring. Once again, by supervisors refocusing

the RA's attention to the more frequent, and less obvious referrals RAs make that increase student success will reaffirm that residents rely on RAs.

Other areas of reliance may go unnoticed by RAs due to the nature of their job responsibilities. For example, Stoner and Zhang (2016) suggest that RAs may not notice they matter in situations where a student is documented for a noise violation. In this case, the neighboring residents in surrounding rooms rely on RAs to maintain a respectful environment for everyone else, which may not be acknowledged by the RA when confronting the negative behavior. Supervisors should remind RAs of this reliance, to reaffirm the sense of mattering.

More generally, to ensure the recognition of mattering among RAs, staff members who supervise RAs must also focus on mattering in their interactions with their RAs. This can be accomplished in staff meetings and individual one-on-one meetings with RAs. Often, RAs never realize the fruits of the labor, or simply may not understand how much they matter to their residents. By mattering to their residents, RAs necessarily matter to the larger university community, since they are on the front lines of student success (Denzine & Anderson, 1999). Therefore, supervisors must fill this void of recognition. For instance, supervisors should frequently challenge RAs to reflect on their experiences and critically think of ways that they mattered to their residents. This should be done with specificity; for example, instead of just asking an RA "tell me how you mattered to your residents this past week?", supervisors should instead ask specific questions such as "who is a resident you believe is more aware of you this week than the previous week, and why?" or "who is a resident who relied on you this week and why?". This recommendation can be incorporated in weekly or bi-weekly reports, self-reflection during RA staff meetings, or even in individual one-on-one meetings. The questions asked should rotate through the mattering components so that each component is emphasized and given

the appropriate attention.

The final recommendation for improving RA mattering is to simply administer the modified University Mattering Scale (UMS) used in this study to RAs. Instead of submitting the survey anonymously, RAs should include their names so supervisors can review individual results and see where their RAs are scoring, both individually and as a collective team. If supervisors know that most of their RAs report low levels of, say, awareness, then the suggested recommendations can be targeted to the entire RA team. On the other hand, if a single RA reports low levels of a particular mattering component, the supervisor can have intentional conversations and target specific strategies during their one-on-one meetings for that individual RA. Due to lack of anonymity, supervisors who administer the modified UMS are cautioned to present it in such a way that the responses have no implications toward job performance evaluations, but rather a developmental tool to help the supervisor better support their RAs.

In summary, if successful, the recommendations provided will not only increase RA mattering, but will also reduce RA burnout, specifically in the dimensions of depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The amount of variance significantly explained in depersonalization and personal accomplishment by *total mattering* was substantial (17.9% and 48.7%, respectively), thus underscoring the importance of fostering and targeting the relational component of the RA position as a strategy for reducing burnout. Recommendations for reducing burnout directly are discussed next.

### **Recommendations for Reducing Burnout**

The findings of this study suggest that if practitioners implement the previous recommendations and are successful in increasing RA mattering, burnout among RAs should also decrease. However, strategies for reducing burnout directly may also be effective in



reducing burnout and thus, increasing job satisfaction.

Paladino et al. (2005) recommended providing continuous training for RAs to assist with alleviating burnout. This recommendation remains true, but warrants specific and targeted direction. Supplementary training or in-service workshops focused on burnout related symptoms, such as the intervention procedures employed in a study on special education teachers (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996) have positively reduced burnout symptoms and increased job satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that housing departments replicate workshops for RAs that focus on stress management, burnout prevention, and coping strategies. Following Cooley & Yovanoff's (1996) guide, the series of workshops would target situational, physiological, and cognitive coping skills. The second workshop recommended for emulation in the RA job setting focuses on peer collaboration (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). Similar recommendations are often suggested by RA burnout researchers, most notably targeting stress management among RAs (e.g., Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Hetherington et al., 1989; Nowack & Hanson, 1983), but little research has been conducted to investigate specific intervention programs and their resulting effects on RA burnout.

When opportunities for addressing job stress and burnout were available, they were not being used for this purpose. At the time of their study, Bowman and Bowman (1995) found that among departments that provided an RA focused, academic course to supplement training, burnout and job stress were only covered by approximately a third of the courses. Therefore, departments that have an existing structure for supplementary training should incorporate a focus on burnout. Housing departments lacking a pre-existing structure should build such intervention workshops within their on-going training processes.

As Freudemberger (1974) originally suggested, those prone to burnout are “the dedicated

and the committed” (p. 161) and those who have “a need to give” (p. 162). Such employees make personal sacrifices and work long hours for those in their care. Over-commitment and the need to be constantly available also contribute to burnout (Freudenberger, 1975). These observations naturally align with the RA position because the nature of their jobs leaves RA’s feeling that they are always working, 24-hours a day, which leads to their burnout (Hetherington et al., 1989), especially in the dimension of depersonalization, (Paladino et al., 2005). Therefore, supervisors should make it a priority to encourage RAs to leave campus and spend time away from their communities. Emphasizing the importance of spending time away while also decreasing the constraints on leaving campus may begin to address this concern. Furthermore, spending time away would also offer residents the opportunity to notice their RA matters through the RA’s absence for a short time, a supporting attribute of the awareness component of mattering (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Rosenberg, 1985; France, 2011).

Supervisor training has also been recommended in order to “assist RAs experiencing burnout at the individual level (Paladino et al., 2005, p. 25). The following recommendations pertain to attention and focus at the supervisory level. Similar to the previous recommendations on supervision modifications to emphasize RA mattering, modifying supervisory attention to specific details within the RA–supervisor relationship can assist with not only alleviating burnout, but also recognizing RAs who may be experiencing burnout.

Since depersonalization is characterized by “unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one’s care or service” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101), RA supervisors must focus on keeping RAs connected to their residents. The example cited in the literature review refers to a doctor experiencing depersonalization from his patients by referring to his patients by the medical condition instead of the individual himself; for instance, by saying “[h]e’s a

coronary” (Maslach, 1976, p. 17). The same is true in residence life. RA supervisors should immediately identify and redirect any conversations held by RAs where residents are not referred to as individuals, but rather their behavior (i.e., “the resident who was medically transported last night”).

This aligns with a common phenomenon experienced by RAs: role conflict. When residents make poor decisions and violate policy, RAs are expected to document them (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Paladino et al., 2005; Twale & Burrell, 1994); however, RAs are also expected to build positive relationships with the same residents (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Denzine & Anderson, 1999); of which both duties conflict with each other. When RAs document an incident in which a resident is involved, due to the perceived negative interaction that occurs between the two, it is easy to understand how an RA might experience depersonalization with that particular resident (i.e., “he is the guy that got busted for drinking on my floor”). Role conflict, leading to burnout (Deluga & Winters, 1991; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Paladino et al., 2005), can easily manifest in other examples, such as residents with routine noise violations (e.g., “the noisy resident”), residents who are typically not around due to other personal commitments and priorities (e.g., “she is a ghost resident”), and residents who are caught violating drug policies (e.g., “he is the druggie”). It is easy to focus on the negatives when RAs are responsible for documenting residents then are not necessarily involved in the further developmental conversations with that resident through university conduct processes.

The findings of this study suggest RA supervisors should focus on the positive outcomes, when they may not be readily apparent to RAs. For instance, by addressing behavioral issues, RAs are still setting a course for student success within their community population, whether they realize it or not. Therefore, RAs will be able to focus on the individual and the potential

success instead of judging an individual on a singular event (e.g., documenting a noise violation, underage alcohol consumption).

Role conflict may also be alleviated by more intentional and structured first impressions between RAs and residents. In first floor meetings, RA supervisors can provide a more structured agenda to articulate the role of the RA while also communicating direct expectations of residents. For example, during the first floor-meeting of the academic year, RAs should address the fact that there is role conflict in their position by explaining that even though RAs are responsible for documenting incidents such as noise and alcohol violations, that does not mean that RAs lack care for residents' academic and personal success. This conversation should immediately be followed up by RAs stating explicitly that residents are not judged by any transgressions in behavior, and residents should expect the exact same interactions the day after a documented violation they would have had a violation not occurred. By setting the tone (Northouse, 2011) in this manner, residents may come to expect no change in the RA–resident relationship should they be involved in a policy violation. This may prove difficult, but it is a step in the right direction.

With this in mind, after any policy violations documented by RAs, supervisors should recommend (or even require) for RAs to have a non-policy violation related conversation with the documented resident. This reinforces the belief that RAs are more interested in student success instead of only focusing on the negative behaviors. By shifting the focus on student success, it serves to reduce the depersonalization felt by RAs. By alleviating this role conflict, insofar as is possible, RAs may feel reduced depersonalization among their residents who may violate policy. Furthermore, focusing on student success in these moments may also increase the feelings of personal accomplishment.

## **Improving Job Satisfaction**

The existing literature on RA burnout and job satisfaction is limited (e.g., Bershoff & Smith, 1995; Deluga & Winters, 1990; Deluga & Winters, 1991; Denzine & Anderson, 1999). However, research in other disciplines shows a link between burnout and decreased levels of job satisfaction (Fisher, 2011; Laschinger et al., 2009; Scalan & Still, 2013). In this study, the available research across disciplines on job satisfaction was extended to both feelings of burnout and perceptions of mattering. RA background characteristics have minimal, insignificant contributions to the variance in RA job satisfaction. Above background characteristics, mattering significantly accounted for 22.5% of the variance in job satisfaction. While impressive on its own, when including both mattering and burnout in the regression model, nearly 54% of the variance in job satisfaction is predicted.

This particular finding has profound implications for housing professionals who supervise RAs. Due to the negative relationships between mattering and burnout (e.g., higher components of mattering indicates lower burnout levels), housing professionals now have research to inform their attempts to improve RA job satisfaction. More specifically, instead of simply focusing on the negative contributions impacting RA job satisfaction (burnout), supervisors can now focus on the positive contributions (mattering). Previous research (Deluga & Winters, 1991) reports a significant, albeit slight, relationship between job satisfaction and the motivational factor to become an RA of “helping behaviors”. Therefore, supervisors should make intentional efforts with those RAs who are not predisposed to becoming an RA to “assist students” (Deluga & Winters, 1991, p. 548) to focus on the relational component of the job and emphasize how much RAs matter to their residents. As previously mentioned, the components of burnout, mainly emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, align more closely with another

motivation to become an RA: “desire for power” (Deluga & Winters, 1991). By nature, RAs who desire power are more likely to experience role conflict due to the likelihood of seeking out policy and becoming more of an authority, severing their ability to also serve as a resource.

### **General Observations and Recommendations**

Despite the limited aberrations in the burnout literature discussed previously, this study provides supporting evidence of male and female RAs experiencing similar levels of burnout in all three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Therefore, there is no need for housing practitioners to develop gender specific interventions for male or female RAs to support mattering or to combat burnout. Thus, if either (or both) RA burnout and RA mattering are of concern to practitioners in their department, a generalized approach is warranted instead of developing support structures or interventions focused on a specific gender. However, as discussed previously in the limitations section, the sample did not contain any non-binary gender participants, so conclusions are unable to be drawn about burnout and mattering levels in RAs identifying as a gender outside the binary classification.

Although this study did not assess mattering and burnout as predictors of RA retention, practitioners should be aware of the significant differences in *total mattering*, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment between RAs who would choose to return to their position and RAs who would choose not to return for another year. With regard to burnout, the findings of this study suggest similarity to Laschinger et al.’s (2009) study of nurses, where burnout contributed to intention to turnover. A similar relationship was found among Australian occupational therapists, where burnout, measured on the *Olenburg Burnout Inventory* (Demerouti et al., 2003), was significantly and highly correlated to turnover intention.

The fact that departing RAs have lower levels of mattering and personal accomplishment

and increased feelings of depersonalization leads to one recommendation during the RA rehiring process. RAs typically are asked to identify if they are interested in coming back as an RA for the following year in the middle of the spring semester, which means those that elect to not return continue their employment as an RA for a substantial amount of time through the spring semester. Therefore, this information can be used to target RA burnout and mattering among this population of RAs with the goal of improving their experience for the remainder of their tenure as an RA, and thus improving the experience of the residents whom they serve in their communities.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research to consider targets two of the limitations of this study: the lack of racial diversity of the sample and the lack of the sample including non-binary gender participants. Approximately 80% of the sample identified as White; therefore, this study should be replicated in different institution types, geographic regions, and at institutions with more diversity. Unfortunately, like previous studies on RA burnout, this study fails to assess the levels of burnout in a growing population of college students: those identifying as transgender. With the number of students identifying as transgender increasing over the past 10 years (Beemyn, 2003; Carter, 2000), it is likely that transgender students are also being hired as RAs and therefore would report feelings somewhere on the continuum of each burnout dimension.

This study did not investigate other characteristics that may yield important implications. For instance, Schlossberg (1989) noted that students in transition “feel marginal and that they do not matter” (p. 5); as such, students just starting their employment as an RA may be predisposed to experiencing lower feelings of mattering due to concerns about belonging or mattering in this

new role. Therefore, exploring mattering between new RAs and experienced, veteran RAs may provide a deeper understanding of their resulting burnout. This line of inquiry becomes even more interesting when considering that burnout typically arises after the first year of employment (Freudenberg, 1974, 1975).

Additionally, this study did not address the role supervision plays in RAs' feelings of mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction. Presumably, different supervision and leadership styles affect the RA experience. RAs who report to supervisors with different leadership styles, such as authoritarian or democratic (Northouse, 2011), may report differing levels of mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction based on their experience with that supervisor. For instance, Freudenberger (1975) indicated that working for an authoritarian supervisor leads to burnout. The effect of burnout and the supervisory relationship was highlighted by Laschinger et al. (2009), specifically noting the combination of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, supervisor incivility predicts nurses' intentions to leave their position. The same study revealed that depersonalization, supervisory incivility, and empowerment predicted lower job satisfaction and lower organization commitment. Therefore, relationship between supervisors and subordinates (in this case, RAs and their supervisors) should not be neglected in future studies.

Further research surrounding RA's emotional exhaustion is warranted because emotional exhaustion is the most apparent symptom of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Since the theoretical framework of mattering failed to provide significant results in conjunction with emotional exhaustion, future research on RA burnout should consider a different theoretical lens. Possible lenses include organizational commitment (see Griffin, Hogan, Lambert, Tucker-Gail, & Baker, 2010), university belonging (see Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007), or relatedness (see Moller, Deci, & Elliot, 2010). In doing so, specific interventions and other recommendations can



then be made to alleviate emotional exhaustion among RAs, thus further reducing their burnout.

The provided implications for practice were generally limited to an intentional focus on mattering through supervisory practices due to an existing limited knowledge of practical mattering experiences felt by RAs. Therefore, qualitative inquiries into RA mattering would illuminate the lived experiences of RAs with regard to their self-perception of mattering. A qualitative study using an inductive approach would allow for the understanding of meaning (Maxwell, 2012) behind RA's feelings of mattering, specifically in identifying particular situations when RAs experienced increased feelings within each component of mattering (e.g., describe a time when you felt you were important to your residents; or, describe a time when you felt your residents relied on you). Specifically, by knowing distinct examples of times RAs experience high (or low) feelings of mattering, practitioners could work to replicate those experiences in other RAs. As such, qualitative studies could provide the basis for more targeted interventions.

Along the same vein, a qualitative inquiry into resident experiences would also prove beneficial. As noted, RAs may not always realize they matter to their residents if they do not receive validation of their efforts from their residents. By understanding the lived experience of residents in times where they felt their RA was important to them, when they relied upon their RA, or were aware of their RA, practitioners can then work towards bridging that gap.

Due to the ambiguity of the question asking RAs to report the number of residents in their community, this study was unable to look at the effect of community size on RA mattering, burnout, job satisfaction. However, there is a significant negative relationship between RA mattering and the size of the RAs community (Stoner & Zhang, 2016); put another way, RAs with larger populations report lower levels of mattering. Therefore, due to the established impact

on RA burnout and job satisfaction afforded by RA mattering, future research should also include residential population size in an attempt to understand how it affects burnout. Looking at RA burnout in conjunction with community size would continue to illuminate the relational component of the RA job, due to the volume of students for which RAs are responsible. This study also has implications for research in disciplines outside of residence life on college campuses. Burnout has received considerable attention in other service-oriented disciplines, such as nursing (e.g., Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2012; Leiter et al., 1998) and education (e.g., Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Fisher, 2011; Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). Using the theoretical framework of mattering as the relationship lens in such fields will illuminate the impact of the relational component of burnout among patients, students, and clients.

The last recommendation for future research is based off of the observation that within the construct of mattering, there may exist the feeling of “over-dependence” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981) Put another way, perhaps RAs may, at times, matter too much to their residents, the result of which is RAs feeling obligated to place the needs of their residents above their own, creating additional stress and pressure (Schlossberg, 1989). As this research study focused on the full range of experienced mattering of RAs, future research could also focus on the extreme ends of mattering (RAs who perceive they matter too little or too much) and the resulting experiences and effects. By investigating the extremes of mattering, further insight would be gained surrounding RA burnout.

### **Conclusion**

Since RAs serve in such a difficult role (Roussel & Elleven, 2009) as frontline student success employees (Denzine & Anderson, 1999), it is paramount that housing professionals foster environments where RAs do not experience burnout and have high job satisfaction. As

such, this study revealed an important relationship between RA mattering, burnout, and job satisfaction, which substantially contributes to the identified “relationship gap” in existing literature. Furthermore, this study notably advanced the overall understanding of mattering and burnout among RAs, ultimately as they relate to RA job satisfaction. Creating environments where RAs perceive higher levels of mattering to their residents will ultimately affect their overall RA experience by reducing their levels of burnout and increasing their overall job satisfaction.

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APPENDIX A:  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**Institutional Review Board  
Notification of Exemption**

March 24, 2016

James Stoner  
Dr. Yi Zhang  
Apartment & Residential Life  
Box 19575

Protocol Number: 2016-0431

Protocol Title: *Job Related Attitudes, Feelings, and Retention of Resident Assistants on College Campuses*

**EXEMPTION DETERMINATION**

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, or designee, has reviewed the above referenced study and found that it qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of **March 24, 2016**.

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject." All proposed changes to the research must be submitted via the electronic submission system prior to implementation. Please also be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services within 24 hours of the occurrence or upon acknowledgement of the occurrence. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training on file with this office. Completion certificates are valid for 2 years from completion date.

**Since you are recruiting students who are enrolled in universities outside of UTA, you must contact their IRB office to see if their university has additional policies for recruiting students. If there are any updates that you need to make to this IRB protocol before recruiting their students (based on their policies), please send a modification request to UTA IRB for this protocol.**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TEXAS**  
ARLINGTON

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION  
REGULATORY SERVICES

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Regulatory Services at [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu) or 817-272-2105.

REGULATORY SERVICES  
SERVICES

The University of Texas at Arlington, Center for Innovation  
202 E. Border Street, Ste. 201, Arlington, Texas 76010, Box#19188  
(T) 817-272-3723 (F) 817-272-5808 (E) [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu) (W) [www.uta.edu/rs](http://www.uta.edu/rs)

APPENDIX B:  
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

## Recruitment Email

Dear Resident Assistant,

I am James Stoner, Assistant Director for Apartment and Residence Life at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). Currently I am conducting a research project for my dissertation on Resident Assistants (RAs) in the Midwestern United States. This study seeks to better understand the attitudes and feelings associated with being an RA.

You are invited to participate in this study because you are an RA in the Midwest. I know this is a busy time of year, but I would like to invite you to participate in an electronic survey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be eligible to enter a drawing to win one of ten \$25 VISA gift cards. This is your opportunity to give voice to your experiences as an RA.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide not to participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty.

Although there are no direct benefits to you as an individual participant in this research study, the findings of this study will be used to shape the experience of future RAs by providing insight into the experience of being a RA and the associated job-related feelings leading to their decision to return as an RA the following academic year.

There are no perceived risks or discomforts for participating in this research study. Should you experience any discomfort please inform the researcher, you have the right to quit any study procedures at any time at no consequence.

Your responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. The results of the study may be published or presented at conferences, but your individual responses will not be able to be tied to you.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please click <<this link>> or copy and paste the link below into your browser to start the survey.

<<LINK>>

Your input is greatly appreciated and will be very helpful as I explore this topic. If you would like more information about this study, please feel free to contact me at [jstoner@uta.edu](mailto:jstoner@uta.edu) or (817) 272-0926. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu). Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

James Stoner

Assistant Director  
Apartment and Residence Life  
University of Texas at Arlington  
600 Spaniolo Dr., Suite 100  
Arlington, Texas 76019-0370  
817-272-0926 | [jstoner@uta.edu](mailto:jstoner@uta.edu)

APPENDIX C:  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT



You are invited to participate in this research study investigating job-related feelings and attitudes of Resident Assistants (RAs). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your responses will be anonymous and completely confidential. You may refuse to participate or opt-out at anytime. Upon completion of the study, you will be directed to page where you can enter in a drawing to win one of ten \$25 VISA gift cards. The approximate time to complete the survey is 15 minutes. If you would like to participate in the study, please click ACCEPT below. If you wish to not participate, please click DECLINE below.

- ACCEPT, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study
- DECLINE, I do not wish to participate in this study

Below are a series of statements that represent feelings toward your residential community. Think about your relationships with the people in your residential community and indicate the degree to which each statement is in line with these relationships. When you respond to these statements, do not think of specific people in your residential community; rather, try to focus on your residential community in general as an entity or the whole community. By “community” I mean the students in your specific community (e.g., your floor, your wing, your apartment building, etc.). Think of all these people as a whole when responding to these items. There are no right or wrong answers. Just answer as honestly as possible. Not all students feel the same way or are expected to feel the same way. If you are using your phone to take this survey, note that your phone likely only shows the available responses for one question at a time, and you will need to click the drop down arrow after each question to show the available responses for the next question.

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	The people in my community do not ignore me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	When people in my community need help, they come to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	No one in my community really needs me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Sometimes in my community, I feel almost as if I were invisible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	The people in my community tend to rely upon me for support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	My successes are a source of pride to the residents in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	At community social gatherings, no one recognizes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	me.					
8	No one in my community would notice if one day I disappeared.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	The people in my community are usually aware of my presence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	I am not someone the people in my community would turn to when they need something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	There is no one in my community who really takes pride in my accomplishments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	Often, the people in my community trust me with things that are important to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	People in my community tend not to remember my name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14	People in my community do not care what happens to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	Much of the time, people in my community are indifferent to my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16	It is hard for me to get the attention of people in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17	Quite a few people in my community look to me for advice on issues of importance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18	Most people in my community do not seem to notice when I come or go.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19	I have noticed that people in my community will sometimes inconvenience themselves to help me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20	There are people in my community who react to what happens to me in the same way they would if it happened to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21	The people in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	generally know when I am around.					
22	When I have a problem, people in my community usually don't want to hear about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23	There are people in my community who care enough about me to criticize me when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24	People in my community count on me to be there in times of need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job as a Resident Assistant. If you have never had this feeling, mark "never." If you have this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by marking the response that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

*Dissertation Note.* Due to copyright restrictions, only three of the 22 burnout items are reproduced in this section. See Appendix D for the supporting copyright permission allowances.

	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day
I feel emotionally drained from my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All in all, I am satisfied with my	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

job.							
In general, I don't like my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I like working here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your gender identity?

- Man
- Woman
- Another gender identity
- I prefer not to respond

What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other
- I prefer not to respond

What is your current university classification?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

Are you an international student?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to respond

How many semesters, including this semester, have you been employed as an RA?

How many residents are in your specific residential community? (e.g., your floor, your wing, your apartment building, etc.)

In what area do you work?

- Apartments
- Residence Halls
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

The residents in your specific community are... (select the option that best describes your residents)

- Mostly freshman/first-year students
- Mostly upperclass students
- A balanced mix of freshman and upperclass students

Please mark the option below that most closely applies to you:

- I will be an RA again in the Fall 2016 semester
- I will not be an RA again in the Fall 2016 semester
- I have not been notified if I will be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester

*Note.* The following question was only displayed if response 2 (“I will not be an RA again in the Fall 2016 semester”) was selected in the previous question.

On the previous question you indicated that you will not be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester. Please mark why you will not be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester.

- I was not offered to return as an RA next year
- I am graduating in either May 2016 or December 2016
- I am studying abroad during the next academic year
- I am serving in the military during the next academic year
- I have a required academic commitment that conflicts with the RA job requirements (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- I have a required personal commitment that conflicts with the RA job requirements (please specify)
- I chose not to be an RA for another reason (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

*Note.* The following question was only displayed if one the following options was selected in the previous question:

- Option 1: I was not offered to return as an RA next year
- Option 2: I am graduating in May 2016 or December 2016
- Option 3: I am studying abroad during the next academic year
- Option 4: I am serving in the military during the next academic year
- Option 5: I have a required academic commitment that conflicts with the RA job requirements (please specify)
- Option 6: I have a required personal commitment that conflicts with the RA job requirements (please specify)

If the reason you indicated in the previous question were not a concern, would you have chosen to be an RA in the Fall 2016 semester?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

APPENDIX D:  
MBI-ES COPYRIGHT PERMISSION



[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant permission for the above named person to use the following copyright material for his/her thesis or dissertation research:

Instrument: **Maslach Burnout Inventory, Forms: General Survey, Human Services Survey & Educators Survey**

**Copyrights:**

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Three sample items from a single form of this instrument may be reproduced for inclusion in a proposal, thesis, or dissertation.

The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any published material.

Sincerely,

Robert Most  
Mind Garden, Inc.  
[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

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APPENDIX E:  
UNIVERSITY MATTERING SCALE USAGE AUTHORIZATION

*Note.* The following email contains redacted material due to previous correspondence unrelated to the usage of the University Mattering Scale in the dissertation study.

**Stoner, James C**

---

**From:** Megan France <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 21, 2016 8:15 PM  
**To:** Finney, Sara - finneysj; Stoner, James C  
**Subject:** Re: University Mattering Scale Usage

Hi J.C.,

[REDACTED]

It's fine if you continue to use the mattering measure and feel free to modify the measure for your needs. I imagined people would want to slightly adapt the measure for their schools or programs. I have no problem with your changes.

Good luck with your research and please let me know if you have any further questions about the measure.

Thanks,  
Megan

**From:** "Stoner, James C" <jstoner@uta.edu>  
**Date:** February 9, 2016 at 9:37:39 PM EST  
**To:** "Finney, Sara - finneysj" <[REDACTED]>, "France, Megan Katharine - francemk" <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** University Mattering Scale Usage

Drs. Finney and France,

I wanted to give you an update on our previous correspondence while also expressing my sincerest appreciation for allowing me to slightly modify and use the University Mattering Scale for research I conducted with Resident Assistants within college residential environments. [REDACTED]

Additionally, you may recall from my first email to you that I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington. I am currently working on my dissertation proposal and would like to continue investigating Resident Assistant mattering, specifically related to feelings of burnout within their position as an RA. I am particularly interested in the relationship between mattering and feelings of burnout, job satisfaction, and staff departure.

As such, I am seeking your permission to use the University Mattering Scale as an instrument for my dissertation research. Once again, I would need to slightly modify the items to fit the specifics of my study within the residential community. For example, item 1 (The people of the JMU community do not ignore me) would be modified to read "The people in my community do not ignore me" (with the introductory prompt detailing exactly what "my community" means instead of "JMU students, faculty, administrators, and staff"). I've attached the full, modified instrument I would use, with your permission.

Of course, full acknowledgement and recognition of original development would be attributed and cited accordingly. If anything is needed of me for consideration, or if there are any concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know. If more detail is needed regarding my dissertation topic and research agenda, I would be happy to supply it.

I do sincerely appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

J.C. Stoner

Assistant Director for Apartment and Residence Life

University of Texas at Arlington

(817) 272-0926

--

Megan K. France  
Assistant Director of Assessment  
Santa Clara University  
500 El Camino Real | Santa Clara, CA 95053  
[mfrance@scu.edu](mailto:mfrance@scu.edu)

APPENDIX F:

MODIFIED UNIVERSITY MATTERING SCALE VALIDATION TOOL

## Validation Form

The enclosed with this Validation Form will be used in a study to investigate Resident Assistant's perception of mattering to their individual community members in residence halls and apartments on college campuses.

Mattering is "the feeling that others depend upon, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981).

It is important that each item is clearly written and is consistent with your understanding of the perception of the identified mattering factor. In the study, a four-factor model of mattering will be used. The items in this validation tool are grouped by factor, with a brief description of the factor at the beginning of each page.

On the left side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of the clarity of each item listed.

On the right side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of how consistent each item is with the identified factor of mattering.

Items in **bold** represent items that will be reversed scored. These items measure the *absence* of the identified mattering factor.

**Factor 1: Awareness**

Awareness is “the feeling that one commands the interest or notice of another person” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 164) or “when others realize that we exist” (Elliott, Kao, & Grant, 2004).

On the left side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of the clarity of each item listed.

On the right side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of how consistent each item is with the Awareness factor of mattering.

Items in **bold** represent items that will be reversed scored. These items measure the *absence* of Awareness.

**Clarity of Item**

- 1. Not clear at all
- 2. Not very clear
- 3. Clear
- 4. Very Clear

**Consistency of Item**

- 1. Not consistent at all
- 2. Not very consistent
- 3. Consistent
- 4. Very consistent

**Awareness Items**

1	2	3	4	(1) The people in my community do not ignore me.	1	2	3	4
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(4) Sometimes in my community, I feel almost as if I were invisible.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(7) At community social gatherings, no one recognizes me.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1	2	3	4	(9) The people in my community are usually aware of my presence.	1	2	3	4
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(13) People in my community tend not to remember my name.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(16) It is hard for me to get the attention of people in my community.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(18) Most people in my community do not seem to notice when I come or go.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1	2	3	4	(21) The people in my community generally know when I am around.	1	2	3	4

**Factor 2: Importance**

Importance is the belief that other people “care about what we want, think and do, or is concerned with our fate” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 164) or more generally, when we are “an object of other’s concern” (Elliott et al., 2004, p. 343).

On the left side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of the clarity of each item listed.

On the right side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of how consistent each item is with the Importance factor of mattering.

Items in **bold** represent items that will be reversed scored. These items measure the *absence* of Importance.

**Clarity of Item**

- 1. Not clear at all
- 2. Not very clear
- 3. Clear
- 4. Very Clear

**Consistency of Item**

- 1. Not consistent at all
- 2. Not very consistent
- 3. Consistent
- 4. Very consistent

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**Importance Items**

1	2	3	4	<b>(3) No one in my community really needs me.</b>	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	<b>(8) No one in my community would notice if one day I disappeared.</b>	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	<b>(14) People in my community do not care what happens to me.</b>	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	<b>(15) Much of the time, people in my community are indifferent to me needs.</b>	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	(19) I have noticed that people in my community will sometimes inconvenience themselves to help me.	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	<b>(22) When I have a problem, people in my community usually don't want to hear about it.</b>	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	(23) There are people in my community who care enough about me to criticize me when I need it.	1	2	3	4

### Factor 3: Ego-Extension

Ego-extension is when people respond to situations in the manner as we do and exhibit similar emotions to us (Rosenberg, 1985).

On the left side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of the clarity of each item listed.

On the right side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of how consistent each item is with the Ego-extension factor of mattering.

Items in **bold** represent items that will be reversed scored. These items measure the *absence* of Ego-extension.

#### Clarity of Item

1. Not clear at all
2. Not very clear
3. Clear
4. Very Clear

#### Consistency of Item

1. Not consistent at all
2. Not very consistent
3. Consistent
4. Very consistent

#### Ego-Extension Items

1	2	3	4	(6) My successes are a source of pride to the residents in my community.	1	2	3	4
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(11) There is no one in my community who really takes pride in my accomplishments.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1	2	3	4	(20) There are people in my community who react to what happens to me in the same way they would if it happened to them.	1	2	3	4



#### Factor 4: Reliance

Reliance is characterized by others relying on us or needing us (Elliott et al., 2004; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981).

On the left side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of the clarity of each item listed.

On the right side of this validation form, please circle the number that best indicates your rating of how consistent each item is with the Reliance factor of mattering.

Items in **bold** represent items that will be reversed scored. These items measure the *absence* of Reliance.

#### Clarity of Item

1. Not clear at all
2. Not very clear
3. Clear
4. Very Clear

#### Consistency of Item

1. Not consistent at all
2. Not very consistent
3. Consistent
4. Very consistent

#### Reliance Items

1	2	3	4	(2) When people in my community need help, they come to me.	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	(5) The people in my community tend to rely upon me for support.	1	2	3	4
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(10) I am not someone the people in my community would turn to when they need something.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1	2	3	4	(12) Often, the people in my community trust me with things that are important to them.	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	(17) Quite a few people in my community look to me for advice on issues of importance.	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	(24) People in my community count on me to be there in times of need.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX G:  
SURVEY ANNOUNCEMENT EMAIL

## Survey Announcement Sent by Institutional Contact

Dear Resident Assistant,

Shortly you will be receiving a survey request from “James Stoner” at the email address [jstoner@uta.edu](mailto:jstoner@uta.edu). The subject of the email will be “Resident Assistant Research Survey”. James Stoner has been communicating with our department to conduct a research study on job-related attitudes and feelings of Resident Assistants. The survey he will be sending you will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. More information about the survey and research study will be included in his email, but if you have any questions or concerns, please contact James directly.

Sincerely,

<<Institutional Contact or RA supervisor name>>

<<Title>>

<<Institution>>

APPENDIX H:  
INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF INSTRUMENT SUBSCALES

Table 17

*Item and internal consistency of instrument subscales*

<b>Scale, Subscale, and Items</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b><i>N</i></b>
Matteing (Total)	.938	24
Awareness	.815	8
M1 The people in my community do not ignore me.		
M4 <sup>a</sup> Sometimes in my community, I feel almost as if I were invisible.		
M7 <sup>a</sup> At community social gatherings, no one recognizes me.		
M9 The people in my community are usually aware of my presence.		
M13 <sup>a</sup> People in my community tend not to remember my name.		
M16 <sup>a</sup> It is hard for me to get the attention of people in my community.		
M18 <sup>a</sup> Most people in my community do not seem to notice when I come or go.		
M21 The people in my community generally know when I am around.		
Importance	.839	7
M3 <sup>a</sup> No one in my community really needs me.		
M8 <sup>a</sup> No one in my community would notice if one day I disappeared.		
M14 <sup>a</sup> People in my community do not care what happens to me.		
M15 <sup>a</sup> Much of the time, people in my community are indifferent to my needs.		
M19 I have noticed that people in my community will sometimes inconvenience themselves to help me.		
M22 <sup>a</sup> When I have a problem, people in my community usually don't want to hear about it.		
M23 There are people in my community who care enough about me to criticize me when I need it.		
Ego-Extension	.737	3
M6 My successes are a source of pride to the residents in my community.		
M11 <sup>a</sup> There is no one in my community who really takes pride in my accomplishments.		
M20 There are people in my community who react to what happens to me in the same way they would if it happened to them.		
Reliance	.843	6
M2 When people in my community need help, they come to me.		
M5 The people in my community tend to rely upon me for support.		
M10 <sup>a</sup> I am not someone the people in my community would turn to when they need something.		
M12 Often, the people in my community trust me with things that are important to them.		
M17 M17. Quite a few people in my community look to me for advice on issues of importance.		
M24 People in my community count on me to be there in times of need.		

(continued)

Scale, Subscale, and Items	$\alpha$	$N$
Burnout <sup>1</sup>	–	–
Emotional Exhaustion	.928	9
B1 I feel emotionally drained from my work.		
Depersonalization	.737	5
B5 I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.		
Personal Accomplishment	.887	8
B9 I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.		
Job Satisfaction	.915	3
J1 All in all, I am satisfied with my job.		
J2 <sup>a</sup> In general, I don't like my job.		
J3 In general, I like working here.		

*Note.* The minimum level of acceptance to be considered internally consistent was a Cronbach alpha level of .7 or higher (Devillis, 2003; Kline, 2005).

<sup>1</sup> Due to copyright restriction (see Appendix C), only three MBI items are reproduced. Reported statistics are, however, for all 22-items.

<sup>a</sup> Reverse-scored items.