

ABSTRACT

The Creation of an Instrument for Evaluating Residential Student Staff Members

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Residential student staff members are a valuable part of housing and residence life teams in colleges and universities; these student leaders are at the forefront of extracurricular education efforts, crisis response, and student support. Despite their importance and impact, little research has been done on best practices for selecting, hiring, training, or evaluating the effectiveness of these student staff members. The purpose of this study was to explore the expectations of the residential student staff member role and develop an instrument for evaluating their effectiveness from the perspective of their student residents. This study produced a highly reliable instrument consisting of three leadership components based on a sample from two four-year research institutions and indicates a possible connection between residential student staff member effectiveness and residential student participation and sense of belonging. This suggests a need for further application of the conceptual framework to other aspects of residential student staff management as well as the need for continued research regarding the impact of these leaders on the experiences of their peers.

The Creation of an Instrument for Evaluating Residential Student Staff Members

by

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DEDICATION

To the fabulous teams of resident advisors and community leaders that I have been blessed to be a part of at Highland (s)Quad, Towers 3, Brooks Residential College, Brooks Flats and the residents that we all serve. You all are why I do what I do, and it is my hope that the work in these pages somehow improves our work and justifies the blood, sweat, and tears we put all put in.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Colleges and universities across the United States regularly enlist the services of student leaders to serve in influential roles across the functional areas of student affairs. These students play a significant part in the educational experience of other students by acting as mentors, role models, peer leaders, part-time administrators, disciplinary mediators, first-line crisis responders, and student success agents. Formally, their roles vary from part-time paid staff to volunteers and may have varying degrees of institutional responsibility. The vast majority of these positions, however, offer great experience in a variety of soft and technical skills. Overall, their purpose is to enhance the educational experience for other students while providing opportunities for incredibly personal growth and development to those who participate in the various positions available.

As a side note, institutions allocate considerable resources in the form of time, training, payment, and benefits to the support of these student leaders. No group of student leaders are incentivized more, however, than residential student staff that live within campus residence halls. These students typically receive free on-campus housing, meal plans, stipends, and valuable training and development that may not be provided to other student leader positions. Beyond direct forms of payment, students working in the residence halls gain a wide variety of experience as informal counselors, administrative managers, crisis responders, role models, and mentors. In a contemporary social climate

intent on justification of expense through understanding and evaluation, however, there is little to be said about the evaluation of the effectiveness of students in these positions.

Assessment of RA performance is often left to the intuition and insight of professional staff who interact with these student leaders only a few times a week and rarely observe these students doing their jobs. It is not uncommon for these students to be entirely unsupervised and autonomous in fulfilling their job requirements, as part of their role includes being on the “front lines” in ways that full-time professional staff cannot. Although the insight of professional staff with regards to the performance of their student leaders should certainly be part of any evaluation process, residence life departments nationwide could benefit from additional means of evaluation that incorporate the voices of students and use validated research methods to allow them to celebrate excellent student performance, offer developmental feedback to improve student leadership, make decisions about re-hire and termination. This study seeks to understand the student staff member role and provide current evaluation tools to professional staff members to complement their existing evaluation processes and benefit colleges and universities at large.

Definition of Terms

The following study will use a variety of terms with which the reader should be familiar. First and foremost is the term *residential student staff*. This term is meant to describe the undergraduate – or occasionally graduate – student leaders who live and work in college and university residence halls. They are charged with a wide variety of responsibilities discussed in later chapters. Broadly, they are sometimes referred to as resident advisors, resident assistants, community leaders, and more.

Residence halls is a formal term to describe the college and university owned and operated living spaces on or near campus. Traditionally called dormitories or ‘dorms’ for short, these halls may be synonymous to apartment buildings or may have robust features including dining halls, exercise rooms, technology rooms, social spaces, and more. They may also include integrated programs connected to academic units, commonly called living-learning programs or living learning communities, or may be modeled after original living environments of traditional liberal arts colleges – sometimes referred to as residential colleges (Jessup-Anger, 2012).

Housing and residence life staff is a broad term to describe the professional, full-time staff members – often requiring a bachelor’s or master’s degree – that, in some cases, live and work in a residence hall. These staff members are usually the direct supervisor of residential student staff and have direct responsibility for the operation and management of the hall and its residents.

Residents describe the undergraduate, and occasionally graduate, students who live in college and university residence halls. These students are usually advised by a residential student staff member.

What Are Residential Student Staff?

For over 50 years, colleges have employed and trained undergraduate student assistants to offset increasing demands placed on housing systems by increased student enrollment, better understanding of the benefits of campus life, and expanding residential spaces. As early as 1965, Shaffer and Greenleaf (1965) noted that institutions encountered “difficulty in maintaining their staffing patterns,” forcing them to “seek more effective ways of securing staff and using their skills” (p. 25). The answer came

through the undergraduate populations. With a large population available to pull from, these select undergraduate students would augment the current services offered by full-time professional staff. In return, these students would gain recognition and prestige, earn pay at similar rates to their peers, and receive training that would expand their skills (Shaffer & Greenleaf, 1965).

The position of residential student staff eventually evolved into the contemporary concept of resident advisor or resident assistant. Blimling (2015) asserts that these students are the “eyes and ears of the university, making sure residence hall students are given the support they need to succeed” (p. 162) through programming efforts, administrative roles, and informal counseling. The success of residential communities rests with their residential student staff (Blimling, 2015).

Why Are Residential Student Staff Important?

Extant student affairs research overwhelmingly supports the benefits of living on campus (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987; Long, 2014; Flowers, 2004; Conroe, 1986; Astin, 1999; Thompson, Samiratedu, & Rafter, 1993; Strange & Banning, 2015). A key component of living on campus is an increased sense of belonging. Astin (1999) asserts that “involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various ‘objects’” (p. 36) encompassing the entirety of the student experience. Because the investment of energy is a key factor to this conception of involvement, there is a two-way interaction that must occur. It is as crucial for institutions to offer resources and places of involvement as it is for students to take advantage of them (Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999). Residential student staff encourage their peers to invest in the institution through modeling and peer mentorship (Blimling, 2015). Studies reveal

that effective residential student staff is a crucial factor in predicting residential involvement (Aboleda, Wang, Shelby, & Walen, 2003).

Investment in Residential Student Staff

According to one estimate by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, colleges and universities in the United States employ approximately 11,000 residential student staff members in the form of resident advisors or resident assistants. On average, these students earn an annual mean wage of \$31,290 in provided housing costs, meal plans, stipends, scholarships, professional development, and other expenses. Thus, in total, institutions of higher education across the country spend more than \$300 million – specifically \$344,190,000 – on residential student staff each year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

This estimate, however, seems conservative when one considers that approximately 13,400,000 students attended 4-year institutions in the fall of 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Assuming a one-year residential requirement that is common across colleges and universities – ignoring the fact that many campuses are moving to two- or four-year residential requirements – and a conservative estimate of 50 residents per RA – whereas schools often target ranges of 25 to 40 residents per RA – one instead finds an estimated expenditure of over \$2 billion - \$2,096,430,000 to be specific – is dedicated to the support of residential student staff members.

Using a normal distribution, the argument could be made that on average 1,100 residential student staff members (the lowest 10% of the population) are falling short of expectations and depriving their communities of the outcomes outlined above. Similarly,

that same number of residential student staff members are going above and beyond, making extraordinary impacts on the lives of their residents with less recognition.

In addition to monetary investment, housing and residence life departments often spend significant amounts of time in training for these student leaders utilizing the expertise of professional staff and faculty to provide instruction and mentorship. It is not uncommon for residential student staff members to participate in week-long training sessions at the beginning of each fall and spring semester with additional, rolling training occurring throughout the year.

With such a significant investment being put forth towards residential student staff positions, it is important for student affairs professionals to have as complete of an understanding of the effectiveness of these positions as possible. Failing to accurately and reliably evaluate the effectiveness of residential student staff risks hurting the residential communities, the students they serve, and the student leaders themselves. Moreover, such a failure to make accurate evaluations misuses the valuable resources of our institutions of higher education and deprives others the opportunity to participate in these competitive leadership roles.

The need for such evaluation is recognized within the field of higher education. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), for example, is “the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs” (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2017). As part of CAS standards for Housing and Residential Life Programs (HRLP), there is an expectation that campus residents must be allowed to anonymously evaluate the performance of their Resident Assistants or other student staff members at

least once a year. There is, however, a scarcity of available psychometrically sound tools to conduct such analysis.

Evaluation of Residential Student Staff

Almost as soon as the utilization of undergraduate students in paraprofessional roles became the norm on college campuses, researchers became interested in understanding and evaluating resident assistants. Numerous examples exist of early studies to create a foundation of research around the selection, evaluation, and development of the residential student staff role (Wotruba, 1969; Atkinson, Williams, & Garb, 1973; Jennings, 1978, Kuh & Schuh, 1983). Recently, however, there have been surprisingly fewer attempts to study or evaluate residential student staff. Because of the increased resources and increased complexity of the roles as they continue to develop, it is surprising that research has decreased rather than increased. This lack of understanding inhibits the abilities of residence life professionals to understand the impact of these crucial student leaders (Manata, DeAngelis, Paik, & Miller, 2017).

In organizational behavior literature (or whatever it is), Mathis, Jackson, and Valentine (2014) outline five evaluation pathways between constituents within an organization: supervisors evaluating their employees, employees evaluating their supervisors, employees evaluating other team members, employees self-evaluating, and outside sources evaluating employees. This study seeks to provide tools for housing and residence life professionals to explore these pathways. Specifically, principal components analysis will be used to develop an instrument for use in polling students ‘outside’ the department in order to understand the effectiveness of residential student staff members

from their perspective. The results of that analysis will then be used to create templates for the other four pathways of evaluation listed above.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there is significant literature tangentially surrounding the performance and role of residential student staff, a significant gap exists with regards to best practices for evaluation. Especially lacking is the formalized development of instruments that can be utilized by residence life professionals to understand the performance of their student staff from a student voice perspective. As the most recent studies are, in some cases, half a century old, it is an appropriate time to address the deficiency. Several more recent studies have highlighted the need for effective instruments as a relevant step in future research. This study will seek to take that next step.

Conceptual Framework

Student affairs work is inherently interdisciplinary, combining elements of education, psychology, management, statistics, and much more (Sriram & Hines, 2014). This level of complexity is similarly reflected in the work that residential student staff members undertake every day in residential communities. In order to thoroughly explore the varied aspects of their expectations, this study will combine Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model of organizational thinking with Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic institution model as a theoretical framework.

Bolman and Deal (2013) describe a common leadership fallacy for managers and leaders. The result is "seeing an incomplete or distorted picture as a result of overlooking or misinterpreting important situations" (Sriram & Farley, 2014, p. 104). The frames are

used as a way of representing theories that individuals use to understand the world around them. These four frames—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic—are grounded in organizational theory and psychology and are best used in concert with each other through the “reframing” process. Residential student staff, like professional student affairs leaders, who can reframe, or quickly engage a situation through a different frame, are the most effective at understanding the differing perspectives and needs of a given situation or individual.

Higher education institutions are unique leadership environments for students to encounter. Contrary to what common sense may suggest, educational institutions do not function like businesses in a traditional sense. Due to nuances in shared governance, organizational outputs, and environmental structures, the organizations have significant differences. Birnbaum (1988) identifies four models—correlating to the four leadership frames—that institutions of higher education emulate through their various campus structures, departments, and sub-organizations. Any given institution or subunit may manifest as a combination of these four models but understanding the extreme example of each model is helpful when defining the expectations of student affairs administrators – professional and student staff alike (Sriram & Farley, 2014; Birnbaum, 1988).

This study will situate the four frames model and four colleges model together as a basis for categorizing the roles and expectations of residential student staff.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of the current study is to develop a valid and reliable instrument-to aid student affairs professionals in evaluating the performance of residential student staff. While residence life departments across the U.S. accept the importance and impact that

these student leaders have on the development and experiences of their peers, there is scarce literature that is broadly available to aid professionals in informing decisions around effective evaluation. Since leadership in institutions of higher education is challenging and nuanced compared to traditional forms of leadership, it is critical to understand how these students are performing when working with their peers. By creating avenues through which student voice can be heard with regards to the effectiveness of residential student staff performance, this study hopes to supplement existing self-reported evaluation and professional insight currently present in residence life divisions.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The Importance of Living in Residence Halls for Students

Numerous reviews of higher education literature have consistently pointed to the benefits of living in on-campus residence halls for students. In a synthesis of literature up through 1991, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that living on campus was the most consistent intra-college predictor of college impact. Specifically, living on campus demonstrated statistically significant, positive impacts on increases in aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual values; liberalization of social, political, and religious values and attitudes; development of more positive self-concepts; intellectual orientation, autonomy and independence; tolerance, empathy, and ability to relate to others; and the use of principled reasoning to judge moral issues (p. 603).

In the literature of the following decade, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that living on campus promoted more open attitudes towards diversity and racial-ethnic inclusivity, increased persistence, graduation rates, extracurricular involvement, engagement with peers, engagement with faculty, perceptions of campus social climate, overall college satisfaction, and improved personal growth and development.

A commonly demonstrated benefit to living on campus is increased retention and graduation rates. Thompson, Samiratedu, and Rafter (1993) found that regardless of race and gender, academic progress and retention rates were significantly higher for on-campus students.

Similarly, Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, and Lovell (1999) noted that living on campus provided more opportunities for integration between in-class and out-of-class experiences. Their study found that the impact of college on students does not result from a single experience, but from the interactions between interrelated experiences similar to those that occur in residence halls. Arboleda et al. (2003) noted that involvement in the residence hall community encourages involvement in the broader university community and can improve academic performance. More recently, Mayhew, Rockenback, Bowmann, Seifert, Wolniak, Pascarella, and Terenzini (2016) suggest that living on campus has the greatest impact on college outcomes due to “promoting social integration or involvement” (p. 400).

While there is a lack of extensive, contemporary literature examining the benefits of living on campus, it is clearly and historically one of the most consistent indicators of student success. As new studies provide a better understanding of the nuances of college outcomes and impacts, on-campus residency is an indirect influence that supports broader campus initiatives.

The Importance of Residential Student Staff in the On-Campus Environment

More recently, Blimling (2015) describes the necessity of residential student staff as a dire matter: “No matter how dedicated the senior housing officer and resident director are in making residence halls positive educational environments for students, they cannot succeed without the support and dedication of RAs” (p. 162). These students handle administrative tasks, work one-on-one with residents, model good behavior on behalf of the institution, and assist in managing people and resources in the residence halls. As the next section will explore, the role of these residential student staff members

has developed and grown over several decades. Having dedicated student staff in the halls also allows a more direct level of intervention in the lives of students (Eichenfield, Graves, Slief, & Haslund, 1988).

Aspects of the Residential Student Staff Role

In order to develop an instrument for evaluating residential student staff members, it is necessary to understand the complexities of the roles that they fill in colleges and universities. Since at least the 1960s, there has been an ongoing discussion in the literature of higher education over the specific roles and functions of residential student staff positions. One publication explored the various approaches to staffing residence halls at the time, concluding – among other things – that “if job expectations are in keeping with their relationships to their peers, if recognition and prestige can be attached to holding a hall position, if adequate training can be given before they assume staff responsibilities, and if proper supervision is available, the undergraduate is often more effective as unit staff than graduate students” (Shaffer & Greenleaf, 1965, p. 26). Such a perspective seemingly opened the door for further expansion of undergraduate residential student staff roles.

By the later part of the 1960s and early 1970s, research was instead being done on effective methods to hire, train, and understand undergraduate residential student staff positions. Wotruba (1969) concluded that “student helpers can be useful in obtaining the goals of higher education, or they can be retarding. If educators are to maximize the potential of college residence halls, they must select effective RAs and not retarding RAs” (p. 111).

With greater attempts at understanding came greater ambiguity. Atkinson, Williams, and Garb (1973) point to “variously and often vaguely defined” (p. 326) roles that may “range from playing policemen, teacher, and advisor to serving as a confidant to students who need a shoulder to cry on” (p. 326). These same authors concluded that there was an increasing need at the time for agreement with regards to the role and function of residential student staff, including viewing their role as “facilitators who can and should provide an environment which encourages students to take responsibility for themselves” (p. 326).

In a related vein, Jennings (1978) saw the residential student staff role as “an important link in integrating residence halls into the academic community” (p. 55) and advocated for an academically-focused, peer-advising role to be included in the standard rotation of the role. Such an expansion of the role, the author suggested, would maximize the effectiveness of the otherwise short-sighted and temporary role that students traditionally filled. The results of the author’s study on piloting a peer-advising residential student staff initiative yielded promising results, with peer-advised students perceiving greater accessibility and having higher contact than with faculty advisors. The author concluded that there was great potential for student affairs and academic affairs to work together collaboratively and that further attempts towards academic advising in a residential student staff role could prove fruitful.

A study on the perceived importance of various residential student staff roles identified 20 functions broadly grouped into administrative, individual support, environmental, and institutionally-focused categories (Kuh & Schuh, 1983). These

categories would come to manifest again in later literature and has relevant implications for the structure of this study.

By the late 1980s, Eichenfield et al. (1988) included academic and peer advising – as suggested by earlier studies - with the traditionally held roles of counseling and discipline. Murray, Snider, and Midkiff (1999) acknowledged that the RA role involved “responding to the social, emotional, and developmental needs of college students” (p. 744). Elleven, Allen, and Wircenski (2001) similarly affirmed the role of residential student staff as counselors for students in distress and linked the role to residents’ satisfaction with their college experience.

By the 2000s, research related to residential student staff regularly concluded that the role was complex, incredibly important for the success of housing and residence life programs, and generally categorizable into four realms of administrative duties, individual resident care, environment mediation, and university representation (Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Blimling, 2003; Manata, DeAngelis, Paik, & Miller, 2017).

With this foundation of research on the responsibilities and role of residential student staff in mind, it is now worthwhile to turn to contemporary models of leadership as a means of understanding the often-ill-defined requirements of these positions. By combining Bolman and Deal’s (2017) four frames of leadership with Birnbaum’s (1988) models of organizational functioning, a straightforward categorization emerges for exploring the residential student staff role.

Bolman and Deal (2017) present a model of four leadership frames through which leaders can interpret and analyze organizational problems in order to plan accordingly. Reframing, or moving between the perspectives of all four frames, allows leaders to see a

more complete picture of the reality of a given situation. The four frames defined by Bolman and Deal (2017) are the structural, political, symbolic, and human resource frames. Each frame has a particular focus and contribution to leadership. These four frames are specifically explored in the higher education setting by Birnbaum's (1988) case study of institutional archetypes which correspond to the respective frames: bureaucratic, political, anarchical, and collegial institutions.

Birnbaum (1988) synthesizes these four archetypes into a single unitive example of contemporary colleges and universities through the concept of the cybernetic institution. Such an institution is complex and multilayered, with elements of all four archetypal institutions constantly interacting and interweaving to create a self-correcting organization. Understanding that colleges and universities are cybernetic systems composed of bureaucratic, political, anarchical, and collegial elements within their institutions, it is possible to gain a better conceptual understanding of the expectations of residential student staff. These expectations are explored through the frames as described by Bolman and Deal (2017).

Structural

The structural frame conceptualizes the organization as a series of parts working together to achieve larger goals and concerns itself with the distribution of work in pursuit of efficiency (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In the bureaucratic model of a higher education institution, leaders are most effective when they act as architects to create systems and structures that monitor relevant data (Birnbaum, 1988).

Structurally, residential student staff operate as a cog in the bureaucratic machine. They are the “eyes and ears of the university” (Blimling, 2015, p. 162), passing

information on their communities up the hierarchical chain-of-command to their supervisors and presenting new information or directives to their residents in return. The structural frame encapsulates the administrative tasks of a residential student staff position. Blimling (2003) poses these seven expectations for administrative duties:

1. Prepares necessary reports and maintains records
2. Assists with public relations by being able to explain residence hall programs and staff duties to faculty, guests, parents, and students
3. Assists with room checks as required by hall operations
4. Assists with communications among staff members, students, and residence program leaders
5. Keeps residence hall director informed of major plans developed by students
6. Maintains good liaison relationship with housekeeping personnel
7. Regularly staffs the hall information desk (p. 5).

Political

The political frame conceptualizes the organization as a competition between various subgroups with divergent interests competing for limited resources. Coalitions of subgroups form in order to increase their bargaining power and survive as a group; however, alliances between groups may shift with the passage of time or issue at hand (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In a political model of higher education, the role of the leader is a mediator, both within subgroups and between them (Birnbaum, 1988).

Politically, residential student staff serve as mediators for conflicts between residents (Blimling, 2015). Not only must they balance the conflicts of others, they must “balance their academic work with the demands of service as student leaders who could be called upon at any hour of the day or night to respond to the needs of students” (p. 162). The political frame encapsulates the need for residential student staff to have an awareness of the residence hall environment represented by these eight expectations:

1. Helps students develop respect for each other’s rights and freedoms
2. Helps students develop respect for private and institutional property
3. Encourages

residents to attend residence hall and institutional programs 4. Encourages faculty to visit and talk informally with residents 5. Knows and communicates well with the residents 6. Is tolerant of different lifestyles 7. Encourages an atmosphere conducive to study 8. Promotes a feeling of community among residents (Blimling, 2003, p. 5).

Symbolic

The symbolic frame places emphasis on the meaning of an event beyond the facts. This frame views reality as a story, capturing purpose and values within anecdotes that provide meaning for the organization as a whole. From this perspective, perception of something is more important than the relevant data (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In the symbolic model of higher education, traditions, symbols, and common mascots allow leaders to command greater influence than they normally would be able to (Birnbaum, 1988).

Symbolically, residential student staff “are the face of housing and residence life programs” (Blimling, 2015, p. 162). They set the individual traditions and rituals of their floor and represent the department and university to their residents on a very personal level. They are an important symbolic presence that create meaning and interpret reality for the students under their care. These residential student staff are vital to the representation of the university which includes the following duties:

1. Sets an example by adhering to rules and regulations of the college or university
2. Knows the institution’s and residence hall’s regulations
3. Knows and explains the rationale for institution’s rules and regulations
4. Informs students of institutional expectations
5. Encourages students to confront other students about violations
6. Assists in individual growth toward accountability
7. Knows and interprets the institution’s philosophy of discipline
8. Reports behavioral infractions according to institutional policies,
9. Supports or does not openly disagree with, the institution’s regulations (Blimling, 2003, p. 5).

Human Resources

The human resource frame focuses on the care and support of the people that make up an organizational family. This frame seeks to empower, support, and develop members of the organization as people through active participation and engagement in the decision-making process. In this frame, humans are inherently valuable and more complex than a simple organizational cog (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In the collegial model of higher education – based on the human resource frame – leaders must be actively engaged in social exchange, allowing democratic decision-making and investing time to ensure that people know they matter (Birnbaum, 1988).

From a human resource perspective, residential student staff “are asked to be informal counselors, friends, and confidants” (Blimling, 2015, p. 162) in pursuit of offering individualized assistance to students in their halls. Residential student staff are charged to be mindful of “individual student goals, abilities and potential for achievement” (Blimling, 2003, p. 5) as well students who are not engaged or may feel socially isolated.

Understanding the roles of residential student staff and how they have changed over time is essential to properly evaluating their effectiveness. With this framework in mind, the current study will seek to explore student performance around the four frames and their corresponding expectations. While there is a long-standing body of research on this topic, contemporary studies into the roles, current or needed, of residential student staff are lacking and present a possibility for future study.

Significance of Selection, Training, and Evaluation of Residential Student Staff

Eichenfield et al. (1988) note that “the selection and training of residence hall staff may be the single most important function housing officers undertake” (p. 34). More recently, Blimling (2015) asserts that “the selection and training of these students are no less important than finding the right residence life professionals to lead student learning in the residence halls” (p. 178). Due to the importance of residential student staff roles, the selection, training, and evaluation methods that place them in their positions are crucial to the success of the role.

Similar to the existing literature and research on the role of residential student staff, there are scattered sources around the topics of selection, training, and evaluation. The pattern that seems to emerge is that there was substantial interest in the subject around the time of major student life structure changes (such as the increased popularity of the residential student staff role) that continued for several decades before tapering off. In some cases, there has been limited contemporary interest in exploring these topics but the body of literature is mostly lacking for a topic that is so important.

Selection

Early literature on the selection of residential student staff focused on describing the needs of the role and how undergraduate students would co-exist with or supplant existing graduate and professional roles. A study by Shaffer and Greenleaf (1965) initially identified the potential for undergraduate students to meet the demands for supplemental residence life staff. In particular, the study noted that residence life positions faced increased competition for both professionals and graduate students due to

other opportunities being less demanding, better compensated, or more advantageous from a career perspective. The authors correctly predicted that “the use of undergraduates may well be expanded in the future because of their availability and compatibility with the educational objectives of self-responsibility” (p. 26).

With the need to fill undergraduate residence life positions becoming accepted, new studies sought to explore how best to select students to fill these positions. A study by Wotruba (1969) asserted that it was important to create and revise selection practices for residential student staff members since “selections can have deteriorative as well as constructive consequences on the residents within these potential living-learning centers” (p. 108). The author’s study utilized a series of descriptive tools – personality tests, interest inventories, and “a sociometric type leadership questionnaire” (p. 107) – to investigate if selection could be achieved through a scientific process. Based on the pool of RAs surveyed, the study found that students who rated higher on self-assertiveness and friendliness scored higher on the sociometric questionnaire. If students identified as extraverted, sensing, feeling, and focused on people and things rather than ideas through the Meyers Briggs Type Inventory, they were “more likely to be capable of facilitating positive growth within others” (p. 107). Ultimately, the study concluded that a standardized instrument combining these various tools would be beneficial to the selection of RAs.

Jaeger and Caison (2006) built upon the existing research on elements of successful RAs – “academic ability, personality profiles, previous leadership experience, level of motivation, and group communication skills” (p. 144) – through a study on the use of emotional intelligence in the selection and training of residential student staff.

Emotional intelligence is suggested as a concept combining abilities more distinct than the social component of general intelligence but separate from cognitive, affective, and conation intelligence. Emotional intelligence contains the ability to utilize and understand a variety of soft skills including interpersonal behavior, leadership, self-awareness, and self-regulation (Mathis, Jackson, & Valentine, 2014). The Jaeger and Caison (2006) study examined emotional intelligence through five conceptual categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood components. The study found that the component of adaptability, specifically problem solving and flexibility, was highly predictive in identifying RAs that were considered outstanding or high-performing by a selection committee including RA peers, supervisors, and residents.

Wu and Stemler (2008) noted consistent findings to Jaeger and Caison with regards to emotional intelligence. However, results diverged when controlling for general intelligence and personality factors:

emotional intelligence was no longer a statistically significant predictor of performance. Rather, different personality dimensions emerged as statistically significant predictors. Specifically, neuroticism was found to be a significant negative predictor of RA performance. ... Findings state that emotional stability is a significant positive predictor of RA performance (p. 550).

Blimling (2015) noted several other factors that are used to predict effectiveness of a residential student staff member during the selection process including “emotional maturity, positive self-concept, motivation to help others, preference to be a giver rather than a taker, maintenance of open and honest relationships, and desire to be a team member” (p. 164-165). Ultimately, students who became RAs for the sake of helping others, making friends, and being a part of their team were most fulfilled and happy in the residential student staff position (Blimling, 2015).

Training

Blimling (2015) noted that institutions approach training from a variety of ways including competency-based programs, team-building courses or retreats, classes, and more. In general, the author noted that training programs follow four phases: orientation and initial training, summer/early-fall training, a RA class, and continued in-service education throughout the year. Additionally, Blimling notes that “research on the effectiveness of RA training programs shows that training increases both knowledge and skills in RAs” (p. 168).

However, Elleven, Allen, and Wircenski (2001) noted “little consensus among higher education administrators as to the training needs of resident assistants” (p. 609). Their study sought to identify important competencies for residential student staff training according to chief housing officers. The study received responses from 45 chief housing officers in the Southwest region of the Association of College and University Housing Officers (SWACUHO). The study found that, of this sample, there was minimal difference between the perceived important competencies for residential student staff training. Organizational skills, administrative tasks, and interpersonal facilitation skills were among the most important competencies. While this study identified important competencies, it did not explore methods or strategies to facilitate the training of these competencies.

Similarly, a 2012 dissertation by Virginia Koch (2012) from Loyola University found that in the past 20 years, “there has been little research about the design of RA training programs in higher education” (Koch, 2012, p. xv). The study provided a descriptive overview of existing training programs.

Evaluation

Evaluation of residential student staff has traditionally centered around evaluating the selection and training methods that prepare them rather than the direct evaluation of individual performance. Eichenfield et al. (1988) conducted a study on perceived effectiveness of RAs who did and did not complete a training course. Their instrument was a “13-item Performance Evaluation Form developed for the residence halls ... by the housing department for five previous years” (p. 35). The results did not confirm the hypothesis that training was beneficial to RA effectiveness; however, these findings lacked significance. The authors offered several interpretations for the results, most notably that the instrument and data collection process, were flawed. The authors posit that responses to the performance evaluation form may have been skewed: “In short, students who liked their RAs returned the forms” (p. 37). The study concluded that more effective RA evaluation procedures were necessary to evaluate RAs in a meaningful manner. Otherwise, the meaningful and influential impact of RAs on residents may be missed (Eichenfield et al., 1988).

Even with the charge to develop effective evaluation methods, there is a lack of literature 30 years later. A 2008 dissertation by David Clark from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro found that “although some research has explored the impact of items such as training initiatives on RA performance, the scholarly portfolio on other, more basic factors is largely nonexistent” (Clark, 2008, p. 5). There is little literature in contemporary journals or publications that correct that deficit.

Instruments for Effectively Evaluating Residential Student Staff

Throughout higher education and student affairs literature, a variety of instruments have been explored in the pursuit of residential student staff evaluation. In addition to these instruments, residence life departments often create their own methods of evaluation and assessment through a variety of means, often seeking to capture multiple perspectives through mixed methods. No extant literature revealed an evaluation instrument specifically created and published for use by residence life departments in evaluating their residential student staff members.

Wotruba (1969) used a mix of inventories and instruments in a study on residential student staff effectiveness. These instruments were issued to RAs that were identified as effective by a committee of residence life staff and students. First among these instruments was the Edwards Personal Reference Schedule, a “self-report used to measure motivation by manifested needs” (p. 108). Results from this inventory revealed that RAs, in general, strove higher for achievement, sought out friendships, and were receptive to leadership opportunities. RAs were less inclined to allow others to make decisions for them and were less interested in being the center of attention. The most effective RAs had significantly higher scores in “achievement, order, intraception, dominance, and nurturance” (p. 109). Ineffective RAs rated significantly higher on “deference, exhibition, succorance, and aggression” (p. 109).

Next in the Wotruba (1969) series was the Bell Adjustment Inventory, a “self-report of the individual’s life adjustments as he has experienced them” (p. 109). Results of this inventory revealed no significant findings that differentiated effective RAs from the general student population. Within the RA group, however, the submissiveness,

emotionality, and hostility scores revealed that the least effective RAs were those who were “more submissive, less emotionally secure, and more hostile than the effectively rated RAs” (p. 110).

Wotruba (1969) also employed the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator (MBTI). The MBTI is a self-report used to generate basic preferences regarding perception and judgement as well as means of social interaction. The study found significant performance variations between effective and ineffective RAs. As a group, RAs tended to be more extroverted and “focused their perception and judgement upon people and things rather than concepts and ideas” (p. 110). Compared to the average student population, RAs were more inclined towards intuition and feeling over sensing and thinking, handling possibilities with personal care. Within the RA group, the most effective RAs tended towards intuition, feeling, and perception profiles by a significant margin.

Atkins, Williams, and Garb (1973) conducted a study to examine the usefulness of the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) in evaluating residential student staff. The POI is an instrument to measure self-actualization. Residents were asked to rate their RA across six roles: promotion of self-responsibility with residents, promotion of social and educational growth experiences, promotion of community spirit, role modeling for residents, referring students to appropriate resources, and interpersonal counseling. The same inventory was also completed by the RAs’ supervisors. The authors found that “the results of this study, contrary to findings in earlier studies, do not support use of the POI as an instrument for selecting effective resident assistants” (p. 330).

Eichenfield et al. (1988) conducted a similar study using a “13-item Performance Evaluation Form (PEF)” developed by the residence life department. The instrument was

issued to residents who evaluated their RA using a 7-point Likert scale across 13 different characteristics: availability, informed, concerned, counseling, personality, discipline, responsible, sets good example, motivates students, handles administrative tasks, encourages self-development, relations with students, and awareness. However, the instrument did not prove significant in determining RA effectiveness. The authors suggested that poor collection rates and incomplete samples – based on submissions from students that were most loyal to their RA – impacted the usefulness of the instrument. Implications from this study included a need for the development of a more effective evaluation procedure – both an alternative quantitative instrument as well as a mix of other evaluation approaches.

As discussed previously, measures of emotional intelligence, general intelligence, and personality traits may prove useful in measuring the effectiveness of residential student staff (Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Wu & Stemler, 2008). Based on the existing body of research, only outdated, ineffectual, or tangentially-related measures of residential student staff effectiveness exist. While it is common practice for individual residence life departments to develop their own systems of evaluation, there is a clear need for well-researched instruments for residence life professionals to utilize.

Gaps in the Literature

The most recent meta-analysis of student affairs literature revealed more modest and inconsistent studies of the impact of on-campus living, noting that “research examining on-campus residence in the twenty-first century is sparse for most outcomes” (Mayhew et al., 2016, p. 545). Mayhew et al. (2016) further note few studies that expressly examined verbal, quantitative, or subject matter competence, mixed examples

of studies examining cognitive development, inconclusive results regarding psychological well-being, limited evidence supporting increased volunteerism, and clear indicators supporting increased retention and second-year persistence.

Overall, there is a lack of research into the impact of on-campus residence in the past ten years compared to the once-abundant sources of scholarship of preceding decades. These findings indicate that explorations into new research around these once commonly-tested outcomes of on-campus living is sorely needed.

More specifically, the role of residential student staff members has been largely unexplored in the past decade. While there is a significant foundation of research dating back several decades, it would be appropriate for revamped studies to explore and confirm practices that have gone untested for far too long. There is a particular need for evaluative methods of residential student staff effectiveness. Even within the foundational research, successful implementations of such evaluation instruments are virtually non-existent. The widely-accepted importance of undergraduate student staff coupled with the significant investment made towards their development makes the creation of such an instrument a necessity.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study operated from a post-positivist epistemology, which is concerned with the discovery of objective truth through testing, experimentation, and examination of cause-and-effect relationships (Sriram, 2017). Broadly stated, post-positivism is the belief that “truth is already out there, in existence, without our meaning-making” (p. 23).

The goal of the study was to develop and validate a survey instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of residential student staff members in college and university residence halls from the perspective of their residents. The study used a nonexperimental research design focused on survey research. Nonexperimental research design focuses on the relationship between variables in a set of data (Sriram, 2017); specifically, this study will attempt to understand the relationships between responses to a created survey instrument in order to validate and improve the instrument.

Population, Sample, and Participants

This study population consisted of a sample of on-campus residents at four-year colleges and universities who live in a residence hall staffed by undergraduate student staff members – commonly referred to as “RAs.” Samples were collected by partnering with the housing and residence life offices of two universities in the southwest – one private, research university and one public, research university – who administered the instrument on the researcher’s behalf. Qualtrics survey software provided by the researcher’s home institution was used to collect data in the form of quantitative

responses to the 40-item survey instrument. The survey also captured demographic responses representative of the residential students at the respective colleges and universities.

The instrument was issued to a selection of halls at the two institutions provided by the respective housing departments as representative of their on-campus populations. In total, the survey was sent to a total population of 2,774 students. Of the total population, 651 participants submitted the survey – a response rate of 23.5%.

Latent Variables

The latent variable for this study was the effectiveness of residential student staff members. Effectiveness as a latent variable was informed by the review of relevant literature, common job descriptions for residential student staff, and the conceptual framework (see chapter 2). Practically speaking, effectiveness was hypothesized to be represented by the sub-variables of structural leadership, human resource leadership, political leadership, and symbolic leadership which correspond to the four frames of Bolman and Deal's (2017) leadership framework as applied to colleges and universities in Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic model of institutions.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument was developed using a hybrid of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames of leadership and Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic model of institutions as a conceptual framework. This framework allowed the creation of four broad categories that anticipate the expected responsibilities of residential student staff: human resources, structural, symbolic, and political. Individual items were developed by reviewing extant

literature on residential student staff member job descriptions and past attempts at instrument design for similar purposes. The instrument consisted of approximately 40 items across the four categories to evaluate residential student staff on expectations of the position.

A pilot of the instrument was conducted for feedback on question wording and intended meaning using a sample of 10 undergraduate students who took the survey and offered feedback. Three rounds of review were then conducted on the item list by senior housing and residence life officers to best capture their expectations of residential student staff members.

In addition to standard demographic questions and a self-rating of involvement in the residential community, individual items asked participants to rate their level of agreement to each item using a 6-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, moderately disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, moderately agree, strongly agree) with a “not applicable” option provided.

Reliability

Reliability is, loosely defined, the accuracy of the measurements made by an instrument. More specifically, reliability describes how strongly an instrument represents the true score of the latent variables (Sriram, 2017). This study utilized Cronbach’s alpha in order to measure the reliability of scales.

Validity

Validity can be categorized into four types: content validity, criterion validity, construct validity, and conclusion validity (Sriram, 2017). Content validity addresses if

individual items capture the information they are intended to capture. Criterion validity is achieved by comparing the developed instrument to similar, existing instruments that are related to the study. Construct validity is achieved using statistical analysis of how variables (items) in the instrument relate to other variables. Conclusion validity describes if conclusions drawn from the study are justifiable and logical based on the intent and findings of the study.

Content validity is assured through review of relevant literature and consultation with experts in the relative field in order to assure that items in the instrument accurately capture what they intend to capture (Sriram, 2017). In this study, a thorough review of relevant literature was used to conceptualize and create the items in the instrument. Throughout the development of the instrument, items were critiqued and spoken into by faculty and professionals in the field of housing and residence life. Their graduate degrees and experiences represent institutions in regions across the United States. As an added layer of content validity, housing and residence life professionals who issued the survey on behalf of the researcher had the opportunity to address or suggest changes to the items in the instrument.

Criterion validity is assured through comparison of the created instrument to existing instruments relevant to the study. While some examples of instruments that have been used for the evaluation of residential student staff exist, in all cases they either were found to be statistically insignificant or are outdated by several decades. The primary motivation for this study is the lack of such an instrument in contemporary student affairs literature.

Construct validity is a major focus of this study. Principal components analysis was used to evaluate the validity of the 40-item instrument and further understand the practical application of the conceptual framework. The use of this exploratory factor analysis determined how closely the constructed survey items, based on extant literature, measured the four latent variables.

Conclusion validity will be thoroughly explored in this study through the review defense process. At that time, specific conclusions regarding the results of the research process will be vetted by a panel of faculty and administrators in order to ensure that claims are valid.

Statistical Analysis

This study relied on exploratory factor analysis specifically through principal components analysis. Principal components analysis took individual survey items, which theoretically measured aspects of the latent sub-variables that make up residential student staff effectiveness (the higher-order latent variable), and groups them into components representing the actual latent sub-variables. In this case, the instrument's items, when created, were grouped into four theoretical components following the conceptual framework. The results of this analysis revealed how much information and variance was captured by the latent sub-variables and survey instrument as a whole. Principal components analysis was conducted by examining three things in particular: eigenvalues, scree plots, and total variance (Sriram, 2017).

Eigenvalues measure the amount of information explained by each latent variable. As a rule, items with an eigenvalue of less than 1.0 (representing less information than an average single item) were dropped. Scree plot analysis was used to further confirm the

removal of unnecessary components. Scree plots graphically display the relative value of each latent variable. The latent variables were graphed on a line with the relatively vertical slope representing significant latent variables and the more horizontal slope identifying less significant latent variables. By observing the change in slope of the scree plot line, the most significant components were retained. Finally, a total variance explained table was used to confirm that only the most significant components were retained.

Limitations

The greatest limitation for this study was the number of survey respondents. Even though a large number of responses were collected, further responses from increasingly diverse campuses of different types would improve the model allowing for better items to be created. Additionally, this survey primarily sought to develop the instrument but had very limited application in using the instrument. One question on participant self-rating of participation in the community was included allowing for a limited level of multiple regression analysis. However, the dependent variable of participation is not the end-all-be-all in terms of student affairs research. Further study applying the instrument and issuing it to more populations on more campuses would improve the quality overall.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This study sought to develop a valid and reliable instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of residential student staff members. Residential student staff members are usually undergraduate students who work in residence halls on college and universities campuses. Their roles include informally advising or mentoring students, creating extracurricular academic programming, assisting with disciplinary or policy issues, and completing administrative tasks. These residential student staff members are often primarily unsupervised in their day-to-day responsibilities. As such, methods of evaluating their performance are not often clear or effective. Extant student affairs literature lacks extensive study of methods for evaluating these staff members. The purpose of this study is to develop an instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of residential student staff members in their role for use by their supervisory professional staff. This chapter presents the results of structural data analysis on the developed instrument to address the research question of whether such a scale can be created and utilized. All data analysis was conducted using version 24 of the IBM SPSS Statistics suite.

Research Question

The guiding research question for this study asked whether a statistically valid and reliable instrument could be created for evaluating the effectiveness of residential student staff members from the perspective of their resident students. To answer this

question, a review of relevant literature and job expectations for such staff members were used to develop a 40-item instrument centered around a conceptual framework for education leadership (see chapters two and three for more information). This instrument was distributed to on-campus residents at two participating institutions of higher education. The responses to this instrument were analyzed using principal components analysis to determine if meaningful components emerged that corresponded to the relevant literature and expectations.

Descriptive Statistics

In addition to the 40-item instrument developed for analysis, a standard set of demographic questions were included at the beginning of the survey. The survey was issued to students from January 2018 to February 2018. The survey was administered to approximately 2,774 on-campus undergraduate residents at two four-year research institutions in the Southwest. Of the surveyed population, 651 participants responded for a response rate of 23.4%. The response sample represents a wide variety of student demographics across year, race/ethnicity, sex, international student status, transfer student status, time spent living on campus, and community type. A summary of these demographic results can be found in Table 4.1 below.

Using the initial 651 participant responses, a principal components analysis was conducted. A second factor analysis was conducted using a small sample of the initial 651 responses containing only responses where no item was marked “n/a” – leaving 316 responses for the second analysis. This second analysis yielded effectively identical results that were clearer than the initial analysis using all 651 responses. The results that follow are based on the smaller 316 response subset.

Table 4.1

Response Demographics for Residential Student Staff Evaluation Instrument

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%
Total Responses	651	
Sex		
Male	218	33.49
Female	417	64.06
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native/First Nation	7	1.08
Asian	48	7.37
Black or African American	29	4.45
Hispanic, Latino/Latina	69	10.60
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	3	0.46
White/Caucasian/European American	406	62.37
Multiracial	25	3.84
Other	7	1.08
Academic Standing		
First-year/Freshman	391	60.06
Sophomore	123	18.89
Junior	52	7.99
Senior	36	5.53
Time living on campus		
Less than 1 year	420	64.52
1 to less than 2 years	120	18.43
2 to less than 3 years	35	5.38
3 to less than 4 years	23	3.53
4 or more years	6	0.92
Transfer status		
Transfer	20	3.07
Non-transfer	585	89.86
International Status		
International	10	1.54
Non-international	626	96.16

Principal Components Analysis

Principal components analysis was completed to evaluate the validity of the instrument. In this form of analysis, variables that share correlation but are independent from other groups of variables sharing correlation are combined into factors. Within this study, shared variability through communalities, eigenvalues, and a rotated component

matrix with orthogonal rotation was measured. See Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 below for the eigenvalue/total variance explained table, communalities table, and rotated component matrix respectively.

Table 4.2

Eigenvalues and Total Variance Explained of Loaded Components

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
1	27.244	68.110
2	1.793	4.482
3	1.066	2.664
Cumulative		75.256

As represented by Table 4.2 above, the principal components analysis of the data set revealed three components with eigenvalues greater than 1, which were retained. These components, each made up of a grouping of individual survey items, were the most effective at capturing measurements of effectiveness of residential student staff. Components beyond these first three had eigenvalues of 0.908 or lower, meaning that they account for less variability than a single variable and were not retained in analysis. These three components together account for 75.26% of variance in the set with subsequent potential components possessing a total variance explained of 2.3% or less. These components were compared to the scree plot to confirm that they were the most strongly related components. See Figure 4.1 below for the scree plot. Note the change in slope at the point of component 3.

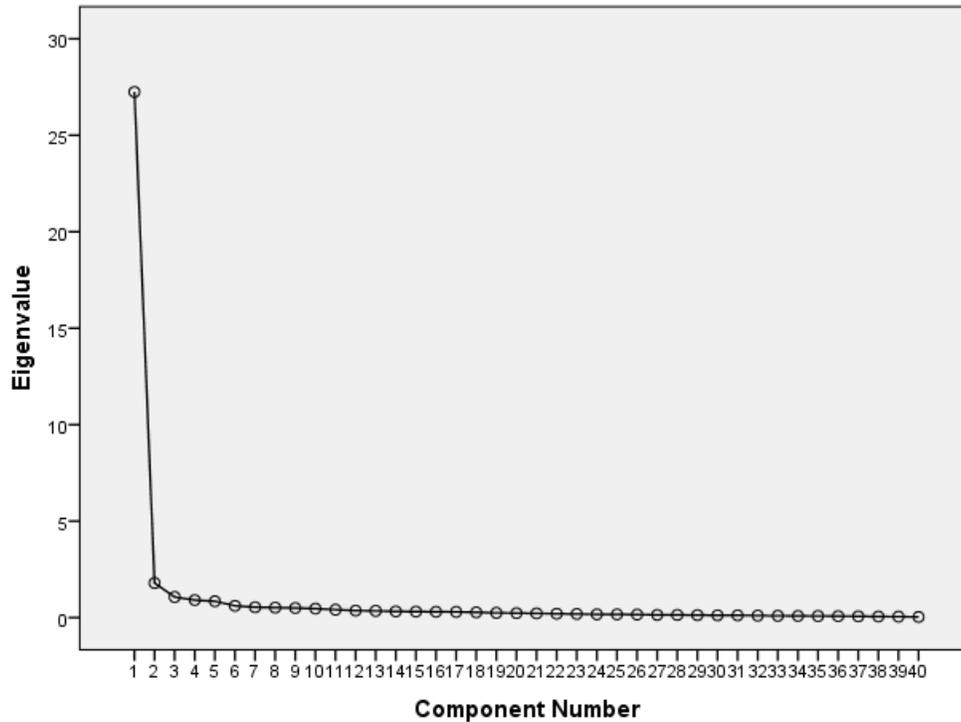


Figure 4.1. Scree plot showing 'elbow' at component number 3.

The communalities for the principal components analysis represent the proportion of variance of a variable explained by the principal components. The variables in the set all had relatively high levels of communality, ranging from 0.588 to 0.864. Thus, all items were well represented.

Next, the rotated components matrix was used to determine which specific items to retain within each component. The items were divided amongst the three components as seen in Table 4.4 below by retaining only items with values greater than .5 that did not have a higher value within another component. This yielded a subscale with 16 items, a subscale with 15 items, and a subscale with 9 items.

Table 4.3

Communalities

Item	Extraction
STR1	0.685
STR2	0.791
STR3	0.578
STR4	0.849
STR5	0.825
STR6	0.752
STR7	0.749
STR8	0.748
STR9	0.673
STR10	0.689
HR1	0.670
HR2	0.797
HR3	0.769
HR4	0.819
HR5	0.815
HR6	0.733
HR7	0.764
HR8	0.760
HR9	0.717
HR10	0.761
SYM1	0.703
SYM2	0.824
SYM3	0.847
SYM4	0.732
SYM5	0.812
SYM6	0.810
SYM7	0.864
SYM8	0.799
SYM9	0.852
SYM10	0.802
POL1	0.734
POL2	0.776
POL3	0.790
POL4	0.713
POL5	0.617
POL6	0.744
POL7	0.794
POL8	0.708
POL9	0.647
POL10	0.588

The internal reliability of each subscale was measured by analyzing Cronbach's alpha with scores of 0.7 or higher being considered acceptable. All three subscales had high Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores of 0.96, 0.98, and 0.95, respectively.

Table 4.4

Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
STR4	0.81		
STR10	0.792	0.374	
STR5	0.762	0.418	
STR2	0.745		0.372
STR9	0.73		
POL8	0.697	0.362	
STR1	0.687		0.365
STR6	0.686		0.464
POL7	0.677	0.465	
STR8	0.655	0.396	0.402
STR3	0.64	0.395	
SYM6	0.596	0.452	0.5
HR8	0.595	0.487	0.411
HR10	0.579	0.474	0.449
HR9	0.541	0.445	0.477
POL5	0.506	0.451	0.396
SYM7	0.425	0.766	
SYM10	0.381	0.764	
SYM5	0.414	0.759	
SYM8		0.754	0.403
SYM2	0.502	0.714	
SYM3	0.53	0.708	
SYM1		0.702	0.423
SYM4		0.693	0.473
HR4	0.53	0.665	
HR5	0.549	0.655	
HR7	0.387	0.635	0.459
POL1	0.545	0.61	
POL6	0.476	0.6	0.397
POL9	0.354	0.586	0.422
SYM9	0.528	0.564	0.505

(Continued)

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
HR2			0.774
STR7	0.48		0.685
POL10		0.428	0.591
HR1		0.46	0.584
POL3	0.546	0.39	0.582
HR6		0.543	0.582
HR3	0.556	0.387	0.557
POL4	0.364	0.521	0.557
POL2	0.451	0.516	0.554

*Shaded colors indicate component groupings.

These three subscales were re-assessed through content analysis using the conceptual framework to ensure validity. Upon review, some items were re-classified into other frames based on the context of similar items and knowledge of theory. Lower scoring or redundant items were eliminated from the subscales. This yielded two subscales with 10 items and one subscale with 8 items. Subscale 1 primarily consisted of items related to structural frame content. This subscale was named the Structural Leadership Scale. Subscale 2 primarily consisted of items related to human resource frame content. This subscale was named the Human Resource Leadership Scale. Subscale 3 contained a combination of symbolic and political frame content. This subscale was named the Symbo-Political Leadership Scale. Figure 4.2 below summarizes the three subscales.

The refined survey instrument consists of three subscales totaling 28 items measuring three latent variables. Mean scores based on the full set of responses to the initial survey item were as follows: Structural Leadership (5.12), Human Resource Leadership (5.11), and Symbo-Political Leadership (5.17).

1. Structural Leadership Scale ($\alpha = 0.964$)	2. Human Resource Leadership Scale ($\alpha = 0.978$)	3. Symbo-Political Leadership Scale ($\alpha = 0.952$)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My RA responds well to crisis situations. 2. My RA respects their supervisor. 3. My RA is good at communicating rules. 4. My RA responds to me in a timely manner. 5. My RA demonstrates respect for others' property. 6. My RA is consistent in enforcing rules. 7. My RA is an organized person. 8. My RA explains the responsibilities of their role to me. 9. My RA taught me how to resolve maintenance issues. 10. My RA cares about the physical appearance of the hall. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My RA communicates that I matter. 2. My RA is someone I can confide in. 3. My RA likes me as an individual. 4. My RA helps me achieve my goals. 5. My RA is a good listener. 6. My RA expresses care for me. 7. My RA has gotten to know me. 8. My RA interacts with me regularly. 9. My RA makes me feel like I belong at this institution. 10. My RA makes me feel like I belong in this residence hall. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My RA is present. 2. My RA spends enough time on the floor. 3. My RA hosts interesting programs. 4. My RA is enthusiastic about their job. 5. My RA communicates a vision for this hall community. 6. My RA models what it means to be a well-rounded student. 7. My RA interacts with all residents equally. 8. My RA tries to get to know everyone on the floor.

Figure 4.2. Summary of three subscales following analysis.

Additional Multiple Regression Analysis

This study sought to create a valid and reliable scale that measures the effectiveness of residential student staff members. In addition to the 40 conceptual framework-related questions and standard demographic questions, one additional item on the survey measured self-rating of participation in programs and activities in the residence hall (Likert 1-6: “I often participate in programs/activities sponsored by my residence hall”). Although not part of the original research question, I decided to conduct a multiple regression with the new subscales as predictor variables (Structural Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, and Symbo-Political Leadership) and self-reported participation in programs as the outcome variable. See table 4.5 below for a summary of multiple regression findings.

Table 4.5

Results of Multiple Regression with Self-Rated Participation as an Output and the Three Subscales as Predictors.

Model	R ²	Unstandardized Coefficients (b)	Standard Deviation	Standardized Coefficients (β)	p
Constant		2.607	1.502		p < 0.001
strScore	0.021	-0.066	0.911	-0.040	ns
hrScore	0.051	0.666	1.224	0.543	p < 0.001
spScore	0.010	-0.396	1.097	-0.290	p < 0.02

Several noteworthy findings were discovered from the multiple regression analysis. First, only two of the three subscales were found to be significant at a reasonable level. The Human Resource Leadership subscale score was significant at the $p < 0.001$ level in predicting a resident's self-rated participation in the community. Less significant was the Symbo-Political Leadership subscale score, which was significant at the $p < 0.02$ level. The p-value represents degree of confidence with which a statistical claim can be made. With a p-value of less than or equal to 0.05 at least, the chance of finding the indicated results is very low (Sriram, 2017). As such, the effects of the Human Resource and Symbo-Political Leadership sub-scores can be claimed with over 99% confidence and 80% confidence respectively.

The R² value in the table above represents the proportion of the dependent variable (participation in activities in the residence hall) predicted by the three independent variables (Structural, Human Resource, and Symbo-Political Leadership scores of residential student staff member). The highly significant human resource leadership sub-score predicted 5.1% of variation in the response to the participation question. The less significant Symbo-Political Leadership sub-score predicted 1% of

variation in the response to the participation question. While these values are not very high, it is worth discussing the impact that residential student staff member effectiveness may have on resident participation.

The unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) coefficients represent the impact on the dependent variable (participation in activities in the residence hall) that a change in the independent variable (Structural, Human Resource, and Symbo-Political Leadership scores of residential student staff members) has. The unstandardized (b) coefficient represents the amount of change in actual units of the dependent variable occurred when a change in one actual unit of the independent variable occurred. So, in this study, an increase of 0.666-units on the 1-to-6 scale occurred in participation score when a 1-unit increase in Human Resource Leadership score occurred. Similarly, a decrease of 0.396 units on the 1-to-6 scale occurred in participation score when a 1-unit increase in Symbo-Political Leadership score occurred.

The standardized coefficients represent the amount of change in standard deviations that occurred. Since all four measures were on a 1-to-6 scale, the unstandardized score is less useful in this case. However, for a reader interested in the standardized scores, the change amounts can be observed using the standard deviation values in table 4.5 above.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Colleges and universities nationwide utilize the talents and abilities of undergraduate students in peer leadership roles. These student leadership positions take many forms and serve a variety of functions. First and foremost among them in terms of responsibility, compensation, and developmental opportunities, is the role of residential student staff members. Called resident advisors, resident assistants, community leaders, and more, these students provide a wide variety of services to their resident peers including administrative responsibilities, extracurricular programming, informal counseling, and peer mentorship. It is clear that these students are the “eyes and ears of the university, making sure residence hall students are given the support they need to succeed” (Blimling, 2015, p. 162).

Contemporary research studies in student success and development encourage the residential experience as a benefit to students (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987; Long, 2014; Flowers, 2004; Conroe, 1986; Astin, 1999; Thompson, Samiratedu, & Rafter, 1993; Strange & Banning, 2015). Residential student staff members help create the environments and encourage involvement that ensures the positive experiences for on-campus residents (Blimling, 2015). In addition to being important factors in student success, colleges and universities invest significant amounts of monetary resources into the training and compensation of residential student staff members. Using statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) and the National Center for Education Statistics

(2017), estimates range from \$300,000,000 to \$2,000,000,000 is spent annually on residential student staff members at colleges and universities across the country.

Despite the clearly established importance – both educationally and monetarily – of residential student staff members, there is a severe lack of research surrounding the selection, training, and evaluation of residential student staff members (Clark, 2008; Koch, 2012). In particular, only loosely-related (Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Wu & Stemler, 2008), statistically insignificant (Eichenfield et al., 1988), or outdated (Wotruba, 1969) examples of evaluation instruments exist in the extant student affairs literature.

Given the extensive gaps in literature, this study sought to develop a valid and reliable instrument to aid housing and residence life professionals in evaluating the performance of residential student staff members from the perspective of their residents. The project was ultimately successful in developing such an instrument, and this instrument has important implications for theory, current practice, and future research.

Discussion of Findings

The three latent variables present in the revised version of the survey following principal components analysis align closely with practical aspects of the residential student staff role. Structural leadership is understood as a residential student staff member's ability to work together with others as part of a larger organization to achieve goals and distribute work in an efficient manner. Leaders are most effective in this area when they work within the systems and structures around them and communicate relevant data to their residents, team members, and supervisors (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Birnbaum, 1988, Blimling, 2003). Items in the structural leadership component centered on administrative aspects of the job (“...responds well to crisis situations,” “...is an

organized person,” “...cares about the physical appearance of the hall”), communication of information up and down the hierarchical chain (“...respects their supervisor,” “...is good at communicating rules,” “...responds to me in a timely manner,” “...taught me how to resolve maintenance issues,” “...explains the responsibilities of their role to me”), and respect for the organizational structure they belong to (“...is good at communicating rules,” “...demonstrates respect for others’ property,” “...is consistent in enforcing rules”).

Human resource leadership emphasizes the importance of individuals through empowerment, support, and development of interpersonal relationships. Leaders are most effective in this area when they offer individualized assistance to people they serve by acting as informal counselors, friends, and confidants (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Birnbaum, 1988; Blimling, 2003). Items in the human resource leadership component focused on creation of sense of belonging (“...communicates that I matter,” “...makes me feel like I belong at this institution,” “...makes me feel like I belong in his residence hall”), individualized care (“...expresses care for me,” “...helps me achieve my goals,” “...likes me as an individual”), and regular interpersonal interaction (“...is a good listener,” “...has gotten to know me,” “...interacts with me regularly,” “...is someone I can confide in”).

Finally, symbo-political leadership combined aspects of political leadership and symbolic leadership articulated in the conceptual framework. This component was created through a combination of statistical analysis and review of the relevant literature on leadership in educational institutions and in the residential student staff position.

Political leadership involves managing competing demands between competing interests when goals are unclear or immeasurable. Normally, political leadership occurs by forming coalitions of subgroups within organizations to increase bargaining power and assist in mutually beneficial goals. Political leaders are most effective when they are able to mediate within and between subgroups by understanding when to encourage or discourage differing opinions to achieve specific goals (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Birnbaum, 1988). Practically speaking, residential student staff are not often in a position of needing to negotiate with various subgroups or make strategic institutional decisions about competing resources. They do, however, have to balance competing demands on their time – namely between school, their work responsibilities, social life, and other interests – or intergroup dynamics within their floor – whether that be interpersonal conflicts between residents or groups of people with varying needs and interests. (Blimling, 2003).

Symbolic leadership involves emphasizes meaning making, storytelling, and sense-making beyond the facts of a given situation. Symbolic leaders view reality as a story, establishing purpose and values for the organization as a whole through anecdote, tradition, ritual, and shared perceptions of reality (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Birnbaum, 1988). In terms of their daily responsibilities, residential student staff do not fully possess the role of symbolic leader, namely because they often are not able to set visions or missions for the organizations they belong to; however, on a small scale, they establish the traditions, rituals, and values for their individual floors or communities of residents. Additionally, they act as role models who live out the mission and vision of their floor,

residence hall, or university and interpret or explain university expectations (Blimling, 2003).

The fact that these two leadership styles – symbolic and political – combined into one component makes sense when one considers the incomplete way that residential student staff members carry out the aspects of the respective leadership types. Residential student staff members are neither fully political or symbolic leaders to the same degree that they are structural and human resource leaders, but they still serve an important function as role models in positions of authority who manage competing dynamics and balance their resources of time and energy amongst their residents.

Thus, symbo-political leaders are most effective when they spend time being present on the floor, being a role model of a good student, hard worker, university representative, and inclusive leader. Items in the symbo-political component focused on balancing competing demands (“...is present,” “...hosts interesting programs,” “...spends enough time on the floor”), sharing time between people (“...interacts with all residents equally,” “...tries to get to know everyone on the floor”), and creating a good example for other students (“...is enthusiastic about their job,” “...communicates a vision for this hall community,” “...models what it means to be a well-rounded student”).

Statistically speaking, these three subscales were incredibly successful at representing the effectiveness of residential student staff members. High internal reliability and high total variance explained for a survey issued to a diverse population of students from two different four-year research institutions indicate that the instrument performs its function well. The mean scores for the individual subscales tended to be around 5.00 (“Moderately Agree”), meaning that on average, students tended to rate their

residential student staff members in a generally positive light; however, the scale still possesses enough variation to ensure that differing opinions on both sides of that average are captured.

Implications for Theory

This study has worthwhile implications for student affairs theory in several ways. First, it represents a contemporary exploration into developing an evaluation instrument based on extensive literature review and statistical analysis. The instrument created in this study has high reliability and is valid in terms of its content and its constructs. The instrument will also demonstrate conclusion validity as long as administrators use it the way it is intended to be used: as a way to measure student perceptions of resident assistant effectiveness (Sriram, 2017). The instrument was also developed using a diverse sample of campus residents and proved useful for application in both private and public institution settings. Thus, this study and the resulting instrument serve as an important foundation for further conversations regarding residential student staff selection, training, and evaluation.

Second, this study provides an empirical application of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames of leadership and Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic institution model. The results of this survey indicate that there is practical evidence to support the use of these models as tools for understanding leadership in higher education institutions. It also expands Birnbaum's (1988) model specifically beyond the realm of college and university presidents or other upper-level leadership, allowing for the potential to better understand entry- and mid-level leaders in educational institutions.

Bolman and Deal's (2017) model can be applied for use helping residential student staff members understand the complexities and uniqueness of their roles. Such understanding would likely prove useful for residential student staff members as they reflect on which relevant skills they are developing in their role that can be transferred to post-college endeavors. Since Bolman and Deal's (2017) model was originally applied to business and adapted to higher education (Birnbaum, 1988), it stands to reason that the conceptual framework can also be used for understanding the aspects of other careers and disciplines as well. Such a connection provides students with an opportunity to grow more from their time as a residential student staff member and constantly reflect on how to continue using their skills. As such, this study demonstrates that Bolman and Deal's (2017) framework could provide a key for linking theory and practice for college and university student leaders.

Finally, through the inclusion of a multiple regression analysis on the question of self-rated resident participation, this study confirms previous research (Blimling, 2015; Aboleda, Wang, Shelby, & Walen, 2003) suggesting that residential student staff members have an impact on residential student involvement and participation. The link between student involvement and student success in higher education is well established (Mayhew et al., 2016).

Implications for Current Practice

As explored previously, there is good reason to better understand the effectiveness and impact of residential student staff members. A significant amount of financial resources is invested in their development (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards

in Higher Education (2017) includes regular evaluation of residential student staff members among their requirements for housing and residential life departments. Despite such a demand, there is no clear evidence in extant student affairs literature of readily available psychometric instruments to accomplish the goal of evaluation.

Recognizing that the intuition and expertise of full-time professional staff is an invaluable aspect of the evaluation process for residential student staff members, this study provides a statistically sound instrument that professional staff can use as an additional means of evaluation to better understand the effectiveness of their staff. Housing and Residence Life departments who are seeking to overhaul or improve their assessment methods can use the information from this study and adapt the instrument to their needs. National associations and standards boards can provide this instrument as a recommendation for institutions seeking to ensure their policies and procedures meet competitive standards.

Practically, student affairs practitioners should incorporate this instrument into their own assessment and evaluation processes in order to better understand their staff members. Using the components developed through this study, a set of templates were created to assist in evaluating residential student staff members. See Appendix A, B, and C for templates that can be used for framing residential student staff member self-evaluation, evaluation of residential student staff members by their supervisors, and peer evaluation of residential student staff members by each other, respectively. Finally, the instrument developed by this study can be found in Appendix D for use in gathering feedback from residents on the effectiveness of their residential student staff members.

For application of the research findings, professional student affairs staff who supervise residential student staff members should use the tools contained in the appendices to assess their staff effectiveness from the appropriate angles. Then, during regularly occurring one-on-one meetings or developmental conversations, feedback should be shared based on what is observed. For example, a residential student staff member who is demonstrating human resource leadership scores that are lower when compared to averages, other staff members, or to an individual's other scores could be coached in how to connect interpersonally with residents and care for them well. Ultimately, these tools should primarily be used for the growth and development of student staff, not for disconnected, mechanical assessment with no purpose in mind.

Beyond these direct uses, scholar-practitioners should consider using this instrument to synergize their selection, hiring, training, and evaluation processes by applying the conceptual framework to interview procedures, training objectives, and student staff learning goals. Such synergy would prove useful in making the conversation consistent across departmental efforts and provides developing student leaders with valuable training in effective leadership tied to practical opportunities for application.

Implications for Future Research

First and foremost, the main implication for future research is to continue issuing the created instrument to populations of on-campus residents in order to build a larger sample of responses and further perfect the instrument. The instrument was issued to two four-year research institutions in the southwest, one private, one public, so additional research could involve expanding the range of schools surveyed – both in type and in location.

Second, there is extensive basis for more rigorous multiple regression analysis and MANOVA analysis to be performed based on results collected using the instrument. A preliminary multiple regression based on a single self-rating question revealed interesting results for study. A significant effect was found on increasing residential student staff member scores in the human resource leadership subscale and increasing self-rating of resident participation in the community. Such a finding suggests that residential student staff members that are adept at interpersonal leadership may cause their residents to be more involved in the community as a whole.

Conversely, a significant but effect was found between increasing symbo-political leadership and decreasing self-rating of resident involvement in the community. This finding suggests that residential student staff members that are more proficient in role-modeling and interacting across resident groups equally may actually discourage involvement in their communities; perhaps residents living with especially adapt symbo-political leaders feel less inclination to engage in the community if they are well supported by strong role-modeling peer leaders. Further research could be conducted to confirm or deny the current results of the multiple regression.

Finally, there is room for qualitative research to explore the depth and precision of the roles of residential student staff members according to residents, the student staff themselves, and their supervisors. While theory and statistical analysis support the classifications of job responsibilities according to the conceptual framework, perceptions of their responsibilities may differ or be confirmed through individual interviews.

Relationship to Existing Evaluation Methods

While there is a clearly demonstrated gap in published literature resulting from a lack of research dedicated to the selection, hiring, training, and evaluation of residential student staff members, it is unreasonable to believe that such managerial functions do not occur regularly in colleges and universities across the country. Between homegrown solutions developed by individual departments and large-scale commercial platforms, there are options available for gathering evaluation data on the residential experience, including residential student staff performance, from the perspective of campus residents. These solutions, however, lack several crucial components that this study seeks to rectify.

First, this study seeks to provide freely available solutions as part of the scholarly conversation for college and university housing and residence life departments seeking to improve their developmental efforts. By applying the conceptual framework to normal staffing functions, a consistent experience can be created to allow for more consistent student leader development and improved impact on residential experiences. Additionally, the availability of published research allows for easier adoption of higher quality evaluation by historically overworked residence life professionals.

Compared to commercial solutions that might fill a similar niche, however, this instrument provides a set of in-depth, highly reliable scales tailored to the unique residential student staff member role. This instrument specifically focuses on expectations and behaviors that these staff members should be embodying, gathering the perceptions of residential students. Commercial solutions, by comparison, often situate student staff evaluation within larger campus climate surveys where a small number of questions attempt to capture the entirety of the residential student staff role. In addition,

many popular solutions focus on measures of tangential, but related, concepts that are not directly representative of effectiveness. A popular example is the Skyfactor benchworks program assessments, a component of which is residence life, which includes the “ACUHO-I Student Staff Assessment” (Skyfactor). However, no published research exists regarding such an ACUHO-I assessment instrument nor does ACUHO-I publish anything in their standards regarding student staff members except for a requirement that “appropriate measures are taken to ensure that when student staff members are employed, they are adequately and routinely trained and supervised” (ACUHO-I, 2015). This limited standard provides the basis for a small selection of questions which ask residents to rate their satisfaction with their student staff member regarding a variety of topics related to the role (Chessman, 2013).

The flaws that exist with such an application are that it is impossible to verify the reliability or significance of any of the items that make up the scale. Higher education institutions uniquely call upon their members, faculty and staff alike, to be scholars as well as practitioners; in this capacity, the application of research is paramount to continued professional development (Sriram & Oster, 2012). To abstract away the opportunity for research development and applications by scholar-practitioners in the field in lieu of corporate solutions locked behind pay-walls seems misaligned with the fundamental principles of higher education.

Additionally, asking residents to report their satisfaction with residential student staff members provides different results than developing an instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of those staff members. Residents in a hall could be entirely detached from the community and associated learning outcomes and thus may be satisfied with a

residential student staff member who does not enforce policies, create learning experiences, or foster meaningful conversations. Such a residential student staff member, however, would not be deemed effective by the head of a housing and residence life department (Blimling, 2015).

Second, this instrument is not to be the only part of the evaluation conversation. The expertise and experiences of housing and residence life professionals is integral to the training and development of student leaders. The instrument developed in this study provides such professionals with another tool with which to make sense of their team's performance. It provides an area of conversation and an avenue for further developing student leaders. Most importantly, it gives these professionals important information gathered by asking hard questions to the people most benefitted by the important work that residential student staff members do every day – and allows professional staff to turn hard, uncomfortable conversations about such information into valuable learning opportunities for highly skilled student leaders.

Conclusion

Extant student affairs research demonstrates the value that is provided to the college and university experience by living on campus. Additional research is needed to continue understanding and optimizing these experiences for student growth and development. Consistently considered crucial in the on-campus experience is the role of residential student staff members who serve as peer leaders to other students. This role is well established but has lacked continued exploration in student affairs literature. Despite the demonstrated benefits these peer leaders bring to their communities and the significant temporal and monetary resources invested in them, there is a significant lack

of research towards understanding their selection, training, and evaluation. This study sought to understand the residential student staff member role and to develop an instrument founded in student affairs theory and statistical analysis.

The strongest implications from this study involve the high statistical reliability and well-rounded validity present in the instrument. This instrument fills a need present in student affairs literature indicated by national standards calling for regular evaluation of student staff members. It also provides a useful tool for practitioners in understanding their specific areas of practice. Finally, it creates a well-rounded foundation for future research and practice in student staff evaluation and beyond.

Increasingly, higher education is data and results driven due to external demands. While this alone does not justify increased data metric use, there are practical advantages to taking care and spending quality time developing useful evaluation instruments that serve multiple roles. Evaluation and assessment is only useful when it answers questions. When spending time, energy, and resources on evaluation, metrics, and data collection, take the time to understand organization goals, existing research, and future plans.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Template for Residential Student Staff Member Self-Evaluation

These questions should be given to residential student staff members for evaluation of their own performance. The specific ways these responses are used can be adjusted based on department expectations and supervisory styles. For example, student staff could use this as a reflective tool to set professional development goals with their supervisor or supervisors could review responses and create development plans for their staff.

On a scale of 1 to 6 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Moderately Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree) how strongly do you agree with the following statements?

- Structural Leadership
 - I respond to crisis situations effectively.
 - I am consistent in enforcing policies within my hall.
 - I am organized.
 - I care for the physical appearance of my hall.
 - I communicate information to my supervisor effectively.
 - I communicate information to my residents effectively.

- Human Resource Leadership
 - I regularly interact with most residents under my care.
 - I have gotten to know most residents beyond surface level information.
 - I interact with most of my residents face-to-face.
 - I regularly communicate to my residents that they matter in this community.
 - I focus on residents as individuals instead of only as part of a large group.
 - I seek out healthy relationships for support so that I can support my residents in turn.

- Symbo-Political Leadership
 - I am enthusiastic about the work that I do.
 - I have a vision for my community that I share with my residents.
 - I seek out opportunities to interact with all of my residents, not just a select few.
 - I am able to balance competing demands on my time.
 - I spend time simply being present on my floor.
 - I strive to be a role model for my residents.

APPENDIX B

Template for Supervisor Evaluation of Residential Student Staff Members

The supervisor's role in evaluation is processing information on residential student staff members from a variety of evaluative sources: one-on-one conversations, observed interactions in the community, resident survey feedback (Appendix D), peer evaluation (Appendix C), and self-evaluation (Appendix A). The supervisor is thus responsible for facilitating the conversation when all of this input is discussed and for creating developmental objectives for the student leader. The conceptual framework for this study (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Birnbaum, 1988) provides a valuable leadership tool that is valuable both for students currently in the role as well as for post-college use. Thus, conversations should be framed with a learning mindset that seeks to help residential student staff understand their current performance and how they can build further strengths. Again, this can be facilitated in a variety of ways that fit the needs of the department and supervisory style. A template is provided below for helping supervisors decide which elements of leadership a student staff member may need growth in.

- Have expectations and the conceptual leadership framework been provided to the residential student staff member? Do they understand the expectations and have a grasp of the leadership framework? More than just being a theory in a book, do they understand the implications that leadership frameworks can have as a person during college and in their career afterwards?
- Are there any trends between your own observations (one-on-one conversations, observations in staff meetings/in the community, etc.), informal feedback from

partners in the community (students, staff, faculty), and formal evaluation measures (peer evaluations, resident surveys, self-evaluation)? Which leadership scores are consistently high or low?

- Within the items that are consistently high and low, are there patterns within the subscales of the resident feedback survey or the self-evaluation?
- Frame the conversation with the staff member by first highlighting areas of strength. Then, move into areas of growth. Depending on the specific areas, examples are helpful for framing the conversation. If there is a low trend, consider asking the student what they are doing with regards to the particular area or if it is something they need assistance with.
- Knowing that you have similar evaluation information for all members of the team, think of ways that team members can be partnered to provide mentorship for each other. A student that is a particularly strong structural leader, for example, might be able to learn from someone who is a stand-out human resource leader.

APPENDIX C

Template for Peer Evaluation Between Residential Student Staff Members

Evaluation of peers can occur in multiple ways; however, the use of a consistent set of expectations or conceptual framework is needed to establish a shared interpretation of the nature of the residential student staff position. Using the framework established in this study (Structural Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, Symbo-Political Leadership), student leaders could be training on how to be most effective as a leader. With that in mind, the following evaluation could be used – within the proper context – to gather input from teammates and peers and used in concert with other evaluation templates as part of the developmental conversation.

Using the 3 leadership sub-scales, on a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being the highest, please rate each member of your team on how effective they are within the following criteria:

- Structural Leadership
 - Administration
 - Communication
 - Organization
- Human Resource Leadership
 - Creating sense of belonging
 - Providing individualized care
 - Interpersonal interaction
- Symbo-Political Leadership
 - Balancing competing demands
 - Sharing time between people and self
 - Setting a good example for other students

APPENDIX D

Instrument for Residents Evaluating Residential Student Staff Members

These questions should be issued to on-campus residents in survey format. On a scale of 1 to 6 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Moderately Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree) how strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Scale 1 – Structural Leadership

1. My RA responds well to crisis situations.
2. My RA respects their supervisor.
3. My RA is good at communicating rules.
4. My RA responds to me in a timely manner.
5. My RA demonstrates respect for others' property.
6. My RA is consistent in enforcing rules.
7. My RA is an organized person.
8. My RA explains the responsibilities of their role to me.
9. My RA taught me how to resolve maintenance issues.
10. My RA cares about the physical appearance of the hall.

Scale 2 – Human Resource Leadership

1. My RA communicates that I matter.
2. My RA is someone I can confide in.
3. My RA likes me as an individual.
4. My RA helps me achieve my goals.
5. My RA is a good listener.
6. My RA expresses care for me.
7. My RA has gotten to know me.
8. My RA interacts with me regularly.
9. My RA makes me feel like I belong at this institution.
10. My RA makes me feel like I belong in this residence hall.

Scale 3 – Symbol-Political Leadership

1. My RA is present.
2. My RA spends enough time on the floor.
3. My RA hosts interesting programs.
4. My RA is enthusiastic about their job.
5. My RA communicates a vision for this hall community.
6. My RA models what it means to be a well-rounded student.
7. My RA interacts with all residents equally.
8. My RA tries to get to know everyone on the floor.

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