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**THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT
ROWAN UNIVERSITY**

by

Anthony F. Leva

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services, and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
Rowan University
February 14, 2018

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, in particular my parents Mark and Joyce, for their unending love, devotion, and support; they have been constant guides along this journey. Also, to my grandparents Bill and Joyce for their encouragement and unfaltering belief. And to my wife Amy who is the best and most supportive companion I could have imagined for myself.

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Abstract

Anthony Leva
THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AT ROWAN
UNIVERSITY
2017-2018
Burton Sisco, Ed.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this mixed study was to (a) assess how paraprofessional staff members (Resident Assistants) in Rowan University's Office of Residential Learning and University Housing feel about the training provided to them in preparation for their duties, (b) assess what Resident Assistant feel are the most influential factors in learning to perform their duties as professionals, (c) assess whether or not Resident Assistants understand their role and if there is ambiguity present in that role, (d) assess if Resident Assistants see the vectors presented in Student Development Theory by Chickering and Reisser as qualities relevant to the resident assistant position.

The study found that found the material presented during training were relevant though not presented in an effective or engaging way. Mentoring relationships between more experienced Resident Assistants and less experienced ones were found to have a profound effect on how the less experienced staff conducted their duties. Ambiguity was not perceived to be a relevant factor by Resident Assistants in their understanding of their position but it did exist particularly when there was competing or conflicting expectations from various supervisors that Resident Assistants may have. The vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser were found to be both relevant and present in the Resident Assistant position

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Chapter I

Introduction

Background

Living in a residence hall or dormitory is a quintessential college experience. Students move in, away from home for perhaps the first time, to embark on a new phase in their lives; it is the beginning of a new period of learning, socializing, and development. It also is a new beginning for the campus' Resident Assistant (RA) staff. Resident Assistants are paraprofessional staff members who help to oversee the operation of a residence hall. Usually undergraduates, they have a wide range of responsibilities and duties requiring them to live on campus with the students that they help to oversee.

The position of a Resident Assistant (RA) is almost all encompassing as it deals with nearly every facet of a residential student's life. Nearly everything that happens in a residence hall, to some extent, involves the Resident Assistant staff of the building. The building and facilities management, the social life of the hall, learning that occurs outside of the classroom, student safety and well-being, and the enforcement of university policies in the residence halls are all included in the RA responsibilities. The RA position has a great deal of responsibility and requires a great deal of knowledge and specialized skills in order to competently fulfill the duties and responsibilities assigned to the position. The position also requires a great deal of structure within the institution itself in order to train and manage this group of students. At Rowan University, undergraduate students are hired by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing and are given nearly two weeks of intensive training before they assume duties

in the their hall for the school year. This training is in addition to other opportunities for development that personnel are given such as working with a Graduate Resident Director, a Professional Residential Learning Coordinator, and other professional staff in the office of Residential Learning and University Housing. This study looks at the training and development that RAs undergo both in a formal training setting and while they are in the process of discharging their duties as active staff members.

The study was conducted at Rowan University's Glassboro campus. Rowan University was founded originally as Glassboro Normal School in 1923. Soon after, it became Glassboro College, and after a sizeable charitable gift of 100 million dollars by philanthropists Henry and Betty Rowan, was renamed Rowan College. University status was achieved in 1997. The Glassboro campus houses almost 4,000 resident students, including 105 Resident Assistants. Students live in a variety of housing styles on campus including apartment complexes and traditional residence halls. Resident Assistants live in the area that they are responsible for with their residents.

Statement of the Problem

The research problem this study investigated is the lack of knowledge about how Resident Assistants at Rowan University develop into seasoned practitioners. There is a range of learning opportunities provided for Resident Assistants, from the newly hired student who begins training for the first time, to the seasoned Resident Assistant who is helping to train the next generation of Resident Assistants. However, is training the only way these students learn to be successful in the Resident Assistant position? What are the other ways that Resident Assistants learn how to perform their duties? What do

Resident Assistants at Rowan University feel is the most effective means for helping them learn to be Resident Assistants? Does supervision or the help of other more experienced staff members help in the learning to be a Resident Assistant? Learning more about the heuristics in use can lead to a better method of training Resident Assistants and increasing competency in their position.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Resident Assistants develop the knowledge and skills associated with their position. Of particular interest were the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward training and the perceived effectiveness, as well as other means of training and development such as working with peers and supervisors, and training outside of the formal summer and winter periods. Moreover, the study sought to investigate how RAs learned to competently go about their duties, and if the training and development of Resident Assistants could be improved.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study assumes that subjects were truthful in responding to probative areas. Participants were made aware that their answers would be kept anonymous and confidential. Also, their answers would not have any effect on their standing with Rowan University. These measures were assumed to remove potential bias and allow participants to speak and respond to the study freely and honestly.

The study was limited due to the means of collecting information. There were over 100 Resident Assistants on the Rowan University Glassboro campus, which made it difficult to interview each Resident Assistant in a timely manner. To combat this, a

mixed method study with a survey instrument distributed to the Resident Assistant staff in addition to focus groups with selected Residents Assistants was used to provide comprehensive data.

Another potential for limitation is the nature of the focus group conversations. Statements were phrased in the focus groups as looking for the opinion of the participating subjects. This did not lend itself to highlighting areas of disagreement among the subjects. For example, if the subjects were asked about what they thought were important qualities in a Resident Assistant, subjects would list their views and then another participant would list their views. If there was an acknowledgement of previous views on the matter, it was to either agree or acknowledge the point made but not to disagree with it.

Another potential for bias is the researcher himself who served as a Resident Director for Rowan University working for the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. He worked with a staff of 16 Resident Assistants and was responsible for overseeing two of the University's apartment complexes. Many of the staff members that the researcher supervised participated in the study. These participants were informed both in writing as a part of their agreement to participate in the study, as well as verbally during both the collection of surveys and the focus group interviews, that they were to speak freely and honestly, and that their responses would have no bearing on their standing with their supervisor or their position as Resident Assistants.

Operational Definitions

1. Apartment Complexes: These are living environments that usually house upper-class students in private apartments with cooking facilities.
2. Duty: Refers to nighttime duties where a Resident Assistant or group of Resident Assistants take responsibility for patrolling the building and being on call in the event of an emergency or some kind of need.
3. Duty Round: Is a walk around the assigned building conducted during duty. On these duty rounds, Resident Assistants look for facility concerns, residents who need help, and University policy violations.
4. New Resident Assistants: Staff members who have not undergone any formal training as a resident assistant and who have been on staff for less than a semester.
5. Operations: Refers to the area of a Resident Assistant's responsibility that relates to building and facilities management
6. On Call: Refers to a staff member who is responsible for responding to calls on the duty phone. That staff member may be contacted at any point that they are on call and asked to respond to a situation.
7. The Office of Residential Learning and University Housing: The administrative department at Rowan University that supervises Resident Assistants, Resident Directors, and Residential Learning Coordinators.
8. Peer Counseling: Refers to the area of the Resident Assistant position that deals with helping resident students, providing limited peer counseling,

making referrals to services such as the counseling center on campus, and engaging in conflict mediation.

9. Programming Model: A method used to classify and organize programming into functional areas. At Rowan University the programming model used is called ASKUS, which stands for the five areas which a program can fall into including Academic Success and Career Planning, Social Connections and Sense of Belonging, Knowledge and Tools for Self-Management, Understanding Diversity and Identity, and Student Leadership and Engagement.
10. Programs: Activities created by RAs meant to engage resident students for the purpose of disseminating information, building community among resident students, and developing useful skills for college students.
11. Resident Assistant (RA): An undergraduate paraprofessional in the student affairs field, who worked in the residence halls of Rowan University during the 2012-2013 academic year.
12. Resident Director (RD): An entry level professional in the student affairs field who lived on campus and directly supervised the resident assistant staff.
13. Residence Halls: An on campus area where undergraduate students live at Rowan University, particularly Chestnut Hall, Magnolia Hall, Willow Hall, Evergreen Hall, Mullica Hall, Oak Hall, Laurel Hall, Mimosa Hall, Edgewood Park Apartments, Triad Apartments, the Rowan Boulevard complex, and The Whitney Center complex.

14. Residential Learning Coordinators (RLC): A professional staff member who supervised the Resident Directors in the halls and approved Resident Assistant programs. Also lived on campus.
15. Resident Students: Undergraduate students who lived on campus in residence halls and apartment complexes during the fall 2012/2013 semester.
16. Returners: Staff members who have undergone some formal training as a Resident Assistant and have at least a semester of experience in the position.
17. Traditional Residence Halls: Facilities that usually house freshmen students. These halls are characterized by communal bathrooms, residents living in rooms with one or more roommates, and communal or no cooking facilities.
18. Training: Periods of time dedicated to teaching necessary knowledge, skills, and best practices to Resident Assistants. There are two periods of time dedicated to training a period of approximately 10 days in the summer before the general population of students returned to campus and approximately three or four days before the start of the spring semester.
19. Work Orders: Referred to requests for maintenance and facilities workers to provide repairs in a residence hall

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward training at Rowan University?
2. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants at Rowan University toward their development according to Chickering & Reisser's seven vectors?

3. Do Resident Assistants understand their roles and responsibilities and does ambiguity play any part in the performance of their duties?
4. How do focus group participants describe their experiences in the Resident Assistant training received at Rowan University?
5. Do focus group participants see the vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser as qualities that are present in and developed by the Resident Assistant role?
6. What qualities do focus group participants view as necessary to effectively accomplish their duties?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a review of the scholarly literature on Resident Assistant development and training. This includes several studies done at other institutions with their paraprofessional staff as well as studies conducted at Rowan University.

Chapter III describes the methodology used to conduct the study and collect data. It addresses the context of the study, the population, the sample, the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter IV focuses on the research questions presented in Chapter 1 and presents the findings of the study using statistical analysis and narrative descriptions.

Chapter V summarizes the findings of the study and discusses the findings in relation to the knowledge base and research questions. It offers conclusions based on the findings and provides recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature surrounding Resident Assistants, their training, and their professional development. It looks at current issues facing Resident Assistants, as well as potential motivating and inhibiting factors for students who take up this position. Various training and supervisory styles are looked at in order to give an idea as to what Resident Assistants are exposed to as they develop into seasoned practitioners.

History of Resident Assistants

The history of Resident Assistants has grown along with the development of the student affairs field as a whole. In colonial America, faculty members lived in student housing to help maintain order and adherence to institutional policies, a tradition carried over from English colleges like Oxford and Cambridge; this pattern continued nearly two centuries in the colleges and universities of the new world. Living on campus was not a particularly popular option in the early United States, and many students chose to live off campus in the towns and boarding houses that developed around institutions. In post Civil War America, local communities began to sponsor collegiate institutions and offered lodging for students; these types of lodgings met a significant portion of the need for student housing. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, on campus student housing had become unpopular with the majority students (Crandall, 2004). In his 2004 study, Crandall showed that as few as 24% of students lived in institutional housing in 1905, which was down from over 50% in the 1870s.

In the early part of the 20th century, debate about student housing surfaced as a result of admitting women into institutions of higher education. This sparked the building of dormitories and some schools began to require students to live on campus. According to Crandall (2004), some institutions even began to use students to enforce policies in these halls, though a faculty member was in charge of the building as a whole. However, the residential model continued to be unpopular in America; this may be explained by the influence of German universities where there was no residence system. The belief among German university administrators was that having students live together would be an overall detriment to their morals and keeping order and discipline among a residential student population would be next to impossible. It was thought that it would be much better to separate students and keep them from spending too much time outside of the classroom together (Morris, 2009).

For those students who did live on campus, their experience differed from the modern one in one facet in particular: the faculty was in direct charge of the housing on campus. Faculty members of a college or university not only administered a residence building, but also lived in the dormitories with their students. The faculty was deeply involved in the day-to-day lives of their students and assumed the role of not only instructor, but disciplinarian and student advocate. After World War II and the introduction of the G.I. Bill, there was a massive influx of students into higher education creating a demand for student housing. At this time, student housing began to expand with new residence halls being constructed on college and university campuses across the United States. However, this new demand began to exceed the available faculty to

administer these new halls. In order to meet the demand, other administrators began to fill this role and eventually, institutions began to hire staff specifically to supervise student housing. In turn, these new professionals began to hire students to help provide supervision in the halls. Thus, the Resident Assistant position in its modern form was created (Clarke, 2008).

Roles of the Resident Assistant

The position of Resident Assistant (RA) is one of the most important and demanding positions an undergraduate student can have on a college or university campus. The position is often responsible for enforcing institutional policies, reporting breeches of those policies or laws, maintaining and promoting community, creating programming for students, and mediating conflicts between resident students. All of these responsibilities occur in the setting of a college residence hall where students from different backgrounds assemble to live and study, creating both opportunities and stress. Therefore, it is likely that Resident Assistants have more contact with residential students than most student affairs practitioners and administrators (Jaeger & Caison, 2006).

An actual job description for a Resident Assistant varies across college campuses although several researchers have attempted to define the duties and responsibilities of a Resident Assistant. According to Clarke (2008), a Resident Assistant serves as role model, counselor, programmer, and as the staff with the most contact with resident students. They serve as a medium for the passing on of institutional traditions, values, and goals. Some researchers, however, see the position of a Resident Assistant as being so all encompassing, that a traditional definition of their role would exclude some of the

roles that Resident Assistants play in the residence hall community. These researchers feel that a better way to define a position like the Resident Assistant would be to outline the types of roles they fill in a more broad way. This broad definition recognizes that Resident Assistants can influence nearly every facet of a resident student's life. This also adds to the idea that much of what a particular Resident Assistant may provide in the way of services to their resident students can vary from community to community making the position slightly different from practitioner to practitioner all across campus (Clarke, 2008).

According to the position description for Resident Assistants at Rowan University, RAs have a wide variety of duties to perform. They are required to be involved in the planning and implementation of seven active programs, passive programming, roommate mediations, and helping with checking in and checking out students from the building both at the formal opening and closing of the semesters as well as throughout the course of the school year. They must also serve on a rotating duty schedule where they are on call in the building from 8pm to 7am; during this time the RAs must make regular rounds of the building, conduct office hours where they make themselves available in the hall office for two hours, and keep a "duty phone" with a number that staff or residents may call for assistance throughout the course of the night. In addition to these duties, RAs must also make time for biweekly one-on-one meetings with either the graduate Resident Director of their building or the professional Residence Life Coordinator of their residence area, in addition to attending weekly staff meetings

usually scheduled in the evening hours. They also attend monthly departmental staff in-service meetings (RLUH, 2011) that range from one to three hours.

With the time commitments and the list of duties inherent to the position, it is easy to see why Summerlin (2008) notes that the Resident Assistant position is often a stressful and demanding position. It is also highly important to an institution, as Resident Assistants are the first line of authority and the first representatives of the institution in the residence halls. These residence halls are places where students spend time not only sleeping and studying, but also learning. In a residence hall, students learn about themselves and how to organize their lives so that they can be successful both during their college experience and after graduation. This means taking into account a host of factors including social, emotional, and physical needs. It also means taking into consideration the community that students live in and how they are going to be a part of that community.

One of the issues facing Resident Life departments includes the ability to hire and retain high quality applicants for the position of Resident Assistant. The rate of turnover can be high and the nature of the position can lead to isolating the Resident Assistant from his or her residents in the hall. Isolation, stress, and an often hectic schedule can lead to problems including small candidate pools and high rates of “burn out” as Resident Assistants leave the position due to either dissatisfaction or an inability to cope with the demands of the position (Summerlin, 2008). This situation makes it important to better understand how Resident Assistants develop in their position so that means of support can be established to help personnel persist and thrive in their role.

Doge (1990) noted that some institutions have voiced concern about Resident Assistants being stretched too far and being asked to take on more responsibilities than they should. There is a feeling that institutions rely too much on these student leaders, particularly when including in their positions a lot of varied and important responsibilities such as overseeing the security of residence halls, the maintenance of those buildings, and the wellbeing of the students living in them. These duties are in addition to the responsibilities that Resident Assistants have as full time undergraduate students.

Why Do Students Become Resident Assistants and Why Do They Leave?

Possible reasons to become a Resident Assistant. One area of agreement that is found in much of the literature on Resident Assistants is that it is a challenging and demanding position and one that should not be entered into for the financial or other rewards alone (Summerlin, 2008). So why do students become Resident Assistants?

Summerlin (2008) found that the financial incentive was a strong motivating factor for students to become Resident Assistants. Other factors included the ability to become involved in the institution, the ability to reach out to others in a leadership position, and prior positive contact that a candidate might have had with their own Resident Assistant. These incentives can have a strong motivating influence on students to become RAs. Why then do Resident Life and Housing Departments across the United States have difficulty in recruiting students into the RA role?

Inhibiting factors for Resident Assistants. Being a Resident Assistant can have a significant impact on not only a Resident Assistant's life but also an impact on his or her fellow students across the building or local community. Many of these impacts are

positive for both the RA and the residence hall. So why do Resident Assistants not return to the position? Or why do they “burn out” and leave?

The reasons are varied but generally they seem to involve Resident Assistants not being able to balance the demands of being an RA with other parts of their lives. This may stem from a number of different feelings, such as isolation or a feeling of being separate from the students they oversee due to their position. Other RAs have reported feeling overworked, underappreciated, or receiving inadequate compensation for their efforts. According to Summerlin (2008), anyone of these reasons can lead to an RA leaving the position.

Resident Assistant Development and Training

Training is the process by which a student who has been hired as a Resident Assistant learns to perform the responsibilities that are associated with the position. Ideally, training should prepare a new Resident Assistant for the obstacles and challenges to be faced in the position. Training encompasses a number of different areas that Resident Assistants need to be proficient in including facilities and operations work, programming, crisis management, and duty responsibilities such as conducting rounds as well as confronting behavior that is against the institutions policies. The importance of training cannot be over-emphasized, as it is a crucial part of preparing a newly hired student to deal with the many different aspects of the position. In 2008, Summerlin noted “The most highly respected and qualified student may not succeed as a Resident Assistant without their receiving a proper level of training and preparation for the position” (Summerlin, 2008, p. 19).

Research indicates that training can have a significant influence on Resident Assistants and how they conduct themselves and perform their duties. The purpose of training is to set best practices for how Resident Assistants should conduct their duties and react to situations that arise in the course of those duties. Training should also establish best practices for Resident Assistants, and help to create work habits that assist them in their position (Summerlin, 2008).

However, as important as training is, it is not enough to ensure that Resident Assistants will adhere to the best practices that are taught. Training and development for Resident Assistants needs to be a constant and ongoing process that includes not only formal training conducted by the department, but also supplementary trainings and work with supervisors (Clarke, 2008).

The difficulty in training a new Resident Assistant is that there is no widely agreed upon standardized way of conducting training or what should be included in training. Many factors can influence how a Residence Life department organizes such a program. Potential factors include departmental goals, beliefs about what Resident Assistants should and should not do, and the cost of training. Because of the wide variety of skills that Resident Assistants need to perform their duties, designing a training that covers everything can be difficult. This is especially true considering the limited time and resources of many Residence Life operations. This can lead to some topics being covered in a limited capacity or cut from the training program all together (Kennedy, 2009).

There are several different types of training that are in use, the first of which is

training that takes place before the start of a semester or term. This training varies greatly from institution-to-institution in terms of level, scope, and time. It generally takes place one to three weeks before the start of the academic year and is the most comprehensive training a Resident Assistant will receive. This training covers topics such as operational duties, ethical responsibilities, risk/safety protocols, addressing student conduct/behavior, counseling, and diversity. There may also be training that occurs during the school year, such as during staff meetings, and even at some institutions, an academic course for Resident Assistants is offered (Kennedy, 2009). There is agreement that training and other developmental opportunities can have a dramatic impact on how Resident Assistants perform their jobs.

At Rowan University, research has found that Resident Assistants question the effectiveness of their training. According to a survey conducted by Learn in 2010, 68% of Rowan Resident Assistants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “RA training prepared me for my role.” A total of 71% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel accurately prepared as an RA after training”, while 60% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel fully prepared for my role after training” (Learn, 2010, p. 32). This level of agreement on the training, which Resident Assistants receive, would seem to suggest that there could be more done to train Resident Assistants. In each one of those statements from Learn’s survey focusing on the effectiveness of their training, 29 to 40% of Resident Assistants, depending on the question, did not agree with the idea that training had prepared them for their position.

Resident Assistant Support Structure

In addition to the training that a Resident Assistant receives, research suggests that Resident Assistants need support structures to help them develop as staff members. Resident Assistant opportunities for support come in a variety of ways including conferences and professional developmental opportunities to hone and expand their skills, working one-on-one with supervisors, and working with more experienced peers.

Strong leadership is an asset to have in a residence hall and there are several different styles of leadership and supervision that professional staff that supervise Resident Assistants can use. There are numerous theories and ideas about leadership and how those in leadership positions should conduct themselves in their leadership. Included are ideas that leadership is not a static notion, but can change in different situations (Contingency Theory) or that leadership can be adapted based on the maturity of those following (Situational Theory). This means that different types of leadership from a supervisor may be equally effective and there is a myriad of ways that a Resident Director could lead his or her staff. A host of different variables such as the leader's preferences, natural disposition, and the disposition of his or her staff may be considered in choosing and evaluating a leadership style (Morris, 2009).

Morris (2009), in her study of leadership styles of Hall Directors, looked at what is called the Full Range leadership model. The goal of this model is to be able to describe a variety of leadership styles by looking at the different traits and goals of each style. The model has three subsections, which include Transformative, Transactional, and Laissez Faire/Passive Avoidant; each of these styles emphasize different ways of

managing Resident Assistants and situations. In looking at leadership in this way, the Full Range model sought to cover a number of attitudes and beliefs in each of the three identified areas (Morris, 2009).

Supervision is a key element to developing competent Resident Assistants, and a Hall Director plays an important role. A good supervisor encourages the best in their staff despite the low pay, benefits, stress, and conditions that Resident Assistants have to negotiate. Research suggests that the supervisors that employ Transformational leadership will see Resident Assistants who are much more motivated than those supervisors who do not. Other methods of supervision include Transactional supervision, where an employee is given pay, and praise for work; this is a traditional style of supervision that is used in the business world where an employee gets some type of praise or extra compensation for good work (Morris, 2009). This type of leadership is used in part with Resident Assistants who usually receive some form of compensation for their work. At Rowan University, for instance, Resident Assistants are compensated with a \$800.00 yearly stipend, as well as having the cost of their housing and meal plan paid for by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing.

Moreover, by using Transformational leadership, a supervisor can motivate his or her Resident Assistants to become more invested, both physically and emotionally, in their position. When a student has invested physical and emotional energy in a project or activity, this is called involvement and it is a cornerstone in involvement and engagement theories (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Both of these theories posit that the more a student is involved in campus life and activities, the more the student will

develop. It stands to reason then that the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing should get Resident Assistants as involved and active in the position as possible. This results not only in an active and engaged staff member, which is good for the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing, as well as for Rowan University as a whole. It also results in a positive outcome for the students themselves who grow in knowledge and skill while in the position of Resident Assistant.

Research at Rowan University

Learn (2010) noted that Resident Assistants had high passion and understanding of their roles but they had slightly lower ratings in their assessment of Resident Directors. Learn found that 87% agreed or strongly agreed that their Resident Directors fairly evaluated them. Of the Resident Assistants surveyed, 76% strongly agreed or agreed that the RD gave timely feedback, while 88% said that they felt supported by the Resident Directors and 76% said that they felt that their Resident Director was easily accessible whenever needed (Learn, 2010). Supervisory access may provide a valuable link to the development of Resident Assistants.

In 2010, the Residential Learning and University Housing office at Rowan University distributed a survey to receive feedback from RAs on their training. In that survey, over 93% of respondents said that the training had improved in recent years. Resident Assistants also seemed to have a generally favorable outlook on most of the sessions offered. More specifically, 90% of respondents agreed with the statement that the helping skills and crisis response training was useful and statements such as “I am confident in my ability to help students who may need assistance” and “I know the

campus resources to refer students when they need assistance” had similar levels of agreement. The survey had several weak areas in that it did not ask about the source of RA confidence. For example, was it a result of the training that they received? Was it from information that they received while on the job? Or was it derived from working closely with supervisors and experienced peers? The other weak area of the survey is that it neglected to ask about Resident Assistant attitudes on programming. No information on that aspect of the Resident Assistant position was gathered by the survey (RLUH, 2010). It is worth stating here that in her 2010 study, Learn noted that programming was declining in terms of its importance to Resident Assistants. Moreover, they noted that other aspects of their position such as student safety and enforcing university rules and regulations were more prominent to recent RAs than their predecessors who valued programming more (Learn, 2010).

Leva (2011), in a survey of Resident Assistants, noted that RAs might have felt less supported in specific areas of programming than in the overall programming requirement of the RA position that Learn described. For example, 74% of Resident Assistants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel my Resident Director supports my efforts in programming.” When presented with a similar statement about Residential Learning Coordinators and Professional Staff in the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing, the percentages of Resident Assistants who agreed and strongly agreed were 71% and 52% respectively.

This suggests that while RAs may have felt supported as a whole (Learn, 2010), they might also have felt less supported in specific areas of their position. This level of support may be connected with the style of supervision used by a Resident Director.

Role Ambiguity

Role Ambiguity indicates a lack of understanding as to what is required from a person acting in a particular role. For Resident Assistants, there are many areas where role ambiguity may be a factor in successfully completing their duties. This ambiguity may be the result of several different factors. For instance, role conflict may present ambiguity for an RA. In situations of rule breaking, there may be conflict with a RA's role as an enforcer of the rules and their role in the safety of residents. Students who may have broken the rules of the institution may feel apprehensive about approaching an RA when that rule breaking leads the resident to needing help from the RA (Horvath, 2011). An example might be a student's abuse of alcohol resulting in getting help from an RA in arranging for medical attention. How Resident Assistants address this situation may result in conflict between competing roles creating a potential source of ambiguity for the RA.

Ambiguity may also come from a lack of training or training of insufficient depth or clarity to resolve ambiguous situations. Similarly, a supervisor may not make provide clear expectations for a supervisee. If Resident Assistants are being supervised by two different supervisors simultaneously, the Resident Director and the Residential Learning Coordinator, there is potential for conflict and ambiguity (Horvath, 2011).

Student Development Theory

Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser (1993) articulated one of the best-known theories on student development working from Chickering's earlier research. The theory posits a model for understanding the development of college students and can be applied to Resident Assistants and their development both as students and as Resident Assistants. One of the central points of the theory is the seven vectors, or areas of development, that students go through while in college. The model also takes into consideration environmental influences that have an effect on student development as well as three key admonitions that help to create an educational setting (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). The theory holds promise as the basis for this study because the seven vectors represent measurable areas of student development that can be used in evaluating the growth and change in Resident Assistants.

It should be noted that while there are separate stages, the theory is not sequential; students may not have completed one vector before moving on to another. The order in which the vectors are given reflect what Chickering and Reisser believe to be a "good foundation" of student development and they are not set in stone nor do they represent fixed stages of development. Vectors may be skipped or worked on simultaneously; indeed many of the vectors have a complex interplay with each other. Chickering and Reisser (1993) describe this dynamic when they discuss the interaction between developing intimacy and autonomy.

Moving through each vector is how a student progresses, usually by meeting challenges and overcoming them during the growth process. Though Chickering and

Reisser were careful to say movement and retreat mark the process of growth, they also suggest that students need time to process and reflect on their experiences as a way of moving through the vectors. The complexity of the vectors, as opposed to a more step-by-step sequential approach, is necessary to avoid over-simplification. In some student development theories it is very tempting to quickly look at a list of criteria and pinpoint the exact stage and level of a student's development. In the case of the vectors, development is a very complex endeavor (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering's seven vectors are as follows:

1. **Developing Competence**—this would be an increase in both the physical and psychological competence where a student gains both the skills and the knowledge to accomplish personal goals and complete tasks. Development in this vector is also marked by increased confidence that students have in themselves to meet challenges. For a Resident Assistant, this would be a sense that not only can they competently conduct a sweep of the building while on duty (which requires knowledge of the building and its layout and idiosyncrasies), but also being able to confront issues that may arise while on that sweep (which requires knowledge of policies and expectations of the university).
2. **Managing Emotions**—this vector deals with managing emotions during the life course. For example, a student who is prone to be overly emotional would learn to deal with personal emotions in a healthier manner, whereas a student who has trouble expressing emotions would learn how to do so in

a safe way. This is an important vector for Resident Assistants because personal emotions must be managed in addition to resident students.

3. Moving through Autonomy Toward Interdependence—this vector involves developing emotional independence in a student. This can be difficult to navigate because students want to be adults and be treated as adults. However, they still want a relationship that can be dependent upon others such as parents or authority figures. This is one of the reasons why student/parent relationships are so complex.
4. Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships—this vector includes developing healthy intimate relationships with people of different races, identities, and beliefs. It is marked by heightened tolerance and respect for the differences among and between people. For Resident Assistants, developing mature interpersonal relationships is critical as they will have continuous contact with students and the relationships that develop must be based on mutual respect.
5. Establishing Identity—this vector is very complex and focuses on developing personal understanding. Included are an awareness of personal identity such as gender, sexual, social, racial, ethnic, as well as body image and other factors that contribute to a person’s sense of identity. A secure and positive sense of identity can lead to a personal ability to better handle criticism in a positive fashion, greater efficacy, self-esteem, and an appreciation for self-worth.

6. Developing Purpose—this vector involves the development of goals and objectives as well as the ability to persevere to meet goals in the face of obstacles or challenges. It includes vocational (meaning both paid and unpaid work) as well as personal interest. Because of the broad range of responsibilities, the Resident Assistant position can be a useful developmental experience in regards to this vector because it gives students exposure to a range of different types of opportunities.
7. Developing Integrity - includes three sequential tasks involving the development of humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence. This includes moving away from a rigid black and white value system to a more inclusive one, which incorporates the feelings and needs of others. The development of a personalized value system allows students to develop and affirm their core values. Developing congruence allows action to compliment these values. This vector is important for Resident Assistants because they need to have balance in their position. It would be very easy for a Resident Assistant to stretch themselves too far in order to help residents. The value of helping others has to be balanced with the value of maintaining self-interest and upholding university policies.

Opportunities for Development

Resident Assistants are expected to attend formal training before the start of each semester as a part of their professional development. The trainings attempt to prepare RAs for their duties and consist of classroom style presentations as well as interactive

discussions. Returning RAs also participate in these trainings. The Returner led conference is a daylong event held in the summer where experienced RAs can talk about what they have learned, as well as best practices, and ideas based upon experience.

During the fall and spring semesters, RAs are expected to attend weekly staff meetings for continued training as well as the dispensing of information and assignments from the Resident Director, Residential Learning Coordinator, and the RLUH office. RAs are expected to meet with their most immediate supervisors (RD, RLC) twice a month (once with the RD and once with the RLC). This meeting is called a one-on-one and is focused on subjects including, but not limited to, continued training, job performance, personal wellbeing, and discussions on the RA's career and academic goals.

Other outlets for development and training include monthly staff in-service meetings where topics may deal with the various position areas of RAs have such as how to respond to a medical emergency, or how to conduct a health and safety inspection. These sessions may also discuss broad topics such as diversity or handling a crisis.

Resident Assistants also attend conferences designed for Resident Assistants including the Mid-Atlantic College and University Housing Officers-Student Staff/Live in Conference that helps Resident Assistants and other Live in Staff develop new skills and ideas. Unfortunately in the fall of 2012, Resident Assistants did not attend this conference because it conflicted with Rowan University's homecoming. New in the fall of 2012, a program was designed to help Resident Assistants who attended the MAPC (Mid-Atlantic Placement Conference). This conference was an opportunity for both institutions and student affairs professionals in the Mid-Atlantic area to conduct

employee/job searches. The conference was an opportunity for undergraduates who were considering a career in student affairs to interview for graduate assistantships such as Resident Directorships or other graduate positions primarily in the field of Residence Life/Housing. This new program placed RAs going to this conference with a mentor who helped them to prepare with mock interviews and resume critiques.

Summary of the Literature Review

Much has been written about Resident Assistants, the training they receive, and their professional development. However, there has been little research into this process as it applies to Resident Assistants at Rowan University. Thus, many questions abound about how Resident Assistants at Rowan University develop and what are the biggest influences in their professional development.

The literature describes development and learning for RAs as a result of several different factors, such as interactions with supervisors and how training is conducted. Data exist about how prepared RAs feel they are for their position after training. Data also exist in describing ambiguity that may point to areas of deficiency in RA training. However gaps in the literature exist in terms of what areas RAs are learning and developing while at Rowan University. There is also a gap in better understanding how learning and development occurs. Presently, no literature exists on whether RA learning and development occurs outside of training for Resident Assistants at Rowan University.

It is important to understand the Resident Assistant experience and how they develop. Resident Assistants represent both influential student leaders that can have a significant impact on the nearly 4,000 students living on the Glassboro campus as well as

promote the university. Thousands of dollars go into the training, compensating, and supporting of Resident Assistants. Understanding how these student leaders develop cannot only help university staff improve the training, but also help in the expansion of how to support Resident Assistants.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at the Glassboro campus of Rowan University in New Jersey. The Glassboro campus is Rowan's main and residential campus. The university was founded in 1923 as the Glassboro Normal School with the mission of educating elementary teachers for the region. In the past 89 years, the school has expanded and evolved to become a residential liberal arts university and is expanding into a research institution. The process of expansion has been fueled in recent years by the donation of \$100 million dollars to the university from Henry and Betty Rowan. The Rowan donation helped to establish an engineering college at the university and led to a name change from Glassboro College to Rowan College and then to Rowan University (Rowan Website 2013).

The main Glassboro campus is home to nearly 4,000 resident students. These students live in a number of settings including eight "traditional halls" where residents have rooms in a larger structure with limited or no access to a kitchen. These buildings also have common areas for the entire community such as recreation rooms and laundry facilities. Traditional halls may also have communal bathrooms that are shared by a floor or wing; suite bathrooms that are shared by two to three rooms of students (RLUH Student Roster 2013).

Students also live in five apartment complexes where students reside in an actual apartment with its own kitchen, bedrooms, and common area. These buildings may also

include a common area for the building or complex. Some of these complexes feature one floor with one-to-four bedrooms in the apartment, housing between one to two residents in a bedroom. The Townhouse complex features apartments with three floors housing up to six residents with one resident per room. There is also a single house converted into the international house. Staffing of the 14 residence halls consisted of approximately 110 Resident Assistants, 8 Resident Directors, and 3 Residential Learning Coordinators (RD Handbook 2013).

Each of the Residents Assistants hired by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing serves in several different capacities. The first is being a peer mentor/counselor for resident students. The second is being a programmer in the building where each RA is required to participate in the development and implementation of seven active programs over the course of a semester. The third responsibility is working with the physical facilities. RAs are expected to help address facility issues making sure that work orders are properly placed and filled in a timely fashion. Lastly, each RA is expected to enforce university policies and represent the university as a live-in-staff member. Resident Assistants take “duty nights”, or nights where they are on call, to respond to incidents, emergencies, as well as to patrol the hall complex to make sure that residents and guest are abiding by Rowan University’s policies and the law.

Population and Sample Selection

The total population of the RAs on the Rowan Glassboro campus during the time of the study was approximately 110, deployed in 14 facilities. All Resident Assistants were surveyed during a monthly in-service meeting. At the time of conducting the

survey, not all of the 110 approved Resident Assistant positions may have been filled resulting in fewer than the maximum number of 110 RAs who attended the meeting. Any officially employed RA who was absent from the in-service meeting was sent a survey and asked to complete and return it to the researcher within one week (RD Handbook 2013). Resident Assistants were then informed via their weekly staff meetings that there would be focus groups conducted as a part of this study and that these groups would be broken down by time spent as a Resident Assistant. Participants were those Resident Assistants who chose to volunteer for the groups and included 3 participants in the first year group, 9 who participated in the second year group, and 2 who participated in the third year group.

Instrumentation

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The quantitative instrument (Appendix B) was a 33-item survey distributed and collected during a departmental in-service meeting. It was called the RA Development Survey and was based on surveys distributed by Learn (2010) and Kennedy (2009). Items on the survey dealt with a range of issues including RA attitudes on their preparation for the position during summer and semester-long training, as well as the quality of other professional development opportunities such as working with more experienced peers and supervisors. Also included were elements on role ambiguity and how RAs learn best, such as in a classroom like setting, from a peer, or from a supervisor. The survey employed a Likert scale that asked subjects to rate their agreement levels with each statement from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There were also options to indicate

neutrality or that the statement did not apply to the participant. Statements were rated 1-6 with 1=strongly agree and 6=not applicable. Statements with higher levels of agreement will have lower mean scores. Items in the survey were placed into logical factor groupings and organized by research question.

The qualitative instrument included a 10-item focus group protocol (Appendix C). The questions focused on RA opinions on training, learning styles, and professional development. There were three focus groups divided according to time spent as a RA. One group was for first year RAs, one for second year RAs, and one for third year and above RAs. The rationale for this arrangement was to look at how RAs develop over the time in the position. The focus groups took place over two weekends as volunteers were recruited to during the staff in-service when the surveys were distributed.

Both instruments went through several stages before being used in the study and were reviewed by a thesis advisor and selected Resident Directors to ensure content and face validity. Both instruments were submitted to the Rowan University Institutional Review Board examined the study instruments and the proposal for the study and approved all of the elements (Appendix A). The Director of Residential Learning and University Housing also reviewed the instruments and gave his approval.

Once the survey instrument was completed by the subjects, the Likert scale items were examined for reliability using Chronbach's Alpha coefficient; results were .801, indicating superior internal consistency in the instrument.

Data Collection

Data was collected during a departmental in-service meeting and over the course of three focus group sessions. Participation was voluntary on the part of the Resident Assistants and all were assured that their information would be held in strict confidence and not impact their standing as Residents Assistants or students.

The majority of the survey data was collected during a March in-service meeting for the Resident Assistants. The instrument was distributed and instructions were provided to those Resident Assistants willing to participate. Because the meeting itself was mandatory for the Resident Assistants to attend, a large sample of the population was able to participate, though some Resident Assistants declined. Those not present at the meeting were given a survey by their supervisor and if they were willing to participate, were asked to return the survey within one week.

Resident Assistants who participated in the focus groups were audio/video recorded by the researcher for accuracy during the transcribing process. Participants signed a consent statement allowing for participation in the respective focus group (Appendix D). Each focus group lasted between one and-a-half to two hours in time, and was then transcribed for data analysis by the researcher.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data collected was compiled into the predictive analytic software, SPSS, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The independent variables in the study included learning styles and clarity of role expectations. Dependent variables included attitudes about training

and other means employed by the Office of Residential Learning and University to train and develop Resident Assistants. The data tables in Chapter IV include the frequency and percentage of responses on the survey but note that answers where respondents indicated that the statement was not applicable were removed from data analysis. This was done so as to only represent the respondents who felt that the statement was applicable.

Transcripts of the qualitative data were analyzed using Sisco's 1981 Logical Procedures for Analyzing Written Data (Appendix E). Using content analysis, the focus group transcripts were examined looking for common and divergent themes among the responses from the participants. Phrases used by the participants were edited for non-essential words and then compared with other phrases to form common and divergent themes. The emergent themes are organized into tables in Chapter IV based on their frequency (*f*) and rank order. Also, narrative explanation is included for the themes.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Survey Sample

Subjects in this study were taken from the total population of Resident Assistants at Rowan University's Glassboro campus during the 2013 spring semester. This population consisted of 103 Resident Assistants, who worked in one of 14 different facilities on campus, including apartment, traditional residence halls, and a single house converted into the international house. Of the 103 possible respondents, 86 surveys were returned for a response rate of 84%. All responses were valid. Of the respondents 38, (44.2%) were male, 46 (53.5%) were female, and 2 (2.3%) did not respond. The sample consisted of 59 (68.6%) respondents who identified as white, 7 (8.1%) who identified as Hispanic, 7 (8.1%) who identified as African American, 4 (4.7%) who identified as Asian American, 1(1.2%) who identified as Indian American, and 8 (9.3%) did not choose a racial identity.

In terms of experience in the position of Resident Assistant, 54 (62.8%) indicated that it was their first year on staff (two or less semesters on staff), 24 (28%) indicated that it was their second year on staff (between three & four semesters on staff), and 8 (9.3%) respondents indicated it was their third year on staff (five semesters or more on staff). In terms of work place, 31 (36.5%) worked in a traditional hall with freshmen, 5 (5.9%) worked in a traditional hall with upperclassmen, 2 (2.4%) worked in an apartment complex with upperclassmen and freshmen, and 47 (55.3%) worked in an apartment complex with upperclassmen.

The sample population was fairly diverse in terms of class rank with 11 (12.8%) being a sophomore, 29 (33.7%) a junior, 40 (46.5%) a senior, and 6 (7.0%) being fifth year seniors.

Table 4.1

Survey Group Demographics (N=86)

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Ethnicity		
White	59	68.6
Hispanic	7	8.1
African American	7	8.1
Asian American	4	4.7
Did not identify a Racial Identity	8	9.3
Indian American	1	1.2
Time on Staff		
First year on staff	54	62.8
Seconded year on staff	24	28
Third year on staff	8	9.3
Class Year		
Senior	40	46.5
Junior	29	33.7
Sophomore	11	12.8
Fifth year senior	6	7
Sex		
Female	46	53.5
Male	38	44.2
Did not identify gender	2	2.3
Area Assigned to 12-13 Academic year		
Worked in Apartment complex with upperclassmen	45	55.3
Worked in traditional hall with freshmen	31	36.5
Worked in traditional hall with upperclassmen	5	5.9
Worked in Apartment complex with freshmen and upperclassmen	2	2.4

Data Analysis: Survey

All quantitative data collected were compiled into the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) computer program, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The independent variables in the study included learning styles and clarity of role expectations. Also included were dependent variables about training and other means employed by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing to train and develop Resident Assistants. The survey also gathered feedback about Resident Assistant attitudes on the developmental vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser. This was done to see what impact the role of being an RA had on the students and how training and associated activities contributed to vector development.

Tables 4.2-4.6 describe RA attitudes and feedback on the training received at Rowan University as well as their learning styles and development. Items on the survey have been grouped into logical factor groupings and arranged by mean scores from most to least positive. Tables 4.7-4.13 describe RA attitudes on the developmental vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser. The vectors are presented in the same order as Chickering and Reisser conceived their model of student development. Lastly, in order to gauge clarity of the Resident Assistant position, items referring to role ambiguity were presented. The total number of Resident Assistants who responded to the survey was 86. However if an RA indicated that a particular statement did not apply to them by responding N/A, their response was not removed from data analysis and shown in the data tables as missing. This was done so that the tables reflected the answers only of

those respondents who had experience with the statement. For example, if an item probed about how an RA felt about training as a returner and it was the participants first year on staff, then the RA would answer N/A and the response would not be included in the data analysis but shown as missing.

Research question 1. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward training at Rowan University?

Table 4.2 describes the feedback survey respondents gave regarding their training at Rowan University. A majority of respondents agreed that training was a positive experience (85.3%) and a majority (82.9%) also indicated that as a first year RA, they finished training feeling prepared to assume their RA duties. A majority of returning RAs (64.3%) saw training as an opportunity to learn new information or review skills.

Table 4.2

Resident Assistant Feedback on Training Given at Rowan University (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I found RA training to be a helpful and positive experience <i>n</i> =82, <i>M</i> =1.86, <i>SD</i> =.643 Missing=4*	23	28	47	57.3	12	14.6	0	0	0	0
The training I received as a peer counselor was sufficient for my position <i>n</i> =82, <i>M</i> =1.86, <i>SD</i> =.827 Missing=4*	23	28	47	57.3	12	14.6	0	0	0	0
The training I received on policy and policy enforcement was sufficient for my position <i>n</i> =83, <i>M</i> =1.89, <i>SD</i> =.781 Missing=4*	24	28.9	49	59	6	7.2	3	3.6	1	1.2

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.2 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
As a new RA I felt prepared to assume my duties after training <i>n</i> =82, <i>M</i> =1.91, <i>SD</i> =.723 Missing=4*	23	28	45	54.9	12	14.6	2	2.4	0	0
The training I received for work orders and operations was sufficient for my position <i>n</i> =82, <i>M</i> =1.91, <i>SD</i> =.723 Missing=4*	23	28	45	54.9	12	14.6	2	2.4	0	0
The training I received on programming was sufficient for my position <i>n</i> = 82, <i>M</i> =2.07, <i>SD</i> =.842 Missing=4*	19	23.2	44	53.7	14	17.1	4	4.9	1	1.2
As a returning RA I found training helped me to learn new information and review skills <i>n</i> =56, <i>M</i> =2.21, <i>SD</i> =.9480 Missing=30*	14	25	22	39.3	14	25	6	10.7	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.3 describes respondent attitudes on the Returner lead conference during RA training. There was a majority agreement (85.7%) among respondents that the conference represented a good opportunity to learn from peers and respondents indicated that they would like to see an expanded conference. More than half (64%) of respondents indicated that presenting at the conference was something they would have been interested in doing.

Table 4.3

RA Feedback on Returner Led Conference (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
The returner led conference was an excellent opportunity to learn from my peers <i>n=70, M=1.87, SD=.720</i> Missing=16*	21	30	39	55.7	8	11.4	2	2.9	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.3 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
The returner led conference was an excellent opportunity to share with my peers <i>n</i> =63, <i>M</i> =1.87, <i>SD</i> =.729 Missing=23*	19	30.2	35	55.6	7	11.1	2	3.2	0	0
I would like to see an expanded returner led conference <i>n</i> =75, <i>M</i> =2.13, <i>SD</i> =.827 Missing=11*	18	24	32	42.7	22	29.3	3	4	0	0
Presenting at the returner led conference or at an in-service is something I am interested in <i>n</i> = 62, <i>M</i> =2.24, <i>SD</i> =.969 Missing=24*	16	25.8	22	35.5	17	27.4	7	11.3	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.4 describes attitudes among respondents regarding the way information was transmitted during the course of employment as an RA. This includes structured events such as in-services and staff meetings, as well as less formal events such as one-on-one meetings with a supervisor. This also included reference material such as the RA website and the RA manual. Weekly staff meetings and individual one-on-one meetings with the Resident Director were described as being the most helpful experiences with 79.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that weekly staff meetings were a useful way of getting new information. Conversely, only about a quarter of respondents (26.5%) believed that the RA manual was a useful tool.

Table 4.4

RA Attitudes on Information Transmission Approaches (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of getting new information <i>N= 86, M=1.96, SD=.860</i>	27	31.4	41	47.7	12	14.0	6	7.0	0	0
One-on-one meetings with my Resident Director are useful and help me develop <i>n=85, M=2.04, SD=.998</i> Missing=1*	27	31.8	38	44.7	11	12.9	7	8.2	2	2.4

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.4 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of socializing <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =2.05, <i>SD</i> =.955 Missing=1*	24	28.2	42	49.4	11	12.9	6	7.1	2	2.4
One-on-one meetings with my Residential Learning Coordinator are useful and help me develop <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =2.09, <i>SD</i> =1.07 Missing=1*	30	35.3	30	35.3	14	16.5	9	10.6	2	2.4
Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of learning what I need to know to be an RA <i>n</i> =83, <i>M</i> =2.20, <i>SD</i> =.920 Missing=3*	18	21.7	39	47	18	21.7	7	8.4	1	1.2
The RA website has been a useful tool for me <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =2.27, <i>SD</i> =.956 Missing=1*	17	20	40	47.1	17	20	10	11.8	1	1.2

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.4 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Monthly in-services are a useful way of learning what I need to know to be an RA <i>N</i> =86, <i>M</i> =2.34, <i>SD</i> =.967	16	18.6	36	41.9	24	27.9	8	9.3	2	2.3
Monthly in-services are a useful way of getting new information <i>n</i> = 85, <i>M</i> =2.47, <i>SD</i> =1.07 Missing=1*	15	16.5	34	40	21	24.7	11	12.9	4	4.7
Monthly in-services are a useful way of socializing <i>N</i> =86, <i>M</i> =2.60, <i>SD</i> =1.09	3	15.1	32	37.2	21	24.4	16	18.6	4	4.7
The RA manual has been a useful tool for me <i>n</i> =83, <i>M</i> =3.31, <i>SD</i> =1.12 Missing=3*	4	4.8	18	21.7	22	26.5	26	31.3	13	15.7

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.5 examines whether RAs felt that they were supported in terms of their development. Most respondents (91.7%) indicated that they felt that their Resident Director supported them in their development. Also viewed by a majority (82.3% & 74.1% respectively) of the respondents as positive were Residential Learning

Coordinators and the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing who provided support for RA development.

Table 4.5

RA Perceptions on Support for Development (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
My Resident Director supports my development as an RA <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =1.55, <i>SD</i> =.681 Missing=1*	46	54.1	32	37.6	6	7.1	1	1.2	0	0
My Residential Learning Coordinator supports my development as an RA <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =1.77, <i>SD</i> =.864 Missing=1*	38	44.7	32	37.6	12	14.1	2	2.4	1	1.2
The Office of Residential Learning and University Housing supports my development as an RA <i>n</i> = 85, <i>M</i> =2.01, <i>SD</i> =.838 Missing=1*	25	29.4	38	44.7	18	21.2	4	4.7	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.6 describes the learning styles of RAs who responded to the survey. RAs were asked about what most contributed to their learning. A total of 86.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they learned best from a peer. A majority of RAs also indicated that

they found interactive sessions helpful. Interestingly, only 26.7% of respondents indicated that they found learning on their own to be the most effective means of learning.

Table 4.6

RA Learning Styles (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I learn best from a peer or fellow RA <i>N=86, M=1.76, SD=.806</i>	36	41.9	38	44.2	8	9.3	4	4.7	0	0
I learn best from interactive sessions <i>N=86, M=1.77, SD=.601</i>	26	30.2	54	62.8	5	5.8	1	1.2	0	0
I learn best in a classroom setting <i>N=86, M=2.80, SD=.943</i>	7	8.1	26	30.2	31	36.0	21	24.4	1	1.2
I learn best on my own reading manuals and other materials given to me <i>N=86, M=3.12, SD=1.01</i>	5	5.8	18	20.9	30	34.9	27	31.4	6	7.0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Research question 2. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants at Rowan University toward their development according to Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors?

Table 4.7 describes RA attitudes on Chickering and Reisser's first vector developing competence. 83% of responding subjects agreed that the RA position required competency. This indicates that competency is a fair standard on which to observe RA development. Resident Assistants who participated in the survey also generally agreed that active participation in the RA role helped them to develop competence. RAs who responded to the survey agreed that being an RA helped them to develop both interpersonal (90.6%) and intellectual competence (81.4%).

Table 4.7

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's First Vector: Developing Competence (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
The RA position requires competency <i>N=86, M=1.59, SD=.621</i>	41	47.7	39	45.3	6	7.0	0	0	0	0
My interpersonal competency has increased as a result of being an RA <i>n=85, M=1.70, SD=.669</i> Missing=1*	34	40	43	50.6	7	8.2	1	1.2	0	0
My intellectual competency has increased as a result of being an RA <i>N=86, M=1.87, SD=.763</i>	29	33.7	41	47.7	14	16.3	2	2.3	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.8 provides an overview of Resident Assistant attitudes on the vector dealing with managing emotions. Among subjects in the survey, there was high agreement (91.7%) that the RA role required emotional control. The majority of respondents (64%) also agreed that the RA position helped to teach them how to manage emotions. It is unclear from survey data when Resident Assistants learned to control their emotions or what parts of their experience as RAs helped them to develop this.

Table 4.8

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Second Vector: Managing Emotions (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Being an RA requires emotional control <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =1.44, <i>SD</i> =.645 Missing=1*	54	63.5	24	28.2	7	8.2	0	0	0	0
I am usually in control of my emotions <i>n</i> =85, <i>M</i> =1.74, <i>SD</i> =.847 Missing=1*	36	42.4	41	48.2	4	4.7	2	2.4	2	2.4
Being an RA has helped me learn to control my emotions <i>N</i> =86, <i>M</i> =2.16, <i>SD</i> =.980	25	29.1	30	34.9	25	29.1	4	4.7	2	2.3

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.9 describes the attitudes of participating RAs to Chickering and Reisser's vector of moving through autonomy toward interdependence. The findings here may indicate some confusion around the RA role. A majority of respondents (61.6%) agreed that they were interdependent on their peers. This finding contrasts with a majority (53.4%) who indicated they felt they performed their duties independently of peers.

There may be ambiguity present regarding what it means to be either interdependent, autonomous, or both. It may also represent a possible weakness in the instrument.

Table 4.9

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Third Vector: Moving through Autonomy toward Interdependence (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I am interdependent on my peers <i>N=86, M=2.25, SD=.896</i>	18	20.9	35	40.7	27	31.4	5	5.8	1	1.2
I tend to solve my problems as an RA on my own and not ask others for help <i>N=86, M=2.50, SD=1.04</i>	15	17.4	31	36.0	25	29.1	12	14.0	3	3.5

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.10 describes RA attitudes on Chickering and Reisser's fourth vector, which deals with the ability to develop mature interpersonal relationships. There was a very high rate of agreement among participants (91.9%) that the ability to have mature interpersonal relationships was vital in operating as a Resident Assistant. There was also a high rate of agreement among respondents (87.2%) that the RA position contributed to the development of students along this vector.

Table 4.10

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Fourth Vector: Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Being an RA requires the ability to have mature interpersonal relationships <i>N=86, M=1.57, SD=.642</i>	44	51.2	35	40.7	7	8.1	0	0	0	0
My interpersonal competency has increased as a result of being an RA <i>n=85, M=1.70, SD=.669</i> Missing=1*	34	40	43	50.6	7	8.2	1	1.2	0	0
Being an RA has helped me to learn how to have mature interpersonal relationships <i>N=86, M=1.77, SD=.692</i>	31	36.0	44	51.2	10	11.6	1	1.2	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.11 describes responding RA attitudes on Chickering and Reisser's fifth vector dealing with establishing identity. Less than one-quarter (17.2%) of RAs who responded to the survey identified as the same person at the time of the survey as they did when they assumed the RA position. Conversely, a majority of respondents indicated that being in the RA position changed them a little (65.2%). There was also majority

agreement (57%) that the RA position changed them significantly. While the survey data do not indicate what aspect of the RA position or when the role of being an RA created a change in identity for the respondents, it is reasonable to suggest that the data seems to support the vector as a legitimate measure of personal development.

Table 4.11

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Fifth Vector: Establishing Identity (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Being an RA has changed me a little <i>N=86, M=2.42, SD=1.03</i>	12	14.0	44	51.2	17	19.8	8	9.3	5	5.8
Being an RA has changed me significantly <i>N=86, M=2.23, SD=1.05</i>	27	31.4	22	25.6	30	34.9	4	4.7	3	3.5
I am the same person now as when I took the RA position <i>n=81, M=3.61, SD=1.21</i> Missing=5*	7	8.6	7	8.6	17	21	29	35.8	21	25.9

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.12 describes responding RA attitudes on Chickering and Reisser's sixth vector dealing with developing a sense of purpose. A majority of respondents (73.3%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they found the RA position gave them a sense of purpose.

Table 4.12

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Sixth Vector: Developing a Sense of Purpose (N=86)
(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Being an RA gives me a sense of purpose <i>N=86, M=2.03, SD=.963</i>	28	32.6	35	40.7	17	19.8	4	4.7	2	2.3

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Table 4.13 portrays the attitudes of survey respondents to Chickering and Reisser's seventh vector dealing with developing a sense of integrity. RAs who responded to the survey indicated that a sense of integrity was an important part of being a Resident Assistant. Over ninety percent (91.9%) agreed with the statement, "Being an RA requires a sense of integrity." However, there was a lower, though still a majority (80%), of respondents who believed that being an RA fostered development of a sense of integrity.

Table 4.13

RA Attitudes in Relation to Chickering and Reisser's Seventh Vector: Developing a Sense of Integrity (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Being an RA requires a sense of integrity. <i>N=86, M=1.65, SD=.793</i>	41	47.7	38	44.2	5	5.8	0	0	2	2.3
Being an RA has helped me to develop a sense of integrity <i>n=85, M=1.88, SD=.850</i> Missing=1*	31	36.5	37	43.5	14	16.5	2	2.4	1	1.2

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Research question 3. Do Resident Assistants understand their roles and responsibilities and does ambiguity play any part in the performance of their duties?

Table 4.14 examines perceived role ambiguity in the Resident Assistant position at Rowan University. The data indicates that the respondents had a clear understanding of the requirements of the RA position, as well as the expectations of their supervisors and the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. Nearly all of the respondents (95.4%) indicated that they completely understood the role of an RA.

Table 4.14

RA Attitudes in Relation to Role Ambiguity (N=86)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I completely understand the RA position and what it entails <i>N=86, M= 1.63, SD=.611</i>	36	41.9	46	53.5	3	3.5	1	1.2	0	0
I have a clear understanding of what my Resident Director expects of me <i>N=86, M=1.68, SD=.740</i>	38	44.2	40	46.5	5	5.8	3	3.5	0	0
I have a clear understanding of what the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing expects of me <i>N=86, M=1.69, SD=.637</i>	34	39.5	46	53.5	5	5.8	1	1.2	0	0
I have a clear understanding of what my Residential Learning Coordinator expects of me <i>N=86, M=1.71, SD=.734</i>	38	44.2	36	41.9	11	12.8	1	1.2	0	0

* Not Applicable items shown as missing

Data Analysis: Focus Group Profile

In addition to the survey that was distributed to RAs for this study, focus groups were held. This was done to help gain additional insight on RA attitudes surrounding training, development, and the existence of role ambiguity. Fourteen RAs participated in three focus group sessions. These focus groups were organized into three subgroups based upon experience. Those with two or less semesters of experience participated in the first year group, those with between three to four semesters of experience participated in the second year group, and those with five or more semesters of experience were placed into the third year group.

All focus group sessions were audio/video recorded following permission of the participants. The data was transcribed from the sessions and content analysis was used to look for convergent and divergent themes. Any relevant verbal and nonverbal cues were also noted so as to indicate how a participant felt about a statement or item from the interview protocol.

The first year focus group was comprised of three Resident Assistants consisting of two men and one woman. All were in their second semester as Resident Assistants, working in apartments with upperclassmen students. The second year focus group had nine participants, five women and four men. Eight of the nine were in their fourth semester and one was in their third semester as a Resident Assistant; three worked in traditional halls with freshmen, while the other six worked in upperclassmen apartment complexes. One of the Resident Assistants had worked in two settings during his service as an RA, both in upperclassmen apartment complexes and in traditional halls with

freshmen. The third year focus group had two participants, both of whom were men. Both Resident Assistants were in their sixth semester and worked in upperclassmen apartment complexes at the time of the focus group interview, although both had also worked in traditional halls with freshmen previously.

Table 4.15 provides a summary of the demographic information of the participants in terms of their gender, time on staff, and what type of hall and population of students they were working with at the time of the study.

Table 4.15

Focus Group Demographics

(Traditional Hall with Freshmen=1, Traditional Hall with upperclassmen=2, Upper Classmen Apartments=3, Apartments with Freshmen and Upperclassmen=4)

	Sex	Number of semesters on staff	Assignment on campus
Participant 1	M	2	3
Participant 2	M	2	3
Participant 3	F	2	3
Participant 4	M	4	1
Participant 5	M	4	1
Participant 6	M	4	3
Participant 7	M	4	3
Participant 8	F	3	3
Participant 9	F	4	3
Participant 10	F	4	3
Participant 11	F	4	3
Participant 12	F	4	1
Participant 13	M	6	3
Participant 14	M	6	3

Research question 4. How do focus group participants describe their experiences in the Resident Assistant training received at Rowan University?

Table 4.16 illustrates themes from the focus group participants on the subject of RA training and how it was conducted. The themes presented by the participants generally focused on the negative aspects of training such as the ineffective way the material was presented and its repetitive nature. There were a few positive themes identified including the idea that the training material was relevant to the RA position and that summer training was more useful for those who were first year RAs. Winter training was viewed by the second and third year groups as being less useful to them while the first year group only mentioned the value of participating in the social activity (a bowling trip for team building).

Table 4.16

RA Perspectives on Training Received						
	1 st year focus group		2 nd year focus group		3 rd year focus group	
	<i>f</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order
Training should be more interactive to compliment classroom instruction	2	1	4	1	2	1
Training is repetitive	2	1	3	2	2	1
Training prepared me for the RA role	2	1	2	3	1	2
Experience was the only way of learning to be an RA	2	1	2	3	2	1
Training sessions could be shortened	2	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
I was unprepared for aspects of the RA role after training	1	2	3	2	1	2
Training is useful/ informative	1	2	2	1	1	2
Training itself could be shortened	1	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Training opportunities outside of formal training (in-services, staff meetings) are helpful	1	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Training is useful/ informative for first time RAs	0	n/a	3	2	2	1
Winter training is not a useful exercise	0	n/a	3	2	1	2

Table 4.17 presents the perspectives of focus group participants about the factors that helped them to learn about being a Resident Assistant outside of formal training. These types of interactions included, but are not limited to, working with a more experienced peer, a supervisor, a previous position held by the subject, or their role in a personal relationship. The factor ranked most often by all focus group participants was the value of working with an experienced peer in learning to become an RA. Two participants described themselves as the parent figure/mediator in their peer group. Another two participants identified prior student leadership positions, such as being captain of the high school football team and being president of a student club, as experiences that helped to prepare them to become Resident Assistants.

Table 4.17

RA Perspectives about Informal Preparatory Experiences

	1 st year focus group #		2 nd year focus group #		3 rd year focus group #	
	F	Rank Order	f	Rank Order	f	Rank Order
Experience working with a peer/supervisor helped prepare me for being an RA	3	1	10	1	2	1
A mentor such as a coach	1	2	0	n/a	0	n/a
A returning peer staff member	1	2	3	2	2	1
Prior work experience	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a

Table 4.17 (continued)

	1 st year focus group #		2 nd year focus group #		3 rd year focus group #	
	F	Rank Order	f	Rank Order	F	Rank Order
Student Leadership experience	0	n/a	2	3	0	n/a
Resident Director Supervisor	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a
Residential Life Coordinator Supervisor	0	n/a	0	n/a	2	1

Research question 5. Do focus group participants see the vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser as qualities that are present in and developed by the resident assistant role?

Table 4.18 describes how focus group participants viewed their development associated with being a Resident Assistant. The participants responded to probative questions about the relationship between their position as RA and the seven vectors of Chickering and Reisser. There was common agreement among the participants that the vectors described positive attributes that would be necessary in the success of a Resident Assistant fulfilling his or her responsibilities. Moreover, the participants saw being an RA as essential in helping them to develop personal competence, thus confirming one of the vectors of Chickering and Reisser.

Table 4.18

RA Perspectives on Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors

	1 st year focus group		2 nd year focus group		3 rd year focus group	
	<i>F</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order
Being an RA helped me develop competency	3	1	6	1	2	1
Being an RA helped develop the ability to manage emotions	2	2	6	1	1	2
I am interdependent on my staff	1	3	0		0	n/a
I am dependent on my staff	2	2	4	3	1	2
I am independent of my staff	3	1	3	4	1	2
Being an RA helped to develop an ability to have mature relationships	3	1	2	5	2	1
Being an RA helped to develop a sense of integrity	0	n/a	3	4	2	1
Being an RA helped me develop a sense of purpose	3	1	0	n/a	1	2
Being an RA helped me develop a sense of identity	3	1	5	2	2	1

Research question 6. What qualities do focus group participants view as necessary to effectively accomplish their duties?

Table 4.19 describes the attributes that focus group participants saw as necessary qualities needed by Resident Assistants. Across the three focus group sessions, several participants indicated their belief that Resident Assistants needed to be responsible and to have a desire to be an RA. Upon further questioning, this was clarified to mean that the RA needed a certain level of enthusiasm about the position in order to be successful.

Table 4.19

Focus Group Perspectives on Qualities Needed by RAs

	1 st year focus group		2 nd year focus group		3 rd year focus group	
	<i>F</i>	Rank Order	<i>F</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order
Empathetic	2	2	1	4	0	n/a
Desire to be an RA	2	2	1	4	2	1
Responsible	2	2	1	4	1	2
Ethical	1	3	0	n/a	1	2
Open minded	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a
Approachable/Communication skills	0	n/a	1	4	1	2
Calm in a crisis situation	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a
Patience	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a
Organized/Time management	0	n/a	1	4	0	n/a

Table 4.20 describe whether focus group participants believed that the qualities necessary for being an RA are inherent in students who seek to become Resident Assistants or if the position instilled these qualities in an RA. Focus group participants indicated that they believed that their peers possessed these qualities prior to assuming the RA role. Several participants indicated they believed that while those students who apply to the RA position already possessed these traits, participation in the position further develops these traits.

Table 4.20

Focus Group Participants Perspectives on Effect of RA position on RA Qualities

	1 st year focus group		2 nd year focus group		3 rd year focus group	
	<i>F</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order	<i>f</i>	Rank Order
RAs have them before taking the position	3	1	3	2	1	2
These qualities are instilled in RAs as a result of the position	3	1	1	4	2	1
RAs at Rowan have these qualities	3	1	4	1	2	1
These qualities are present to a degree but are expanded in the RA role	2	2	2	3	2	1

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University during the spring of 2013 in an effort to investigate how Resident Assistants at Rowan University learn and develop the abilities needed to perform their responsibilities. Six research questions were asked:

1. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward training at Rowan University?
2. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants at Rowan University toward their development according to Chickering & Reisser's seven vectors?
3. Do Resident Assistants understand their roles and responsibilities and does ambiguity play any part in the performance of their duties?
4. How do focus group participants describe their experiences in the resident assistant training received at Rowan University?
5. Do focus group participants see the vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser as qualities that are present in and developed by the resident assistant role?
6. What qualities do focus group participants view as necessary to effectively accomplish their duties?

An examination of the literature surrounding Resident Assistants suggests that the position is dynamic, incorporating many requirements, and involves many stakeholders to whom RAs are accountable. This underscores the need for not only high quality training, but also the need to look critically at what is considered necessary for Resident Assistants to learn, and how this information is transferred outside of formal training. It also begs

the question, do Resident Assistants feel that they are learning and developing as professionals?

A survey instrument was distributed to Resident Assistants during the spring 2013 semester. This instrument yielded a high response rate by the Resident Assistant staff, and results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward the training received and how the training contributed to their professional development. Following distribution of the survey, volunteers were recruited to participate in three focus groups based upon experience as an RA. This was done to help detect changing attitudes among Resident Assistants as they gained experience in their roles. The focus group data were organized using Sisco's 1981 Logical Procedures for Analyzing Written Data. Common and divergent themes among the focus group participants were determined using content analysis.

Discussion of the Findings

Much of this study was based off of the work of Amanda Learn in 2010. According to Learn, there was high agreement surrounding statements on RA training as 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that training prepared them to be an RA and 71% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt prepared to be an RA after training. While Learn's results showed many positive outcomes, about one-third of her subjects either disagreed or was neutral in their responses about the value of Resident Assistant training. In the current study, 85.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that training was a helpful and positive experience, while 87.9% of respondents agreed or

strongly agreed that as a new RA, they felt prepared to assume their duties after training. Furthermore, 64.3% of returner RAs agreed or strongly agreed that training was a good time to learn new information as well as to brush up on new skills. It should be noted that in 2010, over 90% of the respondents in Learn's survey indicated that training had improved in recent years. This means that changes to the training program can increase its perceived effectiveness.

Over 90% of survey respondents in the current study indicated they felt they completely understood the RA position and there were also high rates of agreement among RAs indicating they felt they understood the expectations of their supervisors and the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. This finding confirms Learn's 2010 study, which showed that role ambiguity did not play a significant part in the RA role.

Research question 1. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants toward training at Rowan University?

Resident Assistants reported having mixed feelings about their training, as indicated by the theme identified in the focus group sessions of streamlining training and reducing the length of time that Resident Assistants were in sessions. Focus group participants also noted redundancy with information that is given to Resident Assistants through the training process. There was, however, an agreement among the subjects in the survey that the training information was important. In focus groups, participants reinforced this point as first year Resident Assistants noted how the training was repetitive but relevant. The participants who had been on staff longest remembered their

first year training as being the most relevant with later training sessions becoming increasingly redundant. This finding is supported by the data from the survey as well as focus group data. A majority of respondents to the survey (79%) indicated that they felt prepared to assume their duties as an RA after completing their first year training sessions.

Resident Assistants highlighted how the social aspect of the training activities was important in bringing the staff together as a team. One participant from the second year focus group noted that the bowling trip was the only redeeming activity of winter training, which was otherwise seen as disorganized, irrelevant, or unimportant. One area where more experienced RAs saw a big improvement to the training program was the opportunity to mentor newer staff members. An example given was a buddy system created by a supervisor where more experienced Resident Assistants were assigned to less experienced Resident Assistants during training in order to help them through their summer training as well as through opportunities such as the Returner led conference. These opportunities to mentor gave more experienced staff additional ways to contribute to what was otherwise described as a repetitive training program. Less than half of returning RAs (42.4%) indicated in the survey that training was a helpful experience. This sentiment was reinforced by comments made in the focus group sessions where there appears to be a need to tailor more training for returning RAs.

The value and experience of Returners was consistently expressed among all of the focus groups. In all three groups, participants noted that the most valuable instruction they received was from returning Resident Assistants who mentored them. First year

Resident Assistants noted that the returning staff members they worked with had a great deal of influence on their performance. Often they took their concerns about the job to more experienced Resident Assistants first before seeking help from a professional staff member. For instance, one of the first year Resident Assistants noted that she felt like the mentoring relationship was the starting point of a friendship with a Returner, even though the Returner was younger, enrolled in a different academic major, and had different interests. This sentiment was repeated by a returning Resident Assistant who commented on his mentor this way, “Yeah I guess in my first year I was in the position and I was paired up with Samantha and I didn’t expect to be such good friends. We have very different personalities, but she was very helpful with incidents and policies, and we are good friends now and we still talk and she really helped me out.”

This reliance on peers may be the result of an institutional culture at Rowan University. In the second year focus group, all of the participants except for one noted how they relied heavily on their peers for not only help in performing their duties but also for empathy and understanding. The role of being an RA is demanding and many participants said that the greatest help they received was from peers who could relate to their difficult position. This may help explain the attitude of seeking help from peers before seeking out a supervisor, even though such heavy reliance on novice staff members may present its own challenges. Moreover, seeking help from Returners may be a part of the learning styles of the RAs. According to survey data, 86.1% of respondents indicated that they felt they learned best from a peer.

The majority of respondents in both the survey and focus groups seemed to agree that the material covered in training was relevant. For instance, RAs responding to the survey were asked about a number of different performance areas and the majority indicated that training in these areas was sufficient to meet their need as RAs. These areas included policy and policy enforcement (84.9% agreement), peer counseling (81.4% agreement), work orders and operations (79% agreement), and programing (73.3% agreement). However, in the focus group sessions, participants indicated that they wished the material was presented in more interesting and interactive ways.

Research question 2. What are the attitudes of Resident Assistants at Rowan University toward their development according to Chickering & Reisser’s seven vectors?

Resident Assistants who participated in this study reported being an RA was a positive experience during their time as students at Rowan University. None of the focus group participants regretted taking the position. Some participants, particularly those in the 3rd year group, expressed that the skills and attitudes they had incorporated during their tenure as an RA would remain influential and relevant to them even though they were not pursuing a career working with college students. This finding confirms the idea that even though participants may have issues with selected parts of their training, or with the Resident Assistant position itself, being an RA was a positive experience.

If development in the role of the Resident Assistant position is related to learning to fulfill the responsibilities in an effective and professional way, then the role of returning staff cannot be overstated. A total of 86.1% of Resident Assistants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “I learn best from a peer or fellow RA.” Taking this

statement, as well as the conversations with Resident Assistants during focus groups, confirms that there has been mentoring from more experienced staff members which suggest that there exists a strong mentoring relationship between Resident Assistants with more experience and those with less experience.

This relationship can be both a potential positive and a potential negative; if the mentoring Resident Assistant has been well trained and adheres to best practices, then the relationship can be viewed as a positive, reinforcing not only good practice on the part of the RA, but also passing down a positive culture among the Resident Assistants as a group. If, however, the RA is not adhering to best practices this relationship may lower overall effectiveness of the Resident Assistants, hindering their ability to be effective in their roles. Creating a Head Resident Assistant role is one way to recognize the value of a mentoring relationship as well as ensuring it is carried out by RAs who will pass on best practices and promote a positive culture. A Head Resident Assistant would effectively be an experienced Resident Assistant with limited supervisory responsibilities. In addition to being someone who worked with the resident student population in a specific area, the Head RA would also serve as the de-facto RA mentor approved by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing at Rowan University.

Research question 3. Do Resident Assistants understand their roles and responsibilities and does ambiguity play any part in the performance of their duties?

Resident Assistants who responded to the survey seemed to be clear about what their roles and responsibilities are as RAs. This is confirmed by 95.4% of the subjects who either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I completely understand the RA

position and what it entails.” Moreover, Resident Assistants felt confident in their understanding of the expectations from Resident Learning Coordinators (RLCs), Resident Directors (RDs), and the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. This high level of agreement confirms the findings of Learn’s 2010 study that showed little role ambiguity among Resident Assistants but a potential schism with senior administrators.

Matters of role ambiguity do not seem to come from a misunderstanding of the position or directions from an immediate supervisor, but stems from a system and culture at Rowan that expects much from Resident Assistants yet provides little support from intermediate and senior administrators. The dynamic between RLCs and RDs was mentioned as a possible source of ambiguity during focus group sessions. Similarly, comments were made about how senior administrators avoid providing a clear structure and staffing to handle the workload of larger residence halls on campus. An example is the Rowan Boulevard apartment complex, which has a staff of 20 Resident Assistants reporting to two Resident Directors. These uneven job expectations can create unnecessary stress and cause role ambiguity among Resident Assistants assigned to the residence complex.

Research question 4. How do focus group participants describe their experiences in the resident assistant training received at Rowan University?

The findings described by the participants in the focus groups regarding training are a mix of positive and critical comments. In all three focus group sessions, participants indicated that the information from training was useful and relevant to the

RA role. In the second and third year groups, participants indicated that the training they thought was most relevant was the training they received during their first year in preparing to become an RA. This training served as an introduction to being an RA and offered many tips and suggestions for succeeding in their roles in residential life. There was also a recurring theme in all three sessions that some of the training was repetitive, especially for second and third year RAs, and that the sessions could be more motivating, interactive, and less redundant.

These attitudes suggest a need to review the current training model, particularly as it concerns returning RAs. In the survey data a sizeable minority (10.7%) of returning RAs disagreed with the idea that training was a helpful or positive experience while another 25% of Returners were neutral about the effectiveness of the training. Again, this finding may indicate a lack of engagement among returner RAs and a need to revamp the training to meet their needs. It may also explain why Returners mentioned in both the second and third year focus groups that training could be shortened.

Even if training is made to be more engaging, it may be impossible to cover all aspects that RAs need to be prepared for their position. The prevailing attitude that RAs need practical experiences was mentioned by each focus group. In every session, RAs discussed having relationships with more experienced RAs and that the mentoring relationship was a critical component of helping new RAs transition to their positions in residence life. Participants across all three focus groups indicated how the practical realities of being an RA were something difficult to prepare for, as immersion and experiential learning are best accomplished through on-the-job training. One RA in the

second year group indicated that even though he had been trained to confront violations of school policy, he was still happy that he had a returning RA with him the first time he had to confront a violator and issue an infraction notice. Moreover, an RA in the first year group, when asked if there was a particular event that prepared him to be an RA, said, “I don’t know if there was a particular thing-I can’t pinpoint one at this point but I think move in day was it—we got our feet wet, checked people in, had our floor meeting. You did a lot in one day and at the end of the day you feel like—OK—I am ready to be an RA. I went through two weeks of training and move in day and now I am ready to go.” These attitudes may indicate that the gap between training and the practical realities of being an RA is one of experience and that the training received may never be enough to make an RA feel prepared until they have had some on the job experience. Thus, interactive experiences such as the behind closed doors training, a scenario-based training exercise, may be as useful as classroom training.

Research question 5. Do focus group participants see the vectors presented by Chickering and Reisser as qualities that are present in and developed by the resident assistant role?

Survey data tended to confirm the idea that the vectors are present in the Resident Assistant role and are valid areas to look for development. The majority of subjects in the survey instrument either strongly agreed or agreed with statements probing if the subject had experienced development in a particular vector such as developing competency. A majority of subjects also strongly agreed or agreed with statements that indicated the qualities these vectors describe were needed or desirable attributes for

someone in the Resident Assistant role. For example, 90.7% of subjects strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Being an RA requires emotional control”. A total of 63.5% of subjects also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Being an RA has helped me learn to control my emotions”. This lower level of agreement may reflect the fact that not all Resident Assistants will experience the same level of development in a particular vector.

Focus group participants indicated that there were several qualities they felt were integral to being a successful RA. These qualities included a desire to be an RA, having an ethical base, and time management/organization skills. These qualities are closely linked to several vectors, which confirms that RAs see these qualities as important even if they did not know previously about the vectors. In addition, focus group members were positive about the various vectors and they saw merit to them in their roles as Resident Assistants. Also, they provided confirming evidence of Chickering and Reisser’s description of development, as several RAs said they felt they had developed the skills before becoming RAs and that being an RA had only helped to refine a skill that was previously there. One participant in the first year group summed up the vector growth by stating, “I feel like I’ve always had a pretty good grasp on my emotions as I don’t overreact to things that often. But I feel like now if I am having a bad day I am not goanna take it out on anyone; whereas before, I might have snapped a little more. So I have a better handle on that now. I might roll my eyes at someone where I might have yelled in the past”.

Research question 6. What qualities do focus group participants view as necessary to effectively accomplish their duties?

Focus group participants indicated that there are several qualities they felt RAs need to be successful in their position. Participants listed nine attributes they felt were important to success in the RA role, which include: be empathetic, have a desire to be an RA, be responsible, be ethical, be open minded, have approachable/communication skills, remain calm in a crisis situation, show patience, and be organized/use time management skills.

From this list, several student development vectors are easy to see. The first vector observed in this list is developing integrity and how that relates to the responsibility and ethical concerns of focus group participants. Patience and the ability to remain calm in crisis situations link strongly to the vector about managing emotions. Open mindedness and empathy are linked to the ability to develop mature interpersonal relationships. Moreover, time management and communication skills are linked to the vector developing competence.

The attribute of desiring to be an RA is not necessarily linked to a vector at first glance. However, after analyzing the transcripts, it is believed that the desire to be an RA is linked to the vector of developing sense of identity. RAs in the focus group, when talking about the attributes necessary to being an RA, talked about wanting to be in the position and this meant that the RA role was a priority in the student's lives. There was an understanding of the need to be present and enthusiastic about the position. The reason to identify the presence of the vector is because aspiring RAs need to have an idea

of what being an RA means and how it fits into their lives. If someone enters into the RA position and their sense of what being an RA means is not congruent with the reality of the position, they will experience a lack of enthusiasm, which will in turn impact their effectiveness and encourage leaving the position.

Conclusions

The data gathered during the study supports the understanding that the Resident Assistant role does foster development among the students participating in that role. The vectors for student development laid out by Chickering and Reisser are also confirmed as valid means of viewing this development. The data confirms that this development does not start at a particular point for all students. Several participants in the focus group sessions noted how they had come to the position with certain competencies already present and these qualities made them good candidates to be a Resident Assistant at the outset. Also, participants noted that traits representative of the student development vectors such as the ability to manage emotions as being necessary to being able to carry out their responsibilities. These traits were also seen as being developed as a result of being in the Resident Assistant position, even though it is not completely clear if this development is the result of training, workplace experience, or institutional culture. It is also possible that the positive development is the result of an unknown factor that is inherent in the Resident Assistant position or some combination of factors that are a part of the position.

It is worth noting that there may not be a metric that can establish norms around how much students develop as a result of being a Resident Assistant. Chickering and

Reisser (1993) note that even students with a similar background and exposure to similar stimuli may not develop in the same way, in the same time, or in the same manner. This indicates that with each developmental experience such as the Resident Assistant position or the experience of college, there is a level of personal internalization that creates a lens for a student to process their experiences through. Thus, what may be a profound and developmental moment for one student can seem insignificant for another. Data from participants in focus groups confirm this observation. For example, the third year focus group noted that they did not seem to derive a sense of purpose from their experiences as Resident Assistants, while the two other groups noted a sense of purpose from their position. Participants in the third year, although they felt that they were better prepared to engage in their chosen professions after being an RA, felt that only someone seeking to pursue a career in higher education (particularly residence life) would derive a sense of purpose from the experience. This diverging view point of RAs at the end of their careers may be informed by a number of variables. For instance, both RAs in the third year group were preparing to graduate and either begin graduate school or a professional career. Viewed through this lens, it is possible to see how the Resident Assistant experience does promote maturity and life skills needed to succeed beyond graduation.

Clarke (2008), Kennedy (2009), and Summerlin (2008) all note how important training is to properly fulfill the expectations of a Resident Assistant at Rowan University. Several of the focus group participants acknowledged the helpfulness of mentoring peers who provided guidance on how to be an effective Resident Assistant. Third year participants commented on the opportunity to mentor, as well as advised to

take advantage of teachable moments to help the next generation of RAs learn how to function as an RA. One area of concern is how many Rowan RAs found training to be boring, repetitious, or redundant. Several RAs noted that the presentations seemed to cover topics in too much detail beyond what a Resident Assistant needs. This suggests that Rowan may offer adequate resources for training but is not creating a motivating and engaging curriculum for its staff. Since the training curriculum is rarely changed from year-to-year, it is possible that Rowan lacks the resources to update its training curriculum and differentiating the activities based upon RA experience levels.

While there has been little research directly concerned with Resident Assistants at Rowan University, the findings of this study support the findings of Learn (2010). In her study, it was found that while the majority of Resident Assistants rated the training as useful there was still a sizeable minority of RAs who questioned its effectiveness. The main problem revolves around how the training is presented rather than the actual material or topics offered. Much like faculty who work in academic departments and offices, Student Affairs professionals are finding that lecture style training and presentations are less effective for modern students. This was a point brought home frequently in the focus groups where students who had only been through the training system once noted the repetitive nature of the training lead to them become bored and disengaged.

One possibility is moving some of the training online, which offers several advantages to the Resident Assistants as well as the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. The first is that every staff member can move at their own pace

taking the training lessons in a flexible schedule which may lessen the sense of repetition and the slow pace of training. It also means that a portion of the training can be done at home before coming to campus, which can reduce the cost of training for the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing. Another benefit could be more time is spent on training sessions focused on team building or exploring matters of urgency that the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing wants its Resident Assistant staff to be proficient.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study indicate that the following practices could be adopted or improved:

1. Formally recognize the mentoring role returning Resident Assistants play with new staff members. By acknowledging this role, the professional staff can help to solidify the mentoring aspect of returning staff members and empower them to fulfill serve in such roles.
2. Work to create an atmosphere that fosters a supportive responsive relationship between Resident Assistants and the professional staff members who supervise them.
3. Look at the methods used to train Resident Assistants by incorporating new methods and technology to support their training with the aim of trying to reduce repetitiveness and make the training more engaging. More practical trainings where RAs get to simulate incidents may also be helpful.

4. The creation of measurable learning objectives for Resident Assistant training. These learning objectives should incorporate different goals for Resident Assistants who have different levels of experience.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in this area could be conducted through several points of inquiry:

1. A study investigating mentoring relationships among Residents Assistants such as how they form and the impact they have on mentees and mentors.
2. A study investigating the training of Resident Directors who serve as direct supervisors of Resident Assistants.
3. A study investigating team building/team dynamics among Resident Assistants.
4. A study investigating role ambiguity and the way Resident Assistant see their role on campus focusing on areas where Resident Assistants are experiencing stress and marginalization.
5. A longitudinal study investigating how Resident Assistants view and prioritize their roles and responsibilities during their career at Rowan University.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



February 27, 2013

Anthony Leva
100 Redmond Ave.
Apt. 6-148
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Anthony Leva:

In accordance with the University's IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2013-162

Project Title: Resident Assistant Development and Training at Rowan University

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for **one calendar year** from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman (hartman@rowan.edu or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Shreekanth Mandayam, Associate Provost for Research (shreek@rowan.edu or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harriet Hartman".

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burton Sisco, Educational Services, Administration, Higher Education, James Hall

Office of Research
Bole Hall
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

856-256-5150
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Appendix B

Survey Instrument

Resident Assistant Development and Training Survey

My name is Tony Leva and I am a graduate student in the Higher Education Administration program at Rowan University. You have been selected to take part in this survey because you are currently a Resident Assistant employed by the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing at Rowan University. Participation in this survey is greatly appreciated but optional and you may discontinue at any time. By taking the survey you give me permission to use the results in my study titled "Resident Assistant Development and Training at Rowan University". If you choose to take this survey no personally identifying information will be asked for and the results will be anonymous. You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this survey.

If you have questions about this survey or study please feel free to contact me at levaa73@students.rowan.edu or 856-256-5686. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Burton Sisco at sisco@rowan.edu or at 856-256-4500 ext 3713

Instructions

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. The first six questions will ask about general demographic data. The following questions will ask you to reflect on yourself, your training, development and time as a Resident Assistant. Answer the questions in terms of how much you agree with the given statement. Thank you for your participation.

Section 1 Demographic Data

1. This is my
 - a. First semester on staff as an RA
 - b. Second semester on staff as an RA
 - c. Third semester on staff as an RA
 - d. Fourth semester on staff as an RA
 - e. Fifth semester or more on staff as an RA
2. I work in
 - a. A traditional hall with freshmen students
 - b. A traditional hall with freshmen and upperclassmen students
 - c. An apartment complex with freshmen and upperclassmen students
 - d. An apartment complex with upperclassmen students
3. I am a
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Transgendered
 - d. Prefer not to identify
4. I am a
 - a. Freshmen student
 - b. Sophomore student
 - c. Junior student
 - d. Senior student
 - e. 5th year senior
 - f. 6th year senior
5. I am a
 - a. Caucasian
 - b. Pacific Islander
 - c. Hispanic American
 - d. Indian American
 - e. African American
 - f. Asian American
 - g. Native American
 - h.

Developmental Information and Learning styles							
6	As a new RA I felt prepared to assume my duties after training	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
7	I found RA training to be a helpful and positive experience	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
8	As a returning RA I found training helped me to learn new information and review skills	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
9	The returner lead conference was an excellent opportunity to learn from my peers	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
10	The returner led conference was an excellent opportunity to share with my peers	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
11	Presenting in the returner led conference or at an in-service is something I am interested in	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
12	I would like to see an expanded returner led conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
13	The training I received for work orders and operations was sufficient for my position	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
14	The training I received as a peer counselor was sufficient for my position	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
15	The training I received on programming was sufficient for my position	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
16	The training I received on policy and policy enforcement was sufficient for my position	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
17	I learned more about being an RA outside of RA training	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
18	My Resident Director supports my development as an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
19	My Residential Learning Coordinator supports my development as an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
20	The Office of Residential Learning and University Housing supports my development as an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
21	One on one meetings with my Resident Director are useful and help me develop	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
22	One on one meetings with my Residential Learning Coordinator are useful and help me develop	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
23	Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of getting new information	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
24	Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of socializing	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
25	Weekly staff meetings are a useful way of learning things I need to know to be an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
26	Monthly in-services are a useful way of getting new information	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
27	Monthly in-services are a useful way of socializing	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
28	Monthly in-services are a useful way of learning things I need to know to be an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
29	I learn best from a peer or fellow RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
30	I learn best from a supervisor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A

31	I learn best in a classroom setting	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
32	I learn best from interactive sessions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
33	I learn best on my own reading manuals and other materials given to me.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
34	The RA manual has been a useful tool for me	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
35	The RA website has been a useful tool for me	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Developmental Theory							
36	The RA position requires competency	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
37	My intellectual competency has increased as a result of being an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
38	My interpersonal competency has increased as a result of being an RA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
39	Being an RA requires emotional control	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
40	I am usually in control of my emotions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
41	Being an RA has helped me learn to control my emotions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
42	I am interdependent on my peers	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
43	I tend to solve my problems as an RA on my own and not ask others for help	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
44	Being an RA requires the ability to have mature interpersonal relationships	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
45	Being an RA has helped me to learn how to have mature interpersonal relationships	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
46	I am the same person now as when I took the RA position	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
47	Being an RA has changed me a little	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
48	Being an RA has changed me significantly	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
49	Being an RA gives me a sense of purpose	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
50	Being an RA requires a sense of integrity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
51	Being an RA has helped me develop a sense of integrity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Role Ambiguity							
52	I completely understand the RA position and what it entails	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
53	I have a clear understanding of what my Resident Director expects of me	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
54	I have a clear understanding of what my Residential Learning Coordinator expects of me	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
55	I have a clear understanding of what the Office of residential learning and university housing expects of me	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A

Thank you again for your participation in this study your time and honesty are greatly appreciated

Appendix C

Focus Group Instrument

RA Focus Group Questions

1. Why are you a Resident Assistant?
2. What was your experience like going through RA training?
3. Do you feel like RA training prepared you for being an RA?
4. Was there another experience that you feel helped prepare you for being an RA?
5. Was there an individual who helped prepare you or showed you how to be an RA?
6. What would you change about how we prepare Resident Assistants?
7. What qualities does a good RA need? Do you think that RAs at Rowan have those qualities? And if so how do they acquire them?
8. Do you feel that being an RA has made you more competent? How do you develop competency as an RA?
9. Do you feel that being an RA has helped you learn to manage your emotions? If so why?
10. Would you say you are dependent or independent of your fellow RAs? How about others in the department like Resident Directors or Professional staff?
11. Has being an RA helped you learn to develop relationships? If yes how and why?
12. Has your identity changed since becoming an RA? If yes how so?
13. Do you feel that you derive a sense of purpose from being an RA? If yes then what is that purpose?
14. Does being an RA require integrity? If yes does being an RA help you develop that sense of integrity?
15. How do you learn best? In classrooms, lectures, from peers or supervisors?

Appendix D

Focus Group Consent to Participate Form

Consent to Participate

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Resident Assistant Development and Training at Rowan University," which is being conducted by Tony Leva, a Higher Education graduate student at Rowan University. Furthermore I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and consent to be a participant in this study.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how Resident Assistants are trained and developed during their time as employees of the Office of Residential Learning and University Housing and to identify possible areas of improvement

I understand that I will be interviewed as a part of a focus group and that this interview will be both video and audio recorded so that it may be analyzed as a part of the study being conducted. I give my consent to be recorded both visually and via audio recording.

I understand that my responses and all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study, I may contact Tony Leva at levaa73@students.rowan.edu or at (856) 256- 5686 or his faculty advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco at sisco@rowan.edu

(Signature of Participant- Consent to be video recorded) (Date)

(Signature of Participant- Consent to be audio recorded) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)

Appendix E

Sisco's 1981 Logical Procedures for Analyzing Written Data

Rules and Procedures for Logical Analysis of Written Data (Sisco, 1981)

The following decisions were made regarding what was to be the unit of data analysis:

1. A phrase or clause will be the basic unit of analysis.
2. Verbiage not considered essential to the phrase or clause will be edited out--e.g., articles of speech, possessives, some adjectives, elaborative examples.
3. Where there is a violation of convention syntax in the data, it will be corrected.
4. Where there are compound thoughts in a phrase or clause, each unit of thought will be represented separately (unless one was an elaboration of the other).
5. Where information seems important to add to the statement in order to clarify it in a context, this information will be added to the unit by using parentheses.
6. The following decisions were made regarding the procedures for categorization of content units:
 - a. After several units are listed on a sheet of paper, they will be scanned in order to determine differences and similarities.
 - b. From this tentative analysis, local categories will be derived for the units.
 - c. When additional units of data suggest further categories, they will be added to the classification schema.
 - d. After all the units from a particular question response are thus classified, the categories are further reduced to broader clusters (collapsing of categories).
 - e. Frequencies of units in each cluster category are determined and further analysis steps are undertaken, depending on the nature of the data--i.e., ranking of categories with verbatim quotes which represent the range of ideas or opinions.