Implications for Resident Adviser Training Programs: Using the Critical Incident Technique to Evaluate the RA Experience

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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April 26, 1999
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: RA, resident advisor, CIT, critical incident technique, training

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(ABSTRACT)

This study was designed to determine the ability of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to advise changes to training regiments offered to Resident Advisers (RAs). The CIT was devised as a tool in the field of organizational psychology. Its purpose is to assist in analyzing the success of individual team members by examining the self-reported occurrence of incidents on the job, which are deemed critical. The Critical Incident Technique has been implemented with success in business and military applications. This powerful tool allows researchers to make valuable observations about the realities faced by individuals on the job. These observations make it possible to devise and improve existing training methods capitalizing on these realities.

Data for this study came from an examination of incident reports (IRs). RAs generate IRs in response to different kinds of issues faced working with resident college students. Three regional institutions agreed to participate in this study and helped to diversify the data collected.

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the critical incidents RAs experience most often on the job?
2. Is there a difference between the critical incident types reported in residence halls by institutional type?
3. Is there a difference between the critical incident types reported by hall types?
4. Is there a difference between the critical incident types reported by gender?
5. What implications do the findings have for future RA training?
Four types of demographic information were collected from the IRs: institution type (large public, midsize public, and small private), hall type (male, female, or coed), RA gender, and incident type. Conducting a survey of the literature concerning RA training and the CIT, generated five general categories of incidents on which RAs report.

- Crisis situations
- Policy enforcement.
- Facilities management
- Administrative procedures
- Advising.

Specific measures including coding, and excision of sensitive information (such as sexual assaults sexual identity situations) from documents were used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the parties involved. When data collection was complete, a chi-squared test of significance was used to examine the relationships between the incident types reported and each of the other three variables (gender, institution type, and hall type).

After analyzing the data using the statistical research methods described above, it was possible to make recommendations for future RA training. This study examines the impact of institutional environment, department philosophy, and personal bias on the training of RAs. The results suggest that each of these factors influences the success of RAs, and defines the environments in which resident students live.
The WITHOUT-WHO's

I've thought a lot about who I need to thank during the writing of this thing. I know that there are a lot of folks out there who've contributed to this process in one way or another, and a lot of folks who have given moral, financial, and emotional support to me too. I cannot forget to thank those individuals. So please pardon this rambling list, for without these folks, this project could never have been finished:

My supervisor, model and friend: Sharrika Davis for patience and time,

My RA staff and Hall Council members for understanding my time commitments,

The members of Residential and Dining Programs at Virginia Tech for their commitment to me and this project,

The members of the Office of Housing and Residence Life at Radford University for their help and council,

Harrold Holmes, Connie Carson and their staffs for their flexibility and assistance at the last minute,

To Jim, Ken, Fred, Alex, Jen, Amy, Mitzi, Jessica, Saranette, Karen, Wendi, and Laurel: my classmates, colleagues, and good friends, for emotional support,

Dr. Susan Hutchinson for statistical advice and counseling,

The Chumps for..... well they know,

Dr. Gerry Kowalski, for his patience, help, and tireless words of wisdom,

Dr. David Hill for inspiration, laughs, and dedication to a guy he just met. David, you're the best!

Of course Dr. Steve Janosik. I couldn't have asked for more than he gave. A true friend, colleague, and mentor,

Finally, my family. My brothers, Evan and Robin, who showed me how to focus myself, and that I have something to offer in this realm. And my parents Barbara and Tom, who gave of themselves without hesitation, even when I hesitated. This is for you.

Thank You
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