

Outcomes of the Resident Advisor Position

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Researchers suggest there are many outcomes associated with attending college. There is also research that suggests there are positive outcomes connected with involvement in college, and living in residence halls. Resident Advisors (RAs) are college students who are involved in college via their RA job, and are on-campus residents. Studies to assess the outcomes associated with serving as a RA, however, have been. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure self-reported outcomes of the RA experience.

The data were gathered by administering the Student Leadership Outcomes (SLO) survey to all RAs on campus in the Spring, 1998 semester. The SLO is an instrument designed by the university at which the study was conducted to measure outcomes of student leadership experiences. Data were analyzed to determine if the outcomes associated with the RA position differed by: size of residence hall (small, medium, large); type of residence hall (single-sex, co-educational); gender of supervisor; or, status of supervisor (undergraduate versus graduate).

The SLO is a 37-item instrument which asks respondents to assess the degree to which they believe they have achieved certain outcomes associated with their leadership

position. Respondents rate items on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly agree, 4= strongly disagree).

Data were analyzed by calculating the mean scores for each group of RAs (i.e., RAs in single-sex halls, RAs in co-ed halls) and rank ordering their scores. Then comparisons between those rankings were examined.

The results of this study provided some interesting information about outcomes associated with being an RA. The findings suggest that the size of hall has a positive impact on loyalty to the university, respect towards others, and leading a group or committee. The findings also suggest that type of hall and status of supervisor has a positive affect on loyalty. In addition, the results indicated that gender of a supervisor has no affect on RA outcomes.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

According to The Student Learning Imperative (SLI) (American College Personnel Association, 1994), higher education is in the midst of transformation. This transformation has been caused by increased enrollment, diminished resources, and accountability demands.

Enrollment in higher education has increased by approximately 2.3 million since 1980. This increase can be attributed to a number of causes. For example, enrollment among non-traditional populations of students in higher education in the United States is on the rise. African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic, and Native Americans have increased their participation in higher education from 17% of 12.3 million students in 1982 to 22% of 14.4 million students in 1993. Moreover, in 1992, enrollment of non-traditional aged (over 25) students in higher education totaled approximately 5.1 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994).

A second trend prompting this transition in higher education is decreasing resources. In the 1960s, money flowed into higher education (DeCoster & Mable 1980). Since then, state funding has decreased dramatically. In 1991, higher education received approximately 13.5% of total state appropriations. By 1996, just five years later, higher education's share of state appropriations had dropped to 11.9%. This translates into a loss of over \$40 billion in current dollars for colleges and universities nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

Increases in enrollment, coupled with decreases in state appropriations have led to calls for greater accountability in higher education. In the 1960s, programs and services were funded with little consideration for their relevance to an institution's mission. As resources for postsecondary education have diminished, demands for accountability and assessment have increased. Departments must demonstrate that their programs and services are consistent with their institution's mission and meet designated goals (Schroeder, Mable, & Associates, 1994).

These changes have prompted colleges and universities to re-examine their primary goal, student learning. The SLI defines student learning as comprised of two types of development: cognitive development and personal development. It calls on student affairs administrators (SAAs) to blend cognitive and personal development to promote student learning.

Cognitive development focuses on how people think and reason. Cognitive processes are hierarchical, moving from simple to complex reasoning. In the early years, cognitive issues are resolved simplistically. For example, young students may use their fingers to do simple addition. As a person gains experience, more complex methods of thinking and reasoning are employed. At a higher level of reasoning, that same student might use an elaborate mathematical formula to solve an equation (Rodgers, 1990).

Cognitive development in higher education has traditionally been the responsibility of the faculty. Faculty utilize in-class techniques such as lectures, experiments, and assignments to foster cognitive development. This form of

development is traditionally measured by examinations, grades, overall grade point average (GPA) and graduation rates.

The second component of student learning, personal development, is often viewed as nonacademic. This form of development focuses on combining thinking, feeling, and experiences over time. For example, Astin (1993) noted that decline in authoritarianism, growth in autonomy, and higher self-esteem were all results of increased personal development.

One way that personal development has been described is through involvement in campus life. Involvement in college life influences student development (Astin, 1984, 1993; Bowen, 1977, Chickering, 1969; Miller & Jones, 1981; Pace, 1979; Parker, 1978). To foster involvement, SAAs sponsor numerous opportunities for students including participation in an array of clubs and organizations. Faculty also sponsor involvement through advising, research, and academic support services.

Clubs and organizations offer students an opportunity to be involved in campus life. Students actively participating in these extra-curricular activities have increased leadership and communication skills, and they develop more mature interpersonal relationships. (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbiel, MacKay, 1991).

Another area that has been known to promote personal development among college students is residential living. Residence halls provide a comfortable and safe physical environment where students are provided opportunities for personal

development (Schroeder et. al, 1994). Research has demonstrated that students who reside in residence halls have more opportunities to participate in campus life, become more involved in cultural activities, and take greater advantage of leadership opportunities (Schroeder et. al, 1994).

Just as faculty measure cognitive development, SAAs have historically measured the personal development outcomes associated with co-curricular activities through cognitive measures such as GPA, retention rates, and graduation rates of students. For example students who reside in residence halls earn higher GPAs than their non-residential counterparts (Schroeder et. al, 1994).

This approach to measuring outcomes of personal development through measures traditionally associated with cognitive development is problematic. How do SAAs demonstrate that the programs and services they offer contribute to personal development outcomes in ways unique from cognitive development measures? For example, SAAs offer numerous opportunities for leadership development among students, but what are the personal outcomes associated with leadership programs and how do SAAs measure those outcomes?

One such leadership position is the orientation leader (OL). OLs are trained to assist new students in their transition from high school to college. The OLs help students with traditional cognitive development tasks like decision making about advising and course registration, but they also promote personal development by discussing substance abuse, sexual assault, and diversity issues with newly admitted students.

The primary purpose of OLs is to help new students learn life skills they will utilize throughout college and beyond (Sandeem, 1996). Holland and Huba (1989) conducted a study on OLs that looked specifically at personal development as a result of their training. The researchers found that OLs developed more mature interpersonal relationships than their non-OL counterparts.

SAA's typically evaluate how OLs felt about their experience as leaders. They also normally evaluate the overall orientation program from the perspective of the new students and parents. But what specific outcomes did SAA's hope to achieve when training OLs and how do they measure whether OLs achieve such outcomes?

Another leadership program sponsored by SAA's involves Resident Advisors (RAs). RAs are full time students who are also employees living in the residence halls on most college campuses. Approximately 78% of colleges utilize undergraduate RAs in their residence halls (Ender & Winston, 1984). RAs are trained to serve a strategic role in the delivery of services that support personal development of students in residence halls. Such services include peer advising, facilities management, policy enforcement, and programming (Blimling, 1995).

RAs serve as live-in peer advisors. Unlike OLs who serve as peer advisors for a short time, RAs serve throughout an entire academic year. They are expected to be knowledgeable about a wide variety of issues and campus services ranging from financial aid to health services. If RAs cannot assist a student with a particular problem, they are expected to refer the student to someone who can help them (Blimling, 1995).



There are several outcomes that might be expected from serving as a peer adviser. Such outcomes might include increased self-confidence to interact with new people, good listening skills, and sensitivity toward diversity. To be an effective peer adviser, RAs are trained on how to listen, question, give feedback, and reflect on an issue. RAs often practice these skills on each other during pre-service training.

RAs also serve as liaisons between students and facility managers. If facility needs arise, it is the responsibility of the RA to go through proper channels to see that those needs are met. This could be as simple as replacing a light bulb or as complex as shutting off the electricity to avoid fire (Blimling, 1995).

There are outcomes that might be expected from serving as a liaison, including improved decision making skills, critical thinking skills, and effective written and electronic communication skills. RAs are trained to address facility issues by determining the extent of the problem and communicating that problem to facility managers. RAs are taught to write effective work orders either on paper or over an on-line system.

Policy enforcement is another component of the RA position. RAs are supposed to create a positive and safe community in their residence halls. They initiate the discipline process for students who impede the development of the community or who violate university policies or break laws. It is the responsibility of the RA to determine what policies have been violated and to refer students to the appropriate authorities for further action (Blimling, 1995).

Certain outcomes might be expected from policy enforcement. RAs might expect to increase their ability to confront others, to resolve conflicts diplomatically, to increase their mediation skills, and to gain more respect for the rights of others. RAs spend a large portion of their training time learning how to deal effectively with policy enforcement. They learn the policies of the institution as well as ways to refer incidents properly.

Educational programming is an essential part of community development and is an important component of the RA job. RAs sponsor intentional activities on issues that are not typically addressed in the academic setting such as healthy roommate relationships (Blimling, 1995).

There are several outcomes that might be expected from educational programming, including the ability to delegate tasks, plan activities, manage time, utilize resources, participate as a team member, and promote events. In training, RAs are taught to produce programs that encourage interaction among students, stimulate thought, and encourage growth. Examples of programs typically sponsored by RAs include tutoring programs, career planning sessions, stress management programs, and self-defense training.

The degree to which RAs deal with the various components of their job (e.g., peer advising, facilities management, policy enforcement, programming) can vary according to the type of residence hall in which they serve. RAs can be placed in a variety of residence hall environments which may vary by number of residents (i.e., large, medium, small halls) and gender of residents (i.e., single-sex versus co-ed

halls). Research suggests that large residence halls promote more personal development among students than small residence halls (Clark, 1994) and that co-ed residence halls foster more personal development among students than single-sex halls (Schroeder et. al, 1994). These studies, however, reported personal development among resident students, not among RAs.

RAs can also be placed in buildings with different types of supervisors including male, female, undergraduate, graduate, or professional staff. Some research suggests that there is no difference in job satisfaction, RA motivation, or effectiveness based on gender of supervisor (Komives, 1991). An extensive literature search, however, revealed very limited research about the effects of different types of supervisors on the personal development outcomes associated with the RA position.

It is evident from this discussion that SAAs have designed residential living to promote personal development and the RA experience to promote certain outcomes. But how do SAAs measure these outcomes? Assessment in residence life is typically conducted through standardized instruments. Two such instruments frequently used to study the perceptions students have of their residence hall environments are the University Residence Hall Environment Scale (URES) (Moos & Gerst, 1974) and the Student Residential Environmental Scales (SRES) (Winston, Johnstone, Long, McFarland, & Bledsoe, 1995).

The URES is used to measure residence hall environment. The instrument contains 100 questions measuring 10 scales: involvement; emotional support; independence; traditional social orientation; competition; academic achievement;

intellectuality; order and organization; student influence; and, innovation (Moos & Gerst, 1974). Results inform SAAs about the degree to which residents feel involved in campus life and part of the residence hall community.

The SRES is also used to measure student perceptions of the residential environment. This instrument measures perceptions in three dimensions: physical; psychosocial; and organizational and engagement (Winston et. Al., 1995) Again, the purpose is to provide data about the degree to which residents might be achieving outcomes associated with personal development.

It appears, then, that SAAs have identified certain outcomes associated with living on campus (i.e., feeling involved in the community, feeling the community is just), and have developed ways to measure what residents experience. But what are the outcomes associated with being an RA and how are those outcomes measured? If SAAs are to be held accountable for the time and resources they invest in selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating RAs, they must measure what their efforts produce for students served and RAs who provide the source. A review of the literature revealed sporadic studies designed to measure the personal developmental outcomes associated with serving as an RA. The present study sought to address this gap in the literature on student development by measuring the outcomes associated with the RA position.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to measure self-reported outcomes of the RA experience. Data were analyzed to determine if the outcomes of the RA position

differed by size of residence hall, type of residence hall, gender of supervisor, or status of supervisor (undergraduate versus graduate).

All RAs at a large, land grant university were asked to participate in the study. The data were gathered by administering the Student Leadership Outcomes survey (SLO). This instrument was designed by the university at which the study was conducted to measure outcomes of student leadership experiences.

### Research Hypotheses

Specifically, the present study was designed to explore the following hypotheses.

1. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience among RAs in large residence halls (more than 500 bed spaces), medium residence halls (301-499 bed spaces), and small residence halls (less than 300 bed spaces).
2. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs in single sex residence halls and co-educational residence halls.
3. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs with male supervisors and those with female supervisors.
4. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs with supervisors who are graduate students and those with supervisors who are undergraduate students.

### Significance of the Study

The present study had significance for both future practice and future research. In terms of future practice, several constituencies might be interested in the results of the study: SAAs, residence life practitioners (RLPs), RAs, and RA applicants.

The results may be useful to SAAs and RLPs when they review the existing RA programs. If the outcomes they want the RAs to achieve are not congruent with what RAs are achieving, they may redesign the RA experience and/or RA training to achieve those desired outcomes.

Current RAs might find the results of this study useful. The results may assist RAs in gauging their own personal development outcomes. The results may also help RAs identify personal developmental goals.

The results may also be of interest for students who are considering applying for the RA position. These prospective RAs might use the results to help them anticipate possible outcomes associated with the position. The results might also assist prospective RAs formulate goals they wish to achieve if selected for a position.

While this study provided practical information to various constituencies, it might also be used as a basis for future research. Future scholars may wish to examine the outcomes of other campus leadership positions such as OLs and Greek letter organization officers. The results from such a study may reveal whether there are different outcomes for students who serve in different campus leadership positions.

Researchers may want to investigate RAs at various types of institutions (e.g., large, research universities versus small, liberal arts colleges). It would be interesting

to explore whether differences in outcomes were experienced by RAs at different types of schools.

Others might want to examine the personal development of RAs who have completed a semester-long RA training class versus RAs who are trained for only two or three weeks before assuming the position. The results of such a study might suggest whether different types of RA training have any affect on the outcomes achieved by RAs.

### Limitations

As with all research, there were several limitations to the design of this study. First, the sample included RAs from only one institution. If RAs from other institutions had been studied, the results might have been different.

The next limitation was that the study was conducted on a campus that utilized both graduate and undergraduate RA supervisors. Hence, the results can only be generalized to other campuses with similar staffing patterns.

Third, the instrument used to measure outcomes (SLO) was designed by SAAs for the campus at which the study was conducted and pilot tests of the instrument were being conducted at the time of the this study. Therefore, there were no reliability or validity statistics on the SLO. Without knowing if the SLO accurately measures student leadership outcomes or measures those outcomes consistently over time and populations, caution must be used in generalizing the results of this study.

Finally, the study relied on self-reported information. If the participants were not honest in their responses to the SLO, the results might have been skewed. Despite

these limitations, the present study provided interesting information about the outcomes that result from serving as an RA.

### Organization of the Study

This study is organized around five chapters. Chapter One provided an introduction to the topic under study, the purpose of the study, the research hypotheses, the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature relevant to the topic under study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology of the study including sampling techniques, data collection procedures, instrumentation, reliability and validity, and data analysis procedures. The fourth chapter reports the results of the study while the final chapter discusses those results and their implications for future practice and research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to measure the self-reported outcomes of the RA experience. To understand the nature of the outcomes of the RA experience, a review of literature was necessary. This review begins with a broad examination of the outcomes associated with attending college. It continues with a discussion on outcomes associated with involvement in campus life, and concludes with a summary of the existing literature about the outcomes associated with living on campus.

#### Outcomes of College

Today, institutions of higher education aim to educate the whole student, both cognitively and personally (American College Personnel Association, 1994).

Extensive research suggests that there are many outcomes that have been associated with attending college. These outcomes include cognitive and intellectual growth, psychosocial changes, and moral development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Cognitive development focuses on how people think and reason. Cognitive processes are hierarchical, moving from simple to complex reasoning. As a person gains experience, more complex methods of thinking and reasoning are employed. Steele (1986) measured the communication skills of 1,589 college freshmen and

1,366 college seniors using data from the American College Testing Program College Outcome Measures Program (Forrest & Steele, 1978, 1982). The results indicated that seniors score significantly higher than freshmen. These results suggest that college has a positive influence on communication skills.

The critical thinking skills of college freshmen and seniors who share similar SAT scores and secondary school rank have also been examined. Results of an administration of the Test of Thematic Analysis (Winter & McClelland, 1978) indicated that seniors score significantly higher on critical thinking skills than freshmen (Whitla, 1978).

Other research contradicts the study conducted by Whitla (1978). A study by Mentkowski and Strait (1983) found only a marginal difference in critical thinking skills between college freshmen and seniors. This suggests that there is no improvement in critical thinking skills during the college years.

The second type of outcome associated with college is psychosocial development. Psychosocial development theory addresses the developmental changes that occur over the life span. This form of personal development focuses on combining thinking, feeling, and experiences over time. For example, Astin (1993) noted that decline in authoritarianism, growth in autonomy, and higher self esteem were all results of increased personal development during the college years. In other words, students who were less dependent on authority figures and relied more on themselves had higher levels of self-esteem.

A study by Constantinople (1969) examined a cross-sectional and longitudinal sample of college freshmen and seniors. She measured Erikson's (1963) fourth, fifth, and sixth stages of psychosocial development. Erikson's (1963) fourth stage, industry versus inferiority, addresses the tasks faced by young adolescents who are gaining knowledge and developing physical skills. If adolescents view themselves as competent and productive, confidence will result. Adolescents who view themselves as inept in comparison to their peers will feel unproductive and inferior.

In the identity versus identity confusion stage, Erikson's (1963) fifth stage, childhood ends and adult responsibilities become apparent. As young adults combine numerous roles into a coherent pattern, they form unique identities. Failing to develop these identities leads to role confusion and feelings of hopelessness.

Hopeless feelings may prevent people from achieving Erikson's (1963) sixth stage, intimacy versus isolation. He argues that tasks of earlier stages of development must be resolved to successfully meet the tasks associated with Stage Six. To form intimate relationships, lovers must be trusting, autonomous, and capable of initiative. During young adulthood, men and women face developing intimacy with partners. Failing to achieve intimacy may result in loneliness and isolation.

The purpose of Constantinople's (1969) study was to determine if there was any change in identity development as a result of attending college. She found that identity development in students significantly increases from freshman to senior year in college. That is, during the college years, students form their own identities, grow more confident, and develop initiative.

In related areas of psychosocial development, an extensive amount of research has been conducted on self-esteem. Most of this literature has examined elementary and secondary school students (Wylie, 1979). The studies that focused on college students consistently report that self-esteem increases during the college years (Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Knox, Lindsay, & Kolb, 1988; Winter, McClelland, & Stewart, 1981).

A large-scale study conducted by Bachman and O'Malley (1977) showed significant change in levels of self-esteem during the college years. They studied 2,200 tenth grade men over an eight year period. They found that increases in levels of self-esteem were gradual through high school. However, a significant increase in level of self esteem occurred during the five years following high school, a time when many students are in college.

Smaller-scale research provides additional evidence that levels of self-esteem increase during college. Winter, McClelland, & Stewart (1981) found that during the college years, there is a significant increase in students' evaluations of themselves. This study found that over four years of college, students viewed themselves as more worthy, competent, equal to others, and proud of their accomplishments.

A study by Knox, Lindsay, and Kolb (1988) examined the effects on levels of self esteem between institutions. For example, they studied students at two-year institutions versus four-year institutions, research universities versus liberal arts, and public versus private schools. This study used the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. Data were collected on 12,824 high school graduates, at

different times between 1972 and 1986. The findings suggested that institutional differences have little or no effect on levels of self-esteem among college students.

Another important area of psychosocial development is moral development. A large body of literature is dedicated to this area. Rest, Davidson, and Robins (1978) synthesized cross-sectional data that used The Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1975). The DIT is a paper and pencil instrument that asks subjects to respond to moral dilemmas. A majority of the results indicated higher levels of education are correlated with higher levels of moral consideration.

The Moral Judgment Interview (MJJ) (Colby et. al., 1982) uses an interview format with standardized scoring to determine levels of moral judgment. Research using the MJJ has also suggested a positive association between moral development and formal education with both cross-sectional and longitudinal data.

However, some studies have found results contradictory to the research done by Rest, Davidson, and Robins (1978). McGeorge (1976) and Shaver (1987) both found that there was no significant increase in moral development across the college years.

### Involvement in Campus Life

It is apparent that there are several developmental outcomes associated with attending college. It is important to note that student development is also influenced by many factors within a college environment. Involvement is one factor that has been demonstrated to influence overall student development (Chickering, 1974.; Holland & Huba, 1989; Kuh et. al., 1991; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Winter, McClelland, &

Stewart, 1981). Participating in athletics, being a member of extra-curricular clubs and organizations, and holding leadership positions are all examples of involvement in college.

Several topics have been studied with respect to intercollegiate athletes, including academic performance, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Pascarella and Smart (1991) found that there was no significant difference in academic performance between intercollegiate athletes and their non-athlete counterparts.

Another study conducted by Winter, McClelland, & Stewart (1981) reported outcomes as a result of participation in intercollegiate athletics. They noted that there was a positive association between participation in intercollegiate athletics and gains in one measure of critical thinking. They also found a positive association between athletes and gains in broad analytical skills.

Involvement in extra-curricular clubs and organizations has been linked to several positive outcomes of college. Students actively participating in clubs and organizations report having increased leadership and communication skills. Research has also revealed that membership in a club or organization leads to more mature interpersonal relationships (Kuh et. al., 1991).

There is evidence to suggest that resident students are more likely to hold on-campus leadership positions than their non-resident counterparts. An example of one such leadership position would be an Orientation Leader (OL). Holland and Huba (1989) conducted a study on OLs that looked specifically at personal development.

The researchers found that OLs developed more mature interpersonal relationships than their non-OL counterparts.

#### Outcomes Associated with Living On-Campus

Being involved on campus is one environmental factor known to have positive outcomes on student development. Another environmental factor known to affect student development is physical surroundings, specifically residence halls. The purpose of a residence hall has been defined in many ways. Schneider (1977) suggested that residence halls have been seen as a means for controlling student behavior. More recently, DeCoster and Mable (1980) outlined five hierarchical levels of residence halls. These five levels are: to provide a satisfactory living environment; to provide adequate care of maintenance of physical facilities; to establish guidelines that provide structure for the community; to develop an interpersonal environment; and to provide opportunities for growth and development. The definitions of the purpose of residence halls can vary, but research indicates that there are several outcomes associated with living in a residence hall.

Astin (1973) conducted a national study on the outcomes associated with living in residence halls. His study incorporated data from colleges and universities, both public and private. He found several important environmental characteristics associated with living in a residence hall.

For example, students living in a residence hall have higher grade point averages than their non-resident counterparts. The results also revealed that residents have stronger persistence rates and earn degrees at higher rates than their non-resident

counterparts. It can be concluded from this research that campus residents tend to be more successful students (Astin, 1973).

It was also noted by Astin (1973) that students living in a residence hall report higher levels of self-esteem than their non-resident counterparts. On the other hand, campus residents also report higher levels of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcoholic beverages than non-resident students, suggesting that there may also be some negative outcomes associated with living on campus.

Blimling (1988) also conducted research on the affects of living in campus residence halls. He summarized over 20 years of residential research. This synthesis revealed several important characteristics associated with living in a residence hall.

Students living in a residence hall report increased participation in extracurricular activities (Blimling, 1988). Students actively participating in these extra-curricular activities are known to have increased leadership and communication skills, and they develop more mature interpersonal relationships. (Blimling, 1988; Kuh et. al., 1991).

Students in residence halls also express more satisfaction with college and the college environment than non-resident students, particularly in terms of peer groups, student friendships and faculty interaction. Peer groups, friendships, and faculty interaction perform important functions in students' lives like providing emotional support and exposing students to diversity (Newcomb, 1960).

Exposure to diversity is the most significant experience students living in residence halls report, according to Dressel and Lehman (1965). They also noted that



students living in residence halls found that such exposure to diversity was a significant factor in shaping their attitudes and values.

Both Chickering (1974) and Blimling (1989) studied the effects of residential living on academic performance. The question at hand was whether residential living has a significant impact on academic success. Their studies contradicted previous studies by Astin (1973). Their results indicated that there is no significant difference in academic performance between resident students and those who are commuters.

#### Size of Residence Hall

It is apparent that living in residence halls affects students, but all residence halls are not alike. Architectural design of residence halls can differ significantly. Research suggests that the design of a residence hall does influence students (Blimling, 1988; Holohan & Wilcox, 1979; Perl, 1986; Sinnett, Sachson, & Furr, 1972).

Residents living in low-rise residence halls report a more positive social climate. For example, students living in low-rise halls report having a quieter, friendlier atmosphere, and more social contact with peers. They also spend more time in their residence hall (Sinnett, Sachson, & Furr, 1972). Low-rise residence halls were defined as buildings no higher than five floors that housed fewer than 500 people.

Students living in high-rise residence halls report lower satisfaction with their surroundings, higher attrition, increased vandalism, and less peer support. However, they also demonstrate higher levels of independence when compared to residents in small, low-rise halls (Blimling, 1988; Holohan & Wilcox, 1979).

A study by Perl (1986) contradicted some of these findings, however. Perl found that residents in high-rise halls report more social support than their counterparts in low-rise halls. High-rise residence halls were defined as at least six floors that housed over 501 residents. Results of research on outcomes associated with size of hall, therefore do not appear to be consistent.

### Gender of Residence Hall

The size of a residence hall is important to examine, but it is also vital to study the composition of residence halls. Coeducational housing was once considered infeasible. Today, co-ed living is recognized as a valuable part of the college experience (Blimling, 1988; Greenleaf, 1962; Roberts, 1990; White & White, 1973). Research indicates there are several outcomes associated with co-educational living.

Students living in co-ed residence halls have reported increased interpersonal competence as a result of living with members of the opposite sex. By comparison, their counterparts living in single-sex residence halls reported lower levels of interpersonal competence. Research has also revealed that residents of co-ed halls have an greater sensitivity toward others (Blimling, 1988).

Further research by Blimling (1988) suggested that residents of co-ed halls are more mature than their counterparts in single-sex halls. It was also noted that residents of co-ed halls have more interest in the community and cultural activities than their counterparts living in single-sex halls.

While many assume there to be behavioral differences between the two living environments, according to Greenleaf (1962) there are few behavioral differences between co-ed and single-sex residence halls. For example, the number of noise violations and acts of vandalism were similar in both co-ed and single sex residence halls. It was also noted that the residents living in co-ed halls have less stereotypical attitudes toward the opposite sex. She found no differences in academic achievement between residents of co-ed and single-sex halls.

Roberts (1990) reviewed the literature related to co-ed living and also noted that there was no difference in academic achievement. Results also revealed that living in a co-ed hall has a positive impact on the maturity level of students. No difference was found in the amount of sexual activity between residents of co-ed and single-sex halls. Studies also demonstrated that residents of co-ed halls are more satisfied with their living environment than the residents in single-sex halls.

Students living in a co-ed environment develop a greater number of platonic, heterosexual relationships (White & White, 1973). They also found no notable difference in the amount of sexual activity between residents of co-ed and single-sex halls.

In summary, the literature suggests there are many outcomes associated with attending college. There is also literature that suggests there are positive outcomes connected with involvement in college, and residence hall living. RAs are college students, they are involved in college via their RA job, and live on-campus. But the outcomes associated with serving as an RA position have been limited in the research

on student outcomes. A review of literature revealed limited studies about specific outcomes associated with serving as an RA. The present study was designed to address this gap in the literature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to rank order the self-reported outcomes of the RA experience. Data were analyzed to determine if rankings of the outcomes associated with the RA position differed by size of residence hall, composition of residence hall, gender of supervisor, or status of supervisor.

Specifically, the present study was designed to explore the following hypotheses.

1. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience among RAs in large residence halls (more than 500 bed spaces), medium residence halls (301-499 bed spaces), and small residence halls (less than 300 bed spaces).
2. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs in single sex residence halls and co-educational residence halls.
3. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs with male supervisors and those with female supervisors.

4. There is no difference in the rank order of outcomes of the RA experience between RAs with supervisors who are graduate students and those with supervisors who are undergraduate students.

All RAs at a large, land grant university were asked to participate in the study. The data were gathered by administering the Student Leadership Outcomes survey (SLO), an instrument designed by professional staff at the university at which the study was conducted. The SLO was designed to measure outcomes of all types of student leadership experiences, including the RA experience.

#### Background of the RA Position

Since the present study examined outcomes associated with serving as an RA, some background on the RA position at this particular institution provided some context for the study. To become an RA at the university where the study was conducted, candidates had to undergo a rigorous, two-step hiring process. The first step was a series of individual and group interviews. The interviews were conducted by current staff members including SAAs, RLPs, and current RAs. Success during the interview process allowed the candidates to enroll in the second step of the hiring process, a semester-long, pre-selection class.

The class ran for 10 weeks. Each week, different topics were discussed, including: peer advising; policy enforcement; and, programming. Written assignments about the topic at hand were submitted by students each week.

Upon completion of the course, class facilitators assigned the candidates to tiers based on their overall class evaluation. Tier one candidates were "must hire"

candidates, tier two candidates were designated "hire with reservations", while tier three candidates were considered "alternates." Any candidate who was not assigned to one of these tiers was not considered further for a position. From these tiers, RAs were hired to staff the 24 residence halls on the campus studied.

Approximately one week before the fall 1997 semester began, RAs returned to campus for intensive training sessions. During this week, RAs reviewed topics such as substance abuse, suicide, peer advising, serving as a liaison, policy enforcement, and programming. This combination of intensive pre-selection screening and pre-selection and post-selection training was designed to lead to several outcomes for RAs including increased self confidence, increased sensitivity toward diversity, improved decision making skills, interpersonal skills, and enhanced time management skills.

### Sample Selection

The target sample included all RAs at the university at which the study was conducted. The 168 RAs were full-time, resident students during the spring semester of 1998.

Of the 24 residence halls at the university, three halls are large (more than 500 bed spaces) and are staffed with a total of 54 RAs. Seven of the halls are medium sized (between 301- 499 bed spaces) and are staffed with a total of 48 RAs. Fourteen of the halls are small (less than 300 bed spaces) and are staffed with a total of 66 RAs.

Thirteen residence halls are co-ed and 11 are single sex (6 male, 5 female). The 13 co-ed residence halls are staffed with 92 RAs. The female halls there are staffed with 25 RAs and the male halls are staffed with 51 RAs.

Of the 24 residence halls at the university, nine of the halls are supervised by women. A total of 61 RAs report to female supervisors. Fifteen of the residence halls are staffed by 16 male supervisors (one residence hall has two male supervisors). One hundred and seven RAs report to male supervisors.

Nineteen of the 25 supervisors in residence halls are undergraduate students. These undergraduate students supervise 94 RAs. The remaining six supervisors are graduate students, who supervise 74 RAs.

#### Instrumentation

The instrument administered in this study, the SLO, was designed by staff in the Office of University Unions and Student Activities at the university at which the study was conducted. It is comprised of two sections. For purposes of this study, several demographic questions were added to create a third section of the SLO. These demographic questions included: gender of the RA; type of residence hall (co-ed versus single-sex); size of residence hall (large, medium, small); gender of supervisor; and, status of supervisor (graduate versus undergraduate). This rendered a total of 41 items in the modified version of the SLO administered in this study.

In the second section of the instrument, respondents are asked to rate 37 items on a Likert-type scale with a response ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Respondents may also elect to respond "no response" by simply leaving the

answer blank. The Likert-type items are divided into three subsections. Each subsection begins with a stem-phrase followed by a list of competencies that RAs may (or may not) have achieved as a result of their position. For example, the stem phrase of the first subsection says "my experience as a leader in this organization helped me". This is followed by a series of competencies. Examples of competencies include: "develop tolerance for divergent points of view"; "relate better to the opposite gender"; and "shape my values in a positive way." For each item, respondents assess the degree to which they feel their RA position has influenced their achievement of these competencies.

The third section of the SLO asks respondents to answer three qualitative questions. These short-answer questions asked RAs to discuss what they may (or may not) have gained from their leadership experience. For example, one question asks RAs to describe the most positive experience they had during their leadership experience. For a complete copy of the SLO (as modified for use in the pilot study), see Appendix A.

### Reliability and Validity

When administering an instrument, standard research practice calls for the researcher to report on the reliability and validity of that instrument. Reliability relates to whether an instrument accurately measures the same phenomenon over time and population. Validity relates to whether an instrument accurately measures the phenomenon it was designed to measure.



The instrument used to measure outcomes in this study was designed for the campus at which the study was conducted. Pilot tests of the instrument were being conducted at the time of the this study. As a result, complete reliability or validity statistics on the SLO were not available at the time the data were collected for this study. Some preliminary results, however, revealed a .94 reliability rating for internal consistency (M. Crowder, personal communication, January 23, 1998) More complete reliability and validity data should be available in the near future.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The present study was one component of a larger study being conducted at a large, public, research university located in a mid-Atlantic state. The larger study was conducted in a two stages and was designed to measure outcomes achieved by student leaders across campus (e.g., orientation leaders, Greek house managers, Residence Hall Federation members).

The first stage of the study employed the Student Leadership Training Outcomes (SLTO). This instrument was designed to measure outcomes of student leadership training. It asks respondents to rate 37 items on a Likert-type scale with a response ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Respondents may also elect to respond "no opinion" by leaving the answer blank. The Likert-type items are divided into three subsections. Each subsection begins with a stem-phrase followed by a list of competencies that leaders may (or may not) have achieved as a result of their leadership training. For example, the stem phrase of the first subsection

says "my leadership training helped me". This is followed by a series of competencies. Examples of competencies include: "develop tolerance for divergent points of view"; "relate better to the opposite gender"; and "shape my values in a positive way." For each item, respondents assess the degree to which they felt their leadership training has influenced their achievement of these competencies.

The SLTO was designed to be administered shortly after some form of leadership training had occurred. In most cases, (e.g., Greek house managers) student leaders are trained at the start of the fall semester, so the SLTO was administered shortly after the start of the fall, 1997 semester.

For purposes of the larger study, the office of the University Unions and Student Activities distributed the SLTO to SAAs across campus. The SAAs were asked to administer the questionnaire to student leaders who had participated in leadership training programs. Leadership groups such as Greek House Managers and Orientation Leaders were involved in the study.

The second step of the larger study utilized the SLO. While the SLTO focused on outcomes associated with leadership training, the SLO was designed to measure outcomes associated with leadership experiences. That is, the SLO was designed to be administered to student leaders who had served in leadership capacities for at least one semester. The instrument was distributed to different departments across campus that utilize student leaders. The instrument was administered to student leaders during the second week in February, 1998.

Residential and Dining Programs (RDP), a department in the Division of Student Affairs, distributed the SLO to residence hall supervisors the second week in February, 1998. The supervisors then distributed the instrument to their RAs at their mandatory weekly staff meetings. The instrument was completed and collected at those meetings. The supervisors returned the completed instruments to the office of RDP. The researcher gathered the instruments from that office for analysis.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

The data in this study were collected to examine the self-reported outcomes that resulted from serving as an RA. To analyze the data, the researcher calculated mean scores; ranked mean scores; and, compared those rankings by group.

The researcher calculated the mean response for each item for each of the nine groups in the analysis (i.e., RAs in large halls, RAs in medium halls, RAs in small halls, RAs in single sex halls, RAs in co-ed halls, RAs with male supervisors, RAs with female supervisors, RAs with undergraduate supervisors, and RAs with graduate supervisors). Then, the researcher rank ordered the mean responses for all 37 items for each group. By rank ordering mean responses, lists were generated of the highest rated to lowest rated outcomes for each group.

Once lists were generated, the rank orders were compared. First rankings from RAs in small halls were compared to rankings from RAs in medium halls and RAs in large halls. Next, rankings from RAs in single sex halls were compared to rankings

from RAs in co-ed halls. Third, rankings from RAs with male supervisors were compared to rankings from RAs with female supervisors. Finally, rankings from RAs with undergraduate supervisors were compared to rankings from RAs with graduate supervisors.

Comparisons were made to determine consistencies and inconsistencies in the order in which different groups rated the outcomes associated with the RA position. To accomplish this, the differences in rankings between groups were calculated. The lists of rankings for each group consisted of the 37 outcomes measured by the SLO ranked from the most highly rated outcome to the lowest rated outcome. To compare rankings between groups, the researcher calculated the number of places by which the same outcome was ranked differently by different groups. For example, if RAs in single-sex halls rated "develop my tolerance for divergent points of view" as the highest rated outcome of their experience, but RAs in co-ed halls rated this outcome as the fifteenth most important outcome, the difference in ranking was calculated as 14 places ( $15-1=14$ ). Once differences in rankings were calculated for all outcomes, these differences were grouped into three categories.

The researcher believed there was a need to create some framework for analyzing differences in rankings. Given that the SLO measured 37 possible outcomes, the highest possible difference in rank for any single outcome between groups would have been 36 places. That is, if RAs in single-sex halls rated a particular outcome as the highest rated outcome (1) while RAs in co-ed halls rated that same outcome as their lowest rated outcome (37), the difference in rankings

would have been 36 places ( $37-1=36$ ). Since the greatest possible disparity in rankings was 36, it seemed reasonable to divide this range into three equal parts. Therefore, differences of less than 12 places were considered as "no difference" between groups. A difference of 12 places was considered a "borderline difference." Differences of 13 to 24 places were rated as reflecting a "moderate difference" between groups while differences of more than 24 places were considered "significant difference."

The SLO was not designed around scales, nor had any factor analysis on items been conducted since it was just being piloted at the time of the study. Given this, it seemed most logical to use rank order outcomes to analyze the data yet maintain the integrity of the purpose for which the SLO was designed.

The researcher was primarily interested in discovering the differences in outcomes between groups of RAs, so she focused on analyzing only the 37 items on the SLO that were rated on the Likert-type scale. The Department of Residential and Dining Programs was interested in the RAs' responses to the qualitative questions added to the end of the SLO, and that office assumed responsibility for analyzing those results which are not reported in this study.

This study was designed to investigate the self-reported outcomes of the RA experience. The methodology described here was deemed sufficient to elicit data relevant to the research hypotheses proposed in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the data collection and analysis. It begins with a description of the sample, followed by an analysis of the data collected. First, the rank order outcomes for the entire sample are reported to provide a context for further data analysis. Then, the results are reported for the four research hypotheses which examine the self-reported rank order outcomes of the RA experience based on size of hall, type of hall, gender of supervisor, and status of supervisor. Finally, a summary of percentages of no-responses for each outcome is provided.

#### Description of the Sample

Of the 168 RAs employed by the university at the time when the study was conducted, 148 completed the SLO. This reflects a response rate of 88%. Of the 148, 60 RAs were from large halls, 38 from medium halls, and 49 from small halls. One respondent did

not report the size of his/her hall. There were 74 RAs from co-ed halls and 74 from single-sex halls in the sample. Eighty-seven (87) RAs reported having male supervisors, while 61 reported having female supervisors. Finally, 81 RAs reported to an undergraduate supervisor while 67 reported to a supervisor who was a graduate student. A summary of the characteristics of the sample is provided in Table 1.

### Results

The data in this study were collected to examine the self-reported outcomes that resulted from serving as an RA. To obtain results, three steps were conducted:

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample (N=148)

Characteristic	n	%N
<b>Size of Hall</b>		
Large	60	40.8
Medium	38	25.9
Small	49	33.3
No Response	1	
Sub Total	148	100.0
<b>Type of Hall</b>		
Co-ed	74	50.0
Single-sex	74	50.0
Sub Total	148	100.0
<b>Gender of Supervisor</b>		
Male	87	58.8
Female	61	41.2
Sub Total	148	100.0
<b>Status of Supervisor</b>		
Undergraduate	81	54.7
Graduate	67	45.3
Sub Total	148	100.0



calculation of mean scores; ranking of mean scores; and, comparing those rankings by group. The researcher calculated the mean response for each item for the entire sample and each of the nine groups in the analysis (i.e., RAs in large halls, RAs in medium halls, RAs in small halls, RAs in single-sex halls, RAs in co-ed halls, RAs with male supervisors, RAs with female supervisors, RAs with undergraduate supervisors, and RAs with graduate supervisors). Then, the researcher rank ordered the mean responses for all 37 items for the entire sample and each group. By rank ordering mean responses, lists were generated of highest rated to lowest rated outcomes.

Once lists were generated, the rank orders were compared. First rankings from RAs in small halls were compared to rankings from RAs in medium halls and RAs in large halls. Next, rankings from RAs in single sex halls were compared to rankings from RAs in co-ed halls. Third, rankings from RAs with male supervisors were compared to rankings from RAs with female supervisors. Finally, rankings from RAs with undergraduate supervisors were compared to rankings from RAs with graduate supervisors.

The researcher first looked at rank order outcomes for all the participants. The highest ranked outcome was item 37 which asked RAs to rank how their position has affected their overall college experience. This outcome had a mean response score of 1.626. The lowest ranked outcome was item 20. This item asked RAs to report if their position did not affect their interpersonal development. This outcome had a mean response score of 3.103. A summary of the rank order outcomes for the entire sample is provided in Table 2



Table 2

Rank Order Outcomes for the Entire Sample (N=148)

Outcome	Item #	N	Mean	Rank
Coll. Experience	Q37	147	1.626	1
Interaction w/ New People	Q06	145	1.641	2
Confrontation	Q07	148	1.669	3
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	143	1.741	4
Coordinating Tasks	Q27	146	1.760	5
Planning Activities	Q25	146	1.767	6
Team Member	Q09	144	1.771	7
Managing Time	Q26	144	1.799	8
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	144	1.833	9
Promoting Events	Q33	144	1.840	10
Respect Rights	Q14	144	1.854	11
Participating in Team	Q30	144	1.854	11
Listening Skills	Q08	144	1.861	13
Neg. Skills	Q10	147	1.884	14
Tolerance for Div.	Q13	144	1.896	15
Overall Learning	Q40	145	1.897	16
Decision Making	Q11	147	1.918	17
Motivating Others	Q28	146	1.932	18
Loyalty to University	Q42	137	1.934	19
Consequences of Actions	Q19	138	1.964	20
Lead Group	Q23	142	1.986	21

Acc. Team Goals	Q31	142	2.056	22
Public Speaking	Q29	140	2.057	23
Values	Q16	141	2.064	24
Involvement in Comm.	Q41	138	2.101	25
Delegating Tasks	Q22	140	2.107	26
Acad. Experience	Q38	143	2.189	27
Ethics	Q17	134	2.239	28
Self-Centered	Q18	136	2.272	29
Written Skills	Q32	135	2.296	30
Opposite Gender	Q12	135	2.356	31
Detracted From	Q39	138	2.565	32
Financial Mang.	Q34	135	2.593	33
No impact on Values	Q21	144	2.743	34
Computers	Q35	134	2.993	35
Did not contribute to Dev.	Q36	142	3.014	36
Did not help w/ Interpersonal	Q20	146	3.103	37

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Differences in rankings by size of hall were examined next. Of 37 items, four moderate differences were found on three items based on size of hall. The first two differences were found on item 42. This item asked RAs to rate how their position has affected their loyalty to the university. The RAs in the large halls ranked this item 6th, while the RAs in the medium halls ranked it 25th and those in small halls ranked it 20th. This was a difference of 19 and 14 places respectively. RAs in large halls ranked loyalty higher than RAs in both medium and small halls.

The third difference was found on item 23. This item asked RAs rate to their experiences leading a group or committee. RAs in medium halls ranked this item 10th and RAs in large halls ranked this item 23rd. This was a difference of 13 places. This difference suggests that RAs in medium halls felt they gained more experience in working with groups and committees than RAs in large halls.

The final difference was found on item 14. This item asked RAs to rank how their position has affected their level of respect toward others. RAs in small halls ranked this item 8th , while RAs in medium halls ranked this item 21st. This was a difference of 13 places, suggesting that RAs in small halls felt their position helped them be more respectful of others than did RAs in medium halls.

Borderline differences (items differing by 12 places) were also reported on three items based on size of hall. The first borderline difference was reported on item 26. This item asked RAs to rank how their position affected their time management skills. RAs in small halls ranked this item 4th, while RAs in medium halls ranked this item 16th. This suggests that RAs in small halls gain more time management skills as a result of their position.

The second borderline difference was reported on item 10. This item asked RAs to report on their negotiating skills as a result of their position. RAs in small and large halls ranked this item 17th, while RAs in medium halls ranked this item 5th. This suggests that RAs in medium halls felt they developed negotiating skills to a greater degree than RAs in small and large halls.

The final borderline difference was found between RAs in small and medium halls on item 40. This item asked RAs to rank how their position affected their overall learning while at the university. RAs in small halls ranked this item 19th and RAs in medium halls ranked this item 7th. This difference suggests that RAs in medium halls thought their position contributed more to their overall learning than RAs in small halls. A summary of the rank order outcomes by size of hall is provided in Table 3. For example, on Table 3, motivating others (Q28) was ranked 14th (mean score 1.931) by RAs in small halls, 12th (mean score 1.921) by RAs in medium halls, and 19th (mean score 1.958) by RAs in large halls.

Differences in rankings of outcomes were also examined by type of hall (co-ed versus single-sex). Of 37 items, one moderate difference and one borderline difference were found. The moderate difference was found on item 42. This item asked RAs to rate how their position has affected their loyalty to the university. RAs in co-ed halls ranked this item 5th and RAs in single-sex halls ranked this item 25th. This was a difference of 20 places. That is, the RAs in co-ed halls reported achieving this outcome to a greater degree than RAs in single-sex halls.

Table 3

Differences in Rank Order Outcomes by Size of Hall (N=147)

Outcome	Small Halls (n=60)				Medium Halls (n=38)				Large Halls (n=49)				Diff. S-M	Diff. S-L	Diff. M-L
	Item	N	Mean	Rank	Item	N	Mean	Rank	Item	N	Mean	Rank			
Interaction w/ New People	Q06	59	1.661	1	Q06	37	1.703	1	Q06	47	1.574	2	0	1	1
Coll. Experience	Q37	59	1.661	1	Q37	38	1.737	3	Q37	48	1.500	1	2	0	2
Confrontation	Q07	60	1.667	3	Q07	38	1.763	4	Q07	48	1.583	3	1	0	1
Managing Time	Q26	57	1.702	4	Q26	38	1.974	16	Q26	47	1.787	15	12**	11	1
Coordinating Activities	Q27	58	1.707	5	Q27	38	1.921	12	Q27	48	1.708	9	7	4	3
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	56	1.786	6	Q24	38	1.868	9	Q24	47	1.596	4	3	3	5
Planning Activities	Q25	58	1.810	7	Q25	38	1.842	8	Q25	48	1.667	5	1	2	3
Respect Rights	Q14	58	1.845	8	Q14	38	2.026	21	Q14	46	1.739	10	13*	2	11
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	58	1.845	9	Q15	38	1.816	5	Q15	46	1.826	16	3	7	11
Promoting Events	Q33	56	1.857	10	Q33	38	1.921	12	Q33	48	1.750	13	2	3	1
Participating in Team	Q30	57	1.860	11	Q30	38	1.974	16	Q30	47	1.745	11	5	0	5
Team Member	Q09	58	1.862	12	Q09	37	1.730	2	Q09	47	1.702	8	10	4	6
Listening Skills	Q08	58	1.897	13	Q08	37	1.946	15	Q08	47	1.745	11	2	2	4
Motivating Others	Q28	58	1.931	14	Q28	38	1.921	12	Q28	48	1.958	19	2	5	7
Consequences of Actions	Q19	56	1.946	15	Q19	37	2.000	19	Q19	43	1.977	20	4	5	1
Decision Making	Q11	59	1.949	16	Q11	38	1.895	11	Q11	48	1.896	18	5	2	7
Neg. Skills	Q10	60	1.967	17	Q10	38	1.816	5	Q10	47	1.830	17	12**	0	12**
Tolerance for Div.	Q13	58	2.000	18	Q13	38	1.974	16	Q13	46	1.696	7	2	11	9
Overall Learning	Q40	60	2.033	19	Q40	37	1.838	7	Q40	46	1.783	14	12**	5	7
Lead Group	Q23	56	2.036	20	Q23	36	1.889	10	Q23	48	2.000	23	10	3	13*
Loyalty to University	Q42	55	2.036	20	Q42	35	2.086	25	Q42	45	1.689	6	5	14*	19*

Public Speaking	Q29	56	2.089	22	Q29	37	2.054	22	Q29	45	2.022	25	0	3	3
Acc. Team Goals	Q31	55	2.091	23	Q31	37	2.081	24	Q31	48	2.000	23	1	1	0
Values	Q16	57	2.105	24	Q16	37	2.054	22	Q16	45	1.978	21	2	3	1
Delegating Tasks	Q22	57	2.123	25	Q22	36	2.000	19	Q22	45	2.200	28	6	3	9
Acad. Experience	Q38	60	2.167	26	Q38	38	2.263	27	Q38	43	2.163	26	1	0	1
Involvement in Comm.	Q41	53	2.189	27	Q41	36	2.111	26	Q41	47	1.979	22	1	5	4
Ethics	Q17	55	2.236	28	Q17	35	2.286	28	Q17	42	2.190	27	0	1	1
Self-Centered	Q18	57	2.246	29	Q18	35	2.343	30	Q18	42	2.238	29	1	0	1
Opposite Gender	Q12	54	2.352	30	Q12	33	2.424	31	Q12	46	2.304	31	1	1	0
Written Skills	Q32	53	2.358	31	Q32	34	2.294	29	Q32	46	2.239	30	2	1	1
Detracted From	Q39	55	2.545	32	Q39	35	2.543	31	Q39	46	2.609	33	1	1	2
Financial Mang.	Q34	53	2.642	33	Q34	37	2.649	34	Q34	43	2.442	32	1	1	2
No impact	Q21	58	2.672	34	Q21	38	2.605	33	Q21	46	2.935	35	1	1	3
Did not contribute	Q36	56	3.036	35	Q36	37	2.973	36	Q36	47	3.064	36	1	1	0
Did not help w/ Dev.	Q20	59	3.068	36	Q20	37	3.000	37	Q20	48	3.229	37	1	1	0
Computers	Q35	52	3.096	37	Q35	35	2.943	35	Q35	45	2.911	34	2	3	1

N = Number of Responses

S - M = Differences in rank between small and medium halls

S - L = Differences in rank between small and large halls

M - L = Differences in rank between medium and large halls

\* = Moderate Difference

\*\* = Borderline Difference



The borderline difference was found on item 26. This item asked RAs to rank how their position affected their time management skills. RAs in single-sex halls ranked this item 4th, while RAs in co-ed halls ranked this item 16th. This difference suggests that RAs in single-sex halls have achieved time management skills to a greater degree than RAs in co-ed halls. A summary of the rank order outcomes by type of hall is provided in Table 4. For example, on Table 4, respecting the rights of others (Q14) was ranked 9th (mean score 1.772) by RAs in single-sex halls and 18th (mean score 1.915) by RAs in co-ed halls.

Differences in rankings of outcomes were also examined by gender of supervisor and status of supervisor (undergraduate versus graduate). Of 37 items, no differences were found based on gender of supervisor, but one moderate difference was found based on status of supervisor. The moderate difference was found on item 42. This item asked RAs to rate how their position has affected their loyalty to the university. RAs with graduate supervisors ranked this item 7th, while RAs with undergraduate supervisors ranked this item 24th. This was a difference of 17 places. That is, RAs with graduate supervisors reported achieving this outcome to a greater degree than RAs with undergraduate supervisors. Summaries of the rank order outcomes by gender of supervisor and status of supervisor are provided in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively. For example, on Table 5, overall learning (item Q40) was ranked 11th (mean score 1.894) by RAs with male supervisors and 18th (mean score 1.898) by RAs with female supervisors.

The number of no-responses was also calculated for each item. The RAs were

Table 4

Differences in Rank Order Outcomes by Type of Hall (N=148)

Outcome	Single-Sex Halls (n=74)				Co-Ed Halls (n=74)				Difference in Rank
	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	
Coll. Experience	Q37	72	1.644	1	Q37	74	1.595	1	0
Interaction w/ New People	Q06	74	1.654	2	Q06	71	1.634	2	0
Coordinating Tasks	Q27	72	1.677	3	Q27	73	1.808	10	7
Managing Time	Q26	72	1.678	4	Q26	71	1.901	16	12**
Confrontation	Q07	74	1.687	5	Q07	74	1.649	3	2
Planning Activities	Q25	72	1.718	6	Q25	73	1.795	8	2
Team Member	Q09	73	1.761	7	Q09	71	1.761	6	1
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	73	1.768	8	Q24	70	1.700	4	4
Respect Rights	Q14	73	1.772	9	Q14	71	1.915	18	9
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	73	1.805	10	Q15	71	1.831	13	3
Promoting Events	Q33	72	1.853	11	Q33	71	1.817	11	0
Participating in Team	Q30	73	1.867	12	Q30	70	1.829	12	0
Tolerance for Div.	Q13	72	1.869	13	Q13	72	1.903	17	4
Motivating Others	Q28	72	1.895	14	Q28	73	1.918	19	5
Neg. Skills	Q10	74	1.910	15	Q10	73	1.836	14	1
Listening Skills	Q08	73	1.914	16	Q08	71	1.775	7	9
Consequences of Actions	Q19	70	1.975	17	Q19	68	1.941	21	4
Decision Making	Q11	74	1.985	18	Q11	73	1.836	15	3

Overall Learning	Q40	71	2.000	19	Q40	73	1.795	8	11
Values	Q16	73	2.017	20	Q16	68	2.074	25	5
Lead Group	Q23	71	2.026	21	Q23	71	1.930	20	1
Acc. Team Goals	Q31	70	2.106	22	Q31	71	2.028	23	1
Public Speaking	Q29	73	2.115	23	Q29	66	2.000	22	1
Delegating Tasks	Q22	72	2.118	24	Q22	68	2.044	24	0
Loyalty to University	Q42	67	2.120	25	Q42	69	1.754	5	20*
Involvement in Comm.	Q41	68	2.131	26	Q41	69	2.087	26	0
Self-Centered	Q18	69	2.179	27	Q18	67	2.328	31	4
Acad. Experience	Q38	73	2.189	28	Q38	69	2.188	29	1
Ethics	Q17	72	2.311	29	Q17	62	2.129	28	1
Written Skills	Q32	70	2.329	30	Q32	64	2.266	30	0
Detracted From	Q39	71	2.524	31	Q39	66	2.606	33	2
Opposite Gender	Q12	65	2.625	32	Q12	70	2.100	27	5
No impact	Q21	71	2.644	33	Q21	73	2.836	34	1
Financial Mang.	Q34	69	2.647	34	Q34	65	2.600	32	2
Did not contribute	Q36	70	3.023	35	Q36	71	3.014	36	1
Did not help w/Dev.	Q20	73	3.100	36	Q20	73	3.123	37	1
Computers	Q35	69	3.116	37	Q35	64	2.891	35	2

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N = Number of Responses

\* = Moderate Difference

\*\* = Borderline Difference

Table 5

Differences in Rank Order of Outcomes by Gender of Supervisor (N=148)

Outcome	RA's with Male Supervisors (n=81)				RA's with Female Supervisors (n=67)				Difference in Rank
	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	
Interaction w/New People	Q06	87	1.621	1	Q06	58	1.672	3	2
Coll. Experience	Q37	85	1.659	2	Q37	61	1.574	1	1
Confrontation	Q07	87	1.667	3	Q07	61	1.672	3	0
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	87	1.759	4	Q24	56	1.714	7	3
Coordinating Tasks	Q27	85	1.812	5	Q27	60	1.683	5	0
Team Member	Q09	85	1.824	6	Q09	59	1.695	6	0
Planning Activities	Q25	85	1.835	7	Q25	60	1.667	2	5
Managing Time	Q26	85	1.835	8	Q26	58	1.741	9	1
Promoting Events	Q33	85	1.859	9	Q33	58	1.810	12	3
Participating in Team	Q30	86	1.872	10	Q30	57	1.825	13	3
Overall Learning	Q40	85	1.894	11	Q40	59	1.898	18	7
Neg. Skills	Q10	87	1.897	12	Q10	60	1.867	16	4
Respect Rights	Q14	87	1.897	13	Q14	57	1.789	11	2
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	87	1.897	14	Q15	57	1.737	8	6
Listening Skills	Q08	85	1.918	15	Q08	59	1.780	10	5
Tolerance for Div.	Q13	86	1.919	16	Q13	58	1.862	15	1
Loyalty to University	Q42	80	1.938	17	Q42	56	1.911	19	2
Decision Making	Q11	87	1.943	18	Q11	60	1.883	17	1
Consequences of Actions	Q19	84	1.964	19	Q19	54	1.963	22	3

Motivating Others	Q28	85	1.988	20	Q28	60	1.850	14	6
Lead Group	Q23	84	2.012	21	Q23	58	1.948	21	0
Public Speaking	Q29	84	2.048	22	Q29	55	2.073	25	3
Involvement in Comm.	Q41	82	2.073	23	Q41	55	2.145	26	3
Acc. Team Goals	Q31	83	2.096	24	Q31	58	2.017	23	1
Values	Q16	85	2.141	25	Q16	56	1.946	20	5
Delegating Tasks	Q22	85	2.165	26	Q22	55	2.018	24	2
Acad. Experience	Q38	86	2.209	27	Q38	56	2.161	27	0
Ethics	Q17	84	2.274	28	Q17	50	2.180	28	0
Self-Centered	Q18	83	2.289	29	Q18	53	2.245	29	0
Written Skills	Q32	80	2.313	30	Q32	54	2.278	30	0
Opposite Gender	Q12	81	2.395	31	Q12	54	2.296	31	0
Financial Mang.	Q34	84	2.500	32	Q34	50	2.740	33	1
Detracted From	Q39	82	2.549	33	Q39	55	2.600	32	1
No impact on Values	Q21	86	2.744	34	Q21	58	2.741	34	0
Did not help w/Dev.	Q20	86	3.058	35	Q20	60	3.167	37	2
Computers	Q35	80	3.063	36	Q35	53	2.906	35	1
Did not contribute	Q36	82	3.073	37	Q36	59	2.949	36	1

N = Number of Responses

Table 6

Differences in Rank Order Outcomes by Status of Supervisor (N=148)

	RA's with Undergraduate Supervisors (n=81)	RA's with Graduate Supervisors (n=67)
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Outcome	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	Item #	N	Mean	Rank	Difference in Rank
Interaction w/New	Q06	80	1.650	1	Q06	65	1.631	3	2
Confrontation	Q07	81	1.704	2	Q07	67	1.627	2	0
Coll. Experience	Q37	80	1.713	3	Q37	66	1.515	1	2
Coordinating Tasks	Q27	79	1.734	4	Q27	66	1.788	8	4
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	77	1.753	5	Q24	66	1.727	5	0
Managing Time	Q26	78	1.756	6	Q26	65	1.846	13	7
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	79	1.785	7	Q15	65	1.892	17	10
Planning Activities	Q25	79	1.785	7	Q25	66	1.742	6	2
Team Member	Q09	78	1.821	9	Q09	66	1.712	4	5
Respect Rights	Q14	79	1.835	10	Q14	65	1.877	15	5
Promoting Events	Q33	77	1.844	11	Q33	66	1.833	11	0
Participating in Team	Q30	78	1.859	12	Q30	65	1.846	13	1
Motivating Others	Q28	79	1.861	13	Q28	66	2.015	20	7
Consequences of Actions	Q19	76	1.882	14	Q19	62	2.065	23	9
Listening Skills	Q08	78	1.897	15	Q08	66	1.818	9	6
Tolerance for Div.	Q13	79	1.911	16	Q13	65	1.877	15	1
Decision Making	Q11	80	1.925	17	Q11	67	1.910	18	1
Neg. Skills	Q10	81	1.926	18	Q10	66	1.833	11	7
Overall Learning	Q40	80	1.950	19	Q40	64	1.828	10	9
Lead Group	Q23	75	1.973	20	Q23	67	2.000	19	1
Values	Q16	77	2.039	21	Q16	64	2.094	24	3
Public Speaking	Q29	76	2.066	22	Q29	63	2.048	21	1

Acc. Team Goals	Q31	75	2.067	23	Q31	66	2.061	22	1
Loyalty to University	Q42	73	2.068	24	Q42	63	1.762	7	17*
Delegating Tasks	Q22	76	2.079	25	Q22	64	2.141	26	1
Involvement in Comm.	Q41	73	2.096	26	Q41	64	2.109	25	1
Self-Centered	Q18	75	2.187	27	Q18	61	2.377	31	4
Ethics	Q17	73	2.192	28	Q17	61	2.295	28	0
Acad. Experience	Q38	81	2.222	29	Q38	61	2.148	27	2
Written Skills	Q32	70	2.300	30	Q32	64	2.297	29	1
Opposite Gender	Q12	70	2.386	31	Q12	65	2.323	30	1
Detracted From	Q39	74	2.527	32	Q39	63	2.619	33	1
Financial Mang.	Q34	73	2.589	33	Q34	61	2.590	32	1
No impact on Values	Q21	79	2.658	34	Q21	65	2.846	34	0
Computers	Q35	71	3.014	35	Q35	62	2.984	35	0
Did not contribute	Q36	77	3.026	36	Q36	64	3.016	36	0
Did not help	Q20	79	3.063	37	Q20	67	3.149	37	0

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N = Number of Responses

- = Moderate Difference

instructed to leave an item blank if they had no opinion about whether they had achieved that particular outcome or felt they could not respond. The researcher examined the no-response rate for each item to ensure that a sufficient number of responses were provided to draw reasonable conclusions. Overall, the no-response rate was relatively low, suggesting that RAs

did feel they could rate the extent they had achieved the outcomes identified on the SLO.

Five items had a 10% or greater no-response rate. Item 34 asked RAs to report on their financial management skills as a result of their position. Item 32 asked RAs to rank their competency with written communication and item 12 asked RAs to report if their experience in the position helped them relate better to the opposite gender. All three of these items had a 10.1% no-response rate. Item 35 asked RAs to rank their computer skills and practical use of software and item 17 asked if the position helped RAs establish a personal code of ethics. Both of these items had a no-response rate of 10.8%. These percentages indicated that at least 15 RAs did not/could not respond to these particular items. A summary of the no-responses to items is provided in Table 7. For example, on Table 7, consequences of actions (Q19) had 12 no responses resulting in 8.1%.

In conclusion, the present study was designed to elicit data about the outcomes participants believed were associated with serving as an RA. Results revealed there were some differences in outcomes achieved by size and type of hall and by status of supervisor. The implications of these results are discussed in the final chapter of this study.

Table 7

Summary of No-Responses to Items

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Outcome	Item	# of No Responses	% of N of No Response
Ethics	Q17	16	10.8
Computers	Q35	16	10.8
Opposite Gender	Q12	15	10.1
Written Skills	Q32	15	10.1
Financial Mang.	Q34	15	10.1
Self-Centered	Q18	14	9.5
Loyalty to University	Q42	13	8.8
Consequences of Actions	Q19	12	8.1
Detracted From	Q39	12	8.7
Involvement w/ Comm.	Q41	12	8.1
Delegating Tasks	Q22	10	6.8
Public Speaking	Q29	10	6.8
Values	Q16	9	6.1
Lead Group	Q23	8	5.4
Acc. Team Goals	Q31	8	5.4
Did not contribute	Q36	8	5.4
Interact w/ Diff.	Q24	7	4.7
Acad. Experience	Q38	7	4.7
Listening Skills	Q08	6	4.1
Team Member	Q09	6	4.1

Tolerance for Div.	Q13	6	4.1
Respect Rights	Q14	6	4.1
Sensitivity for Div.	Q15	6	4.1
No impact	Q21	6	4.1
Managing Time	Q26	6	4.1
Participating in Team	Q30	6	4.1
Promoting Events	Q33	6	4.1
Interaction w/New People	Q06	5	3.4
Overall Learning	Q40	5	3.4
Did Not Help w/Dev.	Q20	4	2.7
Planning Activities	Q25	4	2.7
Coordinating Tasks	Q27	4	2.7
Motivating Others	Q28	4	2.7
Neg. Skills	Q10	3	2.0
Decision Making	Q11	3	2.0
Coll. Experience	Q37	3	2.0
Confrontation	Q07	2	1.4

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to measure the self-reported outcomes of the RA experience. Data were gathered by administering the SLO to all RAs employed by the university at the time the study was conducted. Data were analyzed to determine if the outcomes associated with the RA position differed by size of residence hall (small, medium, large), type of residence hall (single-sex, co-ed), gender of supervisor, or status of supervisor (undergraduate versus graduate).

The discussion in this chapter is divided into three sections. First, the six significant findings are discussed. Second, implications of the results for future practice and research are explored. Third, the limitations to the study are described and some conclusions about the investigation are drawn.

The first hypothesis posed in this study examined the self-reported outcomes of the RA position based on size of hall. The first two moderate findings of the study revealed that RAs in large halls thought their position positively affected their loyalty to the university more so than RAs in medium and small halls. Perhaps the reason for this is social support. RAs in large halls often work with a large staff. This may result in more staff support and a stronger staff network. Moreover, RAs in large halls live with over 500 residents which could also result in a stronger support system. Perl (1986) found that residents in large buildings report more social support than their counterparts in

small and medium halls. Strong social support may positively affect loyalty to the university. Perhaps the same is true for RAs.

A second explanation for this finding may be revealed in the literature. According to Blimling (1988), students living in large halls have higher levels of independence than residents in small and medium halls. Students learn and accomplish tasks throughout their college years. Students with higher levels of independence do this more successfully than students who are not as independent. Accomplishing tasks may increase positive feelings about the university. Positive feelings about the university may influence loyalty in a positive way.

A final explanation for these findings might be the popularity or recognition factor of a residence hall. Often, larger residence halls stand out on campus and are easily located. In addition, larger residence halls often carry a reputation. Residents of these halls may identify with this status which could have a positive affect on feelings of loyalty to the university.

The third finding of the study suggested a difference in experience with leading a group or committee. The findings indicated that RAs in medium halls felt they gained more experience in working with groups and committees than RAs in large halls.

One possible explanation for this finding may be revealed in the literature. According to Blimling (1988), students living in a residence hall participate in extracurricular activities to a greater degree than their non-resident counterparts. This participation may include group or committee work. Perhaps the difference in rank revealed by RAs could be due to the number of residents in the hall. In a medium sized hall, the student/staff ratio is smaller than the student/staff ratio in large halls. RAs in medium sized halls can familiarize themselves with the interests of their residents more effectively than RAs in large halls. In addition, the number of staff in medium sized halls is smaller than in large halls, allowing for more opportunities to work with groups or committees. Therefore, RAs in medium halls may have a greater opportunity for experience in this area because of the number of residents and staff with whom they work.

The next difference revealed in the results of outcomes by size of hall focused on levels of respect toward others. RAs in small halls felt their position helped them be more respectful of others than did RAs in medium halls. Perhaps this is due to the student/staff ratio. RAs in small halls get to know their residents very well. This type of close environment may help staff to be more respectful of others.

Another explanation for this finding may be revealed in the literature. According to research by Sinnett, Sachson, and Furr (1972), residents living in small halls report

having a friendlier atmosphere. If a small environment encourages residents to be more friendly and more respectful to others, perhaps the same is true for RAs.

Differences in rankings of outcomes were also examined by type of hall (co-ed versus single-sex). Of 37 items, one difference was found in the area of loyalty to the university. RAs in co-ed halls reported achieving this outcome to a greater degree than RAs in single-sex halls.

Segregation by gender may affect loyalty because RAs in single-sex halls do not have the opportunity to live and work with the opposite sex. According to Blimling (1988), residents in co-ed halls are more mature and have more interest in the community than their counterparts living in single-sex halls. In addition, White and White (1973) suggested that students living in co-ed halls develop a greater number of platonic, heterosexual relationships. Forming relationships might enhance feelings of social support and social support may positively affect loyalty to the university.

Differences in rankings of outcomes were also examined by gender of supervisor and status of supervisor (undergraduate versus graduate). Of 37 items, no differences were found based on gender of supervisor, but one moderate difference was found based on status of supervisor. The moderate difference was related to how the RA position has affected loyalty to the university. RAs with graduate supervisors reported achieving this outcome to a greater degree than RAs with undergraduate supervisors.

One possible explanation for this difference might be found in the different training experiences of graduate versus undergraduate supervisors. All graduate supervisors on the campus at which the study was conducted are students in a graduate program in student affairs administration. As such, they learn through their masters program the importance of institutional culture. As supervisors, this would be articulated to staff , thereby giving RAs a clearer understanding of how the institution functions. This knowledge may foster more loyalty to the university. In addition graduate supervisors are usually older and represent a more professional status than undergraduate supervisors. Therefore, RAs may have a more professional relationship with a graduate supervisor. Being treated more professionally may lead to higher levels of independence. This independence may increase positive feelings about the university. Positive feelings about the university may influence loyalty in a positive way.

### Implications

The results of this study provide sufficient data to suggest some implications for future practice and research about outcomes associated with the RA position. For example, the results of this study indicated that RAs do report achieving outcomes as a result of their position. The highest ranked outcomes for the entire sample indicated that being an RA had a positive result on the overall college experience, built confidence to interact with new people, and

helped develop diplomatic confrontation skills. It is reasonable to suggest that there are positive outcomes for RAs, but it also suggests some implications for the professional staff who hire, train, supervise, and evaluate RAs.

RLPs should be pleased with what RAs seem to be achieving in terms of outcomes. These reported outcomes suggest that the current design of the overall RA experience seems to be effective and RAs are achieving some desirable outcomes. Based on these reported outcomes, however, RLPs may want to do some evaluation. First, they need to decide which outcomes they think RAs should be achieving. Then, they need to look at the outcomes RAs report achieving and see if the outcomes reported are congruent with what the RA experience and training is designed to achieve.

If the outcomes RLPs want RAs to be achieving are congruent with what RAs are achieving, they should maintain a similar training and development design for future RAs. If, however, the outcomes RLPs want their RAs to achieve are not congruent with what RAs are achieving, they may want to redesign RA training and the RA experience to attain those desired outcomes. For example, if loyalty for RAs with undergraduate supervisors is an outcome RLPs want their RAs to achieve, they could focus their efforts on portraying undergraduate supervisors in a more professional light. This could be done by creating similar titles for both graduate and undergraduate supervisors. This new tactic may reflect less segregation among supervisors to RAs



and, in turn, may positively affect RAs overall loyalty to the university.

Another possible implication relates to the contents of the SLO. Now that RAs are reporting achieving outcomes, RLPs need to look at the outcomes measured by the SLO, the RA experience, the RA job description, and RA training to determine if the outcomes measured by the SLO are appropriate for the RA position. There may be a need to revise the SLO to more accurately reflect a connection between the RA job responsibilities and the outcomes measured by the SLO. If there is an outcome that is addressed in training that is not addressed on the SLO, the SLO may need revision. For example, working closely with other campus departments is not an outcome measured by the SLO, but is addressed in RA training and in the RA job description. RLPs could suggest this outcome be added to the SLO to see the degree to which it is being achieved by RAs.

On the other hand, if RLPs review the SLO, the RA experience, the RA job description, and RA training they may discover that some desired outcomes measured by the SLO are not being achieved to a high degree by RAs. If this is because the outcome is not addressed in training or the job description, some changes may be necessary. For example, gaining competency in public speaking is an outcome measured by the SLO, but is not addressed in RA training. If enhancing public speaking skills is an outcome professional staff want RAs to achieve, staff may wish to incorporate a session on this outcome in RA training. For example, RLPs might ask a

communication professor to discuss tactics in effective public speaking skills during a training session to assist RAs to develop skills in this area.

It is also important to note that the SLO was designed to be administered to student leaders across the campus at which the study was conducted. Therefore, the outcomes are very generic and are not specific to live-in leadership positions like the RA position. Unlike other leadership positions, RAs cannot leave their responsibilities at the office. They are RAs 24 hours a day seven days a week. This live-in aspect could seriously influence the results of the SLO. For example, the president of a student organization is clearly considered a student leader. If that president returns to his/her room for the evening and finds five or six phone messages from organization members requesting information or assistance, that president has the option of dealing with their requests at that time or delay the responses until a more convenient time. RAs do not have such a luxury. Their rooms are their offices and when they are home, they are at work. As such, it is possible that RAs achieve the outcomes measured by the SLO to a higher degree because they are simply required to deal with their job responsibilities more frequently and in a more concentrated fashion than other student leaders. If so the SLO might be revised to address this unique aspect of the RA position.

Overall, the results of the study did not reveal a lot of differences in outcomes. RAs seem to be achieving outcomes fairly consistently despite the different types of environments in which they work. If this is what RLPs want, RA training and the RA

experience may not need to change dramatically. If RLPs want RAs to achieve significantly different outcomes in different environments, change is necessary. For example, if RLPs expect RAs in large buildings to gain more competency in promoting events, perhaps programming requirements need revision. Currently, there are no requirements at the university where the study was conducted that RAs publicize events when programming. Standards could be added so RAs in large buildings are required to utilize different types publicity when programming. This change may help RAs in large buildings gain competency in promoting events.

Finally, it is possible that RAs are simply achieving a number of complex outcomes as measured by the SLO and no further explanation is required. Perhaps the nature of the RA experiences is such that the outcomes they achieve are adequately and accurately measured by the instrument. If so, no reasoning for either the RA experience or the SLO is needed.

Although there were not a lot of differences in outcomes, one trend did surface in the results. Four of the six significant differences in this study addressed loyalty to the university. Loyalty is a broad term, but may be related to school spirit. RAs with more school spirit may feel more integrated and involved in the university. Knowing that loyalty is significant among RAs, several departments might wish to capitalize on this. For example, alumni relations offices frequently work with former students who are highly loyal to their alma mater. Since RAs report high levels of loyalty, alumni

relations staff could look at these results and target former RAs in their campaign drives.

While this study revealed implications for future professional practice, it might also be used as a basis for future research. Future scholars may want to investigate RA outcomes based on different types of institutions (i.e., military academies, historically black colleges and universities). This type of research may offer insight on how different institutional cultures influence the RA experience. For example, RAs at historically black colleges and universities may have a deeper understanding of divergent points of view and might rank that outcome higher than students at a predominately white institution.

Since this study focused primarily on the characteristics of the RA environment, researchers might also want to examine the outcomes based on RAs' personal characteristics such as gender or ethnicity. This type of research may provide insight into whether the outcomes achieved by RAs differ by gender or race.

Researchers might also want to examine the reported outcomes when two or more characteristics are combined. For example, studying male RAs working in small, co-ed halls versus male RAs working in large, co-ed halls may provide a more narrow perspective on outcomes achieved by RAs in different settings.

### Limitations

As with all research, there were several limitations to the design of this study. First, the sample included RAs from only one institution, and that institution utilized both graduate and undergraduate RA supervisors. If RAs from other institutions with different staffing patterns had been studied, the results might have been different. Hence, the results can only be generalized to other campuses with similar staffing patterns.

Next, the halls at the university at which the study was conducted varied dramatically in size. Residence hall occupancy ranged from 88 bed spaces to over 1000 bed spaces. The operational definitions for small halls (1-299 bed spaces), medium halls (300-499 bed spaces), and large halls (more than 500 bed spaces) were suitable for the university where the study took place, but these numbers may not be generalizable to other campuses.

Third, the instrument used to measure outcomes (SLO) was designed by SAAs for the campus at which the study was conducted and pilot tests of the instrument were being conducted at the time of the this study. As a result, complete reliability and validity statistics on the SLO were not available at the time the data were collected for this study. Without knowing if the SLO accurately measures student leadership outcomes, or measures these outcomes consistently over time and populations, caution must be used in interpreting the results of this study.

Finally, assumptions that guided this study may have influenced the results.

The study relied on self-reported information. The researcher assumed that the participants would provide candid responses. If this assumption was inaccurate and RAs were less than candid in their ratings of outcomes associated with their job, then the results of this study are further limited.

Despite these limitations, the present study provided information about the outcomes that result from serving as an RA. The findings revealed that the size of hall has an impact on loyalty to the university, respect toward others, and leading a group or committee. The findings also suggest that the type of hall and status of supervisor has an affect on loyalty. In, addition, the gender of supervisor has no affect on RA outcomes.

In conclusion, the present study sought to address the self-reported outcomes that result from serving as an RA. As discussed in Chapter One, increases in enrollment, coupled with decreases in state appropriations have led to calls for greater accountability in higher education. As resources for postsecondary education have diminished, demands for accountability and assessment have increased. Departments must demonstrate that their programs and services are consistent with their institution's mission and meet the goals they are designed to achieve.

It is evident from this discussion that RLPs have designed the RA experience to promote certain outcomes. If RLPs are to be held accountable for

the time and resources they invest in selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating RAs, they must measure what their efforts produce in these RAs. The present study provided evidence that RAs are indeed achieving certain outcomes. The issue is whether the outcomes RAs are achieving are those outcomes that RLPs believe RAs should be achieving. This question provides fertile ground for future investigations of the outcomes associated with the RA position.

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APPENDIX A

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