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BEHIND TWO DOORS:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS IN TRANSITION AT A
MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

By

William Richard Fairfield Harmon

A THESIS

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BEHIND TWO DOORS:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS IN TRANSITION AT A
MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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University of Nebraska, 2011

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The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case study was to explore the experiences of resident assistants (RAs) as they transitioned from a traditional, corridor-style residence hall, to suite-style hall environments. RAs that were in the transition from the traditional, corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall contributed to this study by participating in multiple interviews over the course of the fall semester of the 2010-11 academic year. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) was also interviewed during the fall semester. Throughout the study, the RAs were asked to reflect upon their (a) roles and responsibilities as RAs in the suite-style environment, (b) effects they have seen in their social and academic lives as a result of their new assignment, and (c) how their current experiences compared with their prior traditional hall experiences.

This study provided an opportunity to explore and understand how the suite-style halls are affecting the RA role. The study reports that many aspects of the RA role, such as their staff dynamics, social lives, academic experiences, and family interactions, have remained the same in the suite-style halls. However, the physical barriers have decreased interactions with residents, increased the difficulty in establishing community, and

residents' needs have changed what roles the RAs utilize in the suite-style environment.

This study includes recommendations for future research and practitioners.

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Chapter One

Introduction

For new students, grabbing armfuls of boxes and walking into the residence hall for the first time is a moment filled with excitement, anxiety, and hope for a positive, life changing experience. In essence, the residence hall acts as gateway for many students, as it is the first, true, on-campus environment that marks their transition into becoming a college student. As foundational as the classroom is to the educative experience, the other environments with which students interact (be they physical, human, structural, or perceptual in nature) also add to the student experience. Fundamental to the profession of student affairs, and residence life in particular, are two premises related by Riker and DeCoster 1965. These premises, that (a) environment influences behavior and (b) learning is a total process, underlie many of the theories and practices that support the educational role of contemporary college residence life (Riker & DeCoster, 2008, pp. 81-82).

Although residence life serves many of the same functions as it did in years past, the modern residence life program is hardly recognizable from those experienced by parents of the current generation. The old guard of dorms, those high rise behemoths of the 1950s and 1960s, are now being replaced by a new wave of halls, designed to meet the needs and expectations of a highly consumer-oriented society. Administrators have recognized that having attractive residence facilities assist in the recruitment and retention of the best and brightest students. Like an arms race, institutions are constantly building bigger and better halls, with more attractive amenities and conveniences to ensure they remain ahead in a highly-competitive higher education market. Among the

different housing options being constructed at colleges across the nation, suite and apartment style halls have become the most popular, and are setting the gold standard for modern residence life (Balogh, Grimm, & Hardy, 2005, pp. 51-56).

However, as with any change of physical environment, the experiences of those living in these new halls also changes. Researchers have studied the experiences of undergraduates who inhabit these new environments to see what effects they have on retention, satisfaction, and risk behaviors of students. But few have explored the effect of suite-style halls on the other subculture of students living and working in the residence halls—resident assistants.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case study was to explore the experiences of resident assistants (RAs) as they transitioned from a traditional, corridor-style residence hall, to suite-style hall environments. RAs that were in the transition from the traditional, corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall contributed to this study by participating in multiple interviews over the course of the fall semester of the 2010-11 academic year. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) was also interviewed during the fall semester. Throughout the study, the RAs were asked to reflect upon their (a) roles and responsibilities as RAs in the suite-style environment, (b) effects they have seen in their social and academic lives as a result of their new assignment, and (c) how their current experiences compared with their prior traditional hall experiences.

Research Questions

The grand tour question in this study was: What are the lived experiences of RAs as they transition from a corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall? The following six research questions were explored in this study:

1. Has the RA role changed in the suite-style environment?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a suite-style hall?
3. How has the suite-style environment affected the RA-resident interaction?
4. Has the RA noticed a change in their social relationships as a result of the suite-style environment?
5. Has the RA noticed a change in their academic experience as a result of the suite-style environment?
6. What are the Residence Hall Director's perceptions of the RA role in the suite-style environment, and are they similar or dissimilar from the RA's perceptions?

Research Design

This was a qualitative, multi-case study which asked RAs who were in the process of transferring and adjusting to a suite-style hall how their new environment was affecting their academic, social, and work related experiences. The study required two RAs to participate in a series of four interviews spread over the course of the fall semester. RA participants were also asked to photograph their interactions with their residents, their hall environment, and other moments that were typical of their experience in the suite-style hall. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) of the suite-style hall was interviewed once at the end of the fall semester, as a way to compare the

supervisor viewpoint with that of the RA. In all, three different RAs participated in this study, but only two of the participants completed the full interview requirements. The third participant's data was not included in this study due to issues resulting in their removal from the interview protocol. The RA participants volunteered for the study following an RD recommendation and an electronic invitation from the primary researcher. Access to these participants, both RA and RD, was authorized by the Department of Residence Life at a Midwestern, RU/VH research university, with which they were affiliated.

Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to gain a rich and thoroughly deep understanding of the experiences of RAs in the suite-style halls. The use of semi-structured interviews was ideal, as it allowed for the exploration of emergent thoughts and ideas expressed by the participants, that the researcher had not anticipated but found relevant. Each interview was conducted one-on-one so that participants could describe their own experiences fully, without interference by others. Additionally, this allowed the researcher to compare differences between the participants without the possibility of "group-think." Each interview was then transcribed and checked for accuracy, by both the interviewer and participants. The researcher then coded the transcriptions, and eventually highlighted the themes inherent in the data.

Definition of Terms

Resident Assistant/Resident Advisor: Undergraduate students usually at sophomore standing or above, who serve as front-line, direct paraprofessionals in the residence hall environment. As live-in employees, RAs usually receive free room and board, and possible stipends, in exchange for their work in the halls. RA roles include

acting as a role model, counselor, and teacher to their student residents, while at the same time fulfilling their requirements as students themselves. Typical duties include: (a) providing personal help and assistance to residents in the residence hall environment; (b) managing the formation and facilitation of small groups; (c) helping to organize and deliver social, recreational, and educational programs; (d) informing students or referring students to resources of appropriate information sources; (e) explaining and enforcing university and residence life rules, regulations, and policies; and (f) constructing and maintaining safe, orderly, inclusive, and engaging environments.

Residence Hall Director: Entry-level professional residence life staff charged with the oversight of residence halls. RDs perform a variety of administrative tasks in the residence halls, including the processing of judicial cases for student residents who violate policies and procedures, and the general supervision of RA staff members. RDs significantly influence the leadership and management of residence halls, and the environments of those who live in them.

Residence Hall: A building designed to house student residents in a collegiate setting. Many varieties exist, but in general, residence halls provide students with sleeping rooms, bathroom facilities, study spaces, dining options, and other amenities.

Dormitories: For the purposes of this study, “dormitories” may be used in place of the term “residence halls” or to refer to the older, traditional, corridor-style residence halls. The term “residence hall” is preferred by most residence life professionals, as the term “dormitory” (or “dorm”) is reflective of the environments common before the newer emphasis on creating supportive living-learning environments.

Traditional/Corridor-style Hall: Refers to older halls that emphasized double or single occupancy rooms organized around double-loaded (or rooms on both sides) or single corridors. Traditional halls are also associated with community bathrooms, the absence of a kitchen and a sink in the individual rooms, and in most cases the shared room experience. Many of these halls were built as a result of the College Housing Act of 1950 (College Housing Act of 1950) and were designed as high-rise buildings.

Suite-style Halls: Provide suites for four residents, with shared-double rooms or single rooms, a shared living room, two bathrooms, and a kitchenette. Individual suites are connected on floors by single hallways.

Residence Life/Housing: Refers to the department of professionals and paraprofessionals who administer the physical spaces and programs that provide students with a residential living experience on college campuses.

RU/VH Research University: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching definition for institutions that offer four year degree programs, are Doctoral granting institutions, and have “very high research activity” (Carnegie Foundation, 2011).

Significance

Little is known about how the movement towards suite-style halls is affecting the RA experience. RAs are vital to the operation and success of residence halls and, as such, residence life professionals need to understand the lived-experience of their primary, front-line employees. Through documentation of the RA experience in suite-style halls, residence life professionals may gain an understanding of the challenges, stressors, interactions, and roles that RAs have in these new halls. With this understanding, residence life professionals will be better equipped to design programs,

expectations, and working environments that are conducive to building engaging living-learning environments, despite the changes in physical environments.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study had several delimitations inherent in its design. The study was qualitative and utilized direct, one-on-one interactions between the participants and the researcher. The study was completed and focused on RAs at a single institution. Only three RAs and one RD participated in the study. Additionally, this study was bound by time, having been completed in the course of a single fall semester. One of the major limitations of qualitative research is that the results are not statistically generalizable to the entire population of those eligible for the study.

Summary

Residence halls add to the student experience and are important to the educational mission of the higher education. In order to provide modern and attractive facilities, many residence life departments are building suite-style halls. The researcher explored the experiences of RAs in the suite-style environment to gain insight into how these new halls are affecting the RA position and lived experience. In Chapter Two the researcher will provide a brief overview of the literature surrounding residence life, RAs, and the new trends in collegiate residence life. In Chapter Three, the researcher will present the methodology used to gather participants and data concerning the RA experience in suite-style halls. In Chapter Four the researcher will present the themes uncovered through analysis of the data, and in Chapter Five the researcher will discuss the findings of the study and will reflect upon the implications for the future.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The impact and role of residence life in the collegiate experiences of students has been researched thoroughly over the years. Bleiberg (2004) noted that “the residential experience can be an integral part of students’ educations and their identity development and, therefore, is an important component of the college learning experience for many students” (p. 3). Much of the existing research on the role of residence life focuses on the undergraduate experience, and how residence life enhances the students’ connection to their campus, increases their involvement and engagement, and contributes to their academic success and persistence to graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 197). Resident assistants (RAs) have subsequently been studied because of the large role they play in the operation of housing units and fulfillment of the housing mission to provide a supportive living-learning environment for students.

According to Posner and Brodsky (1993), RAs are front-line student leaders working and living with other students in college and university residence halls who perform a multitude of tasks and roles for the operation of residence life (p. 300). Much of the research on RAs has focused on (a) the impact of the RA role on the undergraduate residence hall experience, (b) the leadership role of the RA, (c) how residence life directions and ideologies define the roles of RAs, (d) why students choose to become RAs, (d) the positive and negative effects of the RA position, and (e) the qualities and characteristics of successful RAs (Blimling, 1998; Deluga & Winters, 1990; Denzine & Anderson, 1999; Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hardy & Dodd, 1998; Paladino, Murray,

Newgent, & Gohn, 2005; Posner & Brodsky, 1993; Upcraft & Pilato, 1982). However, the review of the literature on the RA position makes apparent that the expectations for the RAs have changed over the years reflecting shifting ideologies surrounding residence life.

Due to the changing expectations of students and their parents, competition from external housing alternatives and advancements in technology, residence life personnel have had to change as well (Balogh et al., 2005). Unlike the corridor-style towers and massive cinderblock dormitories of the 1950s to 1970s, colleges and universities are offering students a multitude of living styles to fit growing expectations. Apartment-style and suite-style halls, replete with full kitchens, private rooms, and private restrooms are becoming more common (Balogh et al., 2005). Gone are the shared bathrooms, concrete walls, and shared-room experiences that have defined residence life for the past 30 years. Moreover, as the new physical environments have changed, the experiences of the residents and the RA experience have changed as well.

In the remainder of the chapter, the researcher will review the relevant professional literature, summarizing (a) the history of residence life and its evolution, (b) the research regarding the importance of residence life to the educational mission of collegiate institutions, (c) the RA position and how its roles have changed over time, and (d) the new trends in residence life that are changing the RA experience.

A Brief History of Residence Life

The integration of the living and learning experiences of students is not a new concept. Even before the Common Era (BCE) young men traveled long distances to sit at the feet of their masters, and learn from such great philosophers and educational leaders

as Confucius, Plato, and Socrates (Lucas, 2006). Once they reached their destinations, they were advised to live with each other and their teachers, in part because it was assumed that the interactions that occurred where they lived would contribute to their learning (Palmer, Broido, & Campbell, 2008, p. 87). Despite being far removed from that time period, the school where Confucius lived with his students had much in common with today's residential colleges (p. 87).

Moving forward to the founding of the colonial colleges in America, it was common to find students and faculty living together in campus dormitories (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 87). Because most students who entered college did so immediately after grammar school (eighth grade), faculty served *in loco parentis*, and their out-of-class duties focused on developing moral character and regulating student behavior (pp. 87-88). Additionally, many early college students were forced to travel great distances to attend the handful of universities operating in the United States. Providing the housing options at these universities developed from a necessity to provide lodging for young students who had nowhere else to live (Willoughby, Carroll, Marshall, & Clark, 2009, p. 23). Colleges and universities were also residential for the reason described by Rudolph (1990) as:

a tradition so fundamental, so all-encompassing, that to call it merely a tradition is to undervalue it. For what is involved here is nothing less than a way of life, the collegiate way . . . the notion that a curriculum, a library, a faculty, and students are not enough to make a college. It is an adherence to the residential scheme of things. (p. 87)

American colleges adopted a collegiate model because many of the early founders were graduates of the English residential colleges (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 88). By the time colleges were established in cities like Philadelphia and New York, the collegiate pattern

was well established and, despite not being necessary, had become tradition (Rudolph, 1990, pp. 87-88).

Eventually, in the early 1800s, the American higher education system shifted from the traditional English model, to a German model that required faculty to create and transmit knowledge through research (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89). The shift occurred due to two factors against the English collegiate model: (a) the criticism that high concentrations of young men living together, with so little academic work to do and many vices to distract them, led to moral decay and rebellion; and (b) increased influence from an increasing number of administrators who had studied abroad and experienced the German model of higher education (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 88). As the German model became more prevalent, faculty devoted more time to research and administrators assumed the responsibility for student life outside of the classroom (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89; Rudolph, 1990, pp. 118-120). These new administrators, deans of men and women, eventually became known as student affairs personnel, and some were charged with the operation of student housing.

Until the mid-20th century, residence life staff served primarily as building managers and student disciplinarians. They often had no training in how to integrate living and learning experiences, and many did not have college degrees (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89). However, as housing systems became larger and more complex, the need for professionally trained staff able to operate the residence halls and integrate the living and learning experiences became more pronounced. In 1952, the professional organization, the Association of College and University Housing Officers (ACUHO),

formed in order to establish professional guidelines and best practices for collegiate housing systems (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89).

During the 1950s and 1960s, colleges experienced unprecedented growth as higher education expanded to serve two large groups of students. The first group was the World War II veterans who enrolled in college with financial assistance provided by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Our Documents.gov, 2011). The second group was the children of the returning G.I.s, otherwise known as the "baby boomers," who were born soon after the war ended. Additionally, the second group included record numbers of women and minorities who began to attend college. This put added pressure on university officials to provide them adequate living arrangements. The College Housing Act of 1950 provided Federal loans to assist educational institutions so that they could build housing and other educational facilities for students and faculties (College Housing Act of 1950). For the next two decades, much of the residence life profession was focused on the funding, design, construction, and management of new student housing facilities that ranged from apartments for veterans who were married and had children, to the high-rise residence halls that could house hundreds of students (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89). The majority of these halls were constructed to house as many students as possible and represented the dormitory-style housing typically associated with college residence halls of that era (Frederiksen, 1993, pp. 172-173). As the needs for additional housing capacities were met at colleges, housing officers focused attention on staff and programs that were, or would become, associated with residence life (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89).

In his 1961 book, *Student Personnel Services in Colleges and Universities*, Williamson described the functions of student housing personnel as 'securing

housing; maintaining standards of hygiene, safety, and behavior in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and private rooming houses; residential counseling; and stimulating students to participate in governing and administering the dormitories and other residences'. (cited in Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89)

Although Williamson (1961) suggested that housing had an educative function, at this time period, many viewed residence life primarily as a service unit and perceived its functions to be largely divorced from the academic mission of the institution (cited in Palmer et al., 2008, p. 89). In 2008, Riker and DeCoster stated:

It is simply not possible to disembodify the human personality and develop a student's intellectual capacities in isolation from his cultural, spiritual, and psychological growth. Non-classroom activities, experiential learning, as well as classroom education must be developed to enhance student growth as total human beings. Students spend more time in their place of residence than in all other locations on campus combined, and the role of professional and student-staff members again becomes a prominent factor regarding the total education process. (p. 82)

During the latter half of the 1960s, many housing officers implemented some of the recommendations Riker (1965) offered for staff, programs, facilities, funding, and other areas that needed to be addressed in turning residence halls into effective living-learning centers (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 90).

Since the 1970s, the emergence of new trends has changed the scope and number of educational opportunities offered by residence life in their halls. In the late 1970s, backed by research that suggested coed housing would increase the communication and decrease the stereotypical beliefs of the different genders, it became the norm for multiple college campuses (Willoughby et al., 2009, p. 24). By the late 1990s, several institutions had transformed conventional dormitories into residential living-learning communities (LLCs), which are residence hall areas designed to promote the academic integration of students. In an LLC, students of like majors, interests, or backgrounds are grouped onto

certain floors, sections or buildings, and faculty may be brought in for (a) on-site lectures or office hours, and/or (b) to provide developmental seminars and other academically-related events (Turley & Wodtke, 2010, p. 509). As the new millennium unfolds, residence life personnel have begun to adapt to the new generation of students with different expectations than those of their predecessors. Increasing student desires for (a) privacy and luxury (Devlin, Donovan, Nicolov, Nold, & Zandan, 2008, p. 489; Romano & Hanish, 2003, pp. 3-4); (b) the integration of technology into learning and daily life; and (c) calls for greater sustainability (Marsters & Bliss, 2007, p. 37; Martin & Allen, 2009, p. 35), have changed the residence life landscape, and there are expectations that this trend will continue.

Residence Life and the Educational Mission

The college years can be among the most eventful of one's life, presenting students with numerous opportunities for personal, social, and professional development. However, with these opportunities come challenges, as students struggle to mature, develop, and persist in an environment unlike those previously experienced. The transition from high school, the lack of social support, the presence of academic pressures, the need to define career goals, the search for self-identity, and the onset of financial troubles are some of the most common issues college students experience (Sax, 1997). However challenging, the collegiate environment is a complete learning experience, of which in-class learning is just a part of the equation.

That students are considered whole persons, that learning involves a multifaceted process extending beyond the purely intellectual domain, and that in-class and out-of-class learning experiences are mutually enhancing have become foundational assumptions in student affairs in general and campus housing in particular. (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 92)

Riker and DeCoster (2008) asserted two foundational premises that established the connection between the educational mission of the college and residence life. The first is that learning is a total process, and the second is that environment influences behavior (pp. 81-82). In 1945, the American Council on Education (ACE) stated:

Educational effectiveness is dependent upon the normal healthy functioning of the student outside as well as within the classroom. The student, however intelligent, who is physically ill, who is frustrated in his personal and social relationships, who is worried about his finances, who lacks a sense of direction and orientation in his education, and whose housing and study conditions constantly interfere with learning is in no position to give his best to his studies, and get the most of them. (1945, p. 5)

Additionally, Brown (1974) challenged student affairs practitioners stating:

It is time for student personnel workers to recognize that they too have been dealing with only part of the student, and it is no more valid for them to expect effectiveness in dealing with the student's development, independent of his academic life, than it is for the professor to think a student's personal self does not affect his academic growth. (p. 43)

These statements asserted the integrated nature of in-class and out-of-class learning experiences, which were expanded upon in numerous documents including the *Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1994), *Powerful Partnerships* (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], ACPA, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1998), and *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) (as cited in Palmer et al., 2008, p. 93). In the most recent of these documents, *College Learning for the New Global Century*, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2007) identified four critical outcomes of an undergraduate education:

1. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world;
2. Intellectual and practical skills, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative and information literacy, teamwork and problem solving;

3. Personal and social responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement- local and global, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning; and
4. Integrative learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies.

These outcomes relate to Riker and DeCoster's (2008) premises of learning as a total process, and as Kuh and associates (2005) pointed out, many of the outcomes can be fostered in residence hall experiences. Such educationally effective environments include:

1. human-scale environments housing small groups of students;
2. faculty offices in residences that foster faculty-student interactions;
3. themed living environments that, while not necessarily related to an academic discipline or major, include a course or other academic component shared by the residents;
4. academic and personal support for students; and
5. deliberate efforts to make educational programs (including first-year student programs) an integral part of the residential experience. (Kuh, 2005; Palmer et al., 2008, p. 93)

These practices represent modern residence life initiatives to connect in- and out-of-class learning for students to develop as whole people, which is critical to Riker and DeCoster's (2008) first premise that learning is a total process. The second premise, that environments influence behavior, is also foundational to the connection between the academic mission and residence life. Residence hall environments have changed significantly over the years, with changes made to foster student learning and development, to heighten student satisfaction and to increase retention (Strange & Banning, 2001; Palmer et al., 2008, p. 94).

The benefits of living on campus in the residence halls has been well documented. Colleges have requirements that freshmen reside on campus as a way to integrate them into the collegiate experience. Researchers have found that freshmen who live in

residence halls are more likely to succeed in college than those who live off campus or at home with parents (Astin, 1993, pp. 366-367). In a meta-analysis of the research addressing the benefits of residence life to students, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated:

We found little consistent post-1990 evidence that living on campus directly influences either knowledge acquisition or more general cognitive growth. . . . We suspect that residing on campus may exert an indirect, positive influence on these outcomes, particularly on general cognitive growth, by facilitating academic and social engagement, but we uncovered no empirical tests of this hypothesis. The post-1990 research on the effects of residence on student persistence, degree completion, and educational attainment supports our earlier conclusion that students living on campus are more likely to persist to degree completion than are similar students living elsewhere. . . . Place of residence has a clear bearing on the extent to which students participate in extracurricular activities, engage in more frequent interactions with peers and faculty members, and report positive perceptions of the campus social climate, satisfaction with their college experience, and greater personal growth and development. (p. 604)

Because most college students are still in the process of forming their identities, being involved in community activities may influence personal development (Moor, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998, as cited in Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003, pp. 517-518). Interacting with others is an essential component in identity formation because it enables the development of a sense of respect and a sense of interdependence (Arboleda et al., 2003, p. 518; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Environmental influences gained in residence halls, such as friendships and a sense of community, have a powerful influence over students' development (Arboleda et al., 2003, p. 518). Despite being an indirect source, the added benefits of encouraging student engagement and satisfaction with their collegiate experience, and increasing the retention and persistence of students to graduation makes residence life an important, can't-miss opportunity for students and an integral component to the educational mission of any college.

The Resident Assistant

Resident Assistants (RAs) serve on the front line for the delivery of students services to students living in college and university residence halls; and they represent to students the residence hall system and overall values and beliefs of the university through the delivery of programming, services, and policy enforcement (Johnson & Young-Shin, 2006, p. 31). Usually sophomores, RAs are hired by departments of residence life to act as live-in paraprofessional administrators, who carry oversight of their floors and residence halls, and who interact with students directly, on a day-to-day basis. In exchange for room and board, and sometimes a small stipend, the job of the RA requires nearly 24-hour availability and a capacity to respond to a multitude of diverse issues in residence halls (Blimling, 1998, pp. 3-13).

RAs traditionally have been perceived as supervisors, programmers, and enforcers of university policies and procedures, rather than as counselors and community builders. As described by Newton and Krauss (1973), RAs are undergraduate students (a) hired to help with the orientation of freshmen and transfer students; (b) to interact with and consult with students; (c) to assume responsibility for various administrative and managerial duties; (d) to interpret support, and help enforce the university's policies within the residence halls; and (e) to assist with educational, cultural, and social planning within residence halls (p. 321). Indeed, in a 1976 study by Shelton and Mathis, RAs who scored higher on being assertive were seen as more effective by their residents than those who were seen as non-assertive. In this study, assertive RAs were perceived by students as being significantly more open and honest, less likely to avoid conflict, and better able to handle discipline (Shelton & Mathis, 1976, p. 369). However, just as the concept of

college living evolved from that of the dormitory in which residents merely hung their hats and slept to one of a total living learning experience for the resident, so too did the concept of resident assistant evolve to encompass more than a person who merely monitors student behavior (Layne, Layne, & Schoch, 1977, p. 393).

Beginning in the late 1970s and continuing through the 1980s, as residence life adjusted its missions and visions after the housing boom, the RA took on new roles; that of a counselor, advisor, and community builder. In a 1984 report on the effects of peer training on RAs, Winston and Buckner (1984) described common RA roles as: (a) performing administrative duties; (b) initiating, supporting or advising programming efforts; (c) facilitating group formation; (d) establishing a healthy living environment; (e) explaining and enforcing rules and policies; (f) providing information; (g) making referrals to campus services and agencies; and (h) assisting individual students through counseling or helping interactions (p. 430). While the policy enforcement and administrative tasks were still present, these new roles and identities sometimes cause conflict. Winston and Buckner (1984) remarked on this conflict, stating: “These multiple roles and sometimes conflicting expectations (such as enforcing rules and providing counseling) make the RA position one that requires maturity, intelligence, skill, and dedication” (p. 430). Despite these conflicting roles, each highlighted the critical importance of RAs to the residence life experience. As Posner and Brodsky (1993) stated, RAs were responsible for:

providing a living-learning environment that encourages academic achievement while assisting each individual student and the resident community in their development’. RAs are responsible for the safety and well being (sic) of the residents on their hall or floor and typically work with these residents, along with other RAs in their residential complex, to provide extracurricular activities of both a social and academic nature. Housing directors and student personnel

administrators generally agree that the quality of residential life is directly related to the character and quality of the residential life staff (RAs). (p. 300)

As one can see, the RA role has changed over the years, reflecting the emergent theories and practices adopted by residence life. From policy enforcer and front-line administrator, to counselor and community builder, the RA role has become essential for the delivery of student services within the residence hall experience. So, with this knowledge, how would one describe the modern RA? Upcraft and Pilato (1982) stated that, regardless of institution, RAs are expected to (a) provide personal help and assistance; (b) manage and facilitate groups; (c) facilitate social, recreational, and educational programs; (d) inform students of or refer them to appropriate information sources; (e) explain and enforce the rules and regulation; and (f) maintain a safe, orderly, and relatively quiet environment (p. 10). Blimling (1998) went on to identify the five basic roles assumed by RAs; those of the (a) role model, (b) counselor, (c) teacher, (d) administrator, and (d) student (pp. 7-10).

The very fact that one holds a staff position within a residence hall declares to every student that the RA possesses certain characteristics that the university respects or considers important (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 395). Many RAs have equated the “role model” role to that of the fishbowl effect; in that RA position is highly visible in the residence hall and that, by virtue of the position, residents look up to their RAs (Blimling, 1998, p. 8). As RAs are models for appropriate collegiate behavior, they are expected to abide by the rules, regulations, and policies that the university has set (p. 8). Due to the nature of the RA position, “role modeling” is a constant expectation of RAs, both externally and internally of the residence hall environment.

The RA is also considered to hold a helping and advising role for students who are struggling to make adjustments to the many stresses and challenges that college offers (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 395). For example, many freshmen are required to live with complete strangers, and are often required to study more rigorously than they had in high school. According to O'Hare and Sherrer (1999), RAs, along with others, are "given the charge of supervising and counseling students to deal with psychological distress, interpersonal problems, and acute substance abuse crises" (p. 14). Although there exist many avenues for students to gain help and counseling from professional entities on many campuses, "[r]esident assistants interact with resident students in their on-campus homes and are most likely to observe changes in functioning such as withdrawal, insomnia, and risky behaviors" (Servaty-Seib, & Taub, 2008, p. 51). Indeed, in many cases, it is the RA who expected to provide counseling and assistance to students through this unique experience (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 396).

RAs also serve a teaching role in their daily interactions with their residents. For first-time students, RAs can be fountains of knowledge for university resources, services, contacts, activities, and other general college-related information. Additionally, the RA teaches group-process skills, facilitates group planning activities, and holds educational programs, designed to promote the living-learning process (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 396).

Finally, and one of the most overlooked aspects of the RA experience, RAs are students who are working through their own collegiate experience. Despite their primary role as a student, many RAs find that their studies get relegated to a secondary priority, as their RA position becomes all-consuming (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 396). The RA

position, as described by Blimling (1998), serves as the most comprehensive role in the entire student affairs division and is without a doubt one of the most difficult to hold and perform well (Roussel & Elleven, 2009, p. 396).

In looking at the RA position, how it was defined early on, and how the position has changed over the years, a sense of appreciation wells up for what they have been asked to do, and for all that they accomplish. Although many institutions define the RA role in different ways, perhaps Denzine and Anderson (1999) put it best and most simply by stating: “Possibly one of the most important roles of an RA is to positively influence the development of students” (p. 247).

So far, much of the literature review has focused on the positive effects that RAs have on the living-learning environment and roles that they play in the residence life. Yet, as much as RAs affect their environments, the environment and position also affects them. Much of the literature on RAs has focused on determining the extent of the effect that the RA role plays on the individual; many of those effects are negative and harmful to the student experience.

In a 1977 study, Layne et al. argued a need for assertiveness training because, as RAs “are often exposed to a variety of stress situations in their positions, they may need training in handling their own emotions and feelings” (p. 393). Layne et al. (1977) contended “that resident assistants often experience anxiety and guilt in dealing with certain aspects of their jobs,” and that assertiveness training would help mitigate these effects (p. 393). Why the guilt? Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) provided insight into this issue by stating that:

The role of the resident assistant (RA) in university residence halls is one that might produce significant strain. As an employee in charge of enforcing

university policy and state and federal laws in a residence hall of peers, and as a peer counselor, the RA can be expected to confront stressors that provide considerable challenge in his or her work. (p. 244)

The research into these stressors and the effects that they had on RAs produced the term: RA burnout. Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) defined burnout as “the gradual loss of caring about the people with whom one works” and suggested that “the chronic stress of the frequent and intense interpersonal contacts that characterize service professions is thus typically identified as the primary source of burnout” (p. 244). As is known, RAs live and work with their peers, students, and supervisors in an environment where it is difficult to distinguish work from personal time (Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989, p. 266). The possibility of constant interruptions allows little opportunity for relaxation or self-indulgence, and there is always more work to be completed (Hetherington et al., 1989, p. 266). Unfortunately, the roles of rule enforcer, counselor, and supervisor, at times, create an “us-them” dichotomy in which students become the opposition (Hetherington et al., 1989, p. 266). This, along with daily stress, constant interaction with others and their problems, little support from supervisors and friends, and minimal time away from work contribute to RA burnout.

Another factor that contributes to RA burnout is role ambiguity. As with most positions, clear expectations and agreed upon responsibilities are essential for success. However, if asked, students, parents, supervisors, and RAs might all provide different descriptions of what RAs are supposed to do. Are RAs friends or disciplinarians? Does one confront the behavior of those with whom they are trying to build a trusting and confident relationship? As Deluga and Winters (1990) stated, “RA’s difficulty in simultaneously coping with roles such as counselor, teacher, model students, friend, and

disciplinarian might serve as a foundation for stress” (p. 230). In short, RAs experiencing role ambiguity are uncertain about the dimensions of their position and responsibilities, and this leads to stress (Deluga, & Winters, 1990, p. 230).

In a study by Hardy and Dodd (1998), RA burnout was also associated with the type of floors to which RAs were assigned. In their results, Hardy and Dodd (1998) found that RAs assigned primarily to first-year student floors reported significantly greater depersonalization and slightly greater emotional exhaustion than those on mixed floors (with both freshmen and upperclassmen) (p. 500). To explain these results, Hardy and Dodd (1998) suggested that this was, “because first-year students experience the greatest difficulty coping with the academic and personal demands of college and thus place greater demands on their RAs than do upper-class students” (p. 500). As an alternative to this explanation, Hardy and Dodd (1998) also offered that perhaps RAs in first-year halls receive less social support from either staff or residents, which leads to higher depersonalization and exhaustion (p. 500). The RA position seems to be associated with high levels of stress and burnout, which can have negative effects on the students who work as RAs.

Additionally, the RA position seems to affect the religious expression of RAs and is linked to harassment, both verbal and physical. As stated by Moran, Roberts, Tobin, and Harvey (2008), “Many administrators feel that it is inappropriate for RAs to express their religion [via room decorations and activities], because residents who hold different religious perspectives may view the RAs as unapproachable” (pp. 52-53). In general, RAs are allowed to express their religious convictions in ways that do not attempt to coerce or pressure residents to participate (Moran et al., 2008, p. 53), but this issue holds

significant undertones for the RA position. As a rule, RAs want to appear approachable to create an atmosphere of trust and encourage residents to interact with them, but to risk offending residents with personal displays of expression may close those doors. The extent to which RAs may express their attitudes and opinions is a thin line that must be carefully walked, less they damage their communities and ability to be effective.

The last point to be made about the effect of the RA position on those students who hold those positions is disturbing, as it involves the propensity of verbal and physical violence directed at RAs. Schuh and Shipton (1983), at Indiana University-Bloomington, found that over 50% of the 163 RA respondents reported having an obscenity directed at them, with minority RAs receiving more racial slurs, women RAs receiving more sexual slurs, and male RAs receiving more threats to physical property (p. 429). Male RAs also reported encountering malicious pranks more often than female RAs, and female RAs more frequently reported suffering sexual abuse at least once than did male RAs (Schuh & Shipton, 1983, p. 429). However, the percentage of RAs experiencing physical abuse was rather small. In terms of frequency, RAs had obscenities directed at them more frequently than any other form of abuse, with a mean score of 13.5 times per year (Schuh & Shipton, 1983, p. 430). The mean score for physical abuse was once or twice during the academic year, with a range as high as 10 reported abuses during the academic year (Schuh & Shipton, 1983, p. 430). Despite the age and singular location of this study, and the hopes that issues like these have lessened since this study was completed, RAs continue to battle many stressors, limitations, and abuse as a result of their positions. So, why do students choose to become RAs?

In 1990, Deluga and Winters reported results to two inquiries: (a) why students chose to become RAs and (b) what is the relationship between these reasons and interpersonal stress and job satisfaction (p. 547). The most popular answers as to why RAs chose to apply for their positions were coded as Helping Behaviors, RA Cohesiveness, a Desire for Power, Financial Obligations, Career Development, and Personal Growth (Deluga & Winters, 1990, p. 550). The items of Desire for Power, Financial Obligations, Career Development, and Personal growth were all connected with higher levels of interpersonal stress, whereas Helping Behaviors and RA Cohesiveness were connected with higher levels of job satisfaction (Deluga & Winters, 1990, p. 550). As these results show, students choose to become RAs for a variety and/or a combination of reason, yet, only two (Helping Behaviors and RA Cohesiveness) are related to job satisfaction. In their results, Deluga and Winters (1990) suggested that when hiring RAs, particular emphases must be placed on (a) determining why students want to help others, and (b) selecting those with a strong aptitude for being a team-player (p. 551).

In summary, the RA position represents a vital and complex role within residence life. As front-line paraprofessionals, who live and work with students, RAs fulfill a variety of roles and responsibilities and are absolutely essential to the operation and experience of residence life. Whether they act as supervisors, disciplinarians, counselors, community builders, programmers, or friends, RAs have adapted to the shifting identities of residence life and incorporated new missions and purposes to meet the needs and expectations of new generations of students.

The Suite-Style Hall Movement

Most of the traditional residence halls are aging, as they are products of Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950. As these buildings turn 50 and 60 years old, some are in need of significant repair or a complete overhaul (Ryan, 2003, pp. 61-62). As Sharmer (2005) indicated, universities and colleges in the United States are revamping their student residence options through capital improvements and are replacing the older-dormitory-style buildings with new options like town houses and condominiums (p. 42).

In 2005, Balogh et al. collected significant data on residence life construction and renovation projects and published their findings in an Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) report. According to the report, 57% of 284 respondents who work in residence life reported completing renovation of their existing residence halls, 38.3% reported completing new construction, and 20.2% reported completing both renovation and new construction of residence halls (pp. 51-52). Additionally, 50.2% stated that they were planning to initiate one or more construction and renovation projects within the next five years (p. 52).

Furthermore, 88 institutions reported 113 new construction projects, with 31.9% being individual contracted apartments, 23% being apartments, and 20.4% being super suites (Balogh et al., 2005, p. 52). In contrast, modified traditional rooms and traditional rooms only made up 16.8% of new construction (p. 52). As was clear to the authors (2005), institutions have responded to student preferences by focusing construction on building apartments and suites, rather than the traditional residence halls (p. 55). In addition, the results indicated that the percentage of single-occupancy bedrooms in new buildings had surpassed traditional double-occupancy rooms, which indicated that

administrators have heard the cry from students who prefer residence halls with enhanced private spaces (p. 55). But why has residence life moved in the direction of suite-style and apartment style halls, and how are these two environments different than the traditional halls of years before?

The residential living experience has changed a great deal since the parents of today's students attended college; the cinderblock and high towered dorms of the past are not the residence hall of today (Conneely, Good, & Perryman, 2001, p. 51). "Physically overwhelming and largely anonymous, these dormitories were built at a time when long, double-loaded corridors and shared rooms were considered to be the norm," and today these residence halls are being rejected by the current student population (Hill, 2004, p. 26). In the 2005 ACUHO-I report, Balogh et al. listed six different hall types in new construction data: traditional rooms, modified traditional rooms, adjoining suites, super suites, individual contract apartments, and apartments (see Table 1). Although dormitories might once have been adequate, amenities now abound; in place of the prototypical double rooms located off a double-loaded corridors with ganged bathrooms, there are now suite or apartment style halls with private or semiprivate bathrooms, separated individual rooms and living spaces, and full kitchens or kitchenettes.

There are a host of reasons as to why residence life is moving towards suite-style and apartment style living, but foremost among others, residence life is giving students and parents what they want. These days, prospective students and their parents look not only at how the academic product is delivered, but also look at the physical environment of the campus (Romano & Hanish, 2003, p. 4). As Hill (2004) related:

Table 1

Living Unit Definitions

Type of Living Unit	Definition
Traditional Rooms	Designed as double- and/or single-occupancy rooms and community bathrooms. Includes rooms with sinks, no bath.
Modified Traditional Rooms	Designed as double- and/or single rooms that include a private bath facility in each room (i.e., not shared with an adjoining room).
Adjoining Suites	Designed as adjoining double- and/or single-occupancy rooms connected by a bathroom. No separate living area or study.
Super Suites	Designed as a small group of double- and/or single-occupancy rooms with private or shared bathrooms contained within the suite. Includes separate living area/study.
Individual Contract Apartments	Designed as double- and/or single-occupancy rooms with private or shared bathrooms. Includes separate living area/study and kitchen or kitchenette. Rented by the bed space.
Apartments	Designed as efficiencies, one-bedroom, or multiple-bedroom apartments. Includes a full kitchen. Rented by the unit.

Source: Balogh et al. (2005, p. 53)

More sophisticated and savvy than students of prior generations, undergraduates are becoming increasingly selective about where and how they want to live. Aside from merely housing larger student populations, new residential facilities have become selling points in the battle for the affections of top students. (p. 26)

According to Broekemier and Seshadri (1999), high school seniors reported facility quality to be among the top five important factors for college choice (as cited in Romano & Hanish, 2003, p. 4). In the highly competitive higher education market of the United States, colleges have identified the importance of upgrading residential housing facilities to attract and retain students (Marsters & Bliss, 2007, p. 37). The strategy requires providing new amenities, increased security, and a modern technology infrastructure, as well as offering more choices in housing types (Marsters, & Bliss, 2007, p. 37).

Additionally, “At both private and public institutions, the mindset of parents and students

has become increasingly consumer-oriented,” and they expected housing options to be competitive with off-campus facilities, with more amenities and services for the same price (Conneely et al., 2001, p. 52).

Although corridor-style halls still appeal to students, institutions have moved to building apartments and suites to increase the retention of upperclassmen in on-campus housing. According to Hill (2004), administrators are concerned with upperclassmen who are seeking off-campus housing because administrators view upperclassmen as those most capable of enhancing and enriching the experience of other college students (p. 26). The new suites and apartments keep upperclassmen on campus and keep the real world in mind. They provide a transitional environment between the last year of college and the first year of living on their own.

Apartment and suite-style halls are now becoming the gold standard in new residence hall construction, but new advances in hall design are already coming. The most recent trend in higher education facility construction is the emergence of fusion buildings, or facilities that combine separate functions like residence halls and recreation centers (Hamilton, 2009, p. 44). By combining residence life and recreation together, fusion buildings encourage multiple experiences that create effective and engaging environments for students who have grown up in an increasingly multitasking world.

Nevertheless, residence life professionals should be cautious about devoting resources to amenity-laden halls. According to Sharmer (2005), students who lived on campus in residence hall suites were most at risk and were almost ten times as likely to have participated in drinking games as students in other arrangements (p. 40). As housing officials decide who is allowed access to their suites and apartments, student

development and risk concerns must be considered. As Conneely et al. (2001) cautioned, “Housing administrators must strike a balance between managing a competitive residence hall business and maintaining close philosophical and operational ties to the institution’s educational mission” (p. 52).

Looking Ahead

An overview of the history and importance of student housing, insight into the importance and experience of RAs, and recent trends of residence life have been provided in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, the researcher provides the methods for the current study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In Chapter Two, the researcher established the significant need to understand the experiences of RAs who are transitioning into suite-style halls. There are a variety of studies involving RAs, particularly in areas of training, selection, mentoring and advising, RA burnout, and the ever apparent relation with conduct and judicial side of residence life. However, little research has been done to consider how the RA experiences, and roles, are changing due to the movement towards suite-style living. The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case study was to explore the experiences of resident assistants (RAs) as they transitioned from traditional corridor-style residence halls to suite-style hall environments.

RAs that were in the transition from the traditional, corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall contributed to this study by participating in multiple interviews over the course of the fall semester of the 2010-11 academic year. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) was also interviewed during the fall semester. Throughout the study, the RAs were asked to reflect upon their (a) roles and responsibilities as RAs in the suite-style environment, (b) effects they have seen in their social and academic lives as a result of their new assignment, and (c) how their current experiences compared with their prior traditional hall experiences.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methodology provides opportunity for participants to indicate to others “how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p 13). Thus, a qualitative methodology was the appropriate technique to

provide insight about the RA perspectives on two issues: (a) day-to-day existence in the suite-style hall and (b) the comparison of experiences in suite-style halls and in their previous corridor-style experience. Case study techniques, a type of qualitative study, were most appropriate for this study. Merriam (2009) defined a case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p 40). In this study, the case was defined by both space and time; each case was a single student’s lived experience in the year in which the participant transitioned from the RA role in the corridor-style to one in the suite-style hall at a large in Midwestern RU/VH research university. By considering each student’s transition as a single case, the researcher “gained a complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40) and provided new knowledge in the area of research related to RAs.

Research Questions

The grand tour question in this study was: What are the lived experiences of RAs as they transition from a corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall? The following six research questions were explored in this study:

1. Has the RA role changed in the suite-style environment?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a suite-style hall?
3. How has the suite-style environment affected the RA-resident interaction?
4. Has the RA noticed a change in their social relationships as a result of the suite-style environment?
5. Has the RA noticed a change in their academic experience as a result of the suite-style environment?

6. What are the Residence Hall Director's perceptions of the RA role in the suite-style environment, and are they similar or dissimilar from the RA's perceptions?

Research Site

Research was conducted at an RU/VH research university in the Midwest. As of 2009, the university enrolled approximately 25,000 students, with an undergraduate enrollment of about 19,000 students, the majority of which are residents of the state in which the institution is located. The student body is largely white and traditional-aged. The institution offers a wide variety of studies in the liberal arts and professional programs, both undergraduate and graduate students, and offers great collaborative research opportunities for students and faculty. A majority of the student body lives near or on campus (indeed, the Residence Life department rarely has an unfilled bed).

In 2010-2011, 6121 students (or 24 % of the total student population) lived in housing. One hundred fifty-three RAs were employed by residence life in 2010-2011, and they served in a various hall styles, including (a) 14 corridor-style halls (b) 2 apartment style halls, and (c) one suite-style hall. The suite-style hall in the study opened in the fall of 2010 and 12 RAs worked there.

Sampling Procedure

As generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, the most appropriate sampling strategy in non-probabilistic (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Furthermore, in case-studies groups of individuals from the whole population are targeted because they interact with each other and share the same spaces and experiences for which the study was designed (McMillan, 2008, p. 290). Purposeful sampling was the

ideal method for this study, as the researcher was interested in discovering, understanding, and gaining insight into the experience of a certain set of individuals in a transition bound by space and time (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

Participants

Participants included undergraduate students who: (a) had served one year as an RA in a corridor-style hall and (b) had as of the fall of 2010, transitioned into an RA role in the new suite-style hall. Due to the unique requirements of experiencing both types of halls, there were only four current RAs who could compare the different hall styles.

The researcher contacted the Associate Director for Residence Life in order to gather support and gain permission to conduct the study. With Residence Life's support and approval, the researcher contacted the Residence Hall Director (RD) of the suite-style hall and requested the names of possible participants. The researcher asked for two nominees from the pool of four candidates. The RD made contact with those qualified for the study and asked if they would be interested in participation; the RD then forwarded two names to the researcher. Both participants, highly recommended by the RD, were sent an email invitation, and both agreed to participate in the study. However, after the first interview, the male participant was released from his RA role. To compensate for the loss of the male participant, the researcher requested the RD to recommend another candidate for inclusion in the study. The RD forwarded a third candidate's name, and, after contact from the researcher, the newly selected candidate agreed to participate in the study. The third participant in the study was the RD of the suite-style hall. His professional and pre-professional experience and perceptions of working in the suite-style environment offered a third perspective and an opportunity for triangulation.

Tables 2 and 3 provide each participant's demographic information, as acquired through a demographic questionnaires developed by the researcher. The participants selected a pseudonym that is used for identification throughout the remainder of the document.

Student participants (Table 2) were 20 years of age or older, were at least in their junior year, self-identified as white or Caucasian, had at least one outside commitment, and were in their third semester as an RA. The RD's demographics are presented in Table 3 separate from the student participants.

Table 2

Student Demographic Information

Name:	Martha	Courtney
Gender:	Female	Female
Current Major:	Psychology	Accounting
GPA:	3.6	2.9
Self-identified ethnicity:	Caucasian	White
Sexual orientation:	Heterosexual	Straight
Semesters as an RA:	3	3rd
Previous residence hall/s worked in:	[Corridor Hall 1]	[Corridor Hall 2]
Current residence hall:	[Suite-Style Hall]	[Suite-Style Hall]
Other campus/ community involvement (list any offices held and sports teams):	Sorority, Religious-based Activities, Mentoring organization	President of an organization
Other campus/ community jobs:	Numerous outside jobs	

Table 3

Residence Life Professional Staff Demographic Information

Name:	Jeff
-------	------

Current professional title:	[Suite-Style Hall] Residence Director
Current residence hall/complex:	[Suite-Style Hall]
Current job description:	Oversee the daily operation of a suite-style building with both freshman + upperclass students. Specifically I supervise the RA staff (including 1 GA), advising building government, serving as the conduct officer, manage room moves + other administrative tasks
Semester in current position:	1 semester [Suite-Style Hall], 3 yrs in [Corridor Hall 2] previously
Semesters in positions related to residence life:	25
Past residence life/student affairs positions held (last four if more than four):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional Residence Director 2. Graduate Hall Director [(Other school)] 3. Senior Resident Advisor [(Other school)] 4. Resident Advisor [(other school)]

Procedures

Data Collection Instruments. Three methods of data collection were employed for this study. The primary method of data collection was through personal semi-structured interviews (see Appendices I & J). As Merriam (2009) related “In all forms of qualitative research, some, and occasionally all, of the data are collected through interviews” (p. 87). For qualitative research, interviewing is necessary when the researcher cannot directly observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). The second method was photo documentation. The third method (administered at the first interview) was a brief questionnaire (see

Appendices G & H) that provided background and context for each participant prior to beginning the interviews

The researcher utilized a researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendices I & J) to gain an understanding of the experiences of RAs in the suite-style environment. The semi-structured interview format provided opportunity to discuss and probe specific content and also allowed the researcher to be flexible. By utilizing this method, the respondent could elaborate on new and emerging topics, ideas, and worldviews that the researcher may not have considered when designing the original interview protocol.

The researcher provided disposable cameras to the two student participants with instructions to photograph their program and floor interactions in order (a) to provide added context and visual understanding of the various experiences of the RAs while at work in the halls, and (b) to provide a visual diary of the RA-resident and RA-building interaction.

Procedures for Data Collection.

RA Participation. Participants were asked to engage in four, time-sensitive interviews. All but one interview took place during the fall semester of 2010 in meeting spaces at the suite-style hall. Participants were given their choice of location, with the caveat that there would not be too much noise interference for the recording device to pick up. One of the interviews was held in the researcher's office at the Campus Recreation center due to the participant's work-related status in the suite-style hall. The following schedule was planned for the research.

Table 4

Interview Schedule

Interview Number	Time of Interview	Focus of Interview
One	Training week	Reflect on previous experience as an RA in a corridor-style hall in order to establish a baseline for comparison to their new experience.
Two	First three weeks of semester	Report on reactions to train and their introduction to the building, their new positions, and their residents
Three	October 18 th	Relate experience with their floors, initial reactions to their developing community, and beginning the process of comparison between their first and current RA experience
Four	Directly before finals week	Discuss the final comparisons between their corridor and suite-style experiences, served as a time to discuss the pictures they were asked to take of their floors, building and, communities, and provided a time for wrap-up and final reflections.

Step Two of data collection required photographs from the RAs. The researcher provided disposable cameras at the first interview and asked RAS to take pictures of their residence hall, their interactions with their residents, and all that they thought was typical of their experiences as RAs in the suite-style hall. The cameras were to be collected at the third interview and the content of the photos was to be discussed at the fourth interview. Step Three of data collection required the completion of the questionnaire. This data is summarized in Tables 2 and 3 in the participant section of the document.

Residence Hall Director Participation. The RD was asked to participate in one interview (a) to discuss outcomes and expectations of RAs (b) to compare the corridor and suite-style environments for RAs, and (c) to declare challenges and successes of working in the suite-style hall. The interview was held during the fifteenth week of the fall 2010 semester. He also completed a questionnaire (Appendix H).

Glitches with Data Collection. Despite the time-sensitive nature of the interviews, and due to unforeseen complications with participation by the RAs, some interviews were combined or shifted to a later date. Courtney participated in four planned interviews and was asked to participate in a fifth interview to discuss her photographs. Martha, due to her late inclusion into the study, combined interviews one and two into a single session to get on schedule and then completed the third and fourth interviews on schedule

For the collection of photo data, only Courtney had taken pictures with the cameras provided and the quality of the pictures were such that no discernable activity could be measured. Martha provided no pictures. Thus, inclusion of the photo diary in the results of this study was eliminated.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed prior to the analysis. A transcriptionist who had no prior knowledge of the research or the participants transcribed all the interviews verbatim. After each interview, the researcher devoted fifteen minutes to maintaining a field journal, which included reflections upon the subjects and stories discussed and impressions of the researcher's experience with the

participants. The journal was used in the analysis process as a way to note my own biases and responses.

The researcher initiated analysis after all transcripts had been received from the transcriptionist. The researcher read through each interview while following the audiotapes to ensure accuracy. Corrections to the transcripts were completed at that time. The researcher then read through each transcript multiple times to gain a familiarity with the data set. Once familiarity with the transcripts was established, the researcher made notes and highlights next to the sentences and bits of data that seemed particularly relevant. This form of analysis is referred to as “open coding” and can be a repeat of the exact word(s) of the participant, the researcher’s words, or a concept from the literature (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). The assignment of open codes to the transcript is the first step towards the construction of categories that describe the data set. For each transcript, the researcher created a document that listed all of the associated codes.

Once fully coded, the researcher then began to group similar open codes into categories that expressed the participants’ ideas. The process of grouping open codes is sometimes referred to as axial or analytical coding (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). Indeed, analytical coding goes beyond descriptive coding, because it comes from the interpretation and reflection upon the meanings of the codes (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). The analytical codes served as headings and open codes from every transcript were categorized below the appropriate analytical code headings (see Appendix #). This master document guided the researcher’s identification of commonalities and differences among the participants’ experiences. The “big picture” provided a visual display of the dominant themes from the data.

Validation Techniques

“Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted” (Merriam, 2009, p. 210). In order to ensure the sound collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected, the researcher employed these methods of validation: (a) triangulation of data, (b) member-checking, and (c) peer reviews of the codes and analysis. The first, and probably most common method of ensuring internal validity, is the use of triangulation, otherwise known as multiple sources of data. Usually associated with navigation, wherein three measurement points enable convergence on a single spot, the use of multiple sources of data by the researcher helps to ensure validity by crystalizing the ideas and themes associated with participant experiences (Merriam, 2009, pp. 215-216). Indeed these crystals of experience “exhibit an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities (sic), and angles of approach” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). To bring about this triangulation of sources, the researcher interviewed RAs and the RD of the suite-style hall, and had each participant fill out a questionnaire prior to their first interview.

The second most common strategy for ensuring internal validity or credibility is the process of member checks. Merriam (2009) described member checking as soliciting feedback on your emerging findings from some of the people that you interviewed (p. 217). To ensure that the participants’ sentiments were reflected accurately throughout the analysis, the participants were provided a copy of the transcripts of their interviews and

asked to review them for accuracy. Following the participant reviews, the transcripts were analyzed using the coding techniques previously described.

The last validation technique utilized, peer review, was completed in two different ways. After the researcher developed the high level themes, the researcher provided these themes, the complete master list of codes, and the copies of the transcripts to a student affairs professional who specialized in qualitative research. The student affairs professional, who had no prior knowledge of the study, was asked to review the resulting codes and themes and determine if the analysis was valid. Additionally, the researcher submitted his entire work to his academic advisor who assisted in the revisions and clarification that contributed to the validation of the reported results.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher prepared for the research in several ways. Prior to beginning this study, the researcher completed a mandated training by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which trained the researcher on the ethical treatment of human subjects. The training, Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is a web-based exam focused on the protection of human subjects, which qualifies individuals to conduct research affiliated with the large Midwestern RU/VH research university. The researcher then designed the study and submitted the required forms for IRB approval. The IRB filed a letter of approval for the study which allowed the researcher to begin the study.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument by which the data are collected, analyzed, and reported. As such, the researcher may bring biases that may skew the collection and interpretation of the data. Readers should be made of aware of such biases. By reflecting critically on this aspect and by airing some of the internal

biases held by the researcher, the researcher hopes to help the reader understand how he came to his interpretations. As Maxwell (2005) explained, “the reason for making your perspective, biases, and assumptions clear to the reader is not to eliminate ‘*variance*’ between researchers in values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a *particular* researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, pp. 119-120).

The greatest bias of the researcher was his service as a former RA for four years at the institution in the study where he was an RA in various corridor and apartment-style halls on the campus. Despite this obvious bias, the researcher’s RA experience provided much of the interest and drive toward the completion of this study. Additionally, the researcher attributed this “insider” perspective with the development of trusting and open relationships with the participants, which subsequently provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the issues and experiences of the participants. To mitigate this bias, the researcher refrained from making inferences and additions to the participants’ comments during interviews and concentrated on providing the occasional nod and smile to encourage the participants to share. This was extremely difficult for the researcher.

Second, the prior experiences of the researcher in the department of Residence Life resulted in pre-dispositions and conclusions made before the collection and analysis of the data. To combat this bias, the researcher relied on the semi-structured interview protocol, and he encouraged and pursued tangents that the participants wandered into as a result of their conversations. The researcher hoped that the freedom to wander added knowledge, experiences, and perspectives that the researcher had not previously considered.

Ethical Considerations

The protection of participant anonymity was of critical importance for two reasons: (a) participants were asked to comment and discuss their current employment and (b) current employers comprise those most interested in the results of this study. Each of the participants provided pseudonyms of their choosing and personal identifying information was excluded. Additionally, all references to locations that might identify the participants were removed or altered.

Given that students were asked to discuss their personal lives and experiences, the researcher made it apparent that, should the participant become uncomfortable with the questions asked or other aspects of the study, participants could decline to comment or remove themselves from the study at any time. This right was discussed during the interviews and in the informed consent that each interviewee signed before participation.

Delimitations

One delimitation was the time period in which the data were collected. Due to the nature of the graduate program in which the researcher was enrolled and the date at which the researcher began the inquiry, the data collection period was forced into one semester. The researcher's multi-interview protocol that began at the beginning of the semester and ended at the very end of the semester combated this delimitation. By starting as early as possible with the participants, and by holding regular interviews until the end of the semester, the researcher hoped to gain as much comparable data as possible to combat the limitation of not continuing the study over the course of the entire year.

Another delimitation was the small number of participants in the study. Due to the qualifications set by the researcher and the rigorous time commitment required by

qualitative inquiries, the researcher sought only three participants. Furthermore the pool was limited. Certainly, greater validity and generalizability may have been possible with a greater number of participants.

Another delimitation of the study was that only RAs at a specific Midwestern RU/VH research university were interviewed. In addition, the loss of the only male participant restricts data to only the female perspective.

Limitations

Qualitative inquiry provides little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 2009, p. 15), yet, as Yin (2009) reminds us, each method is “a different way of collecting and analyzing empirical evidence, following its own logic” (p. 8). Due to the nature of the study, qualitative multi-case study methodology was the most appropriate given the lack of information about transitioning resident-type halls as was the researcher’s use of a rigorous, multi-interview research design and multiple validation techniques. Despite being seen as a strength of the research design, the multi-interview method may have also been a limitation for the study. The reflection that accompanies sharing experiences may have fostered and increased a maturity and understanding to their experiences that they might not otherwise have gained.

The last limitation in the use of the results identified by the researcher is researcher bias. Generalization and validity of the results are low. Nevertheless, the researcher iterates that qualitative case study research treats individual cases as important to understanding unique phenomena, and the researcher is highly aware of the role and responsibility held in this study.

Summary

During the fall semester of 2010, the researcher was actively engaged and engrossed in the experiences of these RAs as they explored a brand new hall and a brand new work environment. Their experiences, challenges, successes, and reflections are shared in chapters four and five.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case study was to explore the experiences of resident assistants (RAs) as they transitioned from a traditional, corridor-style residence hall, to suite-style hall environments. RAs that were in the transition from the traditional, corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall contributed to this study by participating in multiple interviews over the course of the fall semester of the 2010-11 academic year. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) was also interviewed during the fall semester. Throughout the study, the RAs were asked to reflect upon their (a) roles and responsibilities as RAs in the suite-style environment, (b) effects they have seen in their social and academic lives as a result of their new assignment, and (c) how their current experiences compared with their prior traditional hall experiences. In this chapter, the researcher will provide a brief introduction to the participants and present the findings of the study via themes and subthemes.

Introduction to Participants

Despite some commonalities, each participant had different backgrounds and levels of experience in Residence Life at a Midwestern RU/VH research university. Each student participant was required to have at least one year of experience in a corridor-style hall and must have been transitioning into the suite-style hall at the time of the study. The Residence Hall Director was also included as a source validation via triangulation. An introduction that highlights their unique context is provided below.

Courtney. Courtney was a senior completing a degree in Accounting with a GPA of 2.90, and she self-identified as a white, straight, female. Courtney decided to become

an RA because her freshmen year RA was “super active” and recruited Courtney to help her with her programming. According to Courtney, “she, like, called me her little floor helper and stuff and so, like, I really got into what RA's do and I really, like, enjoyed that kind of stuff.” Although she wanted to be an RA in her sophomore year, Courtney decided to wait one year to get comfortable with her academics. She then applied to be an RA for her junior year of college.

Prior to the suite-style hall, Courtney served in a mostly freshmen-based, traditional, corridor-style experience whose residents were a collection of international and music learning community students. Her residents in the corridor-style hall were all female, and she described the hall community “like one big family with 500 people in it.” As a self-described “procrastinator,” Courtney recognized her difficulties in academic performance, but emphasized that the dip in performance was not due to her first-year RA role. To the contrary, Courtney shared that the loss of her grandfather had the most profound effect on her academics, and that “it was really nice to be on my floor with my girls because they brought me out of my room.” Courtney established close friendships with her previous residents and often socialized with her residents and outside-of-hall friends at the same time. Due to this, Courtney “spent a lot of time with [her] floor” but didn’t have any difficulty taking a night away to visit other friends. Additionally, Courtney’s family was supportive of her taking her first RA position and were “both super excited – like, not just for like, me, but also for the experience that [it] would get me.” Courtney also served as the President of a student organization, and despite being stressful at times, she recognized the organization’s importance, and the rewards of being involved. To sum up her experience, Courtney mentioned that she enjoyed the

traditional, corridor-style experience and that “move out was hard because you had to say goodbye to everybody.” As a note, Courtney often used the term “like” as a comma or transition between different thoughts. For clarity, her use of “like” will be reduced in later direct quotations.

Martha. Martha was a junior completing a degree in Psychology with a GPA of 3.60 and self-identified as a Caucasian, heterosexual, female. As a self-identified “fringe-dweller” in her freshmen year, Martha originally wanted very little to do with her floor. However, her freshmen year RA set a great example that had an impact on Martha, and she began to picture herself fulfilling an RA role. Since she enjoyed working with people, she decided to pursue an RA role and was later accepted for the position.

Prior to her suite-style hall, Martha served in a traditional, corridor-style experience whose residents were all female on her floor, and were mostly freshmen. In addition, Martha mentioned that her floor “had a very high population of Greek students” and that “the other half that were there were really involved in our [floor] government too.” However, and almost disappointedly, Martha reflected on the lack of ethnic diversity on her floor and that “there were some diverse personalities, but as far as demographics, it was pretty baseline.” Martha mentioned her success in developing floor community, and attributed that success to her floor government. In reference to a social program, Martha mentioned that “I think the reason I was proud of [the program] was how much my government was integrated and how much they helped out.” However, Martha was not a fan of her floor’s physical structure, remarking that the floor’s “loop” structure made it difficult to interact with the residents in rooms on the opposite side of hers. Martha stated:

I made an effort to try to go over there and talk to some of them and we had some strong government members over there that pulled a few people in, but there were a few rooms over there – they just – they didn't get a lot of air time.

In reference to her academics, Martha reported that her first RA position “had an impact – a detrimental one definitely my first semester. My GPA dropped a lot.” To explain this drop, Martha referenced her passion for the RA position, her wide variety of outside-of-RA involvement, her lack of interest in her first semester courses, and her previously inability to find balance. Indeed, Martha stated:

[I] chose to put a lot of time into [being an RA]. So it was my personal decision. I put in more time and effort than you have [to] complete the requirements of the job. But to do your job well, I feel that it takes a lot of time. I was happy to give that time though – so it's a balance.

Her family was supportive of her taking the RA position and recognized the position as something she really enjoyed. In addition to her studies and RA role, Martha was also involved with: a sorority, her on-campus church, a youth-mentoring organization, and worked part time in various, non-RA related jobs. Concerning this involvement and large amount of responsibilities, when asked about her social life Martha responded “What social life?” While Martha did interact socially with friends, her social life tended to be highly scheduled, revolving around her various commitments and responsibilities. While Martha also socialized with her residents, when interacting with her few close friends Martha had a need to remove herself from her hall “to maintain a little bit of privacy so I'd have a little bit of space.” Martha enjoyed her traditional, corridor-style experience, remarking that the floor was a “close-knit group of girls” whose randomness, ability to hold each other accountable, and trust in Martha made a safe and familial community that “just clicked really well.”

Jeff. The last participant was Jeff, who served as the Residence Hall Director (RD) of the suite-style hall. Jeff was a highly seasoned RD whose previous experiences include three years of a traditional, corridor-style hall experience at the Midwestern RU/VH research university used in the study, and over 25 total semesters of residence life experience as a professional, graduate student, and undergraduate student at various Midwestern institutions. Jeff organized the opening of the new suite-style hall referenced in the study and was also in his first year of experience in the suite-style environment. While recognizing the differences in structure between the two halls, Jeff maintained the priorities of establishing a safe, respectful, and engaging educational environment in the new suite-style hall.

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

From the interviews, four themes and five sub-themes emerged. The themes and sub-themes are outlined in Table 5, and defined in the subsequent dialogue.

Table 5

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Similar	a. Staff dynamics b. Social life c. Academics d. Family
2. Space	
3. Not Needed	
4. Community	a. Creative programming

Similar. In many ways, the RA position in suite-style halls was similar to those in the corridor-style environment. By studying an entire semester of the lived experience of RAs in the suite-style environment, the researcher came across many comparisons between the two hall types and was unsurprised to find commonalities between the two experiences. In fact, when asked bluntly about whether or not her experience had changed, Courtney replied “Not really for me. [Because] I usually, like last year I would spend a lot of the time in the building just hanging out with people. That’s what I feel like I do, pretty much the same amount here.” While looking at the similarities, four sub-themes emerged, including “Staff dynamics,” “Social life,” “Academics,” and “Family.”

Staff dynamics. One large component of working as an RA is the dynamics and relationships one holds with other residence life staff members. Between their corridor and suite-style experiences, neither of the RA participants identified vast changes in how they worked or related to their colleagues. While reflecting on her relationships with other staff members in her corridor experience, Courtney stated:

It was a lot of fun. My staff last year was super energetic and I don't know how to say it - maybe like a brother-sister type thing. It felt like a family when we first met each other and from there, our relationships became stronger through training.

For Courtney, her relationships with other staff members were very comfortable, close and familial. While this experience mirrors Martha’s, Martha also expressed some concerns about her staff last relationships year. Martha’s corridor-style team was very cohesive, tight knit, and they held each other accountable. According to Martha:

Yes. We were a pretty tight-knit group . . . I mean there were a few – like there’s always going to be someone who is . . . always coming in late. But like, we would approach them and [say] ‘hey, you’re not doing this.’ And that was always received pretty well.

Yet despite this accountability and cohesiveness, Martha felt the staff diversity was low, stating “Our staff in [my corridor-style hall], we were like carbon copies of each other, which was why we got along so well. It’s easy to get along with people that you have everything in common with.” In addition, when a new RD arrived mid-year, Martha didn’t feel like she was pushed or challenged to succeed and progress as an RA. In the suite-style hall, both Martha and Courtney experienced similar staff dynamics and relationships as they had in the corridor-style hall. However, due to their experience as returning RA staff members, both RA participants noticed that they mentored and served as role models to their younger, less experienced colleagues.

For Courtney, the staff in the suite-style hall was much more energetic than what she had experienced before. While talking about training for the suite-style hall, Courtney remarked:

But I think also, I guess what surprised me is how energetic my staff is. I wouldn’t say that they [were]disrespectful during different people’s presentations and stuff , but just the fact that they have so much energy and they really want to get to know each other right now and so it’s really kind of hard to – they’re like – oh, okay – let’s calm it down a little bit.

She also remarked that some staff members “are always in sync with each other” while “other staff members are a little more reserved.” However, Courtney did say that the staff in the suite-style hall meshed really well and that she felt supported by her colleagues. Courtney stated:

I feel super supported. When I had an all hall program, we had every RA come out and help us . . . I was personally kind of amazed – because I’ve never had that happen before . . . If I needed anything, like my staff would be super supportive about it.

Yet, Martha also pointed out the difficulties in adjusting to their new staff. While in training, both Martha and Courtney had to adjust into a “returning RA role;” in that they

were now the older members of staff and they had to mentor the younger RAs. As

Martha stated:

I was actually the youngest person on staff. . . . So, now I'm one of the older ones, one of the more experienced ones and the one who is much more calm and collected, so to speak. A very different shift as far as personalities went. And, I think that was the biggest thing during training.

After training, and as the staff connected and worked together during the first semester, they appeared to “mellow out” according to Martha. However, Martha observed that small cliques were forming on staff. For Martha, this was a new experience, and she stated: “There’s a little bit of cliquishness – but you know that’s going to happen. So, I guess it didn’t really happen last year.” Despite these small groups, Martha did note that “everyone, for the most part, gets along and likes each other.”

Another difficulty that both Courtney and Martha noted was the lack of staff interactions beyond their meetings and all-hall programs. According to Martha:

We don’t see each other a whole lot outside of staff meeting. I see a couple of them when [we] eat at the [Dining Hall] – so I see a few of them there. But, [we don’t have] a lot of individual interactions beyond t.v. together. But, we don’t do a whole lot as a staff together.

In the third interview, Courtney concurred saying that:

we don’t – it’s really hard because everybody’s always busy so we don’t spend a lot of time outside of the staff meetings, but occasionally we go and have dinner and stuff and so, those are probably more memorable than the staff meetings. But, I don’t know . . . like the all hall programs, everybody shows up and hangs out.

While the lack of staff interaction was disappointing to both participants, during the interviews, neither participant seemed concerned over this reality.

Jeff recognized many of the same observations that the RA participants did, but he did not remark on the cliques forming nor lack of social interactions among his staff members. In talking about his staff, Jeff said:

I have a quirky group. They are very eclectic and a few of them are a little goofy. But quirky isn't a bad term, the staff despite their differences has come together as its own mini-community in the building and it's probably one of the best overall staffs I've had.

While not exactly the same as their previous staffs, both Courtney and Martha recognized that the staff worked well together and got along. As noted in Courtney's comments, the staff was highly supportive of one another. Despite the difficulties in adjusting to their new "returning RA" roles, the participants integrated well into their new hall, and Jeff commented that this staff was one of the best he's ever had. Again, while different than previous staffs, these differences seem to be connected more to individual characteristics, rather than the influence of the hall structure or type. The researcher also found that the suite-style halls had little effect on the socialization habits of the study participants.

Social Life. Neither Courtney nor Martha experienced a large shift in how or with whom they socialized, but the suite-style experience did have some small, minor effects. For Courtney, her corridor-style experience was filled with deep and meaningful relationships with both residents and outside-of-hall friends. When asked about her friendships, Courtney shared:

I had a lot of fun, I would consider, like I had a lot of friends outside, but a lot of the girls on my floor, even now, I would consider them pretty decent friends, and so – you say, 'what times did I have with my friends?' But a lot of it was either on my floor or I would even bring my friends outside of my residence. I would bring them up and they'd come to core events and hang out with us and that kind of stuff.

Courtney's outside-of-hall friends tended to interact with her residents, and while socializing, it was common for Courtney's to have a mix of both. Apparently, because Courtney spent the majority of her time in her corridor style hall last year, it was quite common for her residents to initiate socialization randomly. Courtney stated:

we used to have like weekly movie nights – like unofficial movie nights that they would initiate . . . so a lot of the times they were [said] – “[Courtney], can we watch a movie?” – and so, I spent a lot of the time, like . . . I'd bring a lot of movies from home and we'd, you know, have a movie weekend or a movie marathons . . . my outside friends, as well as my residents would come to those and so,[there were] lot of fun times.

The presence of close relationships within her hall became very important to Courtney, and is best described by her residents' reaction to Courtney's loss of a family member.

When describing this time of her life, Courtney said:

And so, during that time, I was super-depressed and didn't want to do anything and so, it was really nice to be on my floor with my girls because they brought me out of my room. I was like, 'I don't want to talk to you – I just want to lay in my bed and not talk to anybody' and they were super active in getting me involved and like helping pull me out of that.

It became clear that Courtney's social life within her hall was just as important as her outside-of-hall social relationships that she regularly enjoyed. When talking about her experience in the corridor-style environment, Courtney said of her residents:

It's hard to say goodbye to some people. So, to have that feeling with every single - like all 40 of my residents . . . it was hard. It was good. It was not rough, but like, it was a hard goodbye. But a lot of them are back and so, I've already run into a bunch of them, they come running and we hug and we talk and catch up and so - it's been good.

Courtney's continuing relationships with her former residents shows how deeply she connected with them, and how much she still relied upon those friendships. However, in the suite-style halls, she has experienced a slight change in how she interacts with her

residents. While she approached her residents in the suites in a similar way, she received some mixed reactions.

In her new hall, Courtney is experiencing the same vibes with her residents but on a much smaller scale. Courtney shared:

I have one room who is like, everybody else refers to them as the loud obnoxious room. But, I really enjoy their presence . . . they're just like full of energy and they're really positive and a lot of fun. . . . They helped me set up a [restaurant night] night and got people really excited on the floor to do that kind of stuff. So, they're going to be, like, my go-to guys.

However, her experience with this room has not been universal. While she frequently socializes with the residents of this room, the rest of her residents seem friendly, but noncommittal. As Courtney shared:

I don't know. I'm really hard on myself, and so not being able to get all these people out of their [rooms] really bothers me . . . I guess it's just like – almost every single one of my residents will at least say hello to me. Maybe not invite me in or come hang out with us. But they don't ignore me anymore like they did like the first two weeks. So, making those connections, no matter how small has been one of my greatest successes.

Despite the lack of a complete social environment that she had in her corridor-style residence hall, it appears that her social life is doing just fine. Courtney's outside-of-hall friends hang out in the hall at least once a week, but also socialize outside of the hall.

However, her outside-of-hall friends no longer attended her floor programs and seemed to only interact with her suite-mates, rather than the rest of her residents. When asked if her outside-of-hall friends attended her programs, Courtney stated:

Not my programs. They usually come and hang out in my room and so my roommates are really cool with them . . . and I was like you can come to an event if you want and they're like – uh – maybe. I moved off campus for a reason. And I was, like, it's one event, like you're not going to die – like yeh. I mean, they usually hang out pretty well. Not too awkward.

From her account, Courtney's outside-of-hall friends seemed apprehensive of fully participating with her floor. Despite the small changes in her socialization experience, her main socialization habits have remained stable. She continued to utilize her residents and outside-of-hall friends as sources of socialization, but the degree at which she interacts with each of her resident rooms has lessened. In addition, the amount of outside-of-hall friends and resident interactions has been limited to within her individual suite as opposed to with her entire floor. While Courtney experienced a few modifications in her social life, Martha's social life has remained pretty consistent.

While Martha upheld a good relationship with her residents in the corridor-style environment, she maintained a separate social identity that she did not share with her residents. While relating this experience, Martha stated:

the little social life I did have, I tried to maintain a little bit of privacy so I'd have a little bit of space. It's my own that's away from these girls. Because most of it was open book for them. And they knew who I was dating and they were like – they would talk to me about it. They would give me crap about it and [say] 'hey, what were you doing?' It was like- they were very involved, even in my personal life at times. So, I tried to keep it as secret as possible.

Martha also related that her boyfriend and outside-of-hall friends would occasionally interact with her on her floor in the corridor-style hall, but only to a limited extent:

my friends sometimes would come visit me but they would typically [want] to meet somewhere else because just the dorm and people [would say] 'why are we meeting in the dorm? – we're not Freshman.' So, people were not interested in coming to [Corridor-style hall].

Additionally, due to her involvement, work, and academics, Martha initially responded to questions about her social life with the comment: "What social life?" To clarify, Martha explained that "Social life really was put on the back burner as far as things went because

I was just really, really dedicated to this position because I was just passionate about it.”

Martha explained further by relating:

There’s just no time . . . I chose to be in a sorority to be my social life. It was almost my designated social life. I had to have planned time for it . . . I knew I wanted to be involved in this particular sorority. . . . So, I didn’t have a highly developed social life at that point, which is really just kind of an interesting experience.

From her comments, the researcher gathered that when Martha was in a corridor-style hall her socialization was tightly scheduled, limited to her involvement and work, and held separate from her residents. As she transitioned into the suites, she reported that her social experience remained much the same.

During the last interview, Martha again maintained that, while she had great relationships with residents on her floor, she needed to have a separate social identity with friends who were not residents. When she socializes, Martha said that she would leave the hall to hang out because when she is in the suites “it’s usually because I’m on duty and we can’t go elsewhere.” Indeed she thought it was better to have social interactions outside of the suites, and when asked to clarify, Martha stated:

I think I need to get away at some point and have a separate identity. Because I know last year, I experienced a little bit of [a] bubble invasion. Like when you have each person you’re interacting with coming to your room. You live in a fishbowl and so people – I know my girls were always asking questions and even if these residents don’t ask questions, they’re watching and they’re looking and they’re wondering and, you never know, I guess what people are thinking or whatever and I just think I need to have a life outside of this building.

Similar to her previous experiences, Martha also continued to have a highly scheduled social life that was structured around her involvement and work related commitments.

Martha stated:

I don't have a lot of time to experiment or – so, I guess, like my social interactions are pretty determined for me. I don't have a lot of free time to go out and make a lot of changes in my social life. So, it's been fairly stagnant. So, good or bad – it's been very consistent.

However, the one experience that was not consistent with her previous corridor-style environment was her relationships with her suite-mates.

At the last interview, Martha was commenting on a new suite-mate who would be joining her in the next semester. When talking about the new roommate, Martha stated:

I was supposed to have a new roommate last night. She's from China. So, I'm excited to meet her and see . . . like if she's going to be more of roommate or if she's going to – you know things may develop into a friendship. Because, well, first of all, people have different expectations when the move into a dorm. Some people expect friendships. Some people expect other things.

Apparently, Martha was open to developing friendships with those in her suite should they seek that kind of relationship, but the in-suite dynamic clashed with Martha's disposition of keeping her social life outside of the halls. As Martha stated "I share that space with three other people. Which, I'm pretty close to two of my roommates, but one of them I wasn't." The ability to room with previous friends and create your own social environment within the suites was different for Martha, but she still maintained that she socializes outside, and not within, her suite. Why? To explain this need, Martha described the unique in-suite dynamic that she was experiencing:

[the suite is] reserved for just the people who live there. . . . we always hang out in there together. Like [Roommate 1] and I are sitting in there all the time. But, like it's almost like whenever you bring someone in, they're kind of like intruding on that space, like they're – it's almost like they're not supposed to be there for some reason. [We're] used to [my boyfriend], like being around – but still it changes the dynamic because it's like they're coming into our home – like into our space and I feel like a guest at that point and like, you really feel that. Really strongly.

The data shows that Martha's social experience in the suites has been quite similar to her previous years in the corridor-style halls. While structured and limited,

Martha enjoys socializing outside of her residence hall because she can maintain a sense of separation from her residents and her RA role. However, the new suite mate dynamic had given her additional socialization within her hall, despite not being able to bring in outsiders to change the dynamic of the shared living space. In the next sub-theme, the researcher found that the suite-style hall had little effect on the academic experience of the RA participants.

Academics. Part of being an RA is also being a student. As Blimling (1998) noted, the day-to-day pressures of academic work in conjunction with the responsibilities of being an RA can eventually lead to burnout (p. 17). While investigating the lived experiences of RAs in the suite-style hall, the researcher strove to understand if their suite environment would affect the participants' academic experience.

In her first year as an RA in a corridor-style hall, Courtney encountered some difficulty in her academic role. She related that her GPA suffered, but did not attribute this drop to her RA position. Rather than attribute this difficulty solely to her RA role, Courtney stated that it was the combination of being an RA and working through her family's loss of her grandfather that caused her spring semester's grades to suffer:

like, that, that would be the one semester, like, being an RA hurt my grades just because, I had to be an RA as well as do grades and all this other stuff was going on – so, it was just a lot.

Despite this difficulty, Courtney showed confidence in her skills as a student, and said that she did not anticipate her grades suffering because of working in the suite-style hall.

Further into the semester, Courtney reported a stress level of two on a scale of ten when asked about her current academic experience. She attributed her success to the relative ease of her courses and the way her residents respected her needs as a student.

Despite not wanting to study when her residents were around, when she was pressured Courtney found it easy to say “no” to her residents. As Courtney said “I’d say it’s pretty easy to say no – I don’t know – like I have to do this homework assignment and they’re like – oh, okay.” According to the data, Courtney’s relationship with her academics has remained largely unaffected by her move into the suites, however another mitigating factor just might. As she related:

[I’m] Not super excited about [class] – I’ve had Senioritis since first semester last year – so – I don’t know sometimes the University has classes that aren’t really worth your time, but you have to take anyways for graduation or whatever and you’re like – ‘it’s a waste of your time.’

In contrast, Martha attributed much of her academic difficulties to her first RA position in the corridor-style halls. According to Martha, “It had an impact – a detrimental one definitely my first semester. My GPA dropped a lot.” To explain this drop, Martha cited her lack of interest in her first semester classes, her passion for her RA role, and her lack of balance in her roles. As a side note, Martha also preferred to study in her room while in the corridor-style hall, so that she was accessible to her freshmen residents, and because she “wanted to be . . . that role model for my residents as far as studying goes.”

This year, in the suites, Martha vowed to be “more academically minded” because she recognized that her situation was becoming “more serious.” Last year, her classes were easier and with her aspirations for graduate level studies she understood the need to focus on studies. However, whatever difficulties she was experiencing with her academic work, she would not blame her RA role as a cause. Indeed, Martha said:

But yeh, my academics – still, like I’m still not on top of where I want to be. I don’t think it’s the RA job, I think it’s more my personal time management skills and not sticking with things and wasting time. I don’t think it’s necessarily the RA position. I mean, it forces you to manage your time better.

At the last interview, Martha reported that she had much better control over her academics, and that her RA role in the suites had not affected her at all. Martha continued to study in the living room of her suite because “that’s when I usually interact with my floor . . . and my door will be open.” Interestingly Martha uses her open door to pull in residents, despite her devotion to her studies. However, as Martha said “If I really need to get something done, I will leave the building – I won’t even study here . . . Because, for me, like I feel like I’m at work whenever I’m in my room or I’m at home relaxing.”

Jeff confirmed these results, and noted that “my returning RAs [tend] to have a little bit better handle on what they’re doing . . . and I think, with my new RAs, especially if they’re new and they’re Sophomores, they struggle a bit.” From the data collected in this study, it seems that the suite-style environment had little to no adverse effect on the studies of the participants. To the contrary, Martha has experienced an improvement in her academic situation, which she has attributed to her time management and prioritization skills.

Family support. In terms of support for their RA position, both Courtney and Martha experienced no change from their corridor to suite environments. However, both participants did experience a change in the dynamics of their family interactions. Initially, both Courtney’s and Martha’s parents were excited about their new RA positions in the corridor-style halls. As Courtney related:

I called my mom and my grandma that day and they were both super excited – not just for me, but also for the experience that [being and RA] would get me, they thought that would be really rewarding and so – my mom, really enjoyed it.

Martha's parents were also excited about the experience that the RA position would give her, and both Courtney and Martha's parents visited their floors occasionally. As they transitioned into the suites, not much changed in terms of how their families viewed or interacted with their RA positions, but certain aspects of their relationships with their families did change.

For Courtney, the transition into the suites coincided with her transition into her last year of college. Along with this transition came frustration with how her family viewed and treated her. As Courtney related:

Last year, I went home at least once a month for like a big weekend. But I've only been home twice this year . . . I just have a bunch of stuff going on. Like whether it be big [Suite Hall] events that I should be here for or just homework projects that I need to work on covering up the different times, so . . . I'm getting to the point where I'm like – I'm 21 years old, I don't need to go home and see my family every weekend like they think I should so. . . .

When asked to elaborate, Courtney said "They still see me as like this little baby and I'm like – Stop . . . they're like 'When are you coming home?' . . . I'm not going to come home one week away from Thanksgiving because you can't wait another week." As shown in the described back-and-forth dialogue between Courtney and her parents, their understanding of her transitioning needs has had an effect on their relationship, but this effect does not seem to be related to her change to a suite environment. Martha has also experienced a changing dynamic with her family.

As Martha continued with her RA role, she began to view residence life as a career option. According to Martha, her family is very traditional, and as an example she explained that her mom has been a stay-at-home mom for the past 18 years. However,

Martha explained that “I definitely have a different personality which is more – I’m far more career oriented. Which is adding an interesting element to my relationship with my parents.” When talking about her future career goals, Martha has been met with resistance. Summarizing, Martha stated:

but at this point, because I’ve found something I’m really passionate about and, it does happen to be housing – it’s not exactly a part-time job. Being like a Resident Director or things like that – you’re moving up, within a housing department. So, that’s something we’re going to talk about – but not an idea my parents are super thrilled about. It’s not because it’s housing. It’s because it’s a full-time career in general. . . . How that’s going to affect my relationship with my family is going to be interesting like, in the next few years.

Both Courtney and Martha experienced a change in their relationships with their family, but the change was not related to the suite-style hall RA experience. Instead, each of the participants was approaching their last year of college, and while they transitioned toward adulthood and further into competence, the relationships with their parents changed.

While transitioning to the suite-style hall there were aspects of the RA experience that were the same for the participants as they had in their past corridor-style hall experience. Both participants experienced little change in terms of their staff dynamics, social lives, academics, and family relations. However, there were many aspects that did change as a result of working and living in the suite-style halls.

Space. By stepping into the suite-style halls, one immediately notices the physical differences that separate them from the corridor-style halls. The double doors that serve as barriers to interaction are in place because they serve a very attractive purpose. The individual room within the four person suites provide each resident a sense of privacy and personal space that is not available in the corridor-style halls. Often,

residents choose the suites because they want this personal, more private space, and they want to have an experience that resembles off-campus living. However, this comes at a price as building communities and fostering resident interaction becomes much more difficult for the RA. “Space” emerged as the second theme in this study.

Both Courtney and Martha expressed frustration over the lack of involvement by students on their floors and equated this phenomenon with residents not needing to exit their suites for socialization. As Courtney pointed out “They have three other people they can hang out with and it’s not awkward to meet new people in there because you already know them.” Furthermore, Martha related, “It’s just the physical – the barriers – it’s not easy to promote community where people [only] have to come out to eat. That makes it far more difficult.” Logically, if one wanted to interact with residents who refused to come out of their rooms, one would take the socialization to them. However, as Martha hinted, there may be a barrier to that as well.

During her third interview, Martha stated that her residents usually used their own space to hang out, as opposed to other more public locations in the suite-style hall. While Martha has socialized with residents in their suites, she is hesitant to interact with them unless invited. Martha noted this barrier when talking about conducting building walkthroughs in the suites:

I’m one that’s, like, if the door’s open, I’m not going to walk in and interrupt what they’re doing and talk to them. If they’re out in the hall, I will stop and talk to them, or if people talk to me then I will.

Martha’s hesitancy to enter a resident’s suite uninvited is shared by Courtney, but

Courtney is more willing to interact if the suite-door is open. She explained:

We don’t even, like – if a doors shut, we don’t normally bother them – but if the door’s open, every time I’ve been on rounds – myself with the [other] staff

member, we'll walk right—well not walk right in, but like, like hey guys what's up and start conversations and at least ask them what they're watching. . . . At least if the doors are open, we stop by and talk, we don't really do a lot of, like, knocking on doors – just because – I don't know – if I were a resident, I wouldn't want somebody just knocking on the door just to talk to me.

In both instances, the respect of private spaces is evident. While there is respect for space in the traditional, corridor-style halls, the casual nature of spontaneous interactions is more pronounced. As Martha related, “But I had girls come to my room, like grab some candy and then just talk about how things are going. It was very casual. We were a very close-knit group of girls.” Additionally, and in contrast to her resistance to knock in the suite-style halls, Courtney stated about her corridor-style experience:

I did a lot of door knocking. I was - and even to the extent that - I had a group of girls that were really dedicated to like floor government and trying to get people involved, so I would like send them knocking on doors as well, trying to get people excited and we would just do it, like randomly throughout the days.

So, why is there such a respect for private spaces in the suite-style halls? Martha provided an explanation.

As she acclimated to a suite-style hall, Martha was very aware of her status as a roommate, and in fact was looking forward to having her friends live with her. For Martha, having her close friends live with her would allow her to complain, vent, and interact as a roommate instead of as an RA all of the time. Yet, just because she had more space to socialize and less of a reason to leave her suite, doesn't mean that she didn't prefer to leave her suite while socializing with her outside friends. Why?

According to Martha:

Because, I still – I share that space with three other people. Which, I'm pretty close to two of my roommates, but one of them I wasn't. And, we still, like as a room, like we don't host events at, like – I think it's more like – like I don't know. Our living room is definitely a social space, but I feel like it's almost designated just for us. Like if we're going to have some people over, we always ask and tell,

and things like that. That's the nature of our room. So, it's not like a big old hangout spot – because a lot of us – we study in our rooms and if you're hanging out in the room – you're almost infringing on other people if you can't kind of keep it down.

For Martha, her suite was for her roommates and for her roommates only. Should someone come over, permission was required from the other roommates. She further explained by saying:

It's like – it's like reserved for just the people who live there. Like we – like we three roommates – because our further roommate is really absentee and now we're getting a new one. Like we always hang out in there together. Like [Roommate 1] and I are sitting in there all the time. But, like it's almost like whenever you bring someone in, they're kind of like intruding on that space, like they're – it's almost like they're not supposed to be there for some reason. Like we're used to [my boyfriend], like being around – but still it changes the dynamic because it's like they're coming into our home – like into our space and I feel like a guest at that point and like, you really feel that. Really strongly.

The invasion of space is a different dynamic than that experienced in the corridor-style halls. With the addition of separated rooms, utilities, and suites from the hallway of the suite-style halls, the casual nature of interaction has lessened and become less sporadic. RAs, in the suite-style halls feel a need to be welcomed, invited, or have a reason to intrude on a resident's personal space.

Not Needed. While ominous sounding, the theme “Not Needed” was not meant to imply that RAs are no longer needed in suite-style halls. Rather, the theme describes how certain classic roles that the RAs have played in the corridor-style halls are no longer needed or emphasized in the suite-style halls. The following discussion will highlight the major differences in the RA roles that each participant noticed and encountered in the suite-style environment.

At first Courtney expressed that there was no difference between the roles she played in the corridor-styles halls or the suite-style halls. However, the researcher

noticed a change in her responses over the course of the semester. In the last interview, Courtney saw a difference in her experiences in terms of programming, mentoring, and advising. Martha also remarked on various differences in her roles from the corridor-style to the suite-style halls, and in her last interview said:

Yes, the nature of the relationship [changed] a lot. I think I was more of a mentor, I was more of a mom, like to the Freshmen girls. I see them a lot and they look up to me more. Most of them thought I was a Junior or a Senior last year—I was a Sophomore. Cause, that's kind of—I mean you need to have that air of, you know what you're doing—that confidence, and those kind of things. So, it's a totally different dynamic. And, my Freshmen here still see me that way, but I think that's how, you know, when you relate with upperclassmen and Freshmen, your role and your job description changes.

For Martha, the differences in her RA roles were quite clear, and she mentioned how she changed her approach as an RA depending on whether she was working with freshmen or upperclassmen. Many of the differences in the RA roles experienced by the participants related to the class standing of their residents, but the structure of the hall and overall needs of their residents also changed.

Of the many roles that RAs play, Blimling (1998) discusses four which directly impact residents and form the basis of RA work: the role model, the counselor, the teacher, and the administrator (pp. 7-10). While working with her residents in the corridor-style hall, Courtney made reference to many of these roles as she described reinforcing the rules, educating her residents through programs, implementing a floor government, and building a strong and well-connected floor community. Yet, in the suite-style environment, Courtney immediately noticed that her residents were not as interested in connecting with each other. While her residents were friendly, their need to connect with others was not as pronounced.

In her second interview, the subtle signs of avoidance appeared as Courtney stated “some of my other rooms are a little more reserved, a little more quiet.” She elaborated further by saying “I haven’t had a lot of interaction with my Freshmen boys. They’re too busy doing other stuff . . . ignoring the RA. Like a lot of them are in fraternities and stuff so they’re always out doing something.” While minor at first, the problem with avoidance became more pronounced during the third and fourth interviews. When asked what surprised her this semester, Courtney replied “I’m surprised at the amount of people who don’t want to leave their rooms.” By following up on this statement, Courtney further explained by saying “ I just don’t think they like the RA position in general . . . a lot of them have their own stuff to do,” and that because they see the RA as a rule enforcer, that her residents tend to avoid her. In addition, Courtney brought to light another factor that affected their lack of interaction with the rest of the floor: her residents had everything they needed in their rooms.

In the suite-style hall, residents have access to restrooms, food, and friends all within their own suite. As Courtney related:

You know, they have everything they need in there, why do they need to come out? They have three other people they can hang out with and it’s not awkward to meet new people in there because you already know them. . . . Everybody else knows each other. Yeh, so it’s difficult because you have, you know, four friends in the room – they don’t need more friends, according to them. So, it’s difficult to get them out. Even with the upperclassmen and Freshmen. But it’s kind of a trend throughout the building, I guess, because a lot of the other RAs are having that issue too.

At her last interview, Courtney shared her thoughts on how she would describe her RA role in the suite-style hall. Sadly, and in contrast to Blimling’s (1998) previously mentioned responsibilities, Courtney stated that “I have 36 residents that I plan different events for and if they have a problem then they come to me sometimes. I don’t see them

until they have a problem and they need to come talk to me.” Akin to Courtney, Martha experienced similar issues.

At the beginning of the year, Martha immediately recognized the populations on her floor with whom she had less contact. Among those populations were the athletes and the international students. The football players were “not around very often” and the international students “have not been coming to programs.” In addition to this, Martha also recognized that her upperclassmen “don’t need your help, like, they don’t want your help. They know who you are and why you’re here and they know that they could be doing [the RA job] too.” As a result, Martha related that she is only approached when her residents have roommate conflicts. In response, Martha resorted to holding the floor trash bags hostage, so that her residents are forced to visit her. As she explained:

I’m not handing out a roll to each room – no, you’ve got to come find me. I mean, they might break down and buy them themselves, but I’m like – if you need trash bags- I’ll get you some – but you got to ask me, you’ve got to talk to me. So, it’s the only time I see some of these people.

In contrast to Blimling’s (1998) roles, the needs of residents in the suite-style halls have changed because of the amenities offered by the suites and the characteristics of the residents who live there. While the RA participants continued to cater to freshmen in their various capacities, for many residents the RAs exist to mitigate or solve their problems and roommate conflicts. In Martha’s case, she is the sole source of trash bags. However, Martha maintained that she still served as a resource for her residents, but in a much different way.

While describing her RA role in the suite-style hall, much of what Martha said resembled her roles in the corridor-style environment. According to Martha, her priorities were to form relationships with residents, build a community, and serve as a

source of information. Yet, while her approach in the corridor-style halls still works for the freshmen in the suite-style halls, a different dynamic exists for her upperclassmen.

Martha explained, saying:

Yes, the nature of the relationship change a lot. I think I was more of a mentor, I was more of a mom, like to the Freshmen girls. I see them a lot and they look up to me more. . . . And, my Freshmen here still see me that way, but I think that's how, you know, when you relate with upperclassmen and Freshmen, your role and your job description changes.

As she related the situation, her role as a resource for freshmen was much more vital and could potentially have severe impacts if carried out incorrectly. In a freshmen hall, Martha saw herself as a liaison for the university. She felt that if she gave out incorrect information, or somehow misguided her residents, that they would cease seeing her as a resource and stop interacting with her. As she put it:

people are going to ask you questions and you don't want like the first two questions they ask you – your answer to be like, uh – like, I don't know. Because they're not going to come back and ask you again.

In contrast, Martha saw her resource role for upperclassmen in a very different light. For her current upperclassmen, she said that she didn't carry the "resource" connotation, but that her role was passive instead of active. Martha stated:

but it's far less of a – here's a bullet point list. It's less of a checklist now, it's more like, 'I heard about this and this is cool than you need to do this and these are the incorporated steps and if you don't do it, you're going to have some serious problems.' It's very different message.

Again, Martha reiterated that she still served in a traditional resource role with her freshmen, but that her experiences and dynamics with upperclassmen were different. However, the resource role is not the only way in which her relationship with her residents was different.

When describing the relationships with her freshmen in the corridor-style halls, Martha equated it to being a mother of a family. In one instance, while listening to a resident vent about a conduct violation, Martha said “she would still come and vent to me – like I wasn’t going to talk to my boss about it (laughter) . . . there seemed – I really took, for lack of a better term – a maternal role on my floor.” Later on, Martha confirmed this stance, by stating:

Yes. I was definitely like a mom figure. I think that’s natural considering my family and where I come from. I’m from a really big family and I’m the oldest girl in my family – so I took on a lot of those roles and it translated strongly over to my work.

Courtney, while not directly identifying her relationship with the word “mother,” still had a very close, familial relationship with her residents in the corridor-style halls. In fact, she described her hall community as “one big family.” Courtney’s familial experience is further supported by her interactions with her residents while recovering from a death in her family, and by the nature of her close social relationships with her residents. Yet, each participant experienced a change in how they interacted with their residents in the suite-style environment.

For Courtney, she experienced a community of avoidance and closed doors which frustrated her. Courtney stated:

I just think they don’t like the RA position in general . . . a lot of them have their own stuff to do and don’t want to hang out with, you know – I think they see the RA as more like – like the rule follower – the rule enforcer – instead of - ‘look at all the fun we can have if you come hang out’. Because a lot of them – the only interaction I’ve had with them has been check-in and their first floor meeting because they won’t come to anything else. So, I think that’s part of the avoidance. Like, ‘oh, geeze, here she comes again, she just wants something else from us’, instead of ‘let’s go hang out – let’s play games or’ – so. . . .

The lack of interaction clearly bothered Courtney, and in her last interview she shared that “I’ve got to figure something out. Like, it’s killing me inside that no one wants to come do anything.” For Courtney, she was accustomed to a traditional, corridor-style environment where residents were always around and socialized with her. Martha’s floor has been much more social than Courtney’s, but despite this, Martha has recognized a difference in her resident interactions and sense of community.

Last year, both Martha and Courtney described their community as familial, but this year Martha has noticed a difference. When describing the differences in community at the last interview, Martha said:

Well, first of all, I like the makeup of the people. It was very different – I mean I had all girls, mostly Freshmen all year. So, I mean, you get the typical – I guess the typical community – the girls that hang out together. And, you know, study together. I think, like, I was more of a dorm mom – like kind of what I said before and they all kind of became sisters. It was more family structured. Like more of that kind of model. Whereas here, like, we’re obviously a group of college students that like, are friends. Like it’s – it was almost like a family type model versus, like versus a big group of friends model. So, I guess that would be my analogy.

Rather than family who always spends time together, connect on the deepest of levels, hold each other accountable, and report to their “parent-RAs;” the community in the suites seemed to be much more peer-based and relaxed. While socialization still happens between rooms, the depth of said interactions seems to be much more akin to friends living next to each other in an apartment building, than a family who shares the same spaces and are deeply connected.

In the suite-style halls, both of the participants experienced a change in how they interacted with their residents, and what roles they utilized to help them and build their community. Due to the mixed nature of their floors, the RAs had to tailor their approach

based upon working with their freshmen or upperclassmen residents. The participants used a traditional, corridor-style approach with their freshmen, but often utilized a more peer based approach with their older floor members. In addition, due to the nature of the hall, the participants rarely saw their residents at all, unless they needed a particular service or help with a roommate conflict. While RAs are still required for their administrative, judicial, and community building roles, the changing demographics and needs of their residents have lessened the need and emphasis of some of the common and traditional RA roles. In addition to changing their roles as advisors and mentors, the lack of contact and engagement by their residents has also affected how the RAs build and establish community on their floors.

Community. Essential to the RA position is the responsibility of creating a safe and welcoming environment where residents may study, socialize, and enjoy themselves as they progress through the collegiate environment. Many of the RA roles and expectations are derived from this responsibility to establish an effective and safe community, develop programming and enforce building policies and procedures. However, the RA participants experience in trying to build an engaging and effective community in the suites was much different compared to the traditional, corridor-style halls. “Community” emerged as the fourth theme.

While trying to establish a community on their floors, the participants in the suite-style halls encountered difficulty in drawing their residents out of their rooms. Despite this difficulty, the participants were able to connect with some rooms more than others. For Courtney, it was her room of “rowdy boys” who constantly played games, interacted

with her and other floor mates, and attended her programs. In describing these residents, Courtney said:

I have one room who is like, everybody else refers to them as like the loud obnoxious room. But, like I really enjoy their presence. . . . Like they always have their door open. They're always inviting people in, like people they don't even know. They just brought a foosball table in last week, so they've been sitting there playing that and inviting people in. So, they're kind of rowdy, but like, it's one of the rooms that I'm probably going to enjoy a lot more.

It's obvious that Courtney has made a connection with this room, and in later interviews she remarked on how they became her "regulars" or residents most likely to come to her programs.

For Martha, her upperclassmen have been much easier to approach, and in terms of individual rooms, her "satellite" room as been one that stood out. At first, Martha was worried about pulling this room into her floor community, because the room is not closely located to the rest of her rooms. However, Martha described a much different experience as she worked with them:

They're technically a part of my wing - but they're so far removed physically. . . . But, I sat in with them and I talked - all four of them happened to be in there, so I just sat down and hung out with them. They're really cool guys. I don't know what I would have done if they were like a little bit awkward - but they're great. . . . They don't want to be involved in government per se, but they still like come to stuff and are involved, so, I can't ask for more than that.

For the study participants, it has not been their experience to have all of their suites as actively engaged as their rooms in the corridor-style halls, but the RAs have been able to create positive relationships and community with some of their suites. In addition, Martha relayed some optimism stating:

So, it helps if you have one person - like that's four other people. Like, if you have one person from one room, they're going to get introduced to everyone - like all of their roommates, eventually. I mean, I'm only working with 14 rooms and half of my government - or excuse me, my government represents over half

of the rooms on the floor. So, if you have – you know, the natural mingling comes from that.

According to Martha, if an RA can establish a foothold with one resident in a room, then the rest will follow eventually.

These experiences add to the discussion surrounding building a community in the suite-style environment, but Martha appeared to have more success in building a community than Courtney. According to Martha, her community building was effective because she encouraged her residents to take ownership in their community via floor government.

In both the corridor and suite-style halls, Martha viewed establishing a floor government as vital to her role in establishing a community. She attributed her increased program attendance and upperclassmen engagement directly to her successful government. When talking about her community she said:

Whether or not that's my fault – that's up for debate. Because I've heard from other staff members they've had problems with that. Or, especially, they have problems getting upperclassmen to come to events, which doesn't surprise me at all. Like, I know I have some – like, I typically have my upperclassmen that are in my government are the ones coming to events. And I noticed that. Like I have more Freshmen coming to events, which is understandable.

To establish this government, Martha targeted upperclassmen residents who had previous experience in hall government, or freshmen residents who were excited to be involved.

As she put it:

I think at first, the Freshmen found each other. But the upperclassmen didn't waste a lot of time getting to know them and I think government helped out a lot with that. Because I have – you know, I specifically targeted, like, the Freshmen I saw as like having a lot of promise. And, let's be honest, they don't have a lot to do their Freshmen year. And so, they have time to get invested in something. And then, I sought out those people that I knew who had been in government in the past or were interested in it or were looking for – like they're involved in Business or something where this would be a real asset to their resume or they

would really, really enjoy this. Or just girls who like to do arts and crafts. Because we have a place for everybody here and recruiting them as individuals – you’ve got them all in the same room and they become comfortable with each other and they’re interesting people to everybody.

Additionally, she described how she picked her residents for roles in her government based upon their strengths, and then proceeded to set up committees to help her with programming and other floor events. For her, establishing a government that was collaborative and non-hierarchical was important because the suite-style environment was not conducive for a highly structured government. Rather it was a tool for increased socialization and resident engagement.

If there was one piece of advice that Martha would give to RAs entering the suite-style environment, it would be to start building a floor government immediately.

According to Martha:

But, I would say no matter what you do – you need to attempt to get a floor government together. Because of the difficulty of the structure of this building – like the physical structure of this building – no matter how outgoing and you know, open, your residents are, like you need to establish that community really quickly and well.

By establishing this floor government, Martha’s residents were connected to their floor community, were invested and committed to programs, and had a role and purpose to play on the floor. Jeff concurred saying that the lack of involvement and attendance at floor programs was because “a lot of their programs are mostly done to meet the requirements and don’t include a lot of input from the students.” For him, a floor government keeps students occupied, and gives meaning to their involvement with the floor.

Establishing a floor government and letting residents program for themselves increases the amount of ownership and engagement residents take in their floor. While

the structure may be more relaxed than those in corridor-style halls, the presence of a government can increase program attendance and lead to connected residents in suite-style communities. However, one of the barriers towards building community was deciding how to approach residents.

When interacting with residents in the suite-style halls, the demographics of the residents have an effect on the approach that the RA takes. In the corridor-style halls, both Martha and Courtney expressed familial-like relationships with their residents. In Martha's case, she was definitely a voice of authority with her residents, as she described her role as maternal. However, the suites have offered a different challenge to which the RAs have had to adjust.

This year, Martha has had many more social encounters with her upperclassmen residents than her freshmen residents. She expressed "I don't know, I hang out with a lot of my residents, especially the upperclassmen, because it's like, I'm not really your mentor anymore because we're at the same level." In the suites, Martha identified with her residents as a peer member, rather than a matriarch or mentor. In many cases, residents in the suite-style halls are older than the RAs who govern the floors, and this can cause tension if the RA is not mature and confident of his or her skills. In one such situation, Martha described a conduct situation with her upperclassmen residents:

It was awkward, because it was a desk staff member. So, we were introduced to these people – so I know this person and it was like his 21st birthday- and everyone was of age – which I had never dealt with, because everyone in [my old corridor-style hall was] a Freshmen, or you have some Sophomores and a few people. So, you have people – that most of them were older than I am. I don't turn 21 until the end of May. So, it was very different doing conduct with them.

Unlike in her old hall, Martha recognized the differences in needs between freshmen and upperclassmen. As such, she has tailored the way she interacts with both. For freshmen,

she takes a traditional, mentor-like role. But for upperclassmen, she is much more a peer and friend. Martha said:

I mean I had all girls, mostly Freshmen [last] year. So, I mean, you get the typical – I guess the typical community – the girls that hang out together. And, you know, study together. I think, like, I was more of a dorm mom – like kind of what I said before and they all kind of became sisters. It was more family structured. Like more of that kind of model. Whereas here, like, we're obviously a group of college students that like, are friends. Like it's – it was almost like a family type model versus, like versus a big group of friends model. So, I guess that would be my analogy.

Depending on whom Martha is interacting with, she takes different roles. However, due to the nature of her peer relationships with her upperclassmen, the sense of awkwardness while in conduct has increased in the suite-style halls. In addition, the physical structure of the suites made building community difficult.

In her second interview, Courtney was asked to reflect on similarities between the corridor and suite-style halls. While reflecting, she mentioned that all of her rooms seemed to be friendly towards each other. Specifically, Courtney said:

I don't know – I think like just the camaraderie of, like, between rooms. Even though, like they have their doors shut, they're really friendly when they're in passing and stuff and so, I think that's one thing that I enjoy so far at least. At least people will say hello to each other and I feel like the more like community builders and, like, that kind of stuff that go on and like different activities on the floor like, that will happen more and more often, hopefully it won't just be a little more conversational.

While being happy with the camaraderie and overall friendly nature of residents across the suites, it appeared that Courtney was concerned that the doors were shut. Towards the end of this interview, she mentions that she hopes the community will continue to gain strength despite the doors being closed. Yet, during interview three she shared that this had not been the case. While comparing her current hall with her prior hall, Courtney stated:

Just like the doors always being shut – whereas like when you're on rounds in [my previous corridor-style hall], like most people had their doors open or you saw people walking up and down the halls a lot, whereas here, maybe every couple of doors will be open instead of a lot of them.

For Courtney, this ended up being a major deal for her, and, when asked about her job, she mentioned that she was surprised by the amount of people who didn't want to leave their rooms. In fact, Courtney said "I'm really hard on myself, and so, like not being able to get all these people out of their room, like really bothers me." By interview four, Courtney fully realized that her residents were not as interested in building relationships as she would have hoped, and that they always seemed to be too busy to talk, or go to programs.

In interview four, the researcher asked Courtney to share some disadvantages in working in the suite-style halls. She said:

I think the biggest one is the two doors. Not only their main door, but also their room door to get to them. And, how much they really – they're not apathetic, but they don't care, sometimes, and that's probably one of the hardest things – because, I don't know – I remember when I was a Freshman, I wanted to be involved. I wanted to meet everybody and like, that – for me that was like, the college experience, like getting to know everybody and blah, blah, blah. And my Freshmen are just like, 'okay – no, I don't think so.'

For Courtney, her main frustration has been the presence of the two doors in the suite-style environment, or rather, that the main door is always closed. Martha reported a much different experience with her floor.

When asked about her floor, Martha said she was quite lucky to have such an outgoing and friendly floor.

They're great. I have one of the more outgoing floors [Jeff] said. Yesterday he walked by my hall and it had the most doors open, which doesn't surprise me at all. . . . So, that's an advantage to me because it's pretty easy to get them involved because they want to be and they're the ones that are most invested in

floor government and things like that. So, that's been a good surprise as far as residents go.

For Martha, establishing connections and relationships with her residents has been easier because of their outgoing nature. In her fourth interview, Martha mentioned that when the doors are closed, the suite-style hall appears and feels like a hotel, but Martha's residents are usually more social. However, Martha does admit that she doesn't know all of her residents, and that she would have difficulty picking them out at an all-hall program. This suggests that not all of her residents are interacting with the floor.

Jeff understands Courtney's issues, and recognizes that his RAs "have a great facility to work with, but it is very difficult to get students to venture outside of their bedroom and suite, let alone connect with others on the floor/wing." The lack of direct connection between residents and RAs also had further consequences in terms of within-suite roommate conflicts.

In the suites, both of the RA participants reported a lack of conduct violations in their halls. Even with the occasional alcohol violation and loitering from outsiders, the suite-style environment remained quiet. As Martha put it:

Like, we just have to encourage more, people, hey if you see something weird, let us know and let us know quickly and I don't know if that message has gotten across enough – maybe. Because I feel like we don't get a lot of calls, like the only things I've gotten this year, like when I'm on duty is somebody at the desk can't figure something out so they need some help.

However, despite the lack of conduct violations in the halls, the intensity of roommate conflicts has risen for Jeff. Compared to last year, Jeff has devoted more time to resolving roommate disputes than he ever had in the corridor-style environment:

Mainly I see this with suitemate conflicts and most of that is with Freshman females this year. I don't know if there have been a larger volume than what I experienced in [my old corridor hall], but I definitely see a higher intensity in conflicts that have arisen.

Why is this happening? Jeff says that in traditional halls, it is easy for an RA to see their residents on a daily basis, and to be able to monitor potential roommate conflicts. By doing this, the RAs and RD can proactively approach the situation and diffuse the conflict before it becomes a problem. However, this is not happening in the suite-style halls.

Martha, who had various residents move off of her floor in the semester of the study related her experience with this phenomena:

What we're finding is we don't know about problems until they're big enough that people want to move. Because you can go sit in your own room and we don't know that because people don't have their doors open as much. Or, people sit in their living room and do homework – that's fairly normal. So, it's hard to tell. Unless you have time to walk around and talk to everybody and get a feel for the dynamic of each suite. These problems escalate and they blow up and by the time they come and talk to us, it's too late.

In the suites, the double doors, lack of open doors, and lack of resident interactions with the RA has contributed to the intensity of roommate conflicts. Unfortunately, the intensity of these conflicts has led to a number of room moves for Martha's residents. The difficulties presented by the suite-style hall were numerous for the veteran RA participants. Accordingly, each of the participants recommended that new RAs should not be assigned to the suites unless they possess the right degree of maturity and self-confidence, and understand that their lack of success is partially because of their residents' needs and characteristics.

The difficulties presented by the suite-style halls have challenged and tested both returning RA participants. Yet, in many cases the RAs have recognized that the residents

were partially to blame for low program attendance and floor involvement. Despite being frustrated, Courtney has come to terms with her residents, and is looking at ways to improve her floor next semester. However, what would the experience be like for first-year RAs who are working the suites? Both of the participants said it would be tough for a new RA to work in the suite-style environment.

Courtney noted that it would be easy for a first-year RA to feel defeated by working in the suite-style halls:

If this had been my first year as an RA and this was the building – like I would probably feel pretty defeated. Yeh. I don't know. Like, I'm really a social person, like I wouldn't understand – last year I wouldn't have been able to understand why somebody wouldn't want to come out of their room.

Courtney continued, saying that her previous experience helped her adjust and deal with the disappointments that come with working in a suite-style hall. Reflecting on her fellow staff members, Courtney said that a few of them were hard on themselves and didn't realize that the building design does this to them. Martha also thought it was a better idea for first-year RAs to have a traditional experience. She said:

I think it's much easier to be in a Freshmen hall. I do. Like, I think coming straight into [the suite-style hall] as a first-year would be more difficult because you're dealing with – first you have the two doors, which makes it difficult and then you have Freshmen and upperclassmen. And, a lot of your residents are older than you. And it would be – it's an interesting dynamic. If you can carry yourself really well – if you're a more mature individual and you don't come off as a Sophomore in college – as some do – then you'll be fine. But I think some people's authority gets questioned at times because of their presumed lack of experience.

According to Martha, the combination of being a new RA in a two-door hall with residents who may challenge your authority is more difficult than being in a traditional, corridor-style hall. She goes on to state that if a new RA has a great deal of maturity, her or his chances for success are improved, but that it would still be an interesting dynamic.

Jeff has seen the difference between his returning and new RAs in the suite-style halls, but insists that their experiences are normal:

My upperclass students, they tend to have a – or my returning RAs they tend to have a little bit better handle on what they’re doing and stuff and I think, with my new RAs, especially if they’re new and they’re Sophomores, they struggle a little bit. And I think part of it too, is that maybe they don’t actually have an idea of what they want to do. They may be in the midst of like selecting a major, and choosing one and trying to get into the program of study, and all that stuff, so. So, I mean, the stories are always there, but I guess I haven’t noticed anything different than what I’ve previously experienced with my RAs.

However, Jeff has noticed the struggles of his staff members, and he talked about having to build up their confidence. Of the many challenges RAs experience in the suite-style halls, the lack of program attendance has been one of the most detrimental to the RAs sense of success and satisfaction with their positions. In order to increase program attendance, each of the participants stated that programs needed to be creative and unique in order to draw residents. Creative programming emerged as a subtheme for the theme “Community.”

In terms of attendance, programming has changed in the suite-style environment. In line with the difficulties of getting the residents out of their rooms, active programs within the suite-style halls have seen low attendance. Courtney described her residents’ lack of interest in programs as follows:

Whereas here, like, if I come too excited and it like it freaks them out more than I think it helps me and so, I post signs and knock on doors right before and like, try to talk to them in advance, but a lot of them, just kind of, I feel like if I was super excited like I would be last year – like ‘okay, we’re going to have this pancake feed and it’s going to be awesome and there’s going to be chocolate chips!’ and they’re going to look at me and be like – ‘okay – thanks.’ Like a lot of them just don’t have the energy that I’m used to. . . .

When asked what programs draw out her residents, Courtney said “all hall” programs have been the most widely attended. By collectively planning and executing a program

for the entire hall, the RAs have seen attendance in numbers upward of 200 residents.

Yet, despite the success of these all hall programs, Jeff notes that:

Other programs – like on the floors is where I'm hearing that the RAs are struggling the most with like the smaller venues and stuff like where they're only able to get a handful of people to go to a program or an event or something.

Indeed, with one particular program, Courtney expressed frustration in that she was only able to get two of her residents to show up for ten minutes. For Courtney, it was easy to feel defeated at this point.

Martha, who noticed a similar trend, found a way to combat low attendance at her programs. By establishing an active floor government, she was able to have them program for her, and since they planned the event, she was guaranteed to have at least 12 to 15 people attend. According to Martha “we've got the group that's really—you've got these 12 to 15 people that are really gung ho about getting a community going, getting some sweet programs.” In addition, Martha mentioned that you have to make programs clever or unique to draw residents' interest. She further explained:

So, I think they'll continue to enjoy events and have a little bit of a clever twist to them. But just, yeh, anything that they wouldn't have the opportunity to do on their own, or they wouldn't think of doing on their own. It's got to be a little bit creative, I think.

Jeff agreed saying that some of the lack of attendance was due to poor planning and not catering to the residents' needs:

I think for some of them, like their programming – it's you know, something like 'oh, my floor never comes to anything.' Well, like are you really doing anything that your floor wants to go to, other than just slapping stuff together?

After stating this, Jeff emphasized the importance of making programs unique and interesting, despite the difficulty of constantly coming up with new ideas. He explained:

So you've either got to come up with something unique and different and get people really excited about it. And sometimes, I mean, as an RA, like you're super, super busy, so it's hard to put a ton of effort and energy into every program or every event that you do. Sometime you just have to get your requirements done and when that happens, its likely that there isn't as much energy and excitement from the RA. Which we've - - - I mean, I did it when I was an RA, too. I can't rip on them for that. But that's probably part of the reason that they're not having a whole lot of success is because a lot of their programs are mostly done to meet the requirements and don't include a lot of input from the students.

In order to successfully program in the suite-style environment, two factors must be addressed: (a) do residents have the proper buy-in or involvement in the creation of the program, and (b) is the RA being creative or just trying to fulfill requirements at the last second? For Martha, having her residents plan programs for themselves has increased the amount of attendance at her programs. In addition, by embracing off-the-wall or creative ideas, she has drawn in residents who would not otherwise attend. However, both Martha and Courtney noticed that most of their programs only drew out the residents who always attended their programs.

Courtney and Martha had certain residents who would always come to their programs and events. In the interviews, these special residents who supported their RAs were dubbed "the regulars."

For Courtney, her regulars were a group of boys on her floor that she called the "obnoxious room." However, when programming, these residents helped her advertise her event and applied peer pressure for other residents to attend. In addition, this room plus two other freshmen formed her floor government, and as she put it:

I always have the six guys always show up to all of the things – the government meetings. That's really exciting, but I don't know if they care as much as I do, but they're excited to go check out what's going on on the other floors.

Martha also has her group of regulars which, coincidentally, are also the members of her floor government. While doing a week-long series of socials, Martha mentioned that the same 10 to 20 people showed up every night. Courtney may have summed the situation up best when she gave out two pieces of advice to would-be RAs in the suites-style halls. Her first piece of advice was to wait for your residents to show up to your program, and be okay if your program doesn't start on time. Her second piece of advice was:

and be appreciative of the one or two people that you get to show up or the six people that actually show up because they're going – like don't be down and depressed like nobody else wanted to come to your event – hang out with that one person or what-not.

Each of the RA participants experienced challenges in building an engaging and well-connected floor community on their floors. While the floors were safe and the residents were cordial with each other, there was a lack of deep resident interactions and sense of community across the suites. Martha and Courtney each had suites that they felt had connected with them, but most of the suites remained isolated from each other. Encouraging ownership and floor government helped Martha develop her floor, but the lack of open doors hurt the community building experience for both RA participants. The lack of open doors also made diagnosing roommate issues much more difficult, and resulted in more intense roommate conflicts. While both participants recommended that new RAs should not be placed in a suite-style environment, both gave suggestions on how to make floor programs more successful.

Summary

The following table reflects the research questions posed by the researcher and a summary, per participant, that answers the questions.

Table 6

Summary of Findings

Research Question	Findings
1. Has the RA role changed in the suite-style environment?	<p>a. Courtney: More of a rule-enforcer and crisis solver than mentor and resource.</p> <p>b. Martha: Less of a mentor and role model in the suites because of upperclassmen. Roles utilized depended on the class-year of the resident. Less of a mom and more like a friend to her residents. Not used as an active or primary resource for information.</p>
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a suite-style hall?	<p>a. Courtney: Better accommodations. Lack of conduct violations. Residents not as involved or engaged with the floor community. Many residents avoided or ignored her. Family atmosphere not present. Difficult to establish community. More critical roommate disputes. Less work motivation as a result of poor resident engagement and program attendance.</p> <p>b. Martha: Close interactions with suite-mates. Less of a family atmosphere on floor. Difficult to establish community. Lack of conduct violations. More intense roommate disputes.</p>
3. How has the suite-style environment affected the RA-resident interaction?	<p>a. Courtney: Two doors and perceptions of intrusion limit resident interaction. Lack of involvement by residents. Fewer casual and spontaneous interactions with residents. Low participation at programs.</p> <p>b. Martha: Two doors and perceptions of intrusion limit resident interaction. Low participation at programs. Less of a family atmosphere. Awkward to act as a rule enforcer with students who are the same age or older.</p>
4. Has the RA noticed a change in their social relationships as a result of the suite-style environment?	<p>a. Courtney: Less close relationships with residents. Fewer interactions between residents and non-resident friends. Experienced a change in family relationships due to development as an adult.</p> <p>b. Martha: Noticed little difference in social life. Kept boundaries between her social life and residents. Relied on non-resident friends for social interaction. Close with friends/residents inside her suite. Preferred to leave suite to socialize. Experienced a change in family relationships due to career aspirations.</p>
5. Has the RA noticed a change in their academic experience as a result of the suite-style environment?	<p>a. Courtney: No change in academic experience.</p> <p>b. Martha: Grades improved in the suite-style hall. Due to recommitted efforts after struggling in her first RA position in a corridor-style, first-year hall.</p>

Table 6 continues

Research Question	Findings
6. What are the Residence Hall Director's perceptions of the RA role in the suite-style environment, and are they similar or dissimilar from the RA's perceptions?	a. Jeff: Two doors limit resident interaction. Difficult to promote community. Lack of conduct violations. More critical roommate disputes. Less work motivation as a result of poor resident engagement and program attendance. RA staff members doing well academically.

Each participant experienced unique challenges and successes as a result of working in the suite-style environment. While there were similarities between their current job and their previous experience in the corridor-style halls, their lived experiences were different enough to warrant this study. The theme “Similar” reflected the experiences that stayed unchanged between the suite-style and corridor-style halls for the RA participants. The themes “Space,” “Not Needed,” and “Community” referenced experiences that had changed for the RA participants. As they experimented with their new roles and mixed populations, the participants learned how to succeed on their floors through trial and error. However, only Martha felt like she had established a connected and engaged floor community. In the next chapter the researcher will present the discussion of the findings of the study.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case study was to explore the experiences of resident assistants (RAs) as they transitioned from a traditional, corridor-style residence hall, to suite-style hall environments. RAs that were in the transition from the traditional, corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall contributed to this study by participating in multiple interviews over the course of the fall semester of the 2010-11 academic year. In addition, the Residence Hall Director (RD) was also interviewed during the fall semester. Throughout the study, the RAs were asked to reflect upon their (a) roles and responsibilities as RAs in the suite-style environment, (b) effects they have seen in their social and academic lives as a result of their new assignment, and (c) how their current experiences compared with their prior traditional hall experiences. In this chapter, the researcher will review the findings of the study, discuss the implications, and suggest potential topics for future research.

The following research questions guided the scope of the study, and provided insight into how the RA experience has changed as a result of transitioning to the suite-style halls. The grand tour question in this study was: What are the lived experiences of RAs as they transition from a corridor-style hall to a suite-style hall? The following six research questions were explored in this study:

1. Has the RA role changed in the suite-style environment?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a suite-style hall?
3. How has the suite-style environment affected the RA-resident interaction?

4. Has the RA noticed a change in their social relationships as a result of the suite-style environment?
5. Has the RA noticed a change in their academic experience as a result of the suite-style environment?
6. What are the Residence Hall Director's perceptions of the RA role in the suite-style environment, and are they similar or dissimilar from the RA's perceptions?

Discussion of Findings

According to Blimling (1998), Resident Assistants fulfill five main roles: student, role model, counselor, teacher, and administrator (pp. 7-10). However, to study the entire lived experience of an RA, the researcher added two more: the roles of "friend" and "family member." By adding these two roles, the entirety of an individual's experience in relation to others around them can be glimpsed. The use of Blimling's (1998) definitions has helped professional residence life staff understand the experiences of their RAs in the past, and has helped them tailor their practices to support their student staff members in their efforts to create engaging and educational living-learning environments. However, by changing the physical structure of the hall, and mixing freshmen with upperclass students modern residence life has created a highly unique and different experience for both residents and RAs. This study provided evidence that some of the traditional RA roles were affected by the suite-style halls. The themes that emerged from the study were "Similar," "Space," "Not Needed," and "Community."

Despite concerns and expectations of challenges in the suite-style halls, much of the RA experience remained similar to corridor style environment. While their

colleagues were too energetic at times, each of the participants reported having good working relationships with their fellow staff members. Although Martha stated that the dynamic with her fellow RAs had changed due to her “returning RA” leadership role, she saw this change as the result of her seniority and experience rather than the suite-style hall.

Interestingly, neither of the RA participants noticed a change in their social lives as a result of working in the suites. Martha, who preferred to meet her friends outside of the halls, continued to do so. Courtney experienced a change in her social life, but only because her residents in the corridor-style hall were also her friends. However, Courtney continued to socialize with her non-resident friends as well. The only significant change reported was in the amount of resident to non-resident friend contact. Courtney’s non-resident friends and resident-friends seemed to interact a lot more in the corridor-style halls, as both sets of friends frequently attended hall programs and socials events. This year, Courtney’s non-resident friends stick to her room only. However, there was not enough evidence to prove a significant change in either participant’s social life.

Similar to the RAs social experiences, the transfer to the suite-style halls had little affect on the participants’ academic experiences. In fact, both Courtney and Martha experienced no change or a modest increase in their academic outcomes. There are many mitigating circumstances that might explain Martha’s advances in her academics, but one comment was particularly relevant. Last year in the corridor-style halls, Martha studied in her room to role-model proper study habits for the residents on her floor, and because she felt anxious when she was away for a long period. However, this year Martha stated that she would leave the hall when she had to focus. In addition, both participants

remarked on how quiet the suites were, and how neighbors respected each other's study time. Her ability to leave her floor and not feel anxious reflects her realization that about half of her residents were upperclassmen, and the suite-style design of the floor gave her less exposure to the problems individual students might be experiencing. Her sense of needing to be a "mother hen" was greatly diminished as an RA in the suite-style hall.

During the study, each participant remarked on how their relationships with their parents and families changed while working in the suite-style hall. However, the changing relationships were ascribed to their maturation and progress towards graduation, as opposed to a direct effect of the suite-style halls. Courtney struggled with her parents' perceptions of her as a child, while Martha's career goals strayed from her family values. However, both of the participants' families were supportive of their RA positions. While much of the RA experience remained the same, there were various changes and challenges presented by working in a suite-style hall.

One challenge that the participants dealt with was the physical and social barriers that were built to accommodate the resident's needs for personal and private space. Not only did the double doors separate the RAs from their residents, but there was a perception of "intrusion" associated with entering residents' individual suites, whether their doors were open or closed. While Courtney was more likely to enter her residents' suites, Martha wouldn't encroach upon her residents' private spaces unless invited.

In addition, both participants noticed that the roles they played as an RA changed within the suite-style hall. Courtney observed that she was more of an administrator, and less of an "I can be fun too" RA in the suites, as opposed to when she was in a corridor-style hall. As she reported, the majority of her interactions with her residents centered on

their needs, such as roommate conflict mediation or other services that she could provide. Courtney reported that she became less of a community member and friend, and more of an authority figure. Martha experienced a different reality in the suites as compared to Courtney. For Martha, who was always the authoritative and guiding mother in the corridor-style halls, she became much more of a peer and friend with her residents, but only with the upperclassmen with whom she identified. However, due to the fortunate outgoing nature of the floor residents, Martha freely admitted that she had an easier time establishing community than most of her colleagues. Despite the differences in experience, it is clear from the data that the suite environment and resident demographics changed the roles that each of the RA participants played.

The more outgoing a floor was, the more the RA role stayed the same in the suite-style halls. The researcher sensed that Courtney lost the roles of counselor and teacher in the suites, due to her lack of resident interaction and low program attendance. In addition, she was very frustrated at not being in contact with all of her residents, despite the one room of “rowdy boys” with whom she connected. Martha, on the other hand, whose floor government was very active and whose floor was more engaged, maintained that she was still a resource and teacher to her residents. However, she did remark that she was less of a resource for her upperclassmen, who needed less “check-list” instruction on how to navigate and acclimate to campus. Martha tended to switch her roles as an RA depending on whom she was interacting with, and tailored her actions and responses around the specific resident demographic.

Establishing and building communities in the suite-style hall tended to be more difficult than in the corridor-style environment. While Courtney and Martha both had

residents they could count on to attend their programs and be involved, they could not connect with the majority of their residents. Martha was more successful in building a community, but she attributed this success to her strong floor government. By encouraging her residents to program and be involved with the floor, Martha was able to give her residents ownership in their community, and increase the connectedness of students on her floor. However, the closed doors hampered the community building experience for both participants, and made pro-active identification of roommate conflicts nearly impossible. Due to these challenges, Courtney and Martha said the suite environment might be too difficult for new RAs, and that they might not understand why residents don't attend their programs or don't need to socialize with their floor. However, creative programming and all-halls tended to be better attended, especially by their "regulars."

By interviewing Jeff, the Residence Hall Director (RD), the researcher was able to triangulate and verify some of the themes found in the data. Overall, many of the comments, observations, and perceptions that the RA participants had were mirrored and supported by the RD. The RD reported that each of his student staff members was doing well academically and that none of them was anywhere close to academic probation. He also noted that his RA staff was quirky at times, and that they worked best in teams or in collaborative programming. In fact, some of the more successful programs were all-hall programs that utilized the RAs working in teams. Additionally, the RD also shared the RA participants' frustrations over the residents' lack of engagement with others on their floor and their poor attendance at programs. Jeff also observed the difficulty in getting residents to connect outside of their suites. Like the RA participants, he noticed that new

RAs struggled more often than his experienced RAs in the suite-style environments, and noted that he would have to build up their self-confidence more often. Like Martha, he noted that clever floor programs which involved resident input and buy-in were more successful than programs that were planned by the individual RAs alone. The last perception that Jeff had in common with the RA participants was the difficulty with closed doors and roommate conflicts. As the sole judicator for the building, the suddenness and intensity of the roommate conflicts surprised him. He attributed these phenomena to the closed doors and lack of RA interaction with each room. Based upon the amount of shared perceptions, it was clear that the RD was well informed and attuned to his RA staff members and his building community.

Implications

According to the statements made by the two RA participants and the RD, those hiring for suite-style halls should favor returning or veteran RAs. As a new RA, especially one who had a traditional first-year experience, he/she may come into the job with aspirations of building a corridor-style community in an environment that does not readily fit that mold. In addition, the age range of the residents sometimes provides difficulties when the authority of the RA is questioned because of youth and inexperience. Should new RAs be hired into the suite-style hall, consideration must be given to their level of maturity, ability to communicate effectively and confidently, and their previous knowledge of the difficult realities that exist in the suite-style environments. In conjunction with these considerations in hiring, the RD should be prepared to support new RAs in ways that build their confidence and skill level, and help

them understand that the success of their community is not solely dependent upon them, but that part of the responsibility lies with the residents.

Given the information provided by Martha, the best way to start a floor community is by immediately establishing a floor government and giving meaning to the roles your government members take. From day one, Martha had 10 to 12 of her residents involved in floor government. As active participants in floor government they planned programs, encouraged other residents to attend programs, and increased the amount of engagement on the floor. Even Jeff noticed that her floor community was stronger than the others. Martha's community was strong because her involved residents actively took ownership of floor activities and brought along the rest of the residents. Having an active floor government paid many dividends in the establishment of a connected and engaged community. RDs should prioritize the formation of floor governments, and have their RAs focus on this task early in the academic year.

As all-hall programs are the most widely attended events in the suites, and because the quality of all-hall programs is high when the RAs work on teams, all-halls should be prioritized over individual floor programs. While floor programs may have a great deal of impact, the primary concern of suite-style RAs is getting residents out of their suites and connected with other residents. The ability to do this with all-halls is much better as they attract upwards of 100 residents, as opposed to floor programs that may attract as few as two students. The increased amount of social interaction among residents at all-hall programs can increase the satisfaction and sense of connectedness that residents have in a suite-style environment. In addition, the team effort and

attendance numbers that all-halls garner may improve the confidence levels of the RAs who plan the events, and may lead to a higher sense of satisfaction in their work.

While it might make the RAs feel uncomfortable at times, RDs should encourage their RAs to knock on doors and force interactions with residents so that they can get an understanding of the roommate dynamics within the suites. The amount and intensity of roommate conflicts in the suites was more than Jeff had ever experienced before, and an effective way to proactively address these issues would be to maintain constant communication with the RA. By encouraging this communication, RAs would be able to predict and address roommate conflicts before they escalate.

Future Research

This study addressed how the roles and lived-experiences of RAs changed as a result of working in the suite-style environment. More research on this topic should be conducted at institutions of varying sizes, and with more diverse populations of RAs. One such limitation of this study that could be addressed would be to study male RA's perspectives and experiences in the suite-style halls. Additionally, the experiences of new RAs in the suites-style halls must also be explored to understand the true successes and struggles that they go through in their first year.

Currently, there is a great deal of informal assessment carried out by residence life departments on resident satisfaction with their RAs. However, a study should be done that asks the residents what roles their RA should playing, what they want their experience to be like in their hall, and how these results compare between residents in the corridors and suite-style halls.

Conclusion

The current literature outlines the roles and responsibilities that RAs are expected to have in the canonical, residence hall environment. However, consumer interests and needs have pushed residence life away from the traditional, corridor-style halls of the past, and towards a new generation of suites and apartments-style halls that offer more amenities and greater privacy. The researcher explored the suite-style environment in terms of day-to-day lived experiences and the roles of the RAs who work in them

This research contributed to the existing literature in various ways. While some differences in the roles and lived experiences of RAs in suite-style halls versus corridor-style halls are assumed, there now is stronger evidence of the interactions that RAs have within this new and growing style of on-campus housing. This study provides evidence that the resource role of an RA may change depending on the class years or ages of the students with whom they are working. The suite halls, while providing more amenities and greater privacy, are quiet communities with low amounts of interaction and engagement with others outside of their particular suite. Upperclassmen seem to be more in-tune with returning RAs, as new RAs struggle in their interactions with different resident populations and the lack of an engaging community in the suites. In addition, an expectation of personal space and privacy pervades the hall, and inhibits RAs and other residents from approaching each other without purpose. While the suites had little affect on the social or academic experiences of the RA participants, the aforementioned differences in RA roles and dynamics have vastly changed the day-to-day lived experiences of these RAs in this suite-style hall. The challenge that RAs have in establishing communities starts and ends with the feature that makes the suite-style halls

so unique and attractive in the first place: the two doors that separate them from their residents.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



August 11, 2010

IRB Number: 20100810973 EX
Project ID: 10973
Project Title: and the Resident Assistant experience.

Dear William:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 08/11/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 06/01/2011.

1. The approved informed consent forms have been uploaded to NUgrant (files with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these forms to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent forms, please submit the revised forms to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix B

Student Consent Form



OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Student Consent Form

Title of Project: _____ and the Resident Assistant Experience.

This research project will explore the experiences of Resident Assistants as they transition from a traditional residence hall to a suite style hall. This study will investigate these individuals' transition into their new Community Resident Assistant position, and seek to understand how the change has affected their lived experiences. Specifically, this study will examine how the change in hall style has affected the participants' perceptions of their floor communities, engagement with their floor and building, programming efforts and styles, position satisfaction, campus/community involvement, social life, and academic standing. The investigator hopes this study will contribute to the research on Resident Assistants in higher education environments as well as help residence life departments, at many institutions, understand how suite style halls affect the experiences of their Resident Assistants. Interviews will be held with, and photo documentation will be required from, Resident Assistants to discuss the above topics. You have been chosen because you've been identified as a Resident Assistant who is transferring from a traditional residence hall to a suite style hall.

Participation in this project involves participating in four separate 30 minute interviews held over the course of the fall semester in a location of the participant's choosing. At the first interview, you will be asked to complete a short demographic sheet and the interview portion will be audio taped. Each subsequent interview will also be audio taped. Additionally, at the first interview you will be given a disposable camera and asked to photo document your floor atmosphere, active and passive programs, and any events of interest that relate to your experience as a Community Resident Assistant. The disposable cameras will be collected at the third interview and you will be asked about the photos at the fourth interview. The actual photos will not be included in the formal data write-up, but any observations and data gleaned from the photos will be included in the formal data write-up. This is done to protect the identities of the individuals who may be photographed for this part of the study. You will not receive any compensation for participation in this study beyond the food items supplied by the primary researcher. You must be 19 years or older to participate.

Any information obtained during this project that could be identified with you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored on a flash drive and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's home office. The collected data will only be seen by the primary investigator and a transcriptionist during the study and will be kept under lock for five years after the study is complete. After the five years, the raw data will be destroyed. The information obtained in this study may be published in educational journals or shared at educational conferences but the data will be reported as aggregated data. The audio tapes will be erased after transcription.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this project. You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may also call the investigator at any time at (402) _____ with concerns regarding the study. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 if you wish to talk to someone other than the investigator to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant, to voice concerns or complaints about the research, to provide input concerning the research process, or in the event the investigator could be reached.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All responses will be kept in strict confidence.

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Participant

Date

William Harmon
Principal Investigator
Cell: (_____) _____
Email: _____

Dr. James Griesen
Secondary Investigator
Phone: _____
Email _____

Appendix C

Residence Life Professional Staff Consent Form



 OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Residence Life Professional Staff Consent Form

 Title of Project: and the Resident Assistant Experience.

This research project will explore the experiences of Resident Assistants as they transition from a traditional residence hall to a suite style hall. This study will investigate these individuals' transition into their new Community Resident Assistant position, and seek to understand how the change has affected their lived experiences. Specifically, this study will examine how the change in hall style has affected the participants' perceptions of their floor communities, engagement with their floor and building, programming efforts and styles, position satisfaction, campus/community involvement, social life, and academic standing. The investigator hopes this study will contribute to the research on Resident Assistants in higher education environments as well as help residence life departments, at many institutions, understand how suite style halls affect the experiences of their Resident Assistants. Interviews will be held with current Residence Life professional staff to discuss the above topics. You have been chosen because you've been identified as a professional staff member in Residence Life who has experience with the traditional and suite style halls.

Participation in this project involves participating in one 30 minute interview held during the fall semester in a location of the participant's choosing. At the first interview, you will be asked to complete a short demographic sheet and the interview portion will be audio taped. You will not receive any compensation for participation in this study. You must be 19 years or older to participate.

Any information obtained during this project that could be identified with you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored on a flash drive and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's home office. The collected data will only be seen by the primary investigator and a transcriptionist during the study and will be kept under lock for five years after the study is complete. After the five years, the raw data will be destroyed. The information obtained in this study may be published in educational journals or shared at educational conferences but the data will be reported as aggregated data. The audio tapes will be erased after transcription.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this project. You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may also call the investigator at any time at _____ with concerns regarding the study. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 if you wish to talk to someone other than the investigator to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant, to voice concerns or complaints about the research, to provide input concerning the research process, or in the event the investigator could be reached.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All responses will be kept in strict confidence.

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Participant

Date

William Harmon
Principal Investigator
Cell:
Email:

Dr. James Griesen
Secondary Investigator
Phone: (402) 472-3755
Email:

Appendix D

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

This agreement made on this _____ day of _____ 2010, between William Harmon, primary researcher, and _____ transcriptionist.

The transcriptionist agrees to keep any and all communication (oral and written) pertaining to the research study conducted by William Harmon strictly confidential. This includes, but is not limited to, any and all conversations, audio tapes, audio files, or e-mail correspondence to the transcription, and/or transcription copies (electronic and paper).

The transcriptionist agrees not to duplicate any materials provided by the researcher or presented to the researcher without the consent of the primary researcher. This includes, but is not limited to, audio tapes, audio files, and transcriptions. The completed transcriptions will be electronically sent to the primary researcher after completion and also saved onto a flash drive, provided by the primary researcher. Any e-mails, electronic correspondence, or files containing transcribed information will be destroyed after receiving confirmation of receipt from the primary researcher.

The transcriptionist will return any audio tapes, audio files, or copies thereof, to the primary researcher along with any electronic copies or paper copies of the transcriptions within a reasonable amount of time as set by the transcriptionist and the researcher.

By signing this confidentiality agreement you agree to the terms discussed above limiting you, as the transcriber, from sharing any information obtained during the transcription or through the use of the audio tapes or audio files to anyone except the primary researcher.

Signature

Print Name

Date

Appendix E

Student Email Invitation to Participate

Recruitment E-mail to Potential Student Participants

Greetings,

You are invited to be involved in a study about the experiences of resident assistants who work in Hall. You have been identified as a candidate because you have already experienced one or more years as a resident assistant in a hall outside of Hall and thus, will be able to compare and contrast your new experience as a Hall resident assistant. My hope with this project is to obtain a rich description of the holistic resident assistant experience, as it relates to their: floor community, engagement with their community, programming, staff dynamics, campus and community involvement, social lives, and academic pursuits. The findings of this study will be used to help UNL Residence Life professional staff understand how the new suite style community of Hall affects their resident assistants.

Your participation in the study would include involvement in four, 30 minute taped interviews over the course of the fall semester. The times, exact dates and location of the interviews can be determined by you, but I would like the interviews to fall around these general dates:

Interview one: August 23 (possibly during training if you are available or have time)

Interview two: September 6 (after the two week programming block)

Interview three: October 18

Interview four: November 29 (the week before the last week of classes)

Your participation would also include photographing your floor, programs, and other phenomena of interest that relate to your resident assistant experience with a disposable camera provided by the researcher. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact me at the following e-mail address: or on the telephone at:

Thank you. I look forward to meeting with you and to talking more.

Sincerely,

William Harmon
 Graduate Student
 Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 106 Canfield Administration Building
 P.O. Box 880423
 Lincoln, NE 68588-0423
 Email:
 Phone:

Appendix F

Professional Staff Email Invitation to Participate

Recruitment E-mail to Potential Professional Staff Participants

Greetings,

You are invited to be involved in a study about the experiences of resident assistants who work in [redacted] Hall. You have been identified as a candidate because, as their direct supervisor, you have firsthand knowledge of the experiences as a resident assistant in your hall. The data collected by you will be used as a method of validation to support and contrast the data gained from your resident assistants. My hope with this project is to obtain a rich description of the holistic resident assistant experience, as it relates to their: floor community, engagement with their community, programming, staff dynamics, campus and community involvement, social lives, and academic pursuits. The findings of this study will be used to help UNL Residence Life professional staff understand how the new suite style community of [redacted] Hall affects their resident assistants.

Your participation in the study would include involvement one, 30 minute taped interview to be held at any point over the course of the fall semester. However, if you feel that you would like to participate in another interview, I can schedule more as needed. The times, exact dated and location of the interviews can be determined by you. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact me at the following e-mail address: [redacted] or on the telephone at: [redacted]

Thank you. I look forward to meeting with you and to talking more.

Sincerely,

William Harmon
Graduate Student
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
106 Canfield Administration Building
P.O. Box 880423
Lincoln, NE 68588-0423
Email: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]

Appendix G

Student Demographic Information Worksheet

Student Demographic Information

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions, please leave the item blank.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Pseudonym of Choice: _____ Age: _____

Current Major: _____ GPA: _____

Year in School (by credit hour): _____ Semesters at UNL: _____

Self Identified Ethnicity: _____ Semesters as an RA:

Gender (circle one):

- Male
- Female
- Other (please explain): _____

Sexual Orientation:

Previous Residence Hall/s worked in: _____

Current Residence Hall: _____

Other campus/community involvement (list any offices held and sports teams):

Other campus/community jobs:

Appendix H

Professional Staff Demographic Information Worksheet

Residence Life Professional Staff Demographic Information

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions, please leave the item blank.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Pseudonym of Choice: _____ Age: _____

Current Professional Title: _____

Current Residence Hall/Complex: _____

Current Job Description:

Semesters in Current Position: _____

Semesters in Positions Related to Residence Life:

Past Residence Life/Student Affairs Positions Held (Last four in more than four):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Appendix I

Student Interview Protocol

Resident Assistant Interview Protocol

While each interview will be affected by the participant, four topic domains will be addressed for each of the Resident Assistant individuals interviewed. This protocol is included as a guide to what will be addressed, but may not be followed strictly depending on the events of the interviews with each individual participant. The topic domains are:

- Reflections from their previous Resident Assistant experience
- The 3rd week experience
- The developed floor
- Epilogue/Final thoughts

The first interview will focus entirely upon the participant's previous Resident Assistant position as a way of establishing a baseline for comparison for later interviews. The second and third interviews will focus entirely upon the participant's current Resident Assistant experience, and the fourth will serve as a wrap-up meeting where final thoughts can be shared. In this Appendix, four sample interviews are offered, however strict adherence to these samples is contingent upon the content of interviews as they occur. Therefore, these samples will be used as guidelines as the actual interview questions will be developed over the course of the semester.

The covert categories of interest that will be covered in each interview represent seven areas of the Resident Assistant lived experience. The chosen categories of interest are:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

In each interview, I will explore each of these categories through the lens of the Resident Assistant experience, though they will not be directly or overtly asked. I will remain aware of these categories throughout the interview process, and will make every effort to address them until saturation is reached.

At the beginning of each interview, as a way to break into conversation, I will lead off with one or two questions that do not necessarily reside in the topic domains or categories of interest. A sample of expected questions is provided below.

Interviews 1-4

Topic Domain: Icebreakers

Researcher Self Disclosure

Guiding Questions (Interview 1): Please tell me about yourself.

Sub-questions:

- What are you involved in?
- What are your hobbies and interests?
- Do you have anything exciting coming up?

Guiding Questions (Interviews 2-4): How have you been?

Sub-questions:

- Has anything exciting happened this semester? What have you been up to recently?
- Have you had a chance to reflect upon our last meeting? Is there anything you would like to discuss?
- Questions about any participant specific topics (which might include family, relationships, health, etc.).

First InterviewTopic Domain: Reflections from the previous Resident Assistant experience

Covert Categories:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

Guiding Question: Tell me the story about how you became a Resident Assistant.

Sub-questions:

- Did you have any mentors or role models who recommended you for the position?
- What difficulties did you experience last year? What were you successful at?
- Tell me about your first training week and team building with your staff.
- Tell me about a memorable resident interaction from last year.
- Tell me about the program you were most proud of last year.

Guiding Question: Tell me about your floor last year.

Sub-questions:

- Did you have a floor to yourself, or were you with a partner?
- What did you like and dislike about your floor last year?
- Tell me about a typical night on duty.
- How would you describe your floor community?
- How would you describe your building community?

Guiding Question: Tell me about the day you decided to transfer to [the suite-style] Hall.

Sub-questions:

- What made you want to move?
- How do you anticipate the experience will be different?
- What challenges are you expecting for this year?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What programming ideas do you have?

Guiding Question: Tell me about a great time you had with your friends last year.

Sub-questions:

- Did they frequent your floor? Did they meet and hang out with your residents?
- What challenges did you face last year in your social life?
- Tell me about a time when you hung out with your residents.
- What does your family think about your position?

Guiding Question: Tell me about your best and worst class last year.

Sub-questions:

- How did your position influence your studies?
- How and where do you study?
- What do you do when you are not studying?

Guiding Question (depending upon demographic worksheet and previous self-disclosure): With all of your involvement, tell me about a week where you felt really stressed out.

Sub-Questions:

- How did you balance your commitment as a Resident Assistant with your other involvement?
- How did you get involved with your outside commitment?
- What do you hope to accomplish this year with your organization/job?

Second InterviewTopic Domain: The 3rd week experience

Covert Categories:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

Guiding Question: What surprised you in training this year?

Sub-questions:

- What were you trained in that was specific to your new hall? What has been the same?
- What did you enjoy the most? What did you enjoy the least?
- Tell me about your favorite team building exercise.

Guiding Question: Tell me about your residents.

Sub-questions:

- Tell me about a time when you hung out with a resident/s.
- How would you describe your floor atmosphere?
- What are you residents involved with?
- Has there been conflict on your floor?
- Describe your resident dynamics.
- What issues have they approached you with?

Guiding Question: What has been your favorite program so far?

Sub-questions:

- Did your residents enjoy this program? What programs have they enjoyed?
- Tell me about your first bulletin board. Why did you decide to do it?
- Who comes to your programs?
- What other ideas for programming do you have for the semester?
- Tell me about the formal dedication. Did this event help you establish your community?

Guiding Question: How do you split up the work responsibilities with your floor partner?

Sub-questions:

- How would you describe your staff dynamics?
- Tell me about a time where you hung out with your staff.
- Tell me about a typical night on duty.
- How have you been challenged by your staff? How have you been supported?

Third InterviewTopic Domain: The developed floor

Covert Categories:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

Guiding Question: What has surprised you about your job this semester?

Sub-questions:

- What have you learned in your new position?
- Tell me about a resident that has stood out for you.
- What successes have you had so far?

Guiding Question: How do you feel about how your floor has developed?

Sub-questions:

- What would you do differently?
- Which program has been your most popular?
- What strategies work to keep in contact with your residents?
- What do your residents enjoy doing together? Who hangs out with who?
- Where do your residents hang out at? Do they utilize the spaces made available to them?

Guiding questions: Tell me about a memorable day with your staff.

Sub-questions:

- How would you describe the current staff dynamics?
- How do you socialize together?
- Tell me about someone on staff who you can count on.

Guiding Question: Tell me about a memorable day in class this semester.

- Sub-questions:

- Which classes have challenged you the most?
- How has your position affected your classes?
- What have you done to adjust?

Fourth InterviewTopic Domain: Picture discussion and epilogue

Covert Categories:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

Guiding discussion: This is a discussion of interesting observations and themes in pictures taken by the Resident Assistant. Actual questions to be made before the last interview.

Guiding Question: How would you describe your job to somebody else? What do you feel are your primary responsibilities?

Sub-questions:

- Do these match up with your job description?
- What have been your challenges and successes?
- How have you developed your professional skills this semester?
- How would you characterize your community?
- Have you enjoyed your time in this hall?
- What are you looking forward to next semester?

Guiding Question: Tell me about a typical night with your friends this semester.

Sub-questions:

- Did they frequent your floor? Did they meet and hang out with your residents?
- Did you face any new challenges in your social life? How did you compensate for these?
- What does your family think about your position?

Guiding Question: Tell me about a memorable day in class this semester.

Sub-question:

- Did your study habits change?
- Have your grades improved, stayed the same, or have they gotten worse? Why?

- Guiding Question: What are the advantages in working in [the suite-style] Hall? What are the disadvantages?
- Would you go back to your old hall, or stay in this one?

Guiding Question: What advice would you have for Resident Assistants who are about to enter [the suite-style] Hall?

Sub-question:

- When should they be given this advice and by how should they receive it?

Guiding Question: Do you have anything else you would like to share about your experience in [the suite-style] this semester?

Appendix J

Professional Staff Interview Protocol

Residence Director Interview Protocol

As a method of validation, I will be interviewing the Residence Hall director of [the suite-style] Hall about their Residence Assistants' experiences. This interview represents a method of triangulation that will add rigor to the study. Once collected, I will compare the data from the Residence Hall director with that of the Resident Assistants to see if there are common or contrasting themes. The topic domain for the interview will be:

- Professional staff reflections

The single interview will focus on the Residence Hall director's perceptions of the Resident Assistant experience in [the suite-style] Hall. As a professional staff member in a traditional hall previous to [the suite-style], they should be able to compare and contrast the previous Resident Assistant experience with that of the new suite-style hall.

The covert categories of interest that will be covered in this interview represent seven areas of the Resident Assistant lived experience. The chosen categories of interest are:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

With this interview, I will explore the Resident Assistant experience through the lens of the Residence Hall Director; the primary supervisor to the Resident Assistants in [the suite-style] Hall. While not specifically addressed, I will remain cognizant of the categories of interest throughout the interview process, and will attempt to address every area relevant to the Resident Assistant experience. Additionally, if the Residence Hall Director requests another meeting, I will be open to do so.

First InterviewTopic Domain: Professional staff reflections

Covert Categories:

- Floor communities/atmosphere (sense of safety, conduct issues, resident to resident interactions)
- RA engagement on floor and in building (relationships with residents, mentoring, role modeling, activity on floor)
- Programming efforts (active-social, active-nonsocial, passive)
- Staff dynamics (relationships, roles on floor and within building, support and challenge)
- Campus/community involvement (time commitment, types of involvement, ability to be involved)
- Social life (relationships, close friends, family, time commitment, opportunities to engage with)
- Academic life (perceived level of difficulty, current grades, time commitment, fulfillment with progress)

Guiding Question: How would you describe the Resident Assistant position in [the suite-style] Hall?

Sub-questions:

- What are their priorities?
- How are the floors going to be set up?
- What do you see are the benefits and costs to working in [the suite-style] Hall as a Resident Assistant?

Guiding Question: What unique challenges and experience face your Resident Assistants in [the suite-style] Hall?

Sub-questions:

- How have the resident populations challenged your Resident Assistants?
- What programming is most popular?
- How do you get residents to programs?
- How will their social and academic lives differ?

Guiding Questions: What are your goals for your Resident Assistants this year?

Sub-questions:

- What are your identified outcomes and/or learning objectives for your Resident Assistants?
- What professional skills would you like for them to develop? How will you accomplish this?
- How will you challenge your Resident Assistants?
- How will you support your Resident Assistants?

Appendix K
External Audit Attestation

External Audit Attestation
Christine K. Timm, Ph.D.

Audit Attestation

Will Harmon requested that I complete a methodological audit of his qualitative case study thesis entitled "Behind two doors: the lived experience of resident assistants in transition at a Midwestern research-extensive university." The audit was conducted in March and April of 2011. The purpose of the audit was to determine the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

The audit was based on materials that Will provided for review. These materials provided evidence for the research process and were the basis for determining the extent to which the thesis findings were supported by the data. The following materials were provided primarily via email:

- IRB protocol submission
- Audio files of all participant interviews, each labeled by participant
- Electronic files of transcriptions with researcher notes and emerging themes
- Electronic file of codes and themes derived from interviews
- Draft version of thesis
- Revised thesis chapters one through five, references and appendices
- Printed and signed copies of informed consent documents

Audit Procedure

The audit consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial meeting to discuss project and possible audit role
2. Receipt of requested files as noted above
3. Review of IRB protocol submission
4. Review of random sample of transcriptions with independent coding to note possible emerging themes
5. Listen to sample segments of audio tapes to ascertain accuracy to print transcriptions and note possible emerging themes
6. Review of researcher identified themes and comparison to themes from auditor review and coding
7. Read first draft of thesis manuscript with special attention to the consistency in purpose, questions and methods between the IRB proposal.
8. Read final version of complete thesis.
9. Write and submit the signed attestation to the researcher.

The below information details the auditor procedure and findings.

Initial meeting

Will was a graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and in the Student Affairs program. Members of this program regularly interact with other student affairs

professionals including me. Throughout this time, we had general conversations regarding his thesis progress. In January 2011, we met specifically to discuss the thesis and the steps for an external audit. In March 2011, we made arrangements to conduct the actual audit and to deliver the research materials. Materials were delivered via email and electronic file in March 2011.

Review of proposal

The IRB protocol submission was reviewed to gain an understanding of the original intention of the study and to later compare against the actual methods used in the study. The research was conducted as described in the protocol submission, with an exception being the final research was with three participants instead of the proposed four. The study also was to include photographic evidence but the participants did not provide this information. The researcher explained these changes in the thesis manuscript.

Raw Data

Transcriptions. The auditor reviewed files containing transcriptions from the nine recorded interviews of all three participants. The transcriptions noted the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The auditor randomly selected four of the eight transcriptions and independently noted codes and emerging themes on a separate document while reading each transcription.

Audio-files. The auditor listened to segments of the audio files of four interviews and compared the content of the file to the printed transcription. The transcriptions accurately reflected the interview content.

Coding documents. The researcher submitted a summary document of codes, themes, and subthemes. Additional notes and diagrams were also submitted showing the condensing and focusing of themes.

Identification of Themes

The researcher's identified themes were compared to the coding by the auditor. Initially the researcher had five themes and sixteen subthemes. The researcher and I met to discuss these themes and considered ways to focus those into fewer themes with a goal of greater clarity for the reader. The resulting four themes and five subthemes were consistent with those identified by the external audit.

Thesis Manuscript

The thesis manuscript was reviewed to ensure that each chapter consistently noted the purpose of the study, that the methodology was consistent with the informed consent, and that the findings were supported by literature and participant statements. The manuscript was well supported by documentation and followed consistent processes.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the materials outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions regarding the process that was used and the product that was produced:

Process. It is the auditor's opinion that the process of the study was consistent with accepted qualitative research practices. The researcher fully described his process, noted study limitations, and established a basis of understanding allowing others to replicate this study. The focus of the study remained consistent with the proposed focus. The stated purpose and major questions remained consistent.

Product. It is the auditor's assessment that the trustworthiness of the study can be established. The findings are supported by the data. The researcher carefully designed the study and employed several verification strategies (peer review, triangulation of data, member checking and and external review). The researcher provided a background of each of the participants and a context as to their selection and involvement in this study. After recoding the transcript, I conclude there is support from the data for the themes presented.

Attested to by Christine K. Timm this 7th day of April 2011.

Christine K. Timm, Ph.D.

Associate Director, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Career Services
Courtesy Faculty, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Educational Psychology Department

Appendix L

List of Codes

Master Code List

Courtney: Interview OneTraditional**1. Why RA?**

Freshmen year RA was super active
I helped,
I enjoyed that kind of stuff
Didn't want to become an RA yet
Sophomore RA did the bare minimum
Liked being active
Freshmen RA mentor/Advocate

2. Difficulties

Keeping up with residents
Residents avoiding me
Girl Fights
Not overstepping bounds
Drama and freshmen girls
Prior commitments
Hard to find what they enjoyed or would show up to
Grandfather death

3. Conduct

Girl Fights
Abnormal; no incidents

4. RA Role

Freshmen year RA was super active
Freshmen RA mentor/Advocate
Not overstepping bounds
Didn't need me
Own friends
Reinforcing rules
Confronting
Showing care
Established relationship
Solo
Liked solo
Size matters
Off limits while studying

5. Demographics

Female, upperclassmen and international
Drama and freshmen girls
Mostly Freshmen
Afraid of consequences
Always have fringe dwellers
Nervous with confrontation
Nervous with confrontation
Didn't want to nag

6. Establishing Community

Door Knocking
Floor government
Dinners

Community of Respect
They were accountable
Didn't want a party floor
Community accountability
Custodian relationships
Getting people involved
Incentives for attendance
Service brought floor together

7. Programming

Incentives for attendance
Service brought floor together
Hard to find what they enjoyed or would show up to
Interested in?
Find the niche they like
All Hall; most proud
most successful
Big turnout
Big turnout exciting
NRHH wants bigger attendance
NRHH Small turnout

8. Resident Involvement

Getting people involved
Interested in getting involved
Exciting to see people get involved
Floor government
They can make differences

9. Staff

Staff was super energetic
Brother-sister
Family
No friction/Bonding

10. Resident Interaction

(Positive resident interaction) learning about their culture
Afraid of consequences;
(Bad Interaction) Loud obnoxious resident
Hard goodbye
Hard goodbye
it was good
Catching up
(Rounds) Doors Open
Talk to residents and duty partner
Liked duty mixed rotation
(Rounds) Length depends on interactions with residents
(Grand Fathers Death) Super depressed
Resident support
Being an RA hurt that semester
Spent a majority of time with residents
Residents would walk in and out

11. Community

(Floor) Quiet
 accountable
 (Floor) Respect
 Always have fringe dwellers
 Nervous with confrontation
 Nervous with confrontation
 Didn't want to nag
 Quiet
 super active
 a lot of fun
 Hard goodbye
 Hard goodbye
 it was good
 Catching up
 Cliques among residents
 Structure: Clustered environment
 Cliques among residents
 Abnormal
 no incidents
 Rooms open
 Nice to talk to others
 Unpredictable
 Achieved goal
 (floor Community) Strong
 Knew names, bonded well
 Hard goodbye
 less connected b/c no forced exposure
 (First RA experience): Hall was one big family
 (Unique) Learning communities
 Easy to connect
 Studied in room
 Floor was respectful towards studying

12. Inter-floor Interactions

Boy floor was loud
 Nervous with confrontation
 Didn't want to nag
 Outside interference
 less connected b/c no forced exposure
 Hall was one big family

13. Structure

Floor structure
 Structure: Clustered environment
 (Unique) Learning communities
 (Unique) Structure
 Easy to connect
 Lounges for group study

14. Rounds

(Rounds) Freshmen hall
 (Rounds) Doors Open
 Talk to residents and duty partner

Liked duty mixed rotation
 (Duty) Random is better
 (Rounds) Length depends on interactions with residents

15. Transfer

(Transfer) Wanted RD
 (Transfer) Something different
 Challenge
 Senior year
 (Transfer) Own space
 Roommates = RA's pick, Something different
 (Transfer) Process
 (Transfer) Process limits applications, Must be willing to knock on doors

16. Social

(Friends) On campus fun
 (Friends) 21st birthday downtown
 (Friends) Resident friends
 (Friends) They come to my floor
 (Friends) Interactions between Residents and Outside friends
 Spent a lot of time on floor
 Easy to get away
 Nights away to avoid burn out
 Outside friends came too
 Residents initiated socialization
 Spent a majority of time with residents
 Residents would walk in and out
 No time for Facebook
 Movies/family
 TV junkie

17. Family

Family/floor interaction
 (Family) excited about RA position
 Hard not to go home
 Communication was easy
 Family was supportive
 Grandfather death
 Movies/family

18. Academics

Teacher was godawful
 That's ridiculous
 Best class
 Grandfather death
 RA position had no effect on grades
 (Grand Fathers Death) Super depressed
 Resident support
 Being an RA hurt that semester
 Studied in room
 Floor was respectful towards studying
 Lounges for group study
 Off limits while studying

Procrastinator

19. Outside Involvement

NRHH President
 Outside Involvement; super rewarding
 Not a huge time commitment
 rewarding
 NRHH events for RAs
 Stressful time
 multiple responsibilities
 Responsibility, oversight
 So much/late nights
 Hall Recognition
 Nominated for NRHH
 NRHH wants more RA recognition
 NRHH wants bigger attendance
 NRHH Small turnout

Suite

1. RA Role

Doors don't stay open
 (Transfer) Process limits applications
 Must be willing to knock on doors
 (Floor) Already different
 Upperclass and freshmen
 Make effort to open doors
 Room set
 (Anticipating) Breaking through two doors
 Break through

2. Community

Doors don't stay open
 (Floor) Already different
 Upperclass and freshmen
 Make effort to open doors
 Room set
 Established friends

3. Structure

(Floor) Already different
 Upperclass and freshmen
 Make effort to open doors
 Room set
 (Structure) Own room
 Freshmen = more traditional
 Upperclassmen = more private
 So much room

4. Demographics

(Floor) Already different
 Upperclass and freshmen
 Make effort to open doors
 Room set
 Established friends
 (Looking forward) Resident diversity

New staff; Resident integration
 Establishing government
 Getting to know them

5. Staff

(Looking forward) Resident diversity
 New staff
 Resident integration
 Establishing government
 Getting to know them

6. Establishing Community

(Looking forward) Resident diversity
 New staff
 Resident integration
 Establishing government
 Getting to know them

7. Programming

All Hall programs
 Big turnout
 exciting
 All hall socials
 Floor social
 Freshmen
 Education

Courtney Interview Two

Suite

1. Training

(training) Went to camp
 Crammed training
 Material was the same
 Very general training
 Not as structured
 Returner opinions
 group effort
 Didn't like formalized training
 Liked team building
 help discover team strengths
 Liked hands on training

2. Staff

Staff energy
 Staff want to know each other
 Slow down
 Felt different this year
 some new people
 No all wing programs
 Too much for first year RAs
 Know they can come talk
 doing pretty good
 Not shared
 My wing only
 3 in sync
 Some are more connected

mesh well
 Outspoken
 Timid
 Let others jump in
 Jump in
 Wait a little
 Returner mentoring
 Mesh well
 Non elitist
 RD style
 They are acclimating
 Not since training
 all halls
 Bite my tongue
 be more energetic
 Staff is supportive

3. Community

One loud room
 Enjoy them
 If open door, you have to be cognizant of other people
 Full of energy and inviting
 Involved
 government
 Some rooms are more reserved
 Girls easier to contact
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 Video games
 Some rooms are more reserved
 One loud room
 Knew each other before
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 Open doors
 Interacting now
 Know each other
 Friends from before
 More social from start
 Open doors
 On top of it
 Coming to me
 On my side
 Exception of one room
 Pretty quiet
 depends on night
 didn't know doors could be propped
 Neighbor accountability
 Very respectful
 Interactions positive
 Doors shut
 always going somewhere
 Camaraderie between rooms

4. Resident Involvement

Involved
 government

Outside involvement
 On top of it
 Coming to me
 On my side
 Boys helped me
 Resident involvement
 Floor government
 Interest in Gov.

5. Establishing Community

Involved
 government
 CLA
 Girls easier to contact
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 Knew each other before
 I can be fun
 Open doors
 Interacting now
 Know each other
 Friends from before
 More social from start
 Open doors
 On top of it
 Coming to me
 On my side
 CLA
 Spending time
 Rowdy boys
 Playing games
 Sickness limits interaction
 If the door is open
 Doors shut
 always going somewhere
 Camaraderie between rooms
 Interest in Gov.

6. Demographics

Girls easier to contact
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 Floor demographics

7. Difficulties

Girls easier to contact
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 Freshmen boys ignoring RA
 RA roles = enforce rules
 Facilities issues
 Doors shut
 always going somewhere
 Sick

8. RA Roles

RA roles = enforce rules
 I can be fun
 Floor structure

Room responsibility
 More than one bulletin board
 Procrastinating
 old passives
 Don't know what im supposed to do with it
 Don't know what im supposed to do with it
 Not shared
 My wing only
 Quiet and loud
 hard to set a baseline
 Not stressed

9. Structure

Floor demographics
 Floor structure
 Quiet and loud
 hard to set a baseline

10. Resident Interactions

CLA
 Spending time
 Rowdy boys
 Playing games
 Sickness limits interaction
 Interactions positive
 If the door is open
 Doors shut
 always going somewhere

11. Programming

Almost everybody going
 Just our floor
 Boys helped me
 All hall social
 Big turnout
 Enjoyed all hall attendance
 More than one bulletin board
 Procrastinating
 old passives
 Don't know what im supposed to do with it
 Don't know what im supposed to do with it
 Mixed attendance
 have regulars
 Planning for both genders; socials and service
 Spur of the moment
 No all wing programs
 Too much for first year RAs
 RD style
 They are acclimating
 Not since training; all halls

12. Conduct

No conflict; wouldn't expect much

13. Rounds

Interactions positive
 Quiet and loud; hard to set a baseline
 Rounds structure
 If the door is open

14. Academics

Not stressed

Courtney Interview Three

Suite

1. Difficulty

Don't want to leave rooms
 Staff gets along
 More confrontation
 Doors shut
 Not getting people out of rooms bothers me
 One engaged room
 Residents say hello now
 Don't ignore me anymore
 Don't like RA position
 Own stuff to do
 Only interaction = check in
 Avoidance
 All rooms are avoidant
 Don't come out
 Everything they need
 Already know their roommates
 No need
 Trend throughout building
 Trying not to give up
 Reality check
 not interested in floor
 Get out of room
 Adjusted approach to residents
 Not interested
 Lack of energy
 Isn't excitement
 Don't like being alone
 Just leave your room
 Drinking
 Own space; more places to hide
 A lot of drinking issues

2. Staff

Don't want to leave rooms
 Staff gets along
 Staff development
 strengthsfinder
 Don't spend a lot of time together
 all halls
 Hang out not as an RA
 Competitive nature

3. Establishing Community

Don't want to leave rooms
 Staff gets along

Doors shut
 Not getting people out of rooms bothers me
 One engaged room
 Residents say hello now
 Don't ignore me anymore
 Trying not to give up
 Reality check
 not interested in floor
 Trying more socials
 Get out of room
 Pushing them to interact
 floor meetings = socials
 (Strategies) Excuses to talk
 Upperclassmen girls = hard to contact
 Excuses to talk
 Not much you can do
 Adjusted approach to residents
 Not interested
 Lack of energy
 Isn't excitement
 Don't like being alone
 Just leave your room

4. Community

Don't want to leave rooms
 Staff gets along
 More confrontation
 Doors shut
 Don't like RA position
 Own stuff to do
 Only interaction = check in
 Avoidance
 All rooms are avoidant
 Don't come out
 Everything they need
 Already know their roommates
 No need
 Trend throughout building
 Reality check
 not interested in floor
 Floor is comfortable with each other
 Going somewhere
 Games
 culture talk
 Stay to themselves
 socialize with roommates only
 Hang out spots
 High use of study lounges
 Community victory

5. Conduct

More confrontation
 Drinking
 Own space
 more places to hide
 A lot of drinking issues

On the lookout
 More alert
 Out in open
 Confronting
 Feel comfortable confronting
 Be pleasant

6. Resident Interactions

Step out of comfort zone
 Freshmen boy
 lack of interest in involvement
 turned social
 Only interaction = check in
 (Strategies) Excuses to talk
 Excuses to talk

7. RA Role

Not getting people out of rooms bothers me
 RA = rule follower and enforcer
 Trying not to give up
 Reality check
 not interested in floor
 Door propping discouraged
 (Strategies) Excuses to talk
 Excuses to talk
 Not much you can do
 Flexible duty
 Not affected; classes lax
 Easy to balance
 Drinking
 Own space
 more places to hide
 On the lookout
 More alert
 Out in open
 Confronting
 Feel comfortable confronting
 Be pleasant

8. Resident Involvement

Own stuff to do
 Involved
 Community victory

9. Programming

Trying more socials
 Pushing them to interact; floor meetings = socials
 Attended other floor program
 Food = most popular
 Repeat program
 A lot of people
 Drinking game
 Drinking games
 Don't spend a lot of time together
 all halls
 Adjusted approach to residents

Not interested
Lack of energy
Isn't excitement
Don't like being alone
Just leave your room

10. Structure

Door propping discouraged
Hang out spots
High use of study lounges
Small adjustments for big events
Drinking
Own space
more places to hide
A lot of drinking issues
On the lookout
More alert
Out in open
Confronting
Feel comfortable confronting
Be pleasant

11. Inter-floor interaction

Attended other floor program

12. Demographics

Freshmen boy
lack of interest in involvement
turned social
Upperclassmen girls = hard to contact
Going somewhere
Stay to themselves
socialize with roommates only

13. Academics

Hang out spots
High use of study lounges
Group presentation
Slow down
Material not interesting
Flexible duty
Not affected
classes lax
Easy to balance

14. Outside Involvement

Hang out not as an RA

15. Rounds

Small adjustments for big events

Courtney Interview Four

Traditional

1. Structure

People have own space

Suite

1. RA Role

RA job) Baby sitting
(RA Job) Plan events
Don't see them unless problems
Be visible; deter violations
Planning programs
Deter violations
Hasn't changed
Spending a lot of time in building hanging out
Administration not as important
Really enjoy myself
enjoy interactions with residents
(Goal) getting people out of rooms
Surveying
killing her
(Goals) more interaction
Don't want to study while people are here
following up
most are doing well
some I never see studying
Know how to balance
Learn to deal with it
overcome it

2. Difficulty

Don't see them unless problems
Nobody goes anywhere
Need to open doors
Getting people out of rooms
What else can I do?
Food doesn't work
I'm staying in here
The same people are out
Structure limits
(Goal) getting people out of rooms
Surveying
killing her
(Goals) more interaction
grandfather
two doors
apathetic
not meeting people
don't see them
not connected
no involvement is going to hurt them
not interested
what more do they need?
Both environment and attitude
Own space
Don't need to meet others
Been there done that
Some of the freshmen have same attitude
Whatever
Doors shut
Difficult when nobody wants to meet you

Some want to
 Wandering
 Hard to break the mindset
 Keep doors open
 you could meet new people
 Weird people looking at my stuff
 privacy
 Talk to them
 Just stare
 Doors shut again
 That dang door
 Tell you no and shut doors
 Don't be offended
 Resident avoidance
 It's not you
 It's hard for some
 First year, would have felt defeated
 Wouldn't understand
 Wouldn't understand
 Hard to get excited
 Some were defeated
 Low attendance
 Hard on self
 Traditional experience helps them understand
 it's not you
 Lower attendance this year
 Only regulars show up

3. Conduct

Don't see them unless problems

4. Community

Don't see them unless problems
 Nobody goes anywhere
 Quiet
 Friendly
 They wave
 Really enjoy myself
 enjoy interactions with residents
 The same people are out
 stick around
 have everything here
 own space
 no need
 clears out for vacation
 Clears out for vacation
 easy to say no
 people are understanding of her study time
 most are doing well
 some I never see studying
 Residents diverse in a different way
 Residents mesh better
 Similarities in personality
 apathetic
 not meeting people
 don't see them

not connected
 what more do they need?
 Those that keep doors open
 Went looking
 Only regulars show up

5. Establishing Community

Need to open doors
 Getting people out of rooms
 What else can I do?
 Food doesn't work
 The same people are out
 Structure limits
 Government outreach
 Incentives
 got t-shirt and left
 (Goal) getting people out of rooms
 Surveying
 killing her
 (Goals) more interaction
 Don't want to study while people are here
 Similarities in personality
 similar strategies work
 not interested
 Don't need to meet others
 Been there done that
 Some of the freshmen have same attitude
 Whatever
 Doors shut
 Those that keep doors open
 Went looking
 Difficult when nobody wants to meet you
 Some want to
 Wandering
 Hard to break the mindset
 Keep doors open
 you could meet new people
 Weird people looking at my stuff; privacy
 Talk to them
 Just stare
 Doors shut again
 That dang door
 Be somewhat connected
 Use involved residents
 Find interests
 Personally ask
 Knock hard
 First year, would have felt defeated
 Wouldn't understand
 Wouldn't understand

6. Demographics

Nobody goes anywhere
 I'm staying in here
 The same people are out

Residents diverse in a different way
 Residents mesh better
 Similarities in personality
 apathetic
 not meeting people
 don't see them
 not connected
 not interested
 what more do they need?
 Don't need to meet others
 Been there done that
 Some of the freshmen have same attitude
 Whatever
 Doors shut
 Those that keep doors open
 Went looking
 Difficult when nobody wants to meet you
 Some want to
 Wandering
 Hard to break the mindset
 Keep doors open
 you could meet new people
 Weird people looking at my stuff
 privacy
 Talk to them
 Just stare
 Doors shut again
 Tell you no and shut doors
 Only regulars show up

7. Structure

People have own space
 Structure limits
 brand new
 public spaces
 two doors
 Both environment and attitude
 Own space
 Prefer corridor structure
 Prefer that they don't have own space
 Not person problem
 It's a building problem

8. Resident Involvement

Government
 Regulars
 The same people are out
 Government outreach
 no involvement is going to hurt them
 Use involved residents
 Only regulars show up

9. Socialization

once a week
 I change a bit
 I'm comfortable hanging out with both

outside friends don't come to programs
 they hang out in her room

10. Family

So busy
 less contact with family
 Last year I went home more
 I'm 21
 I don't need to go home
 see me like a baby
 Prefer to be home than work
 Bored, might as well work
 can't sit alone
 30 hour duty = crazy
 grandfather

11. Programming

Regulars
 The same people are out
 Government outreach
 Incentives
 got t-shirt and left
 Use involved residents
 Find interests
 Personally ask
 Low attendance
 Lower attendance this year
 Only regulars show up
 Late residents, late start
 Wait for residents
 Appreciate those who show up
 Don't be depressed
 Appreciate those who show up
 Ton of fun with a few people
 Know each other well
 Small turnout still success
 Sports, not interested

12. Academics

not great
 low excitement
 yelled at
 freaked out
 with
 bad day
 Don't want to study while people are here
 good balance
 hasn't effected me thus far
 easy to say no
 people are understanding of her study time
 following up
 most are doing well
 some I never see studying
 grandfather
 improved
 senioritis

waste of time

13. Staff

staff = fun
 staff support
 tough times
 agonizing
 morale hit
 helping new RA
 New RA still meshing
 Unsure of new RA fit
 unique staff
 Staff is too unique sometimes
 Staff relationships
 Staff energy makes it worthwhile
 Mentoring new RA
 RD leadership would make a difference for first year
 RAs
 Hard to get excited
 Some were defeated
 Connect with staff
 Don't see each other
 Connect right away
 Catch up

14. Preference

Stay here
 Staff relationships
 Residents
 Brand new start = hard
 Drop outs
 Defeated staff
 Staff energy makes it worthwhile
 Prefer corridor structure
 Prefer that they don't have own space

15. Advice

Learn to deal with it
 overcome it
 Don't give up
 Be somewhat connected
 Not person problem
 It's a building problem
 Use involved residents
 Find interests
 Personally ask
 Knock hard
 Don't be offended
 Resident avoidance
 It's not you
 It's hard for some
 First year
 would have felt defeated
 Wouldn't understand
 Wouldn't understand
 Learn to deal

RD leadership would make a difference for first year

RAs

Traditional experience helps them understand
 it's not you
 Before move-in
 Good time to brainstorm
 It will be okay
 Late residents, late start
 Wait for residents
 Appreciate those who show up
 Don't be depressed
 Appreciate those who show up
 Ton of fun with a few people
 Know each other well
 Small turnout still success

16. Resident Interaction

Regulars
 Really enjoy myself
 enjoy interactions with residents
 The same people are out
 I change a bit
 I'm comfortable hanging out with both
 easy to say no
 people are understanding of her study time
 night owl
 interact at night
 Appreciate those who show up
 Appreciate those who show up
 Ton of fun with a few people
 Know each other well
 Small turnout still success

17. Professional Development

More organized
 Common goal
 Developing patience

18. Interviews

Helped me reflect
 Push bad out
 Reflected more

Martha Interview One

Traditional

1. Why RA?

Freshmen requirement
 fringe dweller
 Not interested in involvement
 Impressed by RA
 Enjoy people
 Friend recommendation
 Alternate
 Whirlwind
 No one suggested
 Surprise

2. Structure

Small hall
 Hated floor structure
 It's a loop
 Didn't see the other side
 Didn't see other side
 Hated own room

3. Demographics

Small hall
 Freshmen needs
 Greek and government
 mostly freshmen
 No foreign
 Not ethnically diverse

4. Programing

Freshmen needs
 Met needs
 Compensate
 Successful gov.
 Ask them what they want
 Government
 Residents helped
 High attendance
 Social
 Government
 Resident help
 High attendance
 Successful program
 Proud of government
 All halls unsuccessful

5. Difficulties

Not familiar with environment
 Unexperienced
 Compensate
 Didn't see the other side
 Didn't see other side
 High conduct (building)
 Late round = loud

6. Conduct

No issues
 Not much conflict
 High conduct (building)
 Late round = loud
 Hesitant to confront
 Not busting
 General attitude
 Some major conduct
 Conduct
 Conduct irritated floor

7. Resident Involvement

Successful gov.

Ask them what they want
 Government
 Residents helped
 High attendance
 Government
 Resident help
 High attendance
 Successful program
 Proud of government
 Greek and government
 mostly freshmen
 Government

8. Community

No issues
 Close knit community
 Randomness
 Random roommates
 Clicked well
 Fringe dwellers
 Not much conflict
 Trusted me
 Trusted me
 Floor accountability
 Loved the girls
 they were genuine
 Solid/chill community
 Encourage accountability
 Drinking behavior
 Looked out for each other
 Floor by floor community
 Government
 All halls unsuccessful
 All hall Government not successful
 Not excited for all hall community

9. Establishing Community

Incentives
 Floor accountability
 Didn't see the other side
 Didn't see other side
 Say hi on rounds

10. Training

New RAs
 Returners had confidence
 High expectations
 Help the new RAs
 Bonded well
 Team building
 Staff didn't like teambuilding
 artificial teambuilding
 Team building

11. Staff

New RAs

Returners had confidence
 High expectations
 Help the new RAs
 Bonded well
 Team building
 Staff didn't like teambuilding
 artificial teambuilding
 Team building
 Held each other accountable
 cohesive
 Talking to co-workers
 Hesitant to confront
 Not busting
 General attitude
 RD stability; I lost one
 New boss
 didn't push me
 Staff diversity
 Common spirituality

12. RA Role

Met needs
 Trusted me
 Trusted me
 Maternal role
 Assumed to be older
 Concerned
 Floor accountability
 Mom figure
 Always accessible
 Role model for studying
 Anxious when gone from floor

13. Rounds

Rounds
 Shifting rounds
 High conduct (building)
 Say hi on rounds
 Late round = loud
 Talking to co-workers
 25 min then
 Longer if talking
 Hesitant to confront
 Not busting
 General attitude
 Late rounds

14. Resident Interaction

Incentives
 Say hi on rounds
 On floor often

15. Transfer

Overall thought
 Positive first year
 Passionate about RA position

Same hall
 could skate through
 Why not push this?
 Knew the RD
 RD stability
 I lost one
 New boss
 didn't push me
 Push potential
 Challenge
 Chose difficulty
 Wanted challenge
 Knew it was going to be difficult
 Hated own room
 Want more interaction
 Cant vent to residents
 Wanted roommates
 Random roommates
 Looking forward to roommates
 Looking forward to growing

16. Inter-floor interaction

Some major conduct
 Conduct
 Conduct irritated floor

17. Social

What social life?
 Outside involvement
 Sorority
 Social life = sorority
 Spiritual socialization
 Few close friends
 Social life on backburner
 On floor often
 Significant other help with RA duties
 Outside friends not on floor
 Why they were there
 Bible study
 Symbiotic programming
 Significant other help with RA duties
 Significant other didn't interact
 Relationship = private
 Fish bowl
 Designated social life
 No time
 Time management
 Scheduled social life
 Social life not highly developed
 Very scheduled
 Don't have enough time
 On floor
 Busy
 Busy

18. Family

Family saw RA job as a good thing
Great family
Supportive family
Very supportive family
Family on floor
Sibling

19. Academics

Best class
Like talking to people
Outside involvement
Impact on community
RA role detrimental for GPA
Passionate
Not interested in classes
Not interested in classes
Easier this year
Better balance
More passionate about classes
Dean's list
Significant jump
RA position = passion
Large time commitment
Chose to put time into it
Happy to give time
Balance
Studied in room
Role model for studying
Still developing study skills
Wasn't ready for classes
Breaking point
Want a better grip on Academics
Feels behind academically
Considering Grad School
Service
GPA not ideal
Need to focus on academics

20. Outside Involvement

Outside involvement
Sorority
Social life = sorority
Spiritual socialization
Stressed several times
Exhausted
Stressed several times
Very involved
Sorority
Sorority

21. Priorities

Keep commitments on schedule
Others first
Me second
Others first
Failing as an individual doesn't show

Can't fix failing others
Rearranged commitments
Confident in skills
Routine established

Suite

1. Rounds

45 min now

2. Demographics

Working with both genders
Upperclassmen vs freshmen
Student Athletes

3. Expectations

Working with both genders
Not bad
Upperclassmen vs freshmen
Student Athletes
Staff meshing
Diverse random
The challenge

4. Difficulty

Working with both genders
Not bad
Upperclassmen vs freshmen
Student Athletes

5. Staff

Staff diversity
Staff meshing
Diverse random
Rd on top of it
Tasks due to strengths
Proud

6. Difficulties

Living with friends causes problems

7. Programming

Many all halls
Rd on top of it
Tasks due to strengths
Proud
Social all hall
Investment most important
Residents helping
I'm willing to do anything for the floor
I can give practical knowledge
Resident ran it
Recognize someone
Liked recognition
Tap interests = success
35 people = pretty good
No lectures

Residents not ready to be off campus
 Residents not ready to be off campus
 (Passive) Appealing practical finance information
 (Passive) how to cook in [the suite-style]
 Giving residents ideas
 What are Resident needs?

8. Resident Involvement

Investment most important
 Residents helping
 I'm willing to do anything for the floor
 Resident ran it
 Recognize someone
 Liked recognition
 Tap interests = success

9. RA Role

I'm willing to do anything for the floor
 I can give practical knowledge

10. Inter-floor interaction

35 people = pretty good

11. Academics

Still developing study skills
 Feels behind academically
 Considering Grad School
 Service
 GPA not ideal
 Need to focus on academics

Martha Interview Two

Traditional

1. Rounds

Old hall = circle

2. Structure

Old hall = circle
 Traditional room don't have a lot of space

Suite

1. Training

Staff was all over the place
 Now I'm one of the older ones
 Different climate than last year
 Not suite specific
 Returners treated differently
 Addressed two door issue
 Anticipated difficulty
 A lot remains the same
 Not excited by Team building
 Turned out ok; effective training
 Difficulty adjusting to staff
 Maternal with new staff
 Too many chiefs, not enough Indians
 staff dynamics improving

Throw down from RD
 Had to work together
 Too many chiefs, not enough Indians;

2. Staff

Staff was all over the place
 Now I'm one of the older ones
 Different climate than last year
 Not suite specific
 Returners treated differently
 Difficulty adjusting to staff
 Maternal with new staff
 Too many chiefs, not enough Indians
 staff dynamics improving
 Throw down from RD
 Had to work together
 Too many chiefs, not enough Indians
 Separate wings
 Don't really interact with other floor RAs
 Bounce ideas off staff
 Returner = run out of fresh ideas
 Homecoming victory; not equal participation and effort
 Staff has calmed
 close friendships forming
 Apprehension, job security
 RA removal was traumatic
 Confusion
 Concerned for self/performance
 You know what you can't do
 No surprises
 Clique
 Other RAs come to programs
 Returners
 bouncing ideas/venting
 This staff wants more time together
 Disconnect after training
 Limited time to be together
 Need to confront individuals for a stronger team
 Not all gung ho on homecoming
 They had no idea what it was like
 Not all showing the same effort
 Returner support
 helping transition
 New staff members re-energize team

3. Demographics

Students are still students
 Freshmen have same needs
 RAs need to adapt
 Impressed by upperclassmen
 Upperclassmen are easier to talk to
 Freshmen get loud
 Upperclassmen are eclectic
 Guys are more outgoing
 Football players not interested in floor

I'm there for their needs
 International students
 Residents are all over the place
 Upperclassmen = single space, Freshmen = shared space
 More freshmen attend
 No international attendance
 Regulars
 More men attend
 more male rooms
 Unlike old hall, freshmen and sophomores (conduct)
 Students older than RAs

4. RA Roles

Students are still students
 Freshmen have same needs
 RAs need to adapt
 Upperclassmen don't need RA help
 I Foster involvement
 Separate wings
 Don't really interact with other floor RAs
 Had trouble interpreting reactions
 Freshmen girl roommate conflict
 Helping with program
 Following up with them
 Only approached for this issue (roommate conflict)
 No idea if own residents are attending
 doesn't recognize them
 Students older than RAs
 More careful
 Lot more space
 More aware
 Traditional room don't have a lot of space
 Four rooms, maybe locked
 Maybe roommates aren't there
 Won't walk in if door is open
 If they are in the hallway, will talk
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote programs
 Depends on partner

5. Community

Students are still students
 Freshmen have same needs
 RAs need to adapt
 Pretty active floor
 Impressed by upperclassmen
 Freshmen upperclassmen mixing
 Freshmen integration with international students
 Community builds itself
 Fortunate to have strong community already
 Removed room
 Floor structure
 Upperclassmen are easier to talk to
 Like a hotel
 Pretty quiet

Freshmen get loud
 Friendly
 Upperclassmen are eclectic
 Guys are more outgoing
 Students older than RAs

6. Establishing Community

Impressed by upperclassmen
 Anticipating non-interest
 I didn't do much
 Government is strong
 Government pulls floor together
 Encouraging open doors
 Freshmen integration with international students
 Community builds itself
 Other RAs are struggling
 Upperclassmen are easier to talk to
 Outreach
 interaction within room
 Don't want government, but still come to stuff
 interaction within room
 Guys are more outgoing
 Even involvement by freshmen and upperclassmen
 Targeted residents for involvement
 based on strengths/experience
 Football players not interested in floor
 I'm there for their needs
 Excuse to say hello
 Don't need anything other than trash bags
 self-contained
 You have to talk to me
 It's the only time I see them
 I enjoy government
 gung-ho about community
 See what they're interested in
 Socials
 get them to interact
 Won't walk in if door is open
 If they are in the hallway, will talk
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote programs
 Depends on partner

7. Expectations

Addressed two door issue
 Anticipated difficulty
 A lot remains the same
 Anticipating non-interest
 Upperclassmen don't need RA help
 Removed room
 Floor structure

8. Difficulty

Addressed two door issue
 Anticipated difficulty
 A lot remains the same

Other RAs are struggling
 Removed room
 Floor structure
 Football players not interested in floor
 I'm there for their needs
 Had trouble interpreting reactions
 Freshmen girl roommate conflict
 Following up with them
 Don't need anything other than trash bags
 self-contained
 You have to talk to me
 It's the only time I see them
 No idea if own residents are attending
 doesn't recognize them
 Dealt with conduct already
 Awkward conduct, desk staff member
 Everybody was of age
 Unlike old hall, freshmen and sophomores
 Students older than RAs
 People not intoxicated, socializing
 Usually conduct is more wild
 Not drunk, but still too loud so they addressed it and
 found alcohol
 More careful
 Lot more space
 More aware
 Traditional room don't have a lot of space
 Maybe roommates aren't there
 Can't ask to open doors if not there
 Can only knock
 Be aware
 Debate: enter or stay in doorway
 No one will jump you
 There is always the danger
 Depends on how far gone
 Places to hide everywhere
 Need stronger perception/awareness
 Won't walk in if door is open
 If they are in the hallway, will talk
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote
 programs
 Depends on partner

9. Conduct

Had trouble interpreting reactions
 Freshmen girl roommate conflict
 Following up with them
 Third roommate interaction in conflict
 supportive
 Only approached for this issue (roommate conflict)
 Don't use busted
 Dealt with conduct already
 Awkward conduct, desk staff member
 Everybody was of age
 Unlike old hall, freshmen and sophomores
 Students older than RAs

People not intoxicated, socializing
 Usually conduct is more wild
 Not drunk, but still too loud so they addressed it and
 found alcohol
 More careful
 Lot more space
 More aware
 Traditional room don't have a lot of space
 Four rooms, maybe locked
 Maybe roommates aren't there
 Can't ask to open doors if not there
 Can only knock
 Be aware
 Debate: enter or stay in doorway
 No one will jump you
 There is always the danger
 Depends on how far gone
 Places to hide everywhere
 Need stronger perception/awareness

10. Resident Interaction

Upperclassmen are easier to talk to
 Outreach
 interaction within room
 Excuse to say hello
 Don't need anything other than trash bags
 self-contained
 You have to talk to me
 It's the only time I see them
 No idea if own residents are attending
 doesn't recognize them
 Won't walk in if door is open
 If they are in the hallway, will talk
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote
 programs
 Depends on partner

11. Resident Involvement

Government is strong
 Government pulls floor together
 Encouraging open doors
 Don't want government, but still come to stuff
 interaction within room
 Even involvement by freshmen and upperclassmen
 Targeted residents for involvement
 based on strengths/experience
 Floor is involved with a lot of different things
 I enjoy government; gung-ho about community
 Shared Bulletin board with government
 multiple boards;
 Government = regular program attendees

12. Programming

Don't want government, but still come to stuff
 interaction within room
 All hall

well attended
 No idea if own residents are attending
 doesn't recognize them
 Residents enjoy programs with clever twists
 Residents eat up clever ideas
 Shared Bulletin board with government
 multiple boards;
 Bulletin board series
 Government = regular program attendees
 More freshmen attend
 No international attendance
 Regulars
 More men attend
 more male rooms
 See what they're interested in
 Socials; get them to interact
 Bounce ideas off staff
 Returner = run out of fresh ideas
 Cliché programs
 Wants to do topics not touched on yet
 Changing things up
 Other RAs come to programs
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote
 programs

13. Rounds

Want to standardize rounds
 Lack of round structure didn't fly with RD
 No specific routine
 Louder on second rounds
 Don't use busted
 Dealt with conduct already
 Awkward conduct, desk staff member
 Everybody was of age
 First year partner was a senior
 Went smooth
 Different from old hall
 People not intoxicated, socializing
 Usually conduct is more wild
 Not drunk, but still too loud so they addressed it and
 found alcohol
 Longer rounds
 Talking takes longer
 Round length depends on partner
 Won't walk in if door is open
 If they are in the hallway, will talk
 Some RAs will enter open doors to promote
 programs
 Depends on partner

14. Structure

Removed room
 Floor structure
 Separate wings
 Like a hotel

Upperclassmen = single space, Freshmen = shared
 space
 Lot more space
 Traditional room don't have a lot of space
 Four rooms, maybe locked
 usually somebody in there
 studying
 Not used as intended; for studying or avoiding
 roommates
 big groups
 Mix of people in lounge
 people from other floors
 not following the labels
 Need spaces for meetings
 barely big enough
 serve a purpose

15. Academics

usually somebody in there
 studying
 Not used as intended
 for studying or avoiding roommates
 big groups
 Need spaces for meetings
 barely big enough
 serve a purpose

16. Inter-floor interaction

Separate wings
 Don't really interact with other floor RAs
 Other RAs come to programs
 Mix of people in lounge
 people from other floors

Martha Interview Three

Traditional

1. Programming

Last year much higher attendance

2. Academics

More time last year
 Classes were easier

Suite

1. Staff

Surprised by RD leeway
 Could have stepped up to mentor more
 Mentor based on strengths (government)
 Don't do a lot as a staff
 individual interactions
 Staff size is different
 Not enough collaboration this year
 Hard to get together (she's more schedule oriented)
 Mellowed out
 Getting busy
 Cliques among staff

Didn't happen last year
Everybody gets along this year
Open, honest, and flexible
Support = returner, flexible schedule.

2. Community

Had doors open
One of the more outgoing floors
social upperclassmen
doors open
Residents have time to be invested
Good surprise
Receptive floor
Floor government
floor interconnectedness
Developed well
Roommate issues
Deep friendships forming
Few I don't know at all
Average attendance
They hang out outside dorms
Spontaneous socialization
Non-roommates went to 21st b-day
Active freshmen know upperclassmen due to government
Upperclassmen know upperclassmen well
Freshmen glue floor together
Hang out in own space
Don't want to bother roommates, so they study out of room

3. Demographics

One of the more outgoing floors
social upperclassmen; doors open
Residents have time to be invested
Good surprise

4. Resident Involvement

Residents have time to be invested
Good surprise
Non-freshmen resident standout
Big asset to floor
Standout resident
involved on floor
Floor government
floor interconnectedness
Active freshmen know upperclassmen due to government

5. Resident Interaction

Non-freshmen resident standout
Big asset to floor
Standout resident; involved on floor
I hang out with a lot of my residents especially upperclassmen
Deep friendships forming

Few I don't know at all
Facebook for mandatory stuff
Doesn't like to swamp them with info
Floor signage for programs
Floor government/word of mouth is huge
Quick messages = doorspam
White board updates
Facebook is nice, but not when used a lot
Spontaneous socialization
Non-roommates when to 21st b-day
Loud when they hang out.
Get those priorities
hang out late with floor

6. RA Role

Not a mentor to upperclassmen
not my role
more social
Few I don't know at all
Get to know residents on an individual basis
Spontaneous socialization
Non-roommates when to 21st b-day
RA role on the backburner
Time invested in extracurriculars
Personal time management
Not the RA position
RA position forces you to manage your time better
Get those priorities
hang out late with floor

7. Establishing Community

Not a mentor to upperclassmen
not my role
more social
I hang out with a lot of my residents especially upperclassmen
Floor government
floor interconnectedness
Receptive floor
Can't take credit
Just roaming and found each other
Get to know residents on an individual basis
More valuable to connect with residents
Social programs = success
Numbers of people
Social programs
consistent attendance
Active freshmen know upperclassmen due to government
Upperclassmen know upperclassmen well
Freshmen glue floor together
Get those priorities
hang out late with floor

8. Difficulty

Expect that in freshman girl suites

Roommate issues
 Forget how busy you get.
 Get those priorities
 hang out late with floor

9. Conduct

Expect that in freshman girl suites
 Roommate issues

10. Programming

Social programs = success
 Numbers of people
 Social programs
 consistent attendance
 Multiple floor attendance
 Average attendance
 Last year much higher attendance
 Floor signage for programs
 Floor government/word of mouth is huge
 Facebook is nice, but not when used a lot

11. Inter-floor interaction

Multiple floor attendance
 Non-wing residents use their spaces

12. Structure

Hang out in own space
 Non-wing residents use their spaces
 Spaces used for studying
 Not a lot of socialization in public spaces
 More study lounges

13. Academics

Non-wing residents use their spaces
 Spaces used for studying
 Not a lot of socialization in public spaces
 More study lounges
 Don't want to bother roommates, so they study out of room
 Disorganized lab
 Brutal class
 Time consuming class
 Academics are getting more serious
 RA role on the backburner
 Time invested in extracurriculars
 Personal time management
 Not the RA position
 RA position forces you to manage your time better
 Get those priorities
 hang out late with floor

14. Outside Involvement

RA role on the backburner
 Time invested in extracurriculars
 Personal time management
 Get those priorities

hang out late with floor
 Stressed from outside job
 Not confident in skills
 Struggling with competence

Martha Interview Four

Traditional

1. RA Role

Last year more of a mentor and mom
 Thought she was older than she was
 RAs need to have that air of confidence
 First floor was more family structured
 dorm mom
 Freshmen hall, RAs need to establish themselves as a resource
 And establish a relationship
 Need to be competent and answer their questions
 Or they won't ask again
 RAs are a liaison for the University
 Offering useful information is huge

2. Demographics

Make up of residents is different

3. Community

First floor was more family structured; dorm mom

4. Resident Interaction

Last year I had a bubble invasion

5. Social

Last year I had a bubble invasion

6. Academics

Being a first year RA affected grades last year
 Hard to balance

7. Staff

Old dorm had a set mentality
 Because of amenities and community

8. Structure

Old dorm had a set mentality
 Because of amenities and community

Suite

1. RA Role

Floor mom
 Big time commitment
 Very involved
 Get out what you put in
 Managing people
 Organize floor government
 Foster/maintain relationships
 Build safe communities
 Not like a family, sorority or a fraternity

Forming relationships, building a social network
 Linking people with resources
 Need to connect people
 Administrative stuff: Programs, give them information, duty components, cracking the whip
 Most RAs don't care for that
 Managing a floor
 Stress and time commitment
 Some see RA job as easy, if they didn't invest the time
 If you don't care it is easy
 Many have preconceived notions of RAs
 Two stereotypes: Authoritarian or not around at all
 Or you're the amazing RA who hangs out
 Some hang out too closely
 You lose the RA title if you do it right
 Weird when RA gets that close
 Invest yourself in others' lives
 Look up to her more
 Totally different dynamic
 Role changes when talking with freshmen vs upperclassmen this year
 RAs tend to have leadership positions in other areas as well
 Personal relationships are better
 As a new RA in [the suite-style], you have to carry yourself well, better if you're more mature
 Authority questioned b/c of lack of experience
 A lot of the community is up to the residents
 Invested in your success
 I want to know what is important with them
 I rely on my personality to reach others; I show genuine care
 Help them fulfill their needs
 All residents have needs
 My role to make needs happen
 Here it is a group of friends
 Excited for new international roommate
 Leave the hall to hangout
 When I hang out here its b/c I'm on duty
 Want people to know boyfriend, but I need a separate identity
 Doesn't use study spaces
 At work while in hall
 Can't switch roles while in hall
 Hard to build community with less freshmen
 After freshman year, they dispose of the RA
 As a senior, I want to work with older population
 I've progressed past freshmen
 I don't want to relay that info anymore
 Talk on an intellectual level
 Want to work with adults
 Establish yourself as someone who cares
 Don't have resource connotation in[the suite-style]
 More passive resource
 Less of a checklist

A very different message
 RA role is contingent on their preconceived notions of RA role
 Still advising and mentoring freshmen
 Freshmen always need something
 Never fully dissolve that role, much less emphasized
 Advice/info delivered differently

2. Demographics

Role changes when talking with freshmen vs upperclassmen this year
 Easier to be in freshmen hall as a new RA
 Two doors and resident demographics
 more difficult for first year RAs
 Residents are older than you
 Make up of residents is different
 Problems with upperclassmen coming to events
 Upperclassmen in government coming to events
 More freshmen come
 Excited for new international roommate
 People have different expectations of roommates in dorms
 some want friends, some expect other things
 Upperclassmen led government
 Upperclassmen realize suites are not a place to party
 Freshmen girls
 Hard to build community with less freshmen
 After freshman year, they dispose of the RA
 Upperclassmen hard to program for
 But the mix is nice

3. Outside Involvement

Less and less time
 Job isn't requiring more.
 It's every other element in your life
 assuming more leadership roles
 RAs tend to have leadership positions in other areas as well

4. Establishing Community

Personal relationships are better
 Two doors and resident demographics
 more difficult for first year RAs
 As a new RA in [the suite-style], you have to carry yourself well, better if you're more mature
 Authority questioned b/c of lack of experience
 Invested in your success
 I want to know what is important with them
 I rely on my personality to reach others
 I show genuine care
 Help them fulfill their needs
 All residents have needs
 My role to make needs happen
 People getting over newness
 People getting comfortable; more homelike
 Coming down to normal

Took a while
 My residents mingle
 First, freshmen found each other
 Upperclassmen mixed b/c of government
 Targeted freshmen for gov. b/c they don't have a lot to do
 Targeted returning upperclassmen for gov.
 When you have a role for people
 If you have one person in the room, you can get them all
 Upperclassmen in government coming to events
 For residents, bad experience first year affects this year
 Targeted people for their strengths
 Figure out people in the first two weeks
 Targeting before they get overwhelmed with class
 Strengths based
 Non-hierarchical
 collaborative
 Excited for government program
 Tight knit community is excited for new students
 Arms wide open
 see what they can contribute
 Floor members know what is going on
 super friendly
 Interact with residents b/c door is open
 Hard to build community with less freshmen
 After freshman year, they dispose of the RA
 Upperclassmen hard to program for
 Physical barriers
 not easy to promote community when people only need to come out to eat
 more difficult for first year RAs
 Get floor government together
 Difficulty with building structure, you need to build community quickly
 Eat, sleep, breathe floor for first 2 or 3 weeks
 Develop relationships
 Don't stress on Bulletins or door decs
 Hold an open house in your room

5. Community

Personal relationships are better
 Community is relaxed and friendly
 Some know people I don't know
 Everybody knows each other
 A lot of the community is up to the residents
 People willing to talk to others
 Here it is a group of friends
 At first suites seem like a hotel
 If doors are shut, it's a hotel
 People getting over newness
 People getting comfortable; more homelike
 Coming down to normal
 Took a while
 My residents mingle

My floor mingles
 Other staff members have problems
 Really like my floor
 People have different expectations of roommates in dorms
 some want friends, some expect other things
 Tight knit community is excited for new students
 Arms wide open; see what they can contribute
 Floor members know what is going on; super friendly
 Like excuses to party; see this as community
 Still share spaces
 Don't host events
 Social space just for us
 Need to ask permission before others come over
 Infringing on others if you can't keep it down
 Space reserved for us; intruding on our space
 Outsiders change room dynamic
 In room dynamic depends on roommates
 Not infringing is a basic roommate dynamic
 Why infringe if there are other places to go?
 Many small problems, but people want to come back

6. Difficulties

Less and less time
 Job isn't requiring more.
 Its every other element in your life
 assuming more leadership roles
 Hard to adjust to RA role in first year
 hard to comprehend until you experience it
 More prepared this year
 Know how I want to run things
 Didn't know how things worked at first
 Discovered what I'm good at
 RAs flounder b/c we're not told how to set things up
 like government
 Easier to be in freshmen hall as a new RA
 Two doors and resident demographics
 more difficult for first year RAs
 Residents are older than you
 As a new RA you have to carry yourself well
 better if you're more mature
 Authority questioned b/c of lack of experience
 At first suites seem like a hotel
 If doors are shut, it's a hotel
 Other staff members have problems
 Problems with upperclassmen coming to events
 Freshmen arguments
 Losing residents due to roommate conflict
 Roommate never around
 freshmen girls are the only ones leaving
 not everybody will get along
 not finding problems until people want to move
 because you can go sit in your own room
 unless you have time to talk to everybody in the suite
 doors aren't open
 hard to get a feel for the room dynamic

problems escalate until it's too late
 People have different expectations of roommates in
 dorms
 some want friends, some expect other things
 Freshmen girls
 Dramatic blowups this year;
 RD has dealt with a ton
 Some outsider interference; solicitation/assault
 Other buildings have this
 Suites are less lockdown-able
 structure issue
 Other doors are very isolated
 Still safe
 Encourage residents to report weird things
 We don't get a lot of calls
 Flying under the radar
 Not a huge concern
 Not addressed
 Hadn't really thought about it
 Can't switch roles while in hall
 Many small problems, but people want to come back
 Hard to build community with less freshmen
 After freshman year, they dispose of the RA
 Upperclassmen hard to program for
 Physical barriers
 not easy to promote community when people only
 need to come out to eat
 Suites more difficult for first year RAs
 Difficulty with building structure, you need to build
 community quickly
 Hard because friends are around at the beginning

7. Conduct

Freshmen arguments
 Losing residents due to roommate conflict
 Roommate never around
 freshmen girls are the only ones leaving
 not everybody will get along
 not finding problems until people want to move
 because you can go sit in your own room
 unless you have time to talk to everybody in the suite
 doors aren't open
 hard to get a feel for the room dynamic
 problems escalate until it's too late
 Less conduct this year
 Either less alcohol; or we're not catching them
 I think people are not drinking here
 Upperclassmen realize suites are not a place to party
 Roommate conflict and conduct are not the same
 Freshmen girls
 Dramatic blowups this year
 RD has dealt with a ton
 Some outsider interference
 solicitation/assault
 Other buildings have this
 Hall council successful

interfloor community too
 Suites are less lockdown-able
 structure issue
 Other doors are very isolated
 Still safe
 Encourage residents to report weird things
 We don't get a lot of calls
 Flying under the radar
 Not a huge concern
 Not addressed
 Hadn't really thought about it
 Duty is chill
 less structured than last year
 untraditional b/c of shape
 loud but cooperative

8. Structure

Two doors and resident demographics
 more difficult for first year RAs
 At first suites seem like a hotel
 If doors are shut, it's a hotel
 not finding problems until people want to move
 because you can go sit in your own room
 unless you have time to talk to everybody in the suite
 doors aren't open
 hard to get a feel for the room dynamic
 problems escalate until it's too late
 Some outsider interference
 solicitation/assault
 Other buildings have this
 Suites are less lockdown-able
 structure issue
 Other doors are very isolated
 Still safe
 Duty is chill
 less structured than last year
 untraditional b/c of shape
 loud but cooperative
 Increased amenities has not increased the time I
 spend here
 Still share spaces
 Don't host events
 Social space just for us
 Need to ask permission before others come over
 Infringing on others if you can't keep it down
 Space reserved for us
 intruding on our space
 Outsiders change room dynamic
 In room dynamic depends on roommates
 Not infringing is a basic roommate dynamic
 Why infringe if there are other places to go?
 Doesn't use study spaces
 Physical barriers
 not easy to promote community when people only
 need to come out to eat
 Difficulty with building structure

you need to build community quickly

9. Programming

Problems with upperclassmen coming to events
Upperclassmen in government coming to events
More freshmen come
For residents, bad experience first year affects this year
Excited for government program
Upperclassmen hard to program for

10. Resident Involvement

Upperclassmen mixed b/c of government
Targeted freshmen for gov. b/c they don't have a lot to do
Targeted returning upperclassmen for gov.
When you have a role for people, you can get them in the room, and then they mingle
Upperclassmen in government coming to events
Targeted people for their strengths
Figure out people in the first two weeks
Targeting before they get overwhelmed with class
Strengths based
Non-hierarchical; collaborative
Excited for government program
Upperclassmen led government
Really proud of resident involvement
Hall council successful
interfloor community too
Get floor government together

11. Resident Interactions

Residents are older than you
As a new RA you have to carry yourself well, better if you more mature
Authority questioned b/c of lack of experience
Want people to know boyfriend
but I need a separate identity
Interact with residents b/c door is open
Eat, sleep, breathe floor for first 2 or 3 weeks
Develop relationships

12. Staff

Realized I had useful skills that I should contribute
Figuring out balance of leading vs letting group figure it out for themselves
Have a better understanding of where I fit in an organization
RD is really good
RD professional and personal
Established our vision

13. Social

When I have time, I spend time with boyfriend
Boyfriend moving away
Leave the hall to hangout

When I hang out here its b/c I'm on duty
Better to have socialization away from hall
Want people to know boyfriend
but I need a separate identity
Last year I had a bubble invasion
Need to have life outside the building
Increased amenities has not increased the time I spend here
Still share spaces
Don't host events
Social space just for us
Need to ask permission before others come over
Infringing on others if you can't keep it down
Space reserved for us
intruding on our space
Outsiders change room dynamic
In room dynamic depends on roommates
Not infringing is a basic roommate dynamic
Why infringe if there are other places to go?
Friends tend to meet outside of our living spaces
Stagnant/consistent
Busy schedule determines my social life
not different from last year
Hard because friends are around at the beginning

14. Family

If not boyfriend, then family
Traditional model, stay at home mom
I'm more career oriented
Housing not a part time job
Parents not super thrilled
Not easy to leave or re-continue after absence
Mom was able to re-enter
Housing not in high demand
Parents suggested medical field
Not into science and medicine
Will affect family relationship
No sense to get Masters and stop working
They visit me in the halls
Don't hang out here
About the same as last year

15. Academics

Due to instructor
Very passionate about course
Better control over academics
More interested in studies this year
RA hasn't affected academics at this point
Academics better than last year
Being a first year RA effected grades last year
Hard to balance
Balancing multiple things
Study in my living room
Interact with residents b/c door is open
Doesn't use study spaces
At work while in hall

Leave when crunch time happens

16. Preference

Many small problems, but people want to come back
But the mix is nice
Rather stay here
As a senior, I want to work with older population
I've progressed past freshmen
Better fit for me
I don't want to relay that info anymore
Talk on an intellectual level
Want to work with adults

17. Advice

Get floor government together
Difficulty with building structure, you need to build community quickly
Eat, sleep, breathe floor for first 2 or 3 weeks
Develop relationships
Don't stress on Bulletins or door decs
Hard because friends are around at the beginning
Hold an open house in your room
Establish yourself as someone who cares

18. Professional Development

Benefits = growing professionalism
Realized I had useful skills that I should contribute
Figuring out balance of leading vs letting group figure it out for themselves
Have a better understanding of where I fit in an organization
Want to work with people
Credit RA job for life goal
As a senior, I want to work with older population
I've progressed past freshmen
Better fit for me
I don't want to relay that info anymore
Talk on an intellectual level
Want to work with adults

19. Inter-Floor interaction

Hall council successful
interfloor community too

20. Rounds

Duty is chill
less structured than last year
untraditional b/c of shape
loud but cooperative
Leave the hall to hangout
When I hang out here its b/c I'm on duty

Jeff Interview One

Traditional

1. Resident Involvement

Not as strong as corridor hall

2. Community

Not as strong as corridor hall

Suite

1. RA Roles

Suite RAs are similar in basic responsibilities
Different in style of living
Getting freshmen connected;
Suite Priority: Educational environment
Suite Priority: Safety
Suite Priority: Engagement
Suite Priority: Respect
Suite = Great Educational environment
Suite = secure, safe
Pushed Involvement
We've done a great job
Basics are the same
Have to build up RAs
Numbers vs. impact
Not just meeting expectations
New RAs trying to balance traditional
Returning RAs have a better handle
Selected for higher academics
RA hiring qualities: ability to connect, involvement, high academics
RA hiring qualities: current time commitments
RA hiring qualities: current involvement and leadership

2. Structure

Suite RAs are similar in basic responsibilities
Different in style of living;
Great facility, but difficult to connect students outside of room
Resident layout is important too
Wants staff to share the same experience
Wants to create pockets of like gender spaces on wings
For freshmen, creating nearby outlets
Micro-communities
Micro-community

3. Difficulty

Great facility, but difficult to connect students outside of room
Getting freshmen connected
More female suitemate conflicts
RAs can't see issues until too late
A lot of floor communities are struggling
Not getting out much
Programs need to be unique and different
Hard to make unique programs all the time
No resident buy-in
Good building community

Lack of floor engaged community
 Lack of attendance overshadows success
 Two Doors
 Apartment Upperclassmen struggles
 Freshmen don't see upsides
 Not as much connecting
 Not as much floor unity
 Freshmen not as engaged
 Small turnout
 Floor programs struggle
 Numbers vs. impact
 Have to be creative; creativity relates to quality
 Selected for higher academics
 Want to see involvement up, conduct down
 The outcomes of leniency
 Challenging previous mindsets
 numbers vs. impact
 Conduct higher here than previous
 Time monopolized by roommate conflicts
 Conflicts arise in low contact rooms

4. Conduct

More female suitemate conflicts
 RAs can't see issues until too late
 Conduct higher here than previous
 Time monopolized by roommate conflicts
 advocating resident involvement to decrease
 workload
 Conflicts arise in low contact rooms

5. Establishing Community

Great facility, but difficult to connect students
 outside of room
 Getting freshmen connected
 Suite Priority: Educational environment
 Suite Priority: Safety
 Suite Priority: Engagement
 Suite Priority: Respect
 Suite = Great Educational environment
 Suite = secure, safe
 Respect isn't a huge issue
 in part b/c involvement is low
 Pushed Involvement
 We've done a great job
 A lot of floor communities are struggling
 Not getting out much
 Programs need to be unique and different
 Hard to make unique programs all the time
 No resident buy-in
 Two Doors
 Apartment Upperclassmen struggles
 Upperclassmen connecting more
 Upperclassmen representation
 Upperclassmen are mostly from traditional
 Upperclassmen see the difference
 Freshmen don't see upsides

Not as much connecting
 Not as much floor unity
 Government helps
 Gives meaning
 Government peer pressure to attend
 Word of mouth matters
 New RAs not as involved
 need to focus on job
 Too much engagement hinders them
 Quantity of time on floor equals quality relationships
 The outcomes of leniency

6. Community

Suite Priority: Educational environment
 Suite Priority: Safety
 Suite Priority: Engagement
 Suite Priority: Respect
 Suite = Great Educational environment
 Suite = secure, safe
 Respect isn't a huge issue
 in part b/c involvement is low
 A lot of floor communities are struggling
 Not getting out much
 Good building community
 Lack of floor engaged community
 Upperclassmen connecting more
 Upperclassmen representation
 Upperclassmen are mostly from traditional
 Upperclassmen see the difference
 Freshmen don't see upsides
 Not as much connecting
 Not as much floor unity
 Unique community, freshmen and upperclassmen in
 equal numbers
 suite-style living
 Freshmen not as engaged
 Want to see involvement up, conduct down
 The outcomes of leniency

7. Resident Involvement

Respect isn't a huge issue
 in part b/c involvement is low
 Pushed Involvement
 We've done a great job
 Government
 No resident buy-in
 Upperclassmen representation
 Freshmen not as engaged
 Government helps
 Gives meaning
 Government peer pressure to attend
 Word of mouth matters
 advocating resident involvement to decrease
 workload

8. Programming

Programs need to be unique and different
 Hard to make unique programs all the time
 No resident buy-in
 All halls = better attendance
 Lack of attendance overshadows success
 All Halls = successful
 Small turnout
 Floor programs struggle
 Have to build up RAs
 Numbers vs. impact
 They work best in groups
 more excited
 Not just meeting expectations
 Hard to make them all homeruns
 Government helps
 Gives meaning
 Government peer pressure to attend
 Word of mouth matters
 Have to be creative
 creativity relates to quality
 The outcomes of leniency
 Challenging previous mindsets
 numbers vs. impact

9. Staff

Pushed Involvement
 We've done a great job
 Quirky group
 Really bonded
 Gotta want the job
 I'm preparing them
 Those with social skill sets connect better
 Feed off each other
 I have stayed consistent
 Trying hard not to add more
 I was more excited for the suites
 They fed off my excitement
 Excitement and prestige of being new
 Little community of themselves
 Staff connecting better than previous halls
 No words of wisdom
 Have to build up RAs
 They work best in groups
 more excited
 Not just meeting expectations
 Returning RAs more involved
 New RAs not as involved
 need to focus on job
 If not floor, then each other
 New RAs trying to balance
 traditional
 Returning RAs have a better handle
 Selected for higher academics
 Challenging previous mindsets
 numbers vs. impact
 Let's adapt

Don't set up for failure
 Set up for future success
 Support = one on ones, staff meetings, recognition
 Trying to recognize them more
 build them up
 More recognition to combat getting down
 Some staff encouragement
 Buy in/ownership in staff recognition

10. Structure

Spaces are really nice
 More and better public spaces
 Two Doors
 Unique community, freshmen and upperclassmen in
 equal numbers
 suite-style living

11. Demographics

Apartment Upperclassmen struggles
 Upperclassmen connecting more
 Upperclassmen representation
 Upperclassmen are mostly from traditional
 Upperclassmen see the difference
 Freshmen don't see upsides
 Resident layout is important too
 Wants staff to share the same experience
 Wants to create pockets of like gender spaces on
 wings
 For freshmen, creating nearby outlets
 micro-communities
 Micro-community
 Unique community, freshmen and upperclassmen in
 equal numbers
 suite-style living
 Freshmen not as engaged

12. Plans

Resident layout is important too
 Wants staff to share the same experience
 Wants to create pockets of like gender spaces on
 wings
 For freshmen, creating nearby outlets
 micro-communities
 Micro-community
 Want to see involvement up, conduct down
 Challenging previous mindsets
 numbers vs. impact
 Let's adapt

13. Outside Involvement

Returning RAs more involved
 New RAs not as involved
 need to focus on job
 Too much engagement hinders them
 Quantity of time on floor equals quality relationships
 New RAs trying to balance

traditional
Returning RAs have a better handle

14. Professional Development

RA development: Be on time, interact professionally,
work autonomously
They have to manage themselves

15. Academics

RAs doing well academically
New RAs trying to balance; traditional
Returning RAs have a better handle
Selected for higher academics