

**Exploring Burnout Phenomena Through the Perceptions of One Urban University's
Former College Access Professionals**

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This study aims to understand and explore the lived experiences of six college access practitioners who supported a pathway program for students at an urban research institution. None of the participants in the study no longer work in college access. At least four participants explicitly stated they left their job due to burnout. This research approach was grounded in phenomenological hermeneutics within a philosophical tradition. Utilizing this methodology aids in fully understanding the phenomenon. More directly, this method renders the essence of the phenomenon with a textual representation. Throughout the study, Black women, who work at higher education institutions, occupy institutional spaces that were not created to support how they exist and thrive as Black women. Through their intersectional identities, they assist, persist, and resist the institutional shackles left untouched by the institutional practices of diversity and inclusion. This study deconstructs how racial and gender identities played a significant role in leading to symptoms of burnout in the workplace. I served as both the researcher and the participant in this study. Through my voice and the participants' voices, I want to bring awareness to the systematic oppression of women, particularly Black women who cited multiple inequities in their job responsibilities while supporting predominately Black students in the college access pathway program. The notion of racial capitalism is the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person is a longstanding, common, and deeply problematic practice. This study highlights how institutions use non-white people to acquire social and economic value.

The theory of racial capitalism has serious negative consequences both for individuals and for society as a whole. Racial capitalism relies upon and reinforces the commodification of racial identity, thereby degrading that identity by reducing it to another thing to be bought and sold. This also fosters racial resentment by causing non-white people to feel used or exploited by white people. Lastly, this study supports the need for continuing research on burnout and emotional exhaustion of practitioners in college access, emphasizing the role of Black women.

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Preface

First, I would like to honor God for giving me the strength, perseverance, and desire to complete this goal of earning my doctoral degree. I am a first-generation college student, and this has not been an easy journey, but I feel so blessed and honored because I know my steps have been ordered by the Lord. I am always reminded of the bible scripture Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” To my parents Jude and Christine Floyd, who instilled my values, pride in my culture, self-worth and for reminding me that I can do all things if I put God first. To my husband, Kris, for your love, encouragement, support, and prayers throughout this journey. To my siblings Tonika, Jude, Tawanda, Octavia, and Christina. This degree is for all of us. To my nieces and nephews, there is nothing you cannot accomplish in this world. To my family members and friends, thanks for checking on me and celebrating every small or big win in this educational journey.

Also, thank you to everyone who participated in my study and shared your stories and vulnerabilities with me. Your voice and experiences are so important, and I hope this work will help free someone else that has gone through something similar. As Black women, we are so powerful, and our stories can change the narrative for those who will be coming behind us. Finally, to my advisor, who pushed me to think critically about my topic, and committee members, who offered support, guidance, time, and encouragement. I could not have done it without all of you. It truly takes a village, and I am so happy for the people who were apart of mine.

1.0 Chapter 1: Framing the Problem of Practice

1.1 Broader Problem Area

Higher education institutions were established for the elite and were strictly a hierarchical system (Cook, 2012). Hierarchies are usually gendered and racialized, especially where prominent leadership positions at the top are almost always occupied by white men in the United States, organizing work in the image of a privileged white man (Dilworth, 2004). All organizations have *inequality regimes*, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within organizations (Acker, 2006). These inequalities are producing symptoms of burnout in the workforce. In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified burnout as a syndrome that results from chronic workplace stress that is not successfully managed (Sadd et al., 2021). The responsibility for managing it has shifted away from the individual and towards the organization. According to Gallup, the top five reasons full-time employees feel burned out are unfair treatment at work, unmanageable workload, lack of role clarity, lack of communication and support from their manager, and unreasonable time pressure (Moss, 2019).

Employee disengagement and the concept of burnout are closely related in the literature. Approximately 50–60% of student affairs professionals leave the field within the first five years (Marshall et al., 2016). The disengagement of staff can negatively affect students being served, which becomes less about financial costs and more about students missing out on opportunities for growth and development. This negatively impacts racially minoritized students whose higher education has traditionally served poorly, exacerbating existing inequities (Brewer & Clippard,

2002). Researchers described burnout as a “troubled relationship” between a worker and a particular work environment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Burnout is associated with various physical, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and attitudinal symptoms for the employee. Empirical studies have shown that individuals reporting burnout experience general health problems, sleep disturbance, and emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of helplessness (Lim et al., 2010). Interpersonally, burnout affects friends and family members of the individuals who experience burnout.

Freudenberger (1974) defined *burnout* as the inability to cope with stressors at work. Freudenberger described these workers’ sense of frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness. Later, Freudenberger defined the concept as a condition of fatigue-depletion physical and mental strength and a sense of being worn out due to exaggerated goals and unrealistic expectations imposed by the workers themselves or by the values of society (Freudenberger, 1980). As originators of the well-known and highly respected Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) scale, Maslach and Jackson (1981) initially defined *burnout* as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among and among individuals who do "service work of some kind” (p. 99). Maslach (1987) expanded the definition, describing *burnout* as emotional depletion, de-professionalization, and diminished personal competence. This is the latest definition researchers have used for the last 30 years for burnout. Although there have been advances in other fields, Maslach’s definition is still the universally accepted one derived from Freudenberger (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014).

A second scale, known as the Areas of Worklife Scale (AWS), was developed by Leiter and Maslach (2003) and is frequently used in combination with the MBI. A similar scale for educators, known as the Educator’s Scale (ES), is used for educational professionals (Schubert-

Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). Using measures from MBI and AWS, burnout occurs when individuals feel a conflict or disconnect from their work in one or more of the following six areas including: (a) work life, (b) control, (c) reward, (d) community, (e) fairness, and (f) values (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). For this study, the MBI theory of burnout, an employee's racial identity, labor exploitation, and gender were examined as attributes contributing to burnout. This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the experiences of college access professionals who have become burned out in their work environment and have left the college access field.

1.2 Problem of Practice Organizational Context: Admissions Office

The role of college access professionals in student affairs can be ambiguous, and the workload is demanding (Long, 2012). My problem of practice was that college access practitioners associated with the student academic program (SAP, pseudonym) experienced symptoms of burnout due to inequities in job responsibilities, role expectations, and the misuse of Black¹ employees to acquire social and economic value for the institution. College access professionals can be employed by K-12 schools, housed in university institutions, or based in off-campus facilities. They play a significant role in bridging the gap between students and the university by helping students feel a sense of community and belonging. Most staff members must work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate the needs of students (Long, 2012).

¹ Capitalize Black, and not white, when referring to groups in racial, ethnic, or cultural terms. This symbolizes individuals from the African diaspora. The lowercase black is a color, not a person.

College access professionals support students through their journey on a daily basis. Rarely are these professionals highlighted within their community despite their crucial role in student success. The emphasis is always on the institution and students being served (Sandeen & Barr, 2014).

As a former college access practitioner for five years in the undergraduate admissions and financial aid (UAFA) department at Three Rivers University (TRU, pseudonym), I managed the SAP. SAP is a program designed for high school students attending the Jefferson Public School (JPS) school district, emphasizing attracting underrepresented students such as Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander. JPS and Bedford Community College (BCC) are pseudonyms. The partnership program is between the JPS district, BCC, and TRU and has served approximately 300 students from 2017–2022. The SAP college access professionals developed programming for high school students that focused on college, life skills, and career opportunities. They also provided support for students who had difficulty navigating their home life and school. These various roles can lead to ambiguity in responsibilities and low job satisfaction or burnout (Jakeman & Silver, 2014).

The roles that college access professionals have adapted to are recruiting and retaining students, building relationships with external partners, attempting to meet the needs of students and families, and providing guidance or resources for unexpected situations. These, coupled with the changes to the institutional landscape, have made the field of student affairs much more complicated. Recognizing the competing stressors that staff must regularly navigate, this dissertation, in practice, examined how the cultural, racial, and gender identities in the work environment led to burnout. This study derives its value from exploring labor demands and economic justice for practitioners while providing direction toward addressing the possible effects of burnout at the organizational level that, include increased job turnover and absenteeism,

decreased employee involvement with the job, organization commitment, and job satisfaction (Brewer & Clippard, 2022). Jakeman and Silver (2014) stated low job satisfaction, role stress, limited potential for advancement or career mobility, and poor quality of life are associated with plans to leave student affairs. The two central questions that guided this inquiry were: (a) How, and in what ways, did burnout contribute to SAP employee decisions to leave? and (b) How, and in what ways, does this reflect institutionalized race-gender systems of oppression?

1.3 Organizational System

The TRU is a public state-related research university in Pennsylvania. The university comprises 17 undergraduate and graduate schools and colleges at its urban campus, home to its central administration and 32,686 undergraduate and graduate students. The Wall Street Journal currently ranks as the top institution in the northeast (Times Higher Education, 2021). TRU has a 93% retention rate from freshman to sophomore, and 37% of undergraduate students are from diverse backgrounds, which includes international students, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander (Student Diversity Dashboard, n.d.). In 2020, TRU administrators released a strategic plan to guide the next five years of institutional activity through 2025. This plan prioritized a university committed to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus environment for all. Also, to enhance recruitment and retention efforts with support systems, the university leaders decided to collaborate with local communities to improve resident outcomes and opportunities. In 2019, the university administrators opened its first community engagement center in low-income and predominately Black neighborhoods to spur economic growth and strengthen relationships with residents. The university's leaders are

committed to opening more community centers in the region, and this serves to have local involvement of community members, students, and businesses in the area working together.

My former department, UAFA, at TRU, helps procure one of the university's most significant sources of revenue, student tuition, by recruiting each year's undergraduate class. The admissions office comprises several units or teams, but I specifically talk about former SAP staff members who were under the recruitment or program teams for this study. The department's mission is to attract, recruit, enroll, and acclimate a diverse group of undergraduate students in numbers sufficient to meet the TRU enrollment targets and to assist all students in funding throughout their collegiate careers (TRU Admissions Strategic Plan, 2025).

One of the main institutional goals is to increase efforts in recruiting specialized populations such as underrepresented, transfer, international, and first-generation students. SAP was developed to serve as a pipeline for these efforts. The SAP program was created in 2017 and was operated under the recruitment team. The TRU's chancellor, the BCC's president, and the JPS' superintendent signed a legal agreement to work together and provide resources to help retain local talent in the region. JPS is Pennsylvania's second-largest school district, serving over 20,000 students (Facts at a Glance, n.d.). BCC serves over 24,000 students (BCC at a Glance, n.d.). SAP is a two-pronged system that provides college readiness programming for ninth through 12th grade students. Interested seniors sign an agreement to participate in the pathway to BCC for one to two years and then transfer to TRU to obtain their bachelor's degree. Students who commit to the pathway program receive benefits such as fare-free transportation, paid book expenses, mentorship, and access to social and academic resources. Despite the optimism of this initiative, creating a productive partnership can be quite challenging to develop and maintain (Farrell et al., 2019).

Historically, the university's administrators have partnered with many organizations to help increase racial diversity within the student body. The institution has partnered with school districts to offer rigorous courses such as College in High School (CHS), worked with local community-based organizations or community members in conjunction with research projects, and recently established community engagement centers in under-resourced communities. Academic partnerships are becoming more common (Amey et al., 2007). The collaboration between a university, school, or community is much deeper and more meaningful than a simple coexistence (Miller & Hafner, 2008). Collaboration is an interactive process among individuals and organizations with diverse expertise and resources, combining to devise and execute plans for common goals and generate solutions for complex problems (Gronski & Pigg, 2000).

Partnerships provide options beyond what school and community college administrators can accomplish individually, thereby benefiting institutional members partnerships can enable greater educational access and opportunity for students, resulting in a greater public good, as well (Amey et al., 2010). For students from K-12, partnerships across educational sectors can help ease transitions to postsecondary education. Educators working together across institutional levels can provide smooth pathways and options for students who the traditional systems and structures have historically disabled, find creative options, support networks, address diverse learning needs, and identify alternative strategies that assist all students in pursuing their pursuit of educational goals. The university has several access programs for local students in the area. These programs provide support for first-generation, underrepresented minorities, and low-income students. A few of these programs operated out of the academic schools or student support offices, such as the School of Engineering, the Provost office, the School of Medicine, the School of Pharmacy, the School of

Education, Student Affairs, and the UAFA. There is potential in a university/school partnership that can advance and offer insights for sustaining equity in education (Aleman et al., 2017).

Historically, low expectations drove educational practice in schools with high populations of students of color and children from low socio-economic backgrounds (Alemán et al., 2017). Despite perceived initial benefits, partnerships are often difficult and almost always more complicated than they first appear. Many partnerships fail to obtain desired results, cannot be sustained for long periods of time, or cease to benefit both parties (Amey et al., 2010). They are often difficult to establish and maintain because of fundamental differences between educational organizations. At the same time, it is possible to construct strategic alliances between community colleges, public schools, and universities that appropriately address educational needs when we understand the essential components of partnerships stimulated by public policies and the challenges faced when engaging in these activities (Amey et al., 2010).

1.4 Teams Under the Admissions Office

The research is clear about educational partnerships being difficult to manage or sustain, but these collaborations benefit low-income and underrepresented minority students. Through my study, I examined the role of college access practitioners who had to navigate the work environment while providing such a rewarding benefit to Black and Brown students. I explored how staff experienced racial or gender oppression that contributed to their burnout. According to the research, the lack of solid partnerships, communication, career growth, work schedule demands, workload, control, and role ambiguity are significant factors that can lead staff to leave the profession (Sandeem & Barr, 2006).

As the former assistant director in the admissions office, I recruited students in Pennsylvania and surrounding states at high schools, college fairs, or community events. I also reviewed applications, presented at program events, advocated for scholarships for admitted students, and served on various committees throughout the UAFA. I was also the manager of the SAP program. I saw the excitement of this historical development of a pathway program for high schools and the challenges of such a huge endeavor. The SAP program was under the umbrella of the recruitment team, which was comprised roughly 19 individuals. In the department, there are several units, from financial aid to marketing. The staff that worked with the SAP program attended weekly or bi-monthly programs and were members of the recruitment and program teams. Individuals from these departments would volunteer, and some were required to assist with the on-campus SAP sessions. I could have anywhere from two to seven staff volunteers on session days. I could always count on the Black staff members to show up most of the time unless they had another work commitment. On several occasions, the Black staff volunteers would say, “I don't have a choice. I was told I had to volunteer,” or “I felt obligated to volunteer to help young students that look like me.”

This was an additional work obligation for Black staff members. Typically, the Black employees hired became diversity team members and ultimately supported the SAP program. Being a member of the diversity team meant one got to work on many “special projects” that centered around recruiting and retaining Black students. For instance, staff had to attend multicultural or community events in largely Black neighborhoods on the weekends or evenings and participate in all the diversity programs within admissions. Lastly, Black staff members attended workshops in conjunction with other university minoritized college access programs, visited high schools with a majority Black or Latino student body, and sent emails or

correspondence to students of color who were interested in TRU. Some of these additional responsibilities required Black staff members to work longer hours than their white counterparts.

1.5 Student Academic Program (SAP)

The SAP program was the first partnership of its kind in the city with BCC and the JPS. I was not included in all the development meetings for SAP and was brought on when most high-level decisions were made to create the pathway program. The employees in the admissions office provided support for the SAP program. I oversaw the SAP program since its inception in 2017. I am a JPS alumnus and was charged with recruiting students from that district, but I had no prior experience managing an access program. Managing an access program was an additional responsibility as I continued to work on my current job duties. I was working two jobs but only being paid a salary for one. I was the only assistant director in the department to manage an entire access program with external partners. At the beginning of the hiring process for the program, the team was made up of a part-time temporary employee who eventually became full-time, one graduate student, and another assistant director who would provide support when needed. My colleague helped create and recruit university students as mentors for the program. This student organization was created because we could not have our current student tour guides act as mentors because our senior leaders did not want to pay for the additional hours worked by the students. Also, the director of the SAP program at the time would provide administrative support such as funding needs, request additional staff volunteers for on-campus SAP sessions, and advocate for the needs of the SAP team and students.

As the manager of SAP, I dealt with subtle forms of resistance when it came to requesting support or resources at times. Not everyone in admissions supported the SAP program, including individuals in leadership positions. My team and I would get pushback when reserving on-campus space in our department for our program sessions. We could not have our student tour guides help with our sessions and initially received limited marketing/advertising support for materials. At times, most of the individuals in the department did not know what was going on with the SAP program and how this program fits into the admissions office.

After three years, I hired another full-time employee, so I had two full-time staff members and support from the recruitment team when needed. There was a lack of accountability between JPS and BCC partners, so much of the responsibility fell on the SAP team. It was understood that the program's goal was to provide opportunities for higher education for Black, Latino, Native American, first-generation, or low-income students attending JPS. All parties believed this was a pathway program to sustain young diverse talent in the region, and everything would fall into place. As a street-level bureaucrat, I quickly realized that everything did not fall into place, and the presidents and the superintendent who signed the agreement did not fully understand the needs of this vulnerable student population we were charged with supporting. The street-level bureaucrats were members of the SAP team who helped recruit and retain students and established relationships with school administrators, teachers, families, and community members. Street-level bureaucrats interact directly with citizens during their jobs and have substantial discretion in the execution of their work (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). To accomplish their required tasks, street-level bureaucrats must find ways to accommodate their demands and confront the reality of resource limitations. In a significant sense, street-level bureaucrats become the designers of how they will accomplish stated goals within their respective roles.

SAP had two full-time staff members who had their teaching certifications and were pivotal in developing the curriculum for the program that met the standards of the JPS district. The seniors who agreed to participate in the pathway program at BCC for the first one to two years struggled academically or financially while enrolled there. Most of the students in the program had academic challenges in high school, which carried over into college. Students who did not perform well in high school were required to participate in a summer bridge program to help them adjust from high school to college. Students were required to take a college course and attend weekly mandatory tutoring. This bridge program provided students with a bus pass and a part-time job. The inaugural SAP students participated in the summer bridge program. But, after the first year, it became challenging to require students to join since most of our students needed to work full-time over the summer.

Also, personal circumstances or roadblocks for our students occurred throughout the program. We had students with housing and food insecurity, mental health issues, financial issues, and the death of family members and friends. The staff tried to find resources for some of these issues and would reach out to TRU's senior leadership for guidance, and we were often told these issues were "out of our control." The SAP students who were enrolled at BCC and were dealing with mental health issues were told there was a long waiting list to speak with a counselor, so our students were never seen. Unfortunately, two students trying to manage their mental health issues dropped out of the SAP program because they could not balance work, school, and home life. Even though many believe that a partnership is an effective strategy to meet K-16 educational demands, the reality is that this cross-organizational collaboration is often challenging to develop and hard to sustain (Amey et al., 2007).

Our SAP partners were not as involved in program development, recruitment of students, student retention, or communication with our students enrolled at BCC. TRU was the only partner that hired two full-time staff members to help administer the program. For our BCC and JPS partners, it was an additional responsibility placed on the existing employee. Also, TRU was the only partner to provide financial support and a budget for programmatic expenses. These included paying for the students' books at BCC, ID cards, meals at SAP sessions, bus tickets, book awards for university mentors who volunteered to assist with the program, and so much more. Due to our partners' lack of support or financial investment, SAP staff through TRU had to take on additional responsibilities to manage the program. SAP staff were responsible for developing curriculum and content and hosting and coordinating bi-weekly in-person or virtual sessions from October through May each academic year. Staff also recruited TRU students as mentors for each program session, provided food and transportation for our on-campus sessions, recruited students within the JPS high schools, attended access or diversity events throughout the region, and acted as case managers for our students at BCC. For our students at the community college, the TRU staff would assist them with registering for courses, ordering books, attending financial aid appointments, and connecting them with TRU student mentors, housing needs, and mental health resources. We tried to implement measures for the retention of students while at BCC before the potential transfer to TRU. In the beginning, some measures were successful such as having all the students meet with the same academic advisor who was familiar with the SAP program and having monthly meetings with our BCC liaisons about our students' academic progress. Over time, the program became less of a priority for our partners, and we began to meet less, and students were assigned to any academic advisor because the SAP advisor was overwhelmed by her job responsibilities at BCC.

Some of the experiences that contributed to the burnout of SAP staff were our staff acting as “case managers.” One of my employees would meet some SAP students enrolled at BCC in the evening to drop off books and help them find jobs, housing, and financial resources to help keep their lights on or rental assistance. They would call or text her in the evening because she provided them with her cellphone number. She felt a personal and emotional connection with our students because she wanted them to be successful in their academic journey. She understood their personal challenges would impact their academics. The other SAP staff also tried to help our students find resources and attended class registration or financial aid meetings at BCC. At the beginning of the partnership, our BCC partners said we would have dedicated staff to assist us throughout the program, and they had tools on their campus to help retain our students at BCC. Still, the communication and support became inconsistent very early on.

Due to turnover, our liaisons at BCC and JPS would change every couple of years. In the past, we tried establishing recurring partnership meetings to discuss students' academic and personal progression in the pathway program, but regular attendance was limited. In the beginning stages of this partnership, JPS district representatives requested that we work with students from Jones Academy and Urban Prep. Jones Academy and Urban Prep are pseudonyms. They felt these students had the greatest need regarding limited college readiness resources. Our JPS partners were supposed to assist us with recruitment and recommend students to the program, but that did not happen. During the program's first year, we received a list of every student within the high school instead of personal recommendations from guidance counselors, teachers, or social workers, as was planned in our initial agreement. Unfortunately, we could not get full buy-in or support from our partners. The “lack of full buy-in can be detrimental” to efforts because ensuring the development and sustainability of an effective partnership requires engagement and relationship

building with all primary stakeholders (Alemán et al., 2017, p. 85). According to Farrell et al. (2019), not all hope is lost because there is an opportunity for partners to renegotiate their roles and the program's structure.

1.6 Site and Context

While the literature suggests my problem of practice extends beyond the higher education industry and certainly beyond my former place of practice, I have chosen for my inquiry to take place specifically within the admissions office at TRU. My perspective should be noted as valuable through extensive experience. I am a first-generation college student from a low-income family, so providing higher education opportunities for marginalized students was my top priority. I understood the need to increase diversity and access among the TRU student body. The main goal of admissions is to recruit and attract students to the university. The SAP program had students that, based on grades or test scores at the time, would make it impossible for them to be admitted to the University. I had dual roles as an assistant director of undergraduate recruitment and manager of the SAP program. I was responsible for recruiting exceptional students for TRU and recruiting students for the SAP program who were interested in attending college and being open to attending a community college. At times, these were two competing goals, and it became difficult when deciding what my priority was versus what I was passionate about doing.

1.7 Stakeholders

1.7.1 Admissions Office

In managing the SAP program, I had to work with various internal and external stakeholders. Stakeholders are essential in problem-solving, planning, and decision-making (Bryson et al., 2011). The creation of SAP stemmed from a senior leader in the Office of Admissions, who had a similar transfer initiative he developed at his former institution. The SAP program was unique because we worked with students while they were still in high school to prepare them for college. We guaranteed students an acceptance to TRU who completed one to two years at BCC and met TRU transfer guidelines. The admissions office is charged with meeting a targeted enrollment goal for the incoming first-year class each year, which is the department's number one priority. The director for the SAP program changed hands at least three times from 2017–2022. The new leader who was appointed to this role in 2020 was responsible for several other projects within the office. Getting the support my team for the students' needs was difficult because the office's priority was not the SAP program. It became clear that the program was looked upon as a good "program effort" because it met our access and diversity goals. Ultimately, the office's main goal was to recruit the incoming freshman class because that is where the institution gets much of its tuition revenue.

1.7.2 Jefferson Public School (JPS)

In 2017, under the guidance of our JPS representatives, we only worked with Jones Academy and Urban Prep for the first three years. Once the pandemic occurred, we expanded our

programming to all JPS high schools for virtual programming. Still, we received limited interest from students as not all had access to reliable internet. The JPS school district serves over 20,000 students in the area, and 53% of students are Black, 33% are white, and 14% are of other races (Facts at Glance, 2022).

Jones Academy and Urban Prep have a majority Black student population, and the graduation rate is lower than the district's overall rate of 80%. At Jones, 95% of the students are African American, 50% are economically disadvantaged, and 56% are chronically absent. At Urban Prep, 87% of the students are African American, 90% are economically disadvantaged, and 54% are chronically absent from school (Facts at a Glance, n.d.). The administrators we worked with were the community school site coordinators, principals, and guidance counselors. Both schools are considered community schools whose administrators provide resources that focus on the academic, social, and emotional skills by working with various community partners (Facts at a Glance, n.d.). We worked closely with the community site coordinator at Jones Academy since 2018. The community site coordinator oversees a community-based organization within the school's neighborhood and acts as the liaison for all community partners in the school. Jones Academy has at least 20 community partners, which can be challenging to manage. We did not receive support regarding student recruitment and outreach within the school as we expected. It felt like they were always trying to put out fires or issues within the school. Jones Academy had two principals in the last five years, and the current principal was the former vice-principal until the principal was fired. Urban Prep has had three principals in the last three years, and each ran the school differently. In 2018, the principal welcomed community partners to the school and tried to implement ongoing meetings that would serve the needs of the students. There were opportunities to meet with other external school partners and collaborate. Under the Urban Prep

administration in 2019, the principal did not allow community partners to recruit within the school or offer any in-school programming. The principal was focused on creating disciplinary measures for students within the school and wanted little to no outside representation within the school.

1.7.3 Bedford Community College (BCC)

The BCC liaisons that we worked with were the admissions counselor, success coach, financial advisor, and the dean of students. Initially, we tried to set up recurring meetings with our liaisons to follow up on our students' progress. For the first year, we met at least six times within the year, but after that, things began to change. Toward the end of the first program year, BCC wanted the SAP program to expand to more schools, but it was not the right time to expand due to staff and budget constraints. BCC provided little financial support for our students. TRU paid for the students' books while at BCC. BCC admissions counselors did not help us recruit students to go to their school. Also, one of the success coaches that provided essential learning support through one-on-one communication and collaboration with other departments to promote academic and personal success at BCC left. The advisor assigned to assist our students said she could no longer do it because of her current workload. At the beginning of 2022, we managed to work with one success coach who would provide us with our students' transcripts each academic year, but overall, the only support our students received was from the SAP staff.

1.7.4 SAP Staff & Advisory Committee

As the former SAP program manager, I oversaw the program from 2017 through 2022. I managed program development, hiring staff, budget creation, and building relationships with our

SAP partners. My team and I had to recruit students, meet with JPS and BCC administrators to see how we could work together effectively, and collaborate with other college access programs. Also, we had to update and develop program materials, host and attend sessions, meet with our students at BCC, reserve space, order food, order transportation, and advocate for the needs of the students to TRU senior leadership. SAP staff members were responsible for establishing relationships with our SAP partners and school leadership, parents, TRU academic departments, students, and community members. The two full-time SAP staff members were able to engage in the school-based goals of college readiness, setting goals, and major and career exploration but were largely conditioned by the broader organizational culture of the public school they supported. SAP staff interacted directly with students, families, school staff, and community members. Organizational conditions that impacted our engagement and resulted in implementation difficulties were the attitudes of administrators toward the SAP program, competing priorities, and organization culture. One principal told SAP staff members he encouraged his students toward trade programs, not college. At times we had no support from administrators within the high schools to host parent nights or student recruitment events. This became a major challenge when trying to meet the demands of increasing student attendance at sessions and maneuvering the relationship with JPS leaders.

Since the SAP staff did not have experience managing an access program, we developed an advisory committee comprised of 25 individuals from each SAP partner organization, including TRU, BCC, and JPS. They would advise the team on program logistics, challenges, and support where needed. The committee was made up of individuals at every level, from university student mentors, school counselors, social workers, TRU and BCC staff and faculty, and individuals within student support services. The goal was to meet once a quarter, but over time we began to meet less

because of the uncertainty or direction of the program. Our last advisory meeting was in 2020. The SAP program did not move to a new office until the end of the 2022 academic year.

1.7.5 SAP Students

Students and the SAP staff often forge meaningful relationships early on and tend to last beyond the school year. One reason is that SAP staff members are in the school but not of the school, which minimizes or eliminates power imbalances and sets the tone for equity in relationships. This is not to say that there are no boundaries set, rules for engagement, or other behavior standards that staff set when interacting with students. However, the ongoing development in student support provided by the SAP Program equipped staff with the tools to create and sustain authentic relationships, provide support across several domains (i.e., socioemotional, academic, and behavioral) and connect students to other organizations and people to enrich student development.

For the first three years of the SAP program, we only worked with students from Jones Academy and Urban Prep because when designing the program, JPS administrators stated both schools had the greatest need and lacked adequate resources. SAP has programming for high school students and college students at BCC. In 2020, we had to switch our in-person sessions to a virtual setting because of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. We opened our high school programming to all 10 JPS high schools virtually. In 2022, we served a total of four high schools, intending to provide programming to all 10 high schools once the program was fully staffed. This program has served approximately 300 students who participated in our monthly

college preparatory workshops, and 10 students enrolled in the pathway program to attend BCC and transfer to TRU for degree completion.

All our students at BCC are Black and first-generation college students. We had 10 students commit to the pathway from 2017–2022. In 2018, three Black women enrolled in the pathway, and two students dropped out the following year. In 2019, we had four new students commit to the program, which brought the total to five. At the beginning of the 2021 academic year, there were five students at BCC, two Black men, and three Black women. Unfortunately, due to academic or personal issues, none of the students transferred to TRU to complete their bachelor's degrees. Most of the students struggled academically in high school, and even with the support of the SAP staff, we had at least six students enrolled at BCC drop out. To date, no student has transferred to TRU from BCC. Some SAP students were admitted directly to TRU in their senior year. Typically, these students were a part of another program through the university.

2.0 Chapter 2: Review of the Supporting Literature

In reviewing the SAP staff's role in supporting students, managing expectations and program outcomes, and trying to sustain a viable partnership, examining how the work environment contributed to burnout is critical. The literature review supports that burnout has serious consequences for individuals and organizations. Burnout is characterized by symptoms of psychophysiological arousal, aggression, physical and mental exhaustion, pessimism, problematic work relationships, and decreased performance (Maslach et al., 2001). According to the literature by Maslach and Jackson (1981), the three areas of burnout are the following: (a) emotional exhaustion is the depletion of mental energy involved in the professional obligation; (b) depersonalization is the development of negative attitudes, emotional numbness, and apathy; and (c) cynicism is related to unstudied factors associated with work settings, such as financial incentives for longevity.

A second scale, known as the AWS was developed by Leiter and Maslach (2003) and is frequently used in combination with the MBI. A similar scale for educators, the ES, is used for educational professionals (Schubert-Irastorza et al., 2014). Using measures from MBI and AWS, burnout occurs when individuals feel a conflict or disconnect from their work in one or more of the following six areas, which include: (a) work life, (b) control, (c) reward, (d) community, (e) fairness, and (f) values (Schubert-Irastorza et al., 2014).

2.1 Work Conditions Associated with Burnout

When employees regulate or suppress their emotions in exchange for wages, they are considered to be performing emotional labor. According to Hamama (2012), the work environment has four dimensions, which include the physical, psychological, social, and organizational, each of which can induce burnout. The study examined three dimensions concerning the work environment of professionals working with children and adolescents. The physical dimension is the extrinsic work conditions, the psychological dimension is the intrinsic work conditions, and the social dimension is presented through the social support variable. The fourth dimension of the work environment is organizational, which is defined in relation to three components including: (a) job ambiguousness, (b) job conflict, (c) perceived job expectations, and (d) professional responsibility (Hamama, 2012). The fourth dimension was excluded because the present sample was highly heterogeneous in its organizational settings, thus precluding adequate examination of the multiple job components.

The finding in this study relates to the correlation between professional seniority, the support of colleagues and direct supervisors, and the sense of burnout. The current results corroborate previous research by Bargal and Guterman (1996) that describe how social support contributes to a reduction in burnout among workers in human service professions. Workers without much seniority in the profession experienced less burnout when they received stronger support from their colleagues and direct supervisor. An effective supervisor must provide essential guidelines, professional skills, and knowledge while communicating opinions, feelings, and decision-making. Supervisors can help reduce workers' role stress. The supervisor becomes a vital coping resource when there is role ambiguity and conflict (Hamama, 2012). Researchers reported

that perceived supervisory support was associated with low levels of burnout and turnover intentions among those being supervised (MorBarak et al., 2001).

According to Karasek (1979), the “job demand-control model” suggests that stress results from task demands at work and one’s ability to make decisions and exercise autonomy. Most student affairs professionals are not trained or licensed counselors, but the overwhelming number of them must develop helping skills because of their direct contact with students (Long, 2012). Within the profession, there is a high degree of flexibility and ambiguity because no student’s situation is exactly like another. Student affairs professionals are frequently faced with times when a resolution is required quickly and immediately without the benefit of seeking input from colleagues or supervisors (Long, 2012).

2.2 Types of Burnout

2.2.1 Emotional Exhaustion of Labor

Being emotionally exhausted is rarely a sudden occurrence. It is the cumulative impact of the “cost of caring” from doing “people work.” According to Maslach (1982), “A pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion is at the heart of the burnout syndrome. A person gets overly involved emotionally, overextends him-or-herself, and feels overwhelmed by the emotional demands imposed by other people” (p. 3). Exhaustion is a stress dimension referring to feelings of overextending and depleting emotional resources.

There is a causal relationship between emotional labor and burnout. Emotional exhaustion is a chronic physical and emotional depletion resulting from excessive job demands and continuous

struggles (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). It is manifested by physical fatigue and feeling psychologically and emotionally “drained.” High levels of job demand may contribute to numerous stress reactions, such as burnout and depression, resulting in absenteeism, work disability, and turnover (Jeung et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Lack of Depersonalization

In response to emotional exhaustion, employees exhibit contemptuous, indifferent, and negative behaviors toward others and distance themselves from their work (Maslach, 1982). Depersonalization, also called “dehumanization,” is best understood in reference to the social service occupations in which burnout has been most frequently examined. Depersonalization refers to a set of callous and insensitive behaviors a worker displays toward a client. Experiencing frequent and chronic job stress, combined with a low sense of efficacy for managing job demands and lack of social support when faced with difficult situations and environments, is more likely to increase the risk of burnout.

Over the last two decades, researchers demonstrated that individual differences may play an important role in developing burnout. Although much research on burnout has concentrated on working environments, personality traits were also pivotal in developing job burnout (Jeung et al., 2018). Job autonomy, organizational climate, and some personality traits play significant roles in the relationship between emotional labor and job burnout. One personal characteristic that is likely to play a crucial role in the relationships between work stress, work control, and employee adaptation is self-efficacy. According to Bakker et al. (2014), self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their capability to organize and execute a course of action needed to meet the demands of

a situation. This allows the employee to make judgments concerning their ability to do what is needed to conduct their jobs successfully.

2.2.3 Cynicism

Cynicism is described as an individual in the workplace who feels increasing negativity about the work produced. Additionally, it indicates low motivation, lack of control, despair, and even loss of self-respect (Maslach, 1982). Diminished personal accomplishment refers to negative evaluations of the self. A sense of diminished personal achievement would be shown when a worker feels ineffective and incompetent.

Burnout is a process whereby (a) emotional exhaustion occurs when resources are depleted, (b) then cynicism develops as a response to exhaustion when maladaptive coping mechanisms are used to account for the lost resources, and (c) this maladaptive coping leads to a lack of personal accomplishment combining to create a spiral of resource loss (Alarcon, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). When interpersonal interactions on the job demand emotional effort, emotional resources are depleted, leaving employees emotionally exhausted if those resources are not replenished. By contrast, depersonalization is a coping mechanism by which employees can psychologically distance themselves from others in interaction to reduce stress and cope with the resource loss associated with emotional job demands (Hochschild, 1983). The cynicism and disengagement seen among those engaging in depersonalization to cope with the job is believed to be associated with reduced organizational commitment, poor performance, and loss of personal accomplishment (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

2.3 Student Affairs Professionals' Role

The literature indicates that student affairs professionals with high stress and burnout have higher levels of dissatisfaction with their work and higher turnover intentions. Burnout research has its roots in service industry sectors, such as caregiving, in which the core aspect of the job is the relationship between provider and recipient (Jeung et al., 2018). The student affairs profession refers to the colonial era and the earliest years of American higher education. The doctrine of *in loco parentis* means “in place of the parent.” This concept encouraged college and university administrators to manage students closely, as students were viewed in those times as emotionally immature and requiring strict adult supervision (Long, 2012). The primary role of student affairs professionals is to serve and ensure that students are safe, cared for, and well-treated (Long, 2012). The student affairs field is committed to the idea that student learning does not occur exclusively within the classroom and that college affects students profoundly in many different dimensions.

In higher education, student affairs professionals who manage access programs and initiatives for universities sometimes feel a disconnection between the institutional mission and their role. Student affairs work being devalued may point to underlying concerns regarding the ambiguity of the student affairs profession and difficulties navigating the field. According to Marshall et al. (2016), current fiscal constraints within the student affairs field result in staff downsizing, dwindling material, capital, human resources, and unfilled positions. As funding decreases and is influenced by market and industry needs, higher education cannot simply continue to offer programs as it did in the past (Koorts, 2000). When institutions have to cut services or programs, student affairs are often the areas where services and staff are cut (Marshall et al., 2016). Student affairs programs are great for student development, but they are the first area to get cut in higher education. When staff see cuts to funds and programs, this is evidence that the university

administrators do not value their work. This is evidence of low organizational commitment, which can interfere with adopting and implementing new practices. According to Jakeman and Silver (2014), for new staff in student affairs, there is a disconnect between staff expectations and the reality of the work in the profession.

Several scholars have explored factors relating to student affairs professionals' success and retention in the field. Lovell and Kosten's (2000) meta-analysis of student affairs research connected certain skills, knowledge, and personal traits to succeed in the profession. Research indicates low job satisfaction, role stress, limited potential for advancement or career mobility, and poor quality of life are associated with plans to leave student affairs. Also, the research indicates that most individuals within this profession are not paid a competitive salary (Jakeman & Silver, 2014). A low-paying job that requires a degree and often an advanced degree, extensive workload, little work-life balance, and limited opportunities for professional development ultimately cause staff frustration and burnout. Jakeman and Silver (2014) indicated five reasons why people leave the student affairs profession, and these include a "detachment from the institutional mission, the work in the field is seen as devalued, a lack of personal and professional fulfillment, an emotional burden working with students, and the financial concerns" (p.175). These factors are indicators that contribute to staff burnout and ultimately can cause employees to leave the profession.

Burnout has serious consequences both for individuals and their work environments. Student affairs professionals play a critical role in bridging the gap between students and the university by helping students feel a sense of community and belonging. If student affairs faculty and professionals can support students in understanding the complex issues impacting college and university finances, it is possible that they may come to see their work and their future contributions to the field not as devalued but as essential for the vitality of higher education in a

new economic environment. The role of university-community partnerships or programs may be one of the ways for student affairs professionals to highlight their impactful work.

2.4 Gender Differences in the Workplace

A significant factor that contributed to the growth of the U.S. labor force in the second half of the 20th century was the remarkable increase in women's labor force participation rate (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). During this time, the U.S. economy experienced economic growth that increased the demand for labor. Gender can be understood as "the social organization of sexual difference" (Nielsen et al., 2009, p.35). Patriarchy can be defined as a social system in which men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property (Adisa et al., 2020). Mitchell (2001) noted that patriarchy as an ideological mode delineates the arrangement of male supremacy and female suppression in any society.

Despite regulations that attempt to promote equality within the workplace, discrimination against certain social groups, such as women, still occurs, with women faring worse than men on most measures of economic equity, including income, unemployment, and occupational distribution (Fagenson, 1993). Job satisfaction, professional fulfillment, and work-related stress have significantly impacted women as they develop and navigate their careers. Women are more likely to work outside the home today than in the past, and those in the workforce also spend more time at work than women in earlier years. Women have increasingly opted to work full-time and year-round, partly due to economic necessity. Although women are increasing their numbers in managerial and executive positions, those positions are still generally dominated by men (Blum et

al., 1994). At the close of the 20th century, it remained true that men represented 95% of senior executives in the 1,000 largest publicly held U.S. firms (Blum et al., 2014).

According to Gallup, in 2019, 30% of women and 27% of men said they “always” or “very often” felt burned out at work. That three-percentage-point gap expanded to 12 points in the pandemic-era months of 2020, from March to December, and has averaged eight points in 2021 with 34% of women and 26% of men who reported feeling burned out (Sadd et al., 2021). There is no simple answer to this issue, but many factors contribute to those findings. The division of household labor and traditional ideology about men’s and women’s responsibilities were identified as contributing factors (Dilworth, 2004). Employed mothers with young children were more likely to experience family-to-work conflict than their male counterparts. Research has found that women tend to have higher levels of emotional exhaustion than men (Sadd et al., 2021). Men have higher depersonalization rates and lower personal accomplishment rates than women (Brewer & Clippard, 2002).

Men and women experience very different workplaces. The data shows that men win more promotions, more challenging assignments, and access to top leaders than women do (Waller, 2016). Men are more likely than women to feel confident they are in route to an executive role and more strongly that their employer will reward their merit. Meanwhile, women have a different perception of the workplace and less than half feel that promotions are awarded fairly or that the best opportunities go to the most deserving employees (Waller, 2016). According to the literature, women perceive that their gender has been a factor in missed raises and promotions (Dilworth, 2004). There is a gap between what companies think they do and what individuals experience day to day. Becker (1985) asserted that a fundamental reason for sex disparities in socioeconomic attainments is differences in the amount of effort men and women devote to work outside the

home, even when they work the same number of hours. Effort refers to the amount of physical and mental energy devoted to work and is different from the skill and responsibility requirements of a given job and a particular set of skills and experience a worker brings to it.

Becker (1975) stated:

The evidence still suggests, although it does not demonstrate, that the earnings of men and women would not be equal even if their participation were equal. The literature implies that small initial disadvantages faced by women in the workplace can lead to extreme results in the division of labor in the household, occupational segregation, and earnings differences. Even a small amount of discrimination against women in the workplace gives men a comparative advantage in the market. (p. 20)

Equity theory examines how individuals determine the fairness of ratios of inputs to outcomes, such as what constitutes a fair reward for a given task or what constitutes fair effort for a given reward (Walster et al., 1978). Determinations of fairness are based on perceptions of contributions relative to rewards. Experiments show that men and women differ in how they invoke equity considerations in allocating effort and rewards. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), Black women experience occupational disadvantages based on gender and race. They are more likely to experience higher rates of unemployment, work in support positions, where there are fewer rewards and less opportunity for advancement or skill use, and work in jobs that are less secure than those held by men.

2.5 Position of Blacks in the Division of Labor

From the earliest moments of African slavery in the New World, the vicious exploitation of Black women became a permanent feature of white patriarchal and capitalist society (Marable, 1983). The position of Black women and men alike was that of an involuntary worker. In the first 60 years of the 19th century, raw cotton, almost exclusively grown by enslaved people, comprised more than half of the U.S. exports (Beckert & Rockman, 2016). Enslaved people represented one of the largest U.S. commodities valued at \$3.0 billion according to the 1860 Census. Black women were burdened with the particular task of laboring physically and sexually, by coercion and consent, in order to maintain the slave system. The value of enslaved people was roughly equivalent to the value of all capital invested in manufacturing, railroads, banks, and currency in circulation (valued at \$3.1 billion; Deyle, 2005). Slavery was the specific means through which Black labor was separated from means of production and subsistence and constituted alienated and exploited labor (Harris, 1978). Out of the social relations established under slavery, Black labor was transformed into wage labor and integrated into capitalist relations of production. The act of racial capitalism harms all individuals, especially Black people, because it impedes social progress toward racial equality.

Robinson (1983) stated:

Race became largely the rationalization for the domination, exploitation, and extermination of non-Europeans. Capitalism and racism have evolved to produce a modern world system of racial capitalism dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide. Capitalism was racial not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession but because racialism had already permeated western feudal society. (p. 80).

No analysis of the historical and contemporary situation of Blacks in America would be adequate, which failed to recognize the critical role of this set of “initial conditions” in determining the position of Blacks in the overall division of labor and the ideological forms, which have accompanied that position. These conditions also established a difference between the position of Blacks and that of white workers. Blacks tend to predominate in low wage, unskilled, and semiskilled jobs. A lower wage in such jobs is consistent with a rate of exploitation equal to the average prevailing in the economy (Deyle, 2006). The wage itself is not to be confused with the value of labor power. It is the latter that is relevant for determining the magnitude of the overall rate of exploitation. It would include the value of commodities purchased from direct wage payments and items provided through various forms of income supplements and direct payments through the state apparatus, so far as these represent costs paid by capital for the reproduction of labor power (Opie & Roberts, 2017). It would be necessary to consider the work hours, the pace and intensity of work, and other concrete conditions of the labor process.

Chronic unemployment reinforces discriminatory practices on the part of white labor unions seeking to protect their hold over existing jobs and employers seeking to hold wages down by playing off one group of workers against the other. The discrimination mechanism is, in this way, causally related to unemployment and the process of capital accumulation and is, to that extent, not an independent variable of the problem nor a purely subjective psychological phenomenon (Sadd et al., 2021). This mechanism serves to ration the available total of employment and unemployment so that Blacks suffer a greater incidence of unemployment. At the same time, it serves to channel Blacks into low-paid, unskilled jobs, thus reinforcing their inferior position in the division of labor (Blackmon, 2008). The greater variability of employment among Blacks further limits their ability to acquire skills, experience, and seniority on the job and move

up the hierarchy of the job structure. While slavery throughout the United States was formally prohibited in 1865 with the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Black people were not necessarily free (Deyle, 2006). Although the amendment prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude, it allowed an exception in the form of “punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted. This clause allowed corporations to continue using free or a reduced rate labor (Blackmon, 2008).

Individuals, private enterprises, prisons, and corporations have enslaved Black people, illegally detained them, coerced them to work, and underpaid or not paid (Opie & Roberts, 2017). According to the Pew Research Center (2015), Black employees are persistently paid less than their white counterparts and experience more wage theft (i.e., forcing overtime but not paying for it, violating minimum wage laws, etc.). African Americans have lower levels of education, higher rates of poverty, and higher rates of unemployment than whites, all of which may contribute to higher rates of overall stress in this group (Spaights & Whitaker, 1995).

2.6 History of Black Women in the Workplace

It is critical to talk about the experiences of Black women in the workforce because it differs from the experience of white women. Black women were exploited on the basis of gender as breeders and raisers of slaves for plantation owners. Their gender did not spare them hard physical labor in the fields. According to hooks (1981), plantation owners often preferred women for the hardest field work because they were more reliable workers. After the emancipation, Black women were employed as laundresses and domestic servants. Black women often worked a 14- to 16-hour day and had little time to carry out their own domestic responsibilities at home (Glen,

1985). During the time period from 1870–1930, Black women regardless of rural or urban residence were notable for their high rates of labor force participation and their wages were consistently lower than white women (hooks, 1981). In the 1970s, women have made up an increasing share of the Black or African American labor force. There were 10.7 million Black women in the labor force in 2018, representing 53% of the Black labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The history of Black women in the United States can best be described as a struggle for survival and identity and the desire to protect and support her family (Collins, 1990). Inequalities imposed on Black women in the labor force are not of recent origin.

Historically, institutional racism has been imposed on Black women physically, psychologically, occupationally, and economically (Spaights & Whitaker, 1995). Examining African Americans' responses to job stress is important for several reasons. Black women have been faced with the challenges of race and gender discrimination. Unlike their white counterparts, Black women have had high labor force participation rates throughout American history, often finding employment in low-wage service jobs (Collins, 1990). In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw used the term, intersectionality, to describe a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. Intersectionality creates distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). When systems of oppression overlap, the dominant white culture, mainly white males, continue to maintain control in society and higher education.

The experiences of Black women in the workplace provide a unique standpoint from which to examine oneself, one's social group, and society (Collins, 1990). Scholars offered substantial evidence that institutional racism is present and flourishing within the higher education system, especially for Black females (Bhopal, 2017). Being a Black female professional in white spaces

can place excessive stress on Black women. Claims that the Black race was genetically inferior claims supported by religion, the media, intelligence quotient tests, and separate but unequal educational facilities have been subliminally embedded into the minds of many Black people (Spaights & Whitaker, 1995). Despite their credentials, some Black professional women have feelings of incompetence and self-devaluation when they compete with individuals in white middle-class groups for employment, promotion, and increased salaries (Collins, 1990). These factors contribute to the role Black women must navigate in the workplace.

2.7 Being Black in Higher Education

From inception, racism, and white dominance have been a part of the American higher education system (Ash et al., 2020) and can be traced back to practices displayed during settler colonialism. Patel (2021) stated the establishment of higher education is intertwined with the settler colonialism practices of land seizure, erasing to replace entire populations of individuals, and relying on labor. Patel further stated that the curriculum was focused on advancing knowledge with a primary focus on creating dominance. Connecting higher education to settler colonialism provides a clearer understanding of the higher education system and its relationship to how various populations, especially Black and ethnic minoritized populations, experience the system. For much of history, these institutions ensured the admission process excluded individuals based on race, ethnicity, and social class (Collins, 2008). The problems with racial capitalism arise when white individuals and predominantly white institutions seek and achieve racial diversity without examining their motives and practices (Leong, 2013).

In 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that Black women represented 9% of the 182,831 individuals employed in “student, academic affairs, and other educational services” positions in U.S. colleges and universities (p.9). Black women are an integral part of the American labor force but have long faced a pay gap due to longstanding inequities in education and the labor market. Black women workers are overrepresented in low-paying service sector jobs and underrepresented at the top (Cook, 2012). Theories for understanding the needs of Black women should be based on their cultural, personal, and social contexts, which clearly differ significantly from those who have not experienced racial or gender oppression.

Lomax (2015) stated:

The capitalist structure has historically identified Black women as either no or low wage earners. Black women’s bodies and grunt work have held capitalist institutions together for a long time. It is their positioning within this structure, first as capital themselves and then as bottom laborers, that has led to sometimes desperate methods of survival to include but not limited to working within oppressive structures, performing backbreaking labor and for long hours, working without or for lower pay, taking jobs where they are overqualified and not attending to one’s health. (p. 50)

Also, the lack of wealth accumulation for Black women makes them even more vulnerable to social risks, to include decision-making in oppressive contexts. Racial capitalism frequently does not benefit the non-white individuals whose identities are the source of capital, nor does it necessarily benefit society.

3.0 Chapter 3: Methodology

Much of the social and economic inequality in the United States and other industrial countries is created in organizations, in the daily activities of working and organizing the work (Bakker et al., 2014). All organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices and processes within particular organizations (Acker, 2016). The aim of this project was to improve knowledge, understanding, and awareness of burnout among college access professionals as they support low-income, underrepresented minority students and first-generation students from high school to college.

I surveyed and interviewed former SAP full-time staff and team members from the admissions office that provided support for the SAP program from 2017–2022. There were five members from the recruitment team because I also included myself in the research, and one program team member who participated in this study. The method of research I used was hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutics is the interpretation of text or language by an observer and can be used as a methodology or as an enhancement of phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology, as a methodology, has its early foundational roots in philosophy through the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), followed by Heidegger, Gadamer, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). As a method, phenomenology seeks to transform the participant’s lived experience to better understand the phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) explained the phenomenological process by stating, “Phenomenology aims to transform the lived experience into a textual expression of its essence in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living” (p. 36). In this way, the most crucial aspect of the phenomenological process is the ability to operate as a re-living of the phenomenon.

Regarding phenomenology, Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted, “The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 75). Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology as a methodology, reflexivity, an individual’s reflection upon or examination of a situation or experience can help in interpreting the meanings discovered or add value to those types of interpretations (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Reflexivity describes how researchers are conscious of and reflect on how their questions, methods, and subject position might impact a study’s data or the psychological knowledge produced (Langdridge, 2007). The viewpoint of hermeneutic phenomenology is a belief in the importance and primacy of subjective consciousness, an understanding of consciousness as active as meaning-bestowing, essential structures to the consciousness of which a direct knowledge by a kind of reflection is gained (Cohen et al., 2007).

The aim of a phenomenological study is to uncover the necessary structural invariants of an experience, and those invariants are fully discoverable in any individual case. Phenomenological studies are more about uncovering the core of the phenomenon than the number of participants. Although initially, the founders of hermeneutic phenomenology were disinterested in establishing a standardized method, or methodical structure, Van Manen (1990) created six themes for a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry. To that end, he asserted, “Discussion of method and methodology are meant not to prescribe a mechanistic set of procedures, but to animate inventiveness and stimulate insight” (p. 30); thus, in this way, it can be valued just as much for its structure as for its flexibility.

Van Manen (1990) outlined the following six themes for the flexible and fluid methodical structure of hermeneutic studies within the phenomenological tradition:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.

2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize.
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (p.30)

To remove any potential risks of revealing personal identifiers, I used a pseudonym for the college, SAP high schools, and college partners. Another advantage is the growing recognition of the usefulness of qualitative research and analysis to explore and describe context phenomena (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017), such as that of the SAP staff as street-level bureaucrats. As a starting point for the qualitative content analysis, I began with reading and re-reading the transcribed texts to understand what interviewees share. I captured the data through Zoom by recording semi-structured interviews and later transcribing them, including taking note of pauses, nonverbal cues communicated with responses, and strong emotional reactions to questions.

3.1 Systems Measures

According to Maslach (2003), burnout studies have evolved from analyzing burnout's symptoms, causes, and classifications to a more positive and preventative vision of how society, organizations, and individuals can help individuals mitigate or avoid burnout through early intervention and increased emphasis on work engagement. I used the definition of MBI to determine burnout among participants. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), a description of the multidimensional burnout model includes: (a) emotional exhaustion is the depletion of mental energy involved in the professional obligation; (b) depersonalization is the development of

negative attitudes, emotional numbness, apathy; and (c) cynicism related to unstudied factors associated with work settings, such as financial incentives for longevity. I used tools to measure staff burnout, such as pre-survey and structured interviews. The pre-survey determined if the individuals left the college access field because of burnout. Based on those findings, I conducted a qualitative study and interview only the individuals who stated their work environment contributed to their burnout. I identified at least six former college access professionals associated with the SAP program to participate in my study. All of the participants worked in the Office of Admissions and were members of the recruitment or program team.

The inquiry questions I used this study to address the relation of the impact of burnout on college access professionals who worked with the SAP program from 2017–2022:

1. How, and in what ways, did burnout contribute to SAP employees' decisions to leave?
2. How, and in what ways, does this reflect institutionalized race-gender systems of oppression?

Interviewing college access professionals helped me identify their relationship to the symptoms that characterize burnout and how those symptoms are related to their work environment. Their responses help me to determine the themes and patterns that led to burnout. These themes built reinforcements to mitigate the adverse effects that college access professionals are vulnerable to in this care-taking profession.

3.2 Sampling Population

I used purposeful sampling within qualitative research. I sought to only interview individuals who no longer work in college access and were associated with the SAP program.

Participants for the study needed to identify as former employees who worked in the college access field at TRU. These individuals had to be familiar with college access programming such as financial literacy, the college selection process, and the admissions process to name a few. Also, they must have self-identified as having experienced burnout symptoms such as physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 2004) from 2017 through 2022. With purposeful sampling, participants or cases are identified and selected with consideration of who has the information or experience necessary to respond to the inquiry (Henning & Roberts, 2016). It was important to assess if they experienced burnout before I proceeded with the study by having participants answer questions regarding their symptoms of burnout and the reasons why they felt that way.

I conducted a pre-survey to identify former employees who worked with the SAP program, to understand if they experienced symptoms of burnout due to the work environment, and overall to determine who fit the framework of the study. Based on the pre-survey responses, I had six participants for the study. The individuals who participated in the study worked with the program for at least three years and were full-time staff or members of the recruitment and program team in the admissions office. Members of the program and recruitment teams offered weekly or bi-weekly assistance for SAP. They worked on-campus SAP sessions on a monthly basis, rode the school buses to pick up the students, led sessions, helped with room setup and breakdown, attended SAP program staff meetings, and built relationships with the students. The SAP team consisted of two full-time staff members who managed all programmatic efforts, managed our university mentors, conducted SAP sessions with our partner schools during school hours, and attended community and access events in the community.

3.3 Data Collection

This pre-survey was to assess if individuals who worked with the SAP program experienced symptoms of burnout and if that ultimately caused them to leave their roles. Surveys were administered via the university approved surveying tool, Qualtrics. A link to the pre-surveys was provided in advance and included a statement of informed consent (if needed) and a reiteration of the purpose of the study. Participants were given one to two weeks to complete the survey. The second part of the study used interview questions to measure feelings of emotional burnout, cynicism, lack of personal accomplishment, workload, sense of community, and how racial and gender oppression contribute to burnout. I sent the pre-survey to seven individuals; five experienced burnout symptoms, and four stated they left their roles due to burnout. Table 1 displays some of the interview questions.

Table 1. Interview Questions

Inquiry question	Collection protocol	Protocol question	Data source
How, and in what ways, did burnout contribute to SAP employees' decisions to leave?	Semi-structured interview	While working with the SAP program, did you exhibit any symptoms of burnout? Yes or No?	Interview responses from former SAP staff or team members
How, and in what ways, did burnout contribute to SAP employees' decisions to leave?		Can you identify which burnout symptom you experienced in the work environment and how these symptoms manifested? How did you feel differently about your work responsibilities during the burnout period? Were there any challenges in your role, and how did that contribute to burnout? How did you feel differently about your work responsibilities during the burnout period? Were there any challenges in your role, and how did that contribute to burnout? In thinking about your work duties, how much of it is tied to race, gender, or cultural expectation? (1) What are your identities? (2) What is it like to be a (however they identify)? (3) Did those experiences contribute to burnout? (4) The decision to leave? As a (however they identify), how did burnout in SAP affect your work experiences differently than others?	
How, and in what ways, does this reflect institutionalized race-gender systems of oppression?			

Note. This is not the full list of questions. All of the interview questions are in Appendix C.

3.4 Data Analysis

As a researcher, I used inductive coding to allow findings to emerge from frequent, dominant, or significant themes. The inductive approach reflects frequently reported patterns used in qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2003). The data analysis method used is qualitative content analysis through inductive reasoning, grounding the examination of and arrival at themes and the inferences drawn from them in the data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Here are the following steps I took to analyze the information:

1. Listened and followed along with interviews and create codes and themes.

Resources utilized: Participant audio interviews through Zoom and transcriptions of the interviews from the participants.

- a. Once interviews were completed, a process of hand-coding was utilized to have at least three to four themes
- b. Then, I proceeded to follow along with the written transcriptions and the audio files and created codes
- c. The audio files were stopped as descriptive themes that emerged from the interviews were written on the side of the transcripts. As this was the first cycle within the coding process, the codes ranged from words to full sentences that centered on the essence of the phenomena. According to Saldaña (2015) as the researcher, “data coded during the first cycle coding processes a range in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph, an entire page of text, or a stream of moving images” (p. 4).
- d. Additionally, the codes themselves ranged from both descriptive codes, which summarized the topic and provided insight that examined what was spoken in the interview but also what was seen within the conversation

2. Utilized my pre-understanding/assumptions to continue revealing the phenomenon.

a. Once I finished coding/analyzing the material from the participants (written transcription and audio recordings), I proceeded to utilize my presumptions within the analysis process.

b. This process consisted of re-reading my assumptions and coding the data based on codes that surfaced.

c. At this point, I did not create new codes but looked to see where they fit within the participants' reflections.

3. Lastly, creating themes that ground the phenomenon/lived experience.

As the researcher, who was also connected to the program, I was intimately aware of SAP staff's challenges, barriers, and experiences as street-level bureaucrats. The process for identifying evidence of themes, codes that undergird themes, and conceptualizing shared meaning generated by me as the researcher were further mediated by my values, skills, experience, and education (see Braun & Clarke, 2020). The themes can be viewed as written interpretations of lived experiences. In the application of hermeneutic phenomenology, the requirement is to examine the text, to reflect on the content to discover something telling, meaningful, and thematic (Van Manen, 1990). Having isolated phenomenal themes, one rewrites the theme while interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon or lived experience. It gives a "voice" to the experiences of college access professionals who left the field in the context of this study. Creswell et al. (2007) described in-depth interviews as the primary means of collecting information for phenomenological research, with a selection of individuals to describe the meaning of a phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.

3.5 Researcher's Reflexivity

In hermeneutic phenomenology, reflexivity, one's personal reflection upon examination of a situation or experience can help interpret meanings discovered or add value to the situation (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Acknowledging my role as the former assistant director of undergraduate recruitment and the SAP program manager within the admissions office is critical. My background and experience could be used for data gathering and analysis. I managed the SAP program for five years and collaborated with internal and external stakeholders. In addition to managing the SAP program, I recruited students to the university, reviewed admissions applications, participated in on-campus programs, helped create a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) task force, and attended diversity and access events on behalf of my department.

One may say that juggling many work demands caused me to burn out. Working with first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students was not just a job but a part of my purpose. I was a first-generation college, Pell Grant eligible student who benefited from participating in access programs growing up, so I had a vested interest in my students and staff that supported SAP. Some of the students in my program were dealing with housing, food insecurity, mental health issues, and struggling academically. Some of what they needed from my staff we could not provide, and speaking with leadership at times for direction when trying to help our students to help meet their essential needs was overwhelming because I would often hear, "there is nothing we can do."

There were some potential implications and associated limitations to my positioning: including bias in drawing conclusions, and some of my participants are my former staff members who may have felt they needed to protect my feelings when responding to interview questions. Also, they may have been less forthcoming if they thought there could be some negative

repercussions. Regardless of my feelings, I hoped to clarify to my former employees that I wanted like them to view me as a researcher, not as their former boss. Their participation and openness were significant to this study and could hopefully help improve the lives of others currently working in this field. I was interested in bringing more awareness and providing recommendations for this topic. Finally, I was a part of my own study since I worked in this field for five years and felt burned out, which ultimately caused me to find a new role outside college access. I am confident that this study will help bring more awareness and the support needed for college access professionals to be successful and reduce burnout.

The term “burnout” originated in the 1970s and has expanded over the last 50 years (Moss, 2019). In my study, the participants were from the same institution, as that was where most interests surfaced. The aim of the project was to provide understanding, cultural, racial, and gender awareness of burnout among college access practitioners. The context of the study can also be applied to employees in work sectors outside of higher education. Public and private sector employees have experienced burnout, specifically, those who work in the “helping fields,” such as social work, the healthcare industry, and criminal justice, to name a few (Miller et al., 1990, p. 40). Employees have experienced burnout in their workplaces due to gender or cultural roles. Research has shown that individuals experiencing stress and burnout have lower satisfaction with their work. This is not surprising, especially in terms of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. This study will contribute to the greater body of literature and scholarly practice, the findings and recommendations can be applied across professions and industries.

3.6 Sample Selection Processes

Consistent with qualitative research that utilizes purposeful sampling, specific participant selection criteria create opportunities to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. Regarding purposeful sampling within qualitative research, Creswell (2018) asserted, “The inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 158). For the pre-survey, seven individuals completed the survey, and five individuals stated they experienced burnout while working with the SAP program. The interviewees identified as one white male, one white female, and four Black females. I was a participant in my study as well. All the participants worked with the program for at least three years or more.

3.7 Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol offered the best choice, which developed a rich textual representation of the phenomenon under study. Utilizing this method enabled the researcher to not only have set questions for their participants to answer but also left room for flexibility. Smith and Osborn (2004) suggested that “it facilitates rapport/empathy, allows greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas, and it tends to produce richer data” (p. 59). The interviews were recorded on Zoom and took no longer than one hour.

4.0 Chapter 4: Findings

A useful tool for interpreting the interviews was thematic analyses. Thematic analyses, as is grounded theory and the development of cultural models, require more involvement and interpretation from the researcher. Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing implicit and explicit ideas within the themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. The following table presents an overview of the major findings of the participant interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of the Major Findings from the Participant Interviews

Theme	Subtheme	Quote
Cannot disengage from work role	Frustration, Irritation: Black Woman Workload vs. Whiteness and Work	<p>Interviewee #3 Being invested in the students and the program. I felt pressure to go above and beyond, and I don't know if it was the pressure, I put on myself or from the program because of the population we serve. It was not discouraged.</p>
Experienced burnout while working with the SAP	Responsibility to the role first and self-second	<p>Interviewee #3 I was definitely stressed and experienced emotional exhaustion. I was experiencing my own health issues. I was having surgery, and my students who were in the SAP program were not being responsive to the other staff members who were there. So, I was contacted and needed to assist. I felt like I could never step away.</p>
Race & gender expectations	"Voluntold"	<p>Interviewee #4 But there is, as you know, the conception that students of color identify more with other people of color, which to some degree that is, the case, but that can also be an excuse. To put all that labor on those people and then say, oh, well, the kids don't identify with you. So, you get to go home at 5 pm.</p>
Departmental expectations (culture of the organization)	Additional work with no additional pay	<p>Interviewee #4 Yes, as a person of color, I was automatically signed up to be working with SAP, while my white peers, it was an option, not an expectation. 5 o'clock. Everyone's leaving. I'm still working, but we're all getting paid the same, and it's because there is the conception there's some validity to it</p>

4.1 Emergent Themes & Subthemes

After analyzing the participants' lived experiences and their perceptions of the work environment, I identified four main themes that emerged from the study. Next, themes were identified in the responses to semi-structured interviews, and notes were collected based on how frequently words, phrases, and reactions were found. From themes, codes were derived that captured issues and relevance to the research questions. The themes, codes, and categories were used to draw the conclusions of this study. The themes that emerged were the following: (a) cannot disengage from work role, (b) experienced burnout while working with the SAP, (c) race and gender expectations, and (d) departmental expectations. The subthemes that emerged from the data were: (a) frustration, irritation: Black woman workload vs. whiteness and work, (b) responsibility to the role first and self-second, "voluntold," and (c) additional work with no additional pay.

Also, for the former full-time SAP employees, they perceived their inabilities to step away from their job responsibilities or create boundaries between the work and personal lives, the everchanging demands of the role, administrative changes in leadership within the university and the SAP high schools, and personal challenges that students encountered overtime caused them to burnout in their role. The members of the recruitment team perceived their additional work responsibilities, no additional compensation because not every staff member worked with the program, inability to establish a work-life balance, and the time commitment to the program were not equitable to their white colleagues. Also, the members of the recruitment were responsible for reviewing admission applications, were members of the diversity team, attending prospective and admitted student programming on the weekends, traveling to high schools and college fairs in and outside of Pennsylvania, and conducting student presentations to name a few. Overtime, this caused resentment within their work environment and symptoms of burnout. The emergent themes

and subthemes will be described using the participants' words to illuminate the lived experiences and to provide insight into the participants' life.

4.1.1 Theme One: Cannot Disengage from Work Role

This theme was captured through review and interpretation of the interviews of full-time SAP staff members or the recruitment and program team members in the admissions office. Full-time SAP staff members dedicated at least 95% of their time to SAP, and the other 5% were duties assigned related to work tasks under UAFA. These tasks included making student admissions decisions for TRU, recruitment travel, or working on special projects. SAP team members were full-time staff under the recruitment or program team. Staff who were not full-time SAP employees, their full-time job was to recruit, admit, and retain the incoming first-year class. In addition, these employees would help with SAP, so they dedicated 5% of their time to SAP coordination efforts. Most SAP team members who participated in this study devoted more than 5% of their time to the program.

The SAP recruitment or program team members would provide assistance on program days which could be weekly or bi-monthly, attend SAP team meetings, ride on the bus with the students from their prospective schools to the TRU, set up and break down event space, mentor and build relationships with the students, and lead some of the program sessions to name a few. The analyzed data responses pointed to feeling responsible for the students, the program or job role never-ending, and the inability to take a step away or replenish. Additionally, there was a feeling that their work roles, responsibilities, and stress would be different if they were white males as they did not do the same amount of race-specific and gender work. The following quotes highlight how staff members felt like they could not disengage.

Participant 6 shared,

I had an opportunity to attend a conference that was out of the state, and my initial reaction was no because it was the same day that the SAP program fell on, and I had a limited number of team members to help. A senior leader had to convince me several times that attending the conference and the program would be okay without me for one day.

Participant 3 shared,

Occasionally, on my day off, if I got a phone call from one of my students in the evening, and yes, I had the option not to take the call, but you know, if it was something that could be done quickly, then I would do it. It made me feel like I truly couldn't step away.

Participant 4 shared,

I had to get permission to leave the SAP program early on days I had outside responsibilities. But if this was one of my white peers, they wouldn't have to ask anyone because they were going home at 5, but then it also puts me in a position where I'm spending time with these students, and I don't necessarily want to leave early, but I can only be at one place at a time.

The quotes highlight the experiences of staff members who truly felt like they could not step away from their work responsibilities for various reasons. A common problem that many student affairs professionals face is the concept that working in the helping field makes it particularly challenging to set limits or boundaries for oneself (Marshall et al., 2016). The Black women who were interviewed mentioned how they felt a sense of responsibility to the students because some could identify with the students because of similarities such as being a first-generation college student or being from a low-income family. As Black women, they are expected to not only assist the institutional mission through their doubly minoritized identities but are also

expected to handle any diverse campus issues that may arise (Cook, 2012). Most of the program's students were Black and came from low academic and economic high schools in the city. A consensus among the Black interviewees was, "If I don't do it, who will?" If they did not assist with the program, there was much faith in others to step up because it was an option for other colleagues. Participant 3 stated, "There was some consensus that if you were Black, you wanted to work with the SAP program while it was an option for the white staff members." All of the interviewees wanted the program to be successful. It was clear that the Black interviewees felt responsible for providing resources and opportunities for the SAP students, and it was sometimes hard to step away.

4.1.2 Theme Two: Experienced Burnout While Working with the SAP Program

There have been at least three administrative changes in SAP leadership from 2017–2022. The administrator in the admissions office, who initially developed the program, abruptly left the university due to personal reasons. Also, throughout the program, numerous partners at BCC and JPS left. This has caused a lack of communication among SAP partners, inconsistent student participation, and ever-changing job roles and responsibilities expectations. All the interviewees experienced some type of burnout due to the work environment. This theme emphasizes the symptoms of burnout and how staff experienced emotional exhaustion, a lack of depersonalization of job duties, or cynicism. For the Black participants, the emotionally taxing experience of overextending themselves beyond the efforts of their white colleagues continued to be shared throughout the interviews.

Participant 1 shared,

I cared more about the program than the kids did. We're planning big financial aid nights or picnics with a lot of fun, free things to help these kids get into college. I put all that effort into it, and then for a lot of people to not show up. That made me feel like it was kind of my fault. I was stressed and worried I was going to lose my job. I started not sleeping well at night, venting with my family, and not being super excited to go to work over a single day. Over time, I wasn't excited or pushed myself to go above or beyond at work.

Participant 3 shared,

I experienced symptoms of anxiety and emotional exhaustion. I wasn't taking the time to care for myself or making time to literally eat, working through my lunch, working at night, worried about my students in the middle of the night. I discussed my role and options with my own personal therapist.

Participant 5 shared,

I become frustrated and irritable. My husband banned me from speaking about work because it was so much negative energy. This caused more arguments at home about what I deserved and what was actually going on. Not making additional money even though you are working additional hours. Not having additional time to spend with family/friends and not having money to do things). This negatively impacted my personal life. I became resentful because I saw the inequities and the expectations of me and my Black colleagues versus our other peers.

Participant 4 shared,

It was a source of resentment because it wasn't only this program, but there were other things Black staff had to do that was disproportionately, and it was a culmination of being made to do more because of my skin color. And can I have a real honest conversation to

call people out about that? Not saying that they're necessarily doing it from a place of racism, consciously or anything like that. But I really have to be honest about what's going on here with certain groups of people that look like me.

Participant 2 shared,

It was cynicism for me. I was venting a lot to my family and colleagues. I don't really know what we are doing here. I believe in the cause, and the end result and I really want this program to be successful. We don't see any results that we are looking for from the program. I was frustrated that we were not meeting goals.

Participant 6 shared,

At night, my mind would be racing about what I have to do next for the program. I felt like if I didn't go hard for the program, the program would end, and local students would lose out on a great opportunity. I couldn't sleep; I was emotionally invested and exhausted. I was constantly working evenings and weekend college access events. When I did have some time to myself, I didn't have the strength to leave my house. I was tired.

4.1.3 Theme Three: Race & Gender Expectations

As institutionally hired experts, Black women within student affairs are often called upon to serve their campuses due to their ability to operate in their intersectional identities (Thompson, 2020). Being a historically double-minoritized individual places Black women in positions that trigger both their race and gender. Black women are not just women, and they are not only Black. Instead, they represent a complex intersection of lived experience that is best viewed through its complexity and range (Cho et al., 2013). The responsibilities and burdens of being the Black woman working within student affairs often place their emotional and physical needs secondary

to their positions. In actuality, it is their profession, which posits a student's first directive that exposes them to workplace burnout and fatigue. However, as they are not solely practitioners but Black women, how they experience their role is directly tied to their race and gender.

Crenshaw (1989) theorized that Black women experience sexism differently from that experienced by white women and experienced racism differently from that of Black men. The usefulness of equipping an intersectional framework is that it is interested in the intragroup differences, which exist between groups and rejects a single-axis analysis of difference. Intragroup differences such as gender, class, and sexism, for example, are compounded with other oppressions and are not additive. Regarding how women of color face a compound effect of marginalization, Crenshaw (1991) offered the following statement:

Women of color are differently situated in the economic, social, and political worlds. When reform efforts undertaken on behalf of women neglect this fact, women of color are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged. (p. 1250)

Intersectionality resists practices that examine race, class, and gender separately but is interested in intragroup differences. In this way, pairing intersectionality with the examination of Black women practitioner experiences creates opportunities to reform harmful practices, which often lead to their emotional and physical exhaustion. The demands from their students, as well as their institutions, can trigger a mixture of emotions that place them in positions where they feel the responsibilities of both their race as well as their gender. The concept of intersectionality highlights that rather than a single, easily stated unitary identity, everyone has overlapping identities that may, at times, come into conflict with one another (Collins, 2008). All of the Black women who were interviewed discussed how race or gender impacted their role on the SAP team.

The expectation for Black women to be responsible for their families, community, households, and jobs often leads to burnout and neglect of their mental and physical well-being.

Also, most of the interviewees are women who stated how education is a women's dominant field. A few pointed out that for women, education is a caretaking role for children. Historically, Black women have a particular historical significance as it relates to mothering and their roles in caring for children, and more explicitly, caring for children within systems of dominance and marginalization while in slavery and captivity (Collins, 2008). Participant 4 spoke of working in a challenging racialized climate that exposed her to racialized and gendered trauma that operated as a workplace burden. This burden surfaced through the raced and gendered stereotype of the mammy, which, in the context of higher education, carries raced and gendered institutional expectations (Collins, 2008). Regarding the "mammified" stereotype and how it impacts Black women professionals within predominately white institutions (PWI; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007).

According to Collins (2008):

The work of Black professional women involves caregiving within a predominately white organization, similar to the position a mammy played as a Black mother figure in a white home who is expected to make do with the resources provided. The mammy image is an archetypal outsider within, never being part of the family despite declarations of affection or inclusion. (p. 137)

According to the research, some women are so attached to social, political, and economic patterns and roles that they solidly identify with those roles (Trahan & Growe, 2012).

Participant 5 shared,

Wait a minute when you realize how much less your colleagues are doing, and then, when it comes time for a performance review and no salary promotion talks, and you realize you got to advocate for yourself as a Black woman so much more, even though the performance evaluations and the track records and the projects have shown you are overqualified and have the credentials.

Participant 4 shared,

100% tied to race! When I was hired, my supervisor managed the SAP program, but when my supervisor got switched to another supervisor who was a white man in the department, I thought I didn't have to work with the SAP program anymore, but that wasn't the case. I still worked with the SAP program, and I felt like I was being taken advantage of and it could have been indirectly related to gender as well, but it was certainly directly related to race. Also, in our office, we had more women than men, so it was an expectation that, oh, they'll do it."

Participant 6 shared,

As a Black woman, we can be seen by others, especially by our white counterparts, at times that we can do it all, and essentially by doing it all, it was affecting my emotional well-being. I attempted to ask for more help, support, or flexibility at times, but I had to use the resources that were already available. I was told I was doing a good job of navigating everything, like managing the expectations of others, building relationships, and developing good program content, and that's what I used to keep going. I felt like since I had been given a title at work, I had to work hard to live up to those managerial expectations while my other counterparts did not have the same additional responsibilities as me. So, I

felt the expectations were higher for me, and I felt overworked and underpaid based on everything I was required to do.

Participant 3 shared,

Working with young students or Black students in education, there is the assumption or the perpetuation of women being the helpers, you know, women having that expectation to care for others and to go above and beyond. Women are the caretakers of the kids, and for Black women, it is natural for us to do that. I was hired for one thing, but at the end of the day I felt like a social worker. I was not only developing a program curriculum for SAP, but I was helping my students navigate their personal lives.

Participant 2 shared,

As a white man who assisted with the SAP program, there was no expectation of me when it came to helping. I was told I could stop working with the program whenever I wanted. I don't think other people on the team had that same option.

Participant 1 shared,

I definitely think it's a more female-dominated field of education in general, and at times I felt like my male counterpart was taken more seriously than me. I feel like when one of my male colleagues would reach out to other academic departments to partner with us on a program event. They were more likely to respond to him for some reason.

Participant 4 shared,

So, you feel like you're in a dichotomy because you know the importance of access work, but you don't have the capacity to do it either because you have so many other work and personal responsibilities. So, you have been put in quite a moral dilemma because you want to provide students with these opportunities, but you are trying to prioritize your own

health, especially your mental and physical wellness. This was the main contributor to burnout because this work should be done and also feeling like the work will not be done correctly by people outside of the marginalized group.

4.1.4 Theme Four: Departmental Expectations (Culture of the Organization)

Higher education is seen as a political and educational site where power relations and social inequality are reproduced (Wagner, 2008). Such sites operate in ways that usually negate the experiences of racialized people and, in doing so, reinscribe them as “outsiders,” thereby making it difficult to establish themselves as legitimate, equal, and contributing participants within these institutions (James, 2003). It is well documented that the majority of non-academic support staff and service workers in many academic institutions are non-white (Vergee, 2013). Also, disparities exist in recruiting and hiring Black employees or being promoted into leadership positions, and employment equities have mainly benefited white women (Vergee, 2013). Most of the staff in the department are white women, and only two Black individuals in the office held senior leadership roles. Mosley (1980) conducted a study to investigate the plight of Black woman administrators within college campuses found that they felt extremely overworked, underpaid, alienated, isolated, uncertain, and powerless.

Mosley stated:

One of the dilemmas faced by the Black faculty member or administrators on white campuses is that additional responsibilities, usually as the “Black expert,” are added on without additional resources or released time to perform them. Black females get extra duty since they can fulfill two requirements the need for being Black and the need for a female.

(p. 299)

The concept that Black women must always present an impenetrable shield that cannot be emotionally vulnerable to the exhaustion that their daily processes can expose them to is beyond troubling; it is an impossible standard (Cook, 2012). As articulated in Wallace (1999), the Black Superwoman is a woman who can handle large workloads and does not have the same fears, weaknesses, or insecurities as other women. She is seen as “intelligent, articulate, professional, independent, strong, assertive, and extremely talented” and essentially being everything to everyone within the workplace (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 139). Participant 2 shared, “It is the cultural expectation of the department for staff to go above and beyond.”

Participant 5 shared,

If you were Black, you were doing something diversity related. That’s where the department saw your strengths and talents. Even though I have a Masters in Higher Education and was pretty well rounded on the admission side, especially with operations, this is what you are going to do focus on this diversity stuff again, I’m very passionate about diversity, but I have talents in other areas as well. And then you realize your counterparts are doing less.

Participant 4 shared,

I don’t know how many times I brought this up in meetings about the inequities in the workload. I don’t know how I could possibly get you to understand that this work is not being allotted fairly, but also to then be asked to commit so much of your personal self and to be told that you hit the ceiling at a very entry-level role made me realize this was not the place for me.

Participant 3 shared,

There was the assumption that the Black staff were already going to be participating with SAP. I know that staff expressed that it didn't look great, and at one point, I had to reiterate this is an initiative of the entire office, so everyone should have an opportunity to help. But even then, it was on a volunteer basis, but I know some Black staff were "voluntold" to help with SAP.

Participant 6 shared,

A member of the leadership team told me that she had hired a Latino staff member and she would like to volunteer with SAP. The Latino employee never reached out to me to volunteer or attend any of the SAP sessions. There was an assumption in the office that if you were Black or Latino, you wanted to work with the SAP program.

From the interviews, it was apparent in the department that if you were Black, you wanted to volunteer and work with the SAP program. Again, most of the SAP Black team members who were voluntold to work with SAP were passionate about working with the program and the students, but assumed some work tasks would be taken off their plate because not all members of the recruitment or program teams had to work with the SAP program. Over time, this caused resentment and frustration, and burnout in the work environment. All of the interviewees no longer work with the SAP program, and all of them experienced burnout.

This phenomenological-hermeneutic study was grounded within a philosophical tradition and a research approach, and utilizing this methodology aided in fully understanding the phenomenon. The first qualitative findings focused on why SAP employees decided to leave their work environment, which included: (a) low pay, (b) no flexibility in work schedule, (c) no promotional career opportunities, (d) long hours, and (e) the manifestation of burnout. The second

qualitative finding illuminated the reasons for burnout, including additional work and constant availability to address work-related problems. These findings are not new to higher education, as similar working conditions in the field led to burnout, fatigue, and departure (Marshall et al., 2016). The third finding is that the Black women in the study pointed to examples of inequities in the workload among their white peers. All of the women in this study emphasized how they were not able to disengage from work. The Black women felt a sense of responsibility to the Black students they were working with within the SAP program and would feel bad if they could not attend the program for any reason. Most of the Black women felt taken advantage of, and Participant 4 said if you want to work these additional diversity and access programs, “Pay me for my Blackness.” The Black women in this study possess a unique standpoint on, or perspective of, their experiences, and there are certain commonalities of perception shared by Black women as a group (Collins, 1986).

I would also like to mention that the SAP program continued through the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, and one of the interviewees discussed how it negatively affected program outcomes for high school sessions and students taking classes at the community college. All the SAP programs became virtual and were opened to all 10 JPS school district students. Although it was open to all students, the attendance for the program was low, and there was no need for additional SAP support staff since everything was online. The instructional time was cut down from 2 hours in-person to 1 hour online because of low student interaction and engagement. None of the interviewees stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was an additional factor that led them to burn out. Currently, the SAP program no longer operates under the admissions office and has moved to a new department where the focus is on K-12 educational initiatives.

5.0 Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

In summation, the aim of this study was to understand the lived experiences of college access practitioners associated with the SAP program through a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry. Institutions of higher learning continue to be sites in which racism, sexism, and intersecting forms of oppression are produced, reproduced, and maintained (Vergee, 2013). Organizations without systems to support the well-being of their employees have higher turnover, lower productivity, and higher healthcare costs (Moss, 2019). It is important for leaders to create burnout prevention strategies for employees. The impact of racial oppression, attitudes, values, and ideas are not merely a product of encounters with individuals but are structured by the ideologies, ethics, and practices of institutions and society (Leong, 2013). The college access practitioners left the SAP program at TRU due to the inequities in the workload and perceived their race and gender to be a factor. The workload or environment for the Black participants were different at times compared to white participants. The experiences of the former Black employees are significant for two reasons. Black women realize that minimizing one form of oppression, while essential, may still leave them oppressed in other equally dehumanizing ways. As institutions that were not initially created for the benefit of Black individuals or women serve as backdrops within this study functioned as they were initially created. As it relates to supporting the needs of Black women within the institutional setting, it was less about supporting the needs of their workers, but instead serving students, which led to more capital for the institution, was always the focus (Cook, 2012). Although attending to the needs of their employees is not the primary

objective, not acknowledging them, especially as it relates to supporting Black women, has troubling consequences.

Students of color academically and socially benefit from seeing themselves represented within the administration (Burgis, 2009). Although many of the participants who were interviewed spoke about the value of supporting students, they all spoke of the exhaustion and fatigue of these practices. Showing up within their positions had implications for their health and how they interacted with their colleagues at work. The implication of this study, particularly within PWIs, is that if attending to the needs of their employees, especially their employees of color, remains a nonexistent focus, it can directly impact the retention and recruitment efforts of students and staff of color. All of the participants no longer work with the SAP program. This practice of placing all the responsibility for diverse work on communities of color, or more directly, Black women, has a historical lineage that directly correlates to slavery, bondage, and servitude (Leong, 2013). However, the only difference is that although the physical shackles of servitude have been removed, the psychological ramifications of care without regard for the humanity of the worker still remain.

It is not, nor should it be, the responsibility of Black women to change the system, which operates in killing their souls as well as their physical bodies (Cook, 2012). However, it will never be the administration's first directive to care for Black women's needs because they can never be the priority through an imperialistic white supremacist capitalist patriarchal system (Collins, 1986). The recommendations in the next section focus on what organizational leaders can do to support their employees and how employees need to prioritize their mental and health needs if they are going to provide support to anyone else. The field must deconstruct and dismantle practices and policies that place the responsibilities of care and concern at the feet of its minoritized

communities or, for all intense and purposes, Black women. Combahee (1983) stated, “If Black women were free, it would remain that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression” (p. 2).

5.2 Recommendations for Practitioners and Higher Education Institutions

As the former manager of SAP for five years, I began this study to share my story and other stories that never get told. I am an individual who benefited tremendously from college access programs growing up, and when I started to see friends or colleagues leaving the field, I knew this phenomenon needed to be explored. Most of the staff members who provided support for the SAP program were Black women, and I thought it was crucial to highlight their experiences. All of the SAP team members held full-time roles within the admissions office, which meant they had to recruit the incoming freshman class, review admissions applications, and attend on and off-campus program events. Supporting the SAP program was an additional responsibility assigned solely to this group and led to a substantial inequity in their workloads, one that was mentioned throughout the interviews. If institutional leaders do not focus on the needs of their employees, especially their Black employees, it can directly impact retention and recruitment efforts for students and staff of color. Based on the study, the following recommendations for practice included: (a) create an inclusive environment where staff feels valued and heard, (b) promote practitioner wellness and self-care, and (c) require senior leaders to participate in ongoing trainings on DEI in the workplace.

My primary recommendation as it relates to this study is to establish a community of care among Black women. Institutions of higher learning were not initially created for the benefit of Black people or women. It is important for Black employees to build their own sense of community

within these organizations. Create a process to support existing or new affinity groups on campus that affirms varied experiences for staff. Acknowledging an individual's multiple identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion) and the complexities of those identities is critical. It will facilitate community in ways that bring dynamism and richness to the campus. Collecting feedback from current and new affinity group participants and analyzing the data through survey instruments to reflect inclusion and belongingness is critical. It is important for Black women to have a safe place in the workplace where they can share their concerns and feel supported by their colleagues. Just as adamant as we are about creating climates that are supportive to students of color, we must be just as vigilant in creating safe and supportive working environments for Black women. The college access profession must start authentically and critically examining the intersectional lives of its workers. Just as we understand that universal theories cannot truly capture the experiences of students outside of the margins, so too must this point be made for recommendations for practitioner wellness and self-care.

The second recommendation is to promote practitioner wellness for those with marginalized identities. The study findings revealed that feelings of burnout that were experienced in the work environment bled over into the interviewee's personal lives. Passion-driven and caregiving roles are some of the most susceptible to burnout, and the consequences can mean life or death; suicide rates among caregivers are dramatically higher than that of the general public and 40% higher for men and 130% higher for women (Moss, 2019). For many professionals of color, specifically Black women, how they serve students is directly tied to their identities. As evidenced in the study, institutions will not take better care of them than they should of themselves. However, Black women must fight just as hard for their own wellness as Black women. Some strategies for self-care include acknowledging the stressors in the workplace that are impacting practitioners,

identifying a healthy support system and utilizing the system, setting healthy boundaries in personal and professional life, giving oneself permission to make mistakes, and asking what was learned from the mistakes, seeking mental health support when needed, and learning healthy strategies to let go of things that are out one's control (Paduraru, 2014). Also, taking time off from work when needed and not working on your time off is important.

The third recommendation is to offer ongoing DEI training for individuals in leadership roles that can help address inequities within the workplace. Diversity brings with it a number of educational benefits, including improved racial and cultural awareness, enhanced critical thinking, higher levels of service to the community, and a more educated citizen (Clayton, 2021). Higher education administrators can achieve the institution's mission and deliver on the promise of access if leaders institutionalize DEI practice and embrace equity-minded approaches in their leadership (Clayton, 2021). Creating an environment where staff feel like they belong is vital for all members of a campus community but particularly historically underrepresented and marginalized populations.

By adopting an equity-minded approach to leadership and facilitating greater inclusion, institutional leaders can help employees feel like their voice is being heard. From my experience in management, the leaders who sign up for the training are the ones who are open to learning about DEI issues and want to be mindful of their own biases. Often, the leaders who need to take the trainings because of their lack of cultural and social awareness did not sign up. That is why it is important for everyone in a leadership role to participate in DEI trainings because they are supervising individuals from various ethnic backgrounds and experiences. If leaders do not understand the systemic issues in the world and workplace, they cannot effectively provide support for their staff. If leaders do not support their staff, it will be harder to retain good employees over

time. Participants also noted that institutions were occasionally aware of challenges but did not change practices. Institutional research on workplace conditions should include plans to enact changes to support employees, not simply collect and analyze data (Hirsch, 2021).

Institutional leaders must adjust their practices from burning through employees to prioritizing the humanity of their workforce by making institutional-level reforms to navigate the challenges to come. A diverse workforce leads to more creativity and innovation (Roberge & Dick, 2010). Finally, I would recommend a more directed study focused on Black women who work in college access at colleges and universities because their experiences are unique and different than their peers. If the needs of Black practitioners are not met, they will continue to burn out in their roles, find a new work environment or industry, one where that feel like they belong. Black women are trying to escape discrimination and other workplace barriers (Moss, 2019). I would urge leaders to check on their Black employees, specifically women, even though we have learned over the years to “thrive while surviving.” Although the WHO’s leaders are working on guidelines to help organizations with prevention strategies, most still have no idea what to do about burnout.

5.3 Implications of Practice for Future Research

Although it is important to name that Black women are not a monolith, participants shared a collective standpoint that can inform policies and practices. While these implications are suggestions for moving forward, they cannot and will not be effective unless institutions’ leaders enact structural change and tackle overarching systems of racism and sexism that work together to create barriers for Black women at work and in society, at large. Despite the increase in organizations adopting DEI initiatives and the proliferation of DEI firms and practitioners, a

majority of these initiatives are less effective than many make them out to be (Zheng, 2022). Organizational leaders are eager to fund a one-time workshop or training and are less likely to create long term interventions that can change incentive structures, shift the balance of power and resources. Three implications for practice emerged as the result of this study, which include the significance of Black women's labor unions, kinship and collective advocacy in the work environment. To address workload inequities or unfair treatment in the workplace. Some point to labor unions or collective bargaining to address equal employment opportunities, occupational safety and health, and quality of work life. In the summer of 1881, a group of Black women laundresses formed The Washing Society of Atlanta by deploying organizational technical communication to collectively bargain for better working conditions and wages (Edwards & Walwema, 2022). The women exercised forms of self-determination such as negotiating better pay directly with their employers, quitting one employer for another, or sitting out altogether for a period of time. All of the interviews who identified as Black women perceived inequities in the workload. By forming community networks and rallying support among those networks are central in employing agency.

Kinship is a main social force, geographically structuring individuals into places of living and working in the past as well as today. Kinship relationships fall under the category of relationships grounded in responsibility (Whyte, 2021). When members of a society practice responsibilities to one another extensively, there is a high degree of interdependence. Such interdependence serves the purpose of facilitating a society's responsiveness to changes that affect its members' safety, wellbeing, and self-determination. Some of the Black participants in the study talked about feeling a sense of responsibility to the students and program. The majority of the

students were Black and the responsibility of care in that type of work setting was both exhilarating and exhausting for college access practitioners.

If individuals are strategizing and organizing together, that can make a huge difference. Collective advocacy brings individuals together who have a common interest. It aims to provide a supportive environment in which a group can explore this interest, identify goals and seek possible solutions. According to Collins (1990), collective organizing remains critical to spurring the action consciousness raising of individuals and the social transformation of institutions needed to enact social change. Self-advocacy in the workplace can be harmful to an individual.

Participant 1 stated at times when she was experiencing symptoms of burnout, she did not want to say anything due to fear of losing her job. Collective action that builds the solidarity to find collective solutions is critical.

In reflection upon the literature every movement for equity and justice must be focused on the liberation of those most marginalized, and in freeing Black women, everyone benefits. Black women's understandings of themselves as working harder upheld previous findings.

According to Collins (2000):

For most Black women those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences. Thus, lived experience as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by U.S. Black women. (p. 257)

Without the expertise of the individuals experiencing these situations, the findings from the research will not be as authentic. Institutional leaders must act to increase and retain Black women in higher education. Colleges and universities must value a diverse workforce in all branches of their institutions. These women have rich backgrounds and bring diversity in their

experiences, their perspectives, and their abilities. They also bring different worldviews, which help to promote a multicultural environment. Their presence is crucial for the personal and academic success of minority students for whom they act as mentors, role models, and advisers. Ultimately, college access professionals support the most vulnerable, and the work they perform is critical to institutions of higher learning. For further reading I would recommend the book, *From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: A Guide for Campus-Based Leadership and Practice*, which is a vital wealth of information for college and university presidents and provosts, academic and student affairs professionals, faculty, and practitioners who seek to dismantle institutional barriers that stand in the way of achieving equity, specifically racial equity to achieve equitable outcomes in higher education. Systematic change must come from the top to positively affect change throughout an organization for staff and students.

Appendix A Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Preamble-
Thank you for participating in this interview regarding burnout among former college access practitioners with the Pittsburgh Admissions Program (SAP). As the former manager of the SAP program and a current doctoral student, I am studying the lived experiences of former staff or volunteers of the program who experience burnout due to the work environment. The aim of this interview is to gather insights from former SAP staff members on how they experienced burnout and how their racial, gender, or cultural identities played a factor. Based on the survey results five former staff members stated they experienced burnout. The participation is completely voluntarily, non-compensable, and extremely appreciated. All personal and identifiable information from participants will be kept confidential and I will not include your names or any other information that could identify you in any reports I write. Do you have any questions before we begin? I would also like to record our interview to ensure that I accurately capture all the information shared. Do I have permission to record?
Section One: Role with SAP Program-5 minutes
Q1- How long did you work with the SAP program?
Q2- Can you speak about your work responsibilities in the Office of Admissions & Financial Aid? Specifically, with the SAP program and what was your role?
Q3- Why did you decide to stop working with SAP?
Section Two: Staff Burnout-25 minutes
Q1- <i>Provided a definition of burnout:</i> Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's

job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job (Maslach, 2011). While working with the SAP program, did you exhibit any symptoms of burnout? Yes or No?
Q2- Can you identify which burnout symptom you experienced in the work environment and how these symptoms manifested? (Please provide examples.)
Q3- How did you feel differently about your work responsibilities during the burnout period?
Q4- Do you think the student population you were serving contributed to burnout? Why or why not?
Q5- How did burnout affect your behavior in your personal or professional life? (Please provide some examples.)
Q6- Were there any challenges in your role, and how did that contribute to burnout?
Q7 How did the onset of Covid affect your role and contribute to burnout?
Section Three: Emphasis on Racial, Gender, and Cultural Oppression-15 minutes
Q1- (Reflection) In thinking about your work duties, how much of it is tied to race, gender, or cultural expectation? (1) What are your identities? (2) What is it like to be a (however they identify)? (3) Did those experiences contribute to burnout? (4) The decision to leave?
Q2- <i>Despite regulations that attempt to promote equality within the workplace, discrimination against certain social groups, such as women, still occurs, with women faring worse than men on most measures of economic equity, including income, unemployment, and occupational distribution (Fagenson,1993).</i> As (however they identify), how does burnout impact your life differently than others?
Section Four: Wrap-up-10 minutes
Q1- Did you ever express feelings of burnout to your supervisor/leadership or colleagues? If so, how was it received?
Q2- Could anything be done to make you feel less burned out?
Q3- Is there anything that you want to clarify or add to the discussion?
TITLE OF STUDY
Exploring Burnout Phenomena through the Perceptions of Former College Access Professionals

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study aims to gather insights from former SAP staff and team members on how they experienced symptoms of burnout and how that impacted them to stay or leave the role. Also how they recognized racial and gender oppression in the work environment. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Pre-Surveys

The amount of time estimated per survey is no longer than five minutes (5 mins).

RISKS

There is limited risk of data with electronic collection platforms. You may decline to answer any or all questions, and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

Participant insight will also expand and deepen the literature about the experiences of practitioners that work in college and access and how to better support those individuals.

CONFIDENTIALITY

For this research study, your comments will not be anonymous.

Appendix B Interview Questions for Study

1. What is your name and current occupation?
2. What is your ethnicity and gender?
3. Do you still work with the SAP program?
4. How long did you work with the SAP program?
5. Can you speak about your work responsibilities in the Office of Admissions & Financial Aid? Specifically, with the SAP program and what was your role?
6. Why did you decide to stop working with SAP?
7. (Burnout questions) *Provided a definition of burnout: Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job (Maslach, 2011).* While working with the SAP program, did you exhibit any symptoms of burnout? Yes or No?
8. Can you identify which burnout symptom you experienced in the work environment and how these symptoms manifested? (Please provide examples.)
9. How did you feel differently about your work responsibilities during the burnout period?
10. Do you think the student population you were serving contributed to burnout? Why or why not?
11. How did burnout affect your behavior in your personal or professional life? (Please provide some examples.)
12. Were there any challenges in your role, and how did that contribute to burnout?

13. How did the onset of Covid affect your role and contribute to burnout?
14. (Reflection) In thinking about your work duties, how much of it is tied to race, gender, or cultural expectation? (1) What are your identities? (2) What is it like to be a (however they identify)? (3) Did those experiences contribute to burnout? (4) The decision to leave?
15. *Despite regulations that attempt to promote equality within the workplace, discrimination against certain social groups, such as women, still occurs, with women faring worse than men on most measures of economic equity, including income, unemployment, and occupational distribution (Fagenson, 1993).* As a (however they identify), how does burnout impact your life differently than others?
16. Did you ever express feelings of burnout to your supervisor/leadership or colleagues? If so, how was it received?
17. Could anything be done to make you feel less burned out?
18. Is there anything that you want to clarify or add to the discussion?

Appendix C Primary Codes & Themes

TOP CODES

Cannot disengage from work
Responsibility to the role
Disruption in sleep patterns
because I can't stop thinking
about work
Cannot step away not even for
health or personal care

Experienced burnout while working
with the SAP
Emotional Exhaustion
Cynicism and venting
Developed mental or physical
issues

Race & gender expectations
Women are caregivers in
education
Failure is Not an Option for
Black women
Black woman seen as playing
the "mammy" role

Departmental expectations
(culture of organization)
Assumption Black and Latino
staff want to work with the SAP
program
Black labor exploitation

Frustration, Irritation: Black Woman
Workload vs. Whiteness and Work
Inequities in work responsibilities
Additional work with no additional
pay
Pay me for my blackness

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