THE IMPACT TRAINING HAS ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF
RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

by

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A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

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DEDICATION

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

First, I would like to give thanks to my Lord and Savior. Without you nothing is possible, with you all things are possible. It is with your love and guidance that I pushed through when I could not see the light at the end of the tunnel. Lord, I thank you.

To my daughter, Destiny, I dedicate this degree to you. You have been there with me through all the many, many ups and downs. Always willing to offer a scripture of encouragement; you are wise beyond your years. You have been my biggest cheerleader through everything, even when mommy wanted to throw in the towel, you pushed me to keep going. I pray I made you proud. You are a blessing to all you encounter and I love you with my whole heart. You, too, are destined for greatness.

To my nieces and nephews, I pray auntie has made you proud. Remember always strive for greatness and never stop learning. You can never be over educated or overdressed. Always dress for the job that you want not for the one you are in. When opportunity knocks, pray and then allow God to guide your next move.

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THE IMPACT TRAINING HAS ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

Brandy Garlic

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ABSTRACT

This comparative case study analysis examined the impact training has on the self-efficacy of Resident Assistants (RAs). Literature on the RA position and Bandura's Self Efficacy theory served as the framework for this comparative case study analysis. Case number one, identified as Curricular Design, focused on the design of RA training programs, the background of those presenting at training and designing the program and to what extent designers used integrated course design (Fink, 2003). Case number two, identified as Learning Outcomes, focused on the importance of establishing learning outcomes for a training program. Once learning outcomes are established, the designer should develop ways to assess the effectiveness of those learning outcomes. Case number three, identified as Meaningful Training, focuses on the training RAs receive, their ability to retain the information and then how they apply that information to building a community in the residence halls.

All cases were significant to this study. A comparative analysis of the research study design, study participants, the data collection process and the findings were used to develop themes. Based on the literature reviewed and the cases examined, the Garlic RA Training Model was introduced as a guide for future RA training program designers.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

College students spend 65 to 70% of their time on campus in their living space, residence hall staff, programs, and the facilities in which they live have a large impact on students' and parents' perception of a given university (Greenleaf, Forsythe, Godfrey, Hudson, & Thompson, 1967). Amada (1994) supports this idea by saying,

> The college or university residence hall, which blends together persons of many races, religions, lifestyles, and values systems, may represent the most culturally diverse environment in which many of today's college students will ever live. When large numbers of persons reside together in concentrated proximity, it is inevitable that interpersonal tensions, misunderstandings, incivilities, and disharmonies will arise, at times reaching serious proportions (p. 39).

Although the previously mentioned statements reflect the historical research conducted on resident assistants, these observations still hold true today. If the statements from these researchers are valid, there is one fact that is beyond the scope of everyday activities and that is the importance of the training infused in the staff working in the residence halls, specifically the paraprofessional staff.

The purpose of this case study analysis was to examine the impact Resident Assistants (RA) training has on the paraprofessional staff working in the residence halls. Training practices were examined to gain a better understanding of the knowledge RAs have after training. Researchers and practitioners have identified the need for thorough and intentional training for RAs (Bloland, Stamatakos, Rogers, 1996; Bowman & Bowman, 1995; Bliming, 2003; Denzine & Anderson, 1999).

The extent of that training varies from university to university. Proper training is proven to result in increased self-efficacy (Johnson, Baker, Kopala, Kielselicia & Thompson, 1989).

Bandura (1977) describes self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their abilities to complete a task. Researchers have proven increased self-efficacy will result in better job performance (Bandura, 1982).

1.1 Background of the Problem

A Resident Assistant (RA) is typically an undergraduate student matriculating toward a degree. This individual is hired to oversee a specific floor or wing in the residence halls. For decades, the RA as well as others in Student Affairs have been a vital part of the co-curricular learning that takes place in the residence halls (Bloland, Stamatakos, Rogers, 1996). Greenleaf et al. (1967) is cited by saying, "it has been found that colleges have gained many advantages in employing carefully selected undergraduate students to help meet the objectives of residence hall programs" (p. 7).

Colleges and universities have used Resident Assistants (RAs) to ensure peace in the residence hall, put on programs and to assist various universities develop holistic students upon graduation (Magolda, 2009). The resident assistant position is very dissimilar to the college experience of the traditional student or the average student leader. Bliming (2003) says the RA is over worked and under paid. He continues by saying once you become an RA you

> cannot always be a part of group activities in the living unit. Some students in the unit will ostracize you because of the authority that you represent. You will be intentionally left out of some group discussions and often not invited to share in the 'inside information'. Many tasks will be required of you and some will force you to reorder your personal priorities. You will be among the first students back to school in the fall of the year and among the last to leave in the spring (p. 3).

Self-efficacy is a cognitive concept in Bandura's (1982) social cognitive theory. "Individuals who see themselves as masters of their own fate, rather than at the mercy of luck,

fate or powerful other people tend to cope better with stress, and generally make more effective and satisfying leaders" (Bass, 1990, p. 153). According to McCormack (2001), self-efficacy is essential to the journey to becoming a leader. Self-efficacy directly affects the motivation, development and execution of a leader's strategies and goals. Self-efficacy is closely aligned with self-confidence (Bass, 2008). Benshoff and Smith (1995) focused their research on high levels of stress in RAs and how that may contribute to lower levels of job satisfaction. The purpose of this case study analysis was to examine the training RAs receive and their self-efficacy to perform their duties after. The RA position is very important to the safety and wellbeing of the residential students living within the residence halls. However, once you become an RA your social circle will in fact change. Remaining optimistic during this transition and while in this position is a critical component in determining whether a paraprofessional staff person will be satisfied in their RA job. One way of examining an RA's level of optimism is to examine their signature character strengths. The character strengths, derived from Positive Psychology, focus on the strengths a person possesses rather than weaknesses and pathologies (Peterson, 2006). RAs are often described by their peers and professional staff as counselors, teachers, role models and cops (Longwell-Grice & Kerr, 2013; Benshoff & Smith, 1995). It is important for them to employ not only an optimistic mindset but also self-efficacy.

Since research suggests the RA position is paramount, it is important to focus on their development as a student leader, ensuring they are fully trained to handle any situation that may come up and to be able to hold their peers accountable when residents violate the student code of conduct. This case study analysis examined the training RAs receive and how their training impacts their efficacy in handling such situations following the training.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study analysis was to examine the impact RA training has on the self-efficacy of the paraprofessional staff working in the residence halls. Deluga and Winters (1991) say RAs have to fulfill complex roles. Manson (2003) exclaims the training for RAs must be seen as relevant to the position and inclusive of comprehensive scenarios and incidents that the staff could encounter.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Residential housing programs in the United States have evolved extensively since their inception in the 1920s (Blimling, 2003). Blimling continues by stating "traditional residence halls have undergraduate RAs and professional staff members who are charged with facilitating social and educational activities for the residents" (p.48). Over the years, there has been an increased focus on offering students a co-curricular experience outside of the classroom in higher education institutions. Student Affairs practitioners strive to use every opportunity and encounter with students to assist in developing a holistic graduate when they depart the university (Bloland, Stamatakos, & Rogers, 1996); this includes their time spent in the residence halls. Universities started living learning communities to continue educating students in their living environment. A living learning community provides students with classes, sometimes for credit, that meets in the residence hall (Blimling, 2003). Tutoring sessions to support these classes are offered in the residence halls and at some universities the faculty member that teaches these classes resides in the hall (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, &Whalen, 2003; Blimling, 2003).

Residence Life staff members have moved to intentional housing assignments. Intentionally assigning students with the same major to a living space on the same floor or wing

with their peers allows for them to study together, set up tutoring sessions, assist each other, and create honors housing (Schroeder,[Mable Realizing the Educational Potential in Residence Halls]; Blimling, 2003). Since the RA position has evolved over the years and there has been an increase in the expectations of this position, adequate training is necessary (Elleven, Allen, Wircenski, 2001). This paraprofessional position began as a position to keep order in the residence halls. Over time, it has evolved to demand paraprofessionals act as student, leader, counselor, teacher, mediator and administrator (Blimling, 2003). With such an increase in responsibility, these students need to be adequately trained in order to perform their duties at optimal level. Researchers, practitioners in housing and student affairs divisions at colleges and universities could stand to gain information on how to better serve RAs.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This case study analysis was intended to examine how RA training can impact the self-efficacy of those who participate. The theoretical framework guiding this study was Bandura's (1977) Self-efficacy Theory. Bandura (2001) writes:

> Efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing (p. 10).

Self-efficacy may increase the paraprofessionals' belief in themselves and their ability to perform the techniques learned during training. Having a clear understanding of howcollege

students develop over their time adds to whether the paraprofessional staff have the ability to have high levels of self-efficacy.

1.5 Limitations

Creswell (2009) describes limitations as anticipated weaknesses of a study. They can also be defined as possible shortcomings, controlling the size or extent of something (Merriam, 2016), or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher.

The methodology of this comparative case study analysis could be deemed a limitation. The researcher collected three similar case studies and performed a cross analysis and examination to determine the impact RA training has on RA self-efficacy. It is notable that there are a number of other studies that could have been analyzed. The researcher selected studies that were different and, yet, added to the significance of this study. Also, due to time and limited resources associated with conducting a comparative case study, the researcher opted to conduct a comparative case study analysis investigating existing research on RA training and the impact it has on RA self-efficacy.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms and definitions are provided to bring clarity and deeper understanding when reading this case study analysis. Resident Assistant: an undergraduate full time student employed by the university or college he or she is matriculating tasked with being a mentor, mediator, counselor, health and safety inspector and university ambassador (Healea, 2006, p. 71).

- Resident Director: "are professional Student Affairs staff members who are both directly and indirectly responsible for numerous tasks, projects and programs intended to respond

to the needs and interest of on campus students, especially those in their respective building." This position will have "impact upon individual students, student groups, Resident/Desk Assistants, colleagues and other members of the university community" (Resident Director Expectations, 2014, para. 1).

- Residence Hall: a living space on college campuses intended to enhance the co-curricular experience of college students (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982, p. 5).

- Self-efficacy: "an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to successfully accomplish a specific task or set of tasks. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in task-related performance by influencing individual's choice, effort and persistence. The positive effect of self-efficacy on performance has been supported by individual and collective measures" (Bandura, 1977, p. 191).

- Student Affairs: A division at a college or university, "often encompass[es] residential life, judicial affairs, student activities, religious life, career services, academic advising, community service and multicultural affairs". The division of student affairs assists students with character education. (Healea, 2006, p. 67)

1.7 Summary

This comparative case study analysis contains five chapters. Chapter one has provided a brief overview of the entire document. Chapter two will provide an in depth review of the literature that exists as it relates to residence life, RA training and its impact on RA self-efficacy. Chapter three will offer a methodological view of three studies chosen by the researcher. This chapter will be inclusive of the research design, method and data analysis of the three studies that were examined. Chapter four provides the findings of the three case studies examined for this comparative case study analysis, a comparison of the three cases and common themes that

emerged. Chapter five provides an overview of the entire document and proposed solutions to the problem.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter the researcher reviewed relevant literature in two specific areas. A number of researchers have focused their attention on Resident Assistant stress and the effects of job burnout (Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989) and emotional exhaustion (Nowack, Gibbons, & Hanson, 1985). Others have focused their attention on the verbal and physical abuse RAs encounter and the impact those experiences have on them (Schuh & Shipton, 1983). Very little research exists that focuses on RA training and its impact on self-efficacy of RAs. The purpose of this case study analysis was to examine the literature on the aforementioned topics. First, there will be an in depth discussion about the RA position. Second, the researcher hopes to define some terms used throughout this comparative case study analysis. Finally, there will be a discussion about the theoretical framework.

2.1 Resident Assistant

Blimling (2003) says the phrase "over worked and underpaid" is applied best to the position of the Resident Assistant (RA). This statement is made because most RAs receive free housing and, depending on the institution, RAs may receive board, a stipend, book vouchers or a combination of the benefits mentioned. Although this remuneration may seem enticing to the average college student, RAs are exposed to many different situations, experience every aspect of a residence hall and work countless hours. Resident assistants are considered students, role models, counselors, teachers and administrators. This student leadership position, generally held on most residential colleges and universities, is an integral part of ensuring the residence halls and the students within follow the student code of conduct, are academically successful, adhere to all fire code regulations, attend programs facilitated by the RA to assist the development of a holistic residential student population, etc. (Denzine & Anderson, 1999; Grice & Kerr, 2013).

Denzine and Anderson's (1999) research titled "I Can Do It: Resident Assistants' Sense of Self-Efficacy" discusses a number of characteristics an individual should have in order to be a successful RA. Some of these characteristics are academic performance, personality, prior leadership, level of motivation, faculty and staff recommendation, communication skills, and agreement with the housing mission and vision. These characteristics, although important, only represent a part of staff members' potential for success in this position. Due to the many roles and responsibilities of an RA the belief in their ability to handle incidents is very important. Thorough training is necessary in order for a staff member to be confident in their ability to juggle the many hats an RA is tasked with wearing.

2.2 Resident Assistant as a Counselor

Researchers often compare the RA position to that of a counselor. Bliming (2003) says although the RA does not have an extensive background in the counseling profession, they certainly have a role in assisting. College aged students experience a whirlwind of changes while in school. The stresses of a new environment, unfamiliar people, adjusting to an independent routine, all can lead to anxiety, depression, and homesickness (Taub & Seib, 2011). Keeping in mind traditional aged college students are still transitioning to adulthood, they are experiencing some psychological changes. Some students who were raised as an only child may not be used to sharing a living space with another individual.

The same is true for someone who may have other siblings or family members at home; they may be accustomed to sharing personal items, the bathroom, and furniture to name a few. Some students may prefer a quiet space to study, whereas some students may need music playing in the background while studying. Some students may be a morning person, while other students

may be a night owl. Bliming (2003) reiterates, regardless of the scenario, RAs are expected to know how to handle these types of situations and any conflict that may arise as a result (p.9).

In "The Keys to First year Student Persistence" Ishler and Upcraft (2005) showed first year students who live in the residence halls are more likely to persist in to their sophomore year. Astin (1977) conducted research on the impact living in the residence halls has on a student's likelihood to finish college. His study included more than 225,000 students. The findings from this study concluded "the most important environmental characteristic associated with finishing college was living in the residence hall during the first year" (Ishler & Upcraft, 2005, p. 42). Further research shows staying in the residential facilities increases a first-year student's likelihood to complete college by 12 percent. A study conducted by Chickering (1974) involving 170,000 students proved the same results; living in the residence halls during a student's first year matriculating in college yields positive results when examining their likelihood of graduating when compared to students that do not live in the residence halls.

Taub, Seib, Miles, Lee, Morris, Welch and Werden (2013) further examine the RA position in their research titled "The Impact of Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention on University Resident Assistants". Their study puts a greater focus on the importance of the RA role. This study focused on RAs as gatekeepers to assist in preventing suicide. With suicide being a major problem among college age students, having a reliable trained resource close by when a crisis arises is essential. "Students' proximity to and familiarity with RAs can be especially helpful in crisis situations because students can readily seek them out for assistance" (p. 65). With such an emphasis on the importance of the RA position, intervening when a fellow peer has suicidal thoughts, effective and efficient training on how to handle these situations is vital. Baily and Grandpre (1997) believe the RA is a counselor and crisis manager. This

individual should be equipped with the tools to offer "short-term remedial services, including crisis intervention, and refer students to mental health resources as necessary" (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982). Taub et al. (2013) believe further development in areas such as 'how to deal with a suicidal resident' is essential and must be included in training in order for the RAs to adequately service their residents.

2.3 Resident Assistant as Advisor

Character Education with Resident Assistants is a model developed by Healea (2006). This researcher discusses the importance of the division of student affairs. There is a great focus on the division because it drives the various departments that assist in developing students outside the classroom. The division of student affairs is made up partly by residential life, judicial affairs, student activities, religious life, career services, academic advising, community services and multicultural affairs (p. 67). All of the aforementioned departments are responsible collectively for putting on a diverse array of programs, putting in place policies to protect the students, staff and community, and to act as resources for students to successfully matriculate through college. "Character Education with Resident Assistants (CERA) targets an influential population of student leaders on college campuses—resident assistants" (p. 68). CERA focuses on the RA position as a student but also as an advisor or educator. This approach puts a great emphasis on supervisors who facilitate training sessions to expose RAs to role models with hopes RAs will in turn "explore the virtuous actions of these role models, and that encourage(s) resident assistants to apply virtuous behavior to their own lives" (p. 68). Ultimately, the CERA model hopes to instill the importance of character education in the RAs they model that behavior for their residents.

The RA position is a very important student leadership position because of their proximity to the residents. Austin (1993) says, "The student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (p. 398). This peer group could include the RA of the resident's residential facility. The RAs are able to influence residents in a positive or negative way based on their actions, involvement on campus, and the way they carry themselves. These interpersonal relationships are directly related to persistence among college students. RAs can advise residents on what classes to take, which professors are fitting to a resident's learning style, and where classrooms and buildings are around campus. With most RAs being upperclassmen (Bliming, 2003), they have the ability to use their experience from matriculating at the university to assist another student.

2.4 Resident Assistant and On-Campus Drinking

Underage consumption of alcohol on college campuses is an ongoing concern and has been for many generations. For some students, this problem does not just develop when they arrive at college. James and Wirth (2010) report over four million teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 indicated they consistently drink alcoholic beverages monthly. Another alarming fact is individuals below age 21 reportedly consume 25% of the total alcohol sold each year. Youth are more likely to participate in underage alcohol consumption than illegal drug use or smoking cigarettes (James & Wirth, 2010 & A Call to Action, 2002). Alcohol consumption before college has become a norm; this problem begins at home, is accepted in communities and is supported and idealized by commercial advertisements and celebrities (James & Wirth, 2010).

The First Few Weeks on Campus (2010) reports the most critical time to determine if a freshmen student will be successful at any university is the first six weeks of matriculation. This time frame is significant because students generally participate in a significant amount of binge

drinking during the beginning of the semester (p. 8). The First Few Weeks on Campus also reports some students drink to the point where it interferes with getting settled in this new college environment. Impaired judgment is often times a result of drinking alcohol. Because students participate in heavy drinking they are more likely to violate the Student Code of Conduct by vandalizing university property, participating in violent acts and becoming sexually promiscuous (page 8).

Underage drinking on college campuses is a major concern. James and Wirth (2010) report the staggering reality is that close to 5,000 youth die every year because of underage drinking. These deaths are mainly a result of motor vehicle collisions, suicide, and homicide. Among college age students Kapner (2008) and Reducing Alcohol Problems on Campus (2002) report some significant concerns. Drinking on college campuses each year results in 700,000 assaults, 600,000 unintentional injuries, 100,000 sexual assault and rape cases and 1,700 deaths. With these staggering statistics, it is important that professionals in higher education focus their attention on this problem, brainstorm ways of reducing it and invest in the solutions.

Resident assistants, being on the frontline, are charged with holding their peers accountable for their actions. Underage drinking is against the law and at some universities drinking on campus is against the student code of conduct regardless of age. Dealing with drunk and sometimes irate students is common and the staff should be adequately trained in order to have the self-efficacy needed to respond to these situations when they occur. Continuous training is needed to further enhance a RA's level of self-efficacy when dealing with alcohol on campus. This may be even more difficult for an RA who may be underage and is responsible for correcting the behavior of an upperclassman, or a student that is above the legal drinking limit.

Having confidence in the job they do, especially in difficult situations, is very important for the safety of all residents and staff in the residence halls.

2.5 Resident Assistant and Violence

Working in the residence halls on a college campus can be very rewarding. However, there are many challenges that come with this position as well. Duluga and Winters (1991) mention the stress that RAs endure in their position. Sometimes they have to endure verbal and physical abuse. Peers view the RA position as an authoritative figure; however, this position is usually held by someone who is the same age and build of the students they are charged with documenting for violations to the Student Code of Conduct. Some students lack respect for the position. A study originally reported in Ketchum (1988) and supported by Duluga and Winters (1991) showed that when students were surveyed, 64% believed that people do not respect RAs. This would imply this very important role to the safety and development of the students is not respected by the same individuals RAs serve.

Palmer (1996) categorizes violence against RAs in three categories: verbal harassment, vandalism, and physical violence. Verbal harassment includes but is not limited to comments directed at the RA, messages left on the RA's apartment or suite door, continuous and harassing phone calls, and messages left throughout the residence hall (Palmer 1993). Vandalism includes destruction to the RAs' personal belongings (Palmer, 1996). Physical violence includes physical contact with another individual in an angry and aggressive manner, unwanted and uninvited contact.

Verbal abuse is the most common type of abuse RAs are subjected to. Palmer (1993) says verbal abuse comes "in the form of obscene, vulgar degrading, insulting, derogatory, belligerent,

or other offensive comments" (p. 31). Palmer (1993) and Palmer (1996) report drugs and alcohol are common denominators in violence against RAs. With the number of RAs experiencing violence ranging from 15% as reported in Schuh and Shipton (1983) to 44% as reported in Palmer (1996), it makes it difficult when recruiting for the RA position.

> More and more prospective RA applicants refuse to apply for positions where they will be subjected to these abuses. More important, such incidents undermine the RA's role in fostering student development, a function that should be the most attractive part of the RA position (Rickgarn, 1989, p. 33).

Durant, Marston, and Eisenhandler (1986) surveyed 5,902 RAs and 1,847 housing staff supervisors from 284 different colleges and universities with hopes of gaining a better understanding of the violence, if any, they had to endure while in their position. The results were astounding. The researchers reported the most common forms of violence and harassment this sample of RAs have experienced are harassing language, inconvenient pranks, intentional embarrassment, harassing gestures and graffiti, and harassing phone calls. Rickgarn (1989) further reported on the results of Durant, Marston and Eisenhandleer (1986), discussing specific violent acts and the percentage of those surveyed who experienced these violent acts. 84 percent of those surveyed experienced at least one of the previously mentioned harassing acts. 34 percent experienced at least one of the previously mentioned harassing acts on a daily basis. Furthermore, "23 percent had experienced damage to personal property, 18 percent had experienced physical threats and violence, 12 percent had experienced inappropriate sexual touching, 2 percent had been attached with a weapon or object, and 1 percent had encountered physical sexual abuse" (p.32). Although such violence in a position may seem alarming, RAs may pass off violence against them as "coming with the territory" (Rickgarn, 1989; Durant, Marston, and Eisenhandleer, 1986; Schuh and Shipton, 1983; Palmer, 1993; Palmer, 1996).

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RAs are more likely to cope with violence and have higher levels of self-efficacy when encountering violent situations if they are adequately trained. Rickgarn (1989) suggests training staff so they have a better understanding of the different types of violence that can occur and what is expected of the RA should they encounter this. Rickgarn continues by saying, proper training is a group effort. Collaboration from areas such as housing, public safety, counseling, judicial affairs, and student government helps students understand "we're all in this together" as opposed to thinking combating violence on campus is one departments sole responsibility (1989). Going through a training scene or session where the RAs are educated on how to handle violent situations they may feel less anxious when in a similar situation. If proper handling of violent situations is modeled by a trusting staff person, the RAs may exude more confidence when a similar situation comes up. Upcraft and Pilato (1982) state, "RAs are only as good as their training" (p. 239).

2.6 Violence in the Residence Hall

In January 2000 on the campus of Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, Boland Hall experienced "a small but intense fire" (Patterson, 2001, p. 1). This six-story residence hall, built in 1952, is the university's first residence hall and, at the time home to approximately 600 freshmen. However, the hall on this day was neither normal nor ordinary; it was a scary site for the freshmen residents. A fire that lit up the third floor lounge left three students dead, 57 hospitalized, and hundreds running to save their lives.

Resident Advisor Dana Christmas, one of the students hospitalized, found herself attached to a ventilator to assist her with breathing. She suffered severe burns on 60 percent of her body and respiratory distress as a result of the fire. Her burns span across her face, back and extremities; as a result of Dana's actions and heroic acts during the fire, her life has been

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changed forever (Powell and Haughney, 2003). Although Heyboer (2010) hails Dana as "The Angel of Boland Hall", she still has been affected by this unfortunate incident. Powell and Haughney report Dana went in to the fiery residence hall time and time again to assist fellow students become alert of what was going on and exit the building immediately. Dana was just doing what she was taught to do; when the fire alarm sounds, as a resident assistant you are to knock on residents' doors on your way out of the building. Dana went above and beyond the call of duty and continued to go back in to assist her peers, residents and possibly her fellow staff members. Three young men were charged in this incident. Two were charged with felony murder and reckless manslaughter and the third was charged with witness tampering and obstruction of justice The university and families have been altered forever. Dana Christmas and the lives of the families who did not make it will never be the same.

Another incident that took place at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey led to the demise of a student. As reported by Zernike (2012), Tyler Clementi took his life by leaping from the George Washington Bridge after his roommate, Dharun Ravi and an accomplice, spied on him and a male guest a few times. After the spying incidents were posted on Twitter for others to watch, Tyler reached out to his resident assistant, Raahi Grover, to make him aware of what happened and to see what could be done to mitigate this situation. Tyler described Dharun's behavior to the housing staff by saying he was "extremely uncomfortable" (Sider, 2012, p. 1) in his living space. As reported in "The Story of a Suicide", Parker (2012) says Raahi, who also was called to testify in court, offered a spare bed in his own room for Tyler to stay for the night until the situation could get resolved. Although Tyler declined the offer, Raahi, similar to Dana Christmas, went above and beyond the call of duty by offering his personal living space to his resident to try to make him comfortable and to let him know he was

not alone. Raahi requested Tyler send a statement of the events that took place to him through email. In the email Tyler said, "I feel my privacy has been violated and I am extremely uncomfortable sharing a room with someone who would act in this wildly inappropriate manner" (p.14).

When a resident comes to you in distress regarding a situation that has happened, in this case involving a roommate, the RA must take it seriously and act on the allegations quickly. The next day, Raahi followed up with Dharun making him aware of the complaint against him (Parker, 2012). Unfortunately, Tyler took his life the following day and Dharun and his co-conspirator faced possible jail time and more.

2.7 Residence Halls and Staff Influence Academic Success

Wang, Arboleda, Shelley, and Whalen (2003) conducted research to study the difference between male and female residence hall students to determine if features in a residence hall and interaction among peers has an impact on academic success. It was determined that residence halls play a significant part in a student's decision to attend a university. When parents and prospective students are vetting universities, they pay very close attention to where the student will live. Making the right decision is imperative; this space is where the student will sleep, sometimes eat, study, and meet new friends (Bliming, 2003; Upcraft & Pilato, 1982; & Wang et al., 2003). Considering students spend the majority of their college days in their living space it makes sense to ensure their outside of the classroom environment supports their academic success. It has been proven that males and females have different needs (Wang et al., 2003).

A very interesting component of the results from this survey is the significance of a student's performance in high school and its direct impact on how well they perform in college.

Often time students think college is the same or similar to high school. Although this study does not compare the amount of work in high school to the amount of work a student receives in college, it does show a student that is successful in high school is more likely to be successful in college if placed in an environment that is conducive to academic success and enrichment (Wang et al., 2003).

Housing professionals are faced with ensuring residents have engaging activities in the residence halls during the evening hours to keep their minds occupied (Kuh, 2009). This is also done so residents choose healthy social or educational activities and refrain from mischief. The study conducted by Wang et al. (2003) shows that not all residents benefit from social engagement. Women who are not as social in their living area and prefer to study outside of the residence halls perform significantly higher when social activities are not present. Areas that are coeducational can be seen as a distraction for males, and as a result, hinder their academic performance. It is essential for housing professionals to assess their students in order to determine their needs before planning social or even academic programs. All programs should be geared toward advancing students and developing them into holistic individuals upon graduation. This information is imperative when developing training programs for the RAs who are charged with putting on programs in the residence halls. A greater emphasis should be placed on the RAs gaining a better understanding of the residents they serve and what those students need from the staff in order for them to be successful. Getting to know the residents is not an easy task; this is something that, for some, makes them uncomfortable and needs to be learned. An RA that is an introvert may shy away from this part of their job (Cain, 2013). However, with adequate training, continued reinforcement, and verbal praise, an individual's self-efficacy to perform a specific task may increase (Bandura, 1977).

Wang et al. (2003) support the assertion that leaders in higher education must take the students' needs into consideration when designing a residence hall. Halls should be built to support the academic endeavors of the students. Therefore, halls should have areas designated for studying, tutoring sessions, programs and hall council meetings. Research from Wang et al. also shows participants are very satisfied with the Resident Assistant staff. Providing the RAs with knowledge of the campus, training to handle situations, and support to conduct effective and efficient programs is essential. Leaders in Residence Life and on college campuses must also remember RAs when designing a residence hall. The rigors of the job may be overwhelming at times. Providing RAs with their own room would allow them the opportunity to rejuvenate themselves in their own space. The same is true for Resident Directors. Providing them with their own space in an effort to debrief after work is essential to their overall health and wellbeing.

2.8 Theory Guiding the Study

2.9 Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. Self-efficacy is a cognitive concept in Bandura's (1985) social cognitive theory. According to McCormack (2001), self-efficacy is crucial in the path toward leadership because it directly affects the motivation, development and execution of a leader's strategies and goals. Bandura says self-efficacy is an individual's belief system about the competencies they possess and talents in a particular situation. Self-efficacy is closely aligned with self-confidence (Bass, 2008). A very important characteristic of the Resident Assistant position is their belief system (Denzine & Anderson, 1999).

"Individuals who see themselves as masters of their own fate, rather than at the mercy of luck, fate or powerful other people tend to cope better with stress, and generally make more effective and satisfying leaders" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). This statement from Bandura is very

true when speaking about leaders in general but especially accurate when referring to the RA position.

As previously mentioned, RAs are considered counselors and teachers (Bliming, 2003). Given this information, literature on self-efficacy of teachers and counselors is important. "Counseling self-efficacy refers to counselors' belief in their capabilities to positively help clients in counseling situations or their expectancies for success in counseling situations" (Johnson et al., 1989). Similarly, if a person is placed in a position that exemplifies their signature character strengths, it could be hypothesized that individual would be more effectiveness and ultimately exude self-efficacy.

A teacher's level of self-efficacy is very important. The teacher must believe that he or she can get through to even the most challenging student and assist them in their education pursuit (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Similarly, RAs with strong self-efficacious beliefs are more likely to reach out to all students, especially those who are different and distant from the general population. This skill is important in the role of a teacher and in the role of an RA.

A way self-efficacy could affect conduct is by influencing a person's capacity to persevere through and be tenacious in a given situation. A great example is an RA that has high self-efficacy in his or her ability to conduct floor meetings. This RA would not be discouraged if only half of their residents showed up to the meeting as opposed to all residents. "RAs with high self-efficacy will most likely exert extra effort and believe that they can plan successful events such as floor meetings in the future" (Denzine & Anderson, 1999, p. 248).

2.10 Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Most individuals develop self-efficacy based on their beliefs. Bandura (1977) discusses the four beliefs found in Figure 1: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. The following will be a description of the four self-efficacy beliefs.

2.11 Performance accomplishments. This belief is very important because it is based on personal mastery experience. Bandura (1977) states, "successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events" (p. 195). Successful attempts at a task leave a lasting impression on an individual. Positive experiences encourage people when tasked with performing the same job again. Conversely, negative experiences will lower one's belief that they can complete a given task. For example, an RA that has put on an educational program that was well attended and received positive feedback will have high self-efficacy in their ability to put on programs. An RA that has put time and effort into planning a program only to have very few or no one attend may have lower self-efficacy in their programming abilities. As pinned by Denzine and Anderson (1999), "individuals with high self-efficacy interpret difficult situations as a challenge; whereas, those with low self-efficacy interpret difficult situations as threat" (p. 248).

2.12 Vicarious Experience. When a person observes others being successful at a specific task, they are more likely to have a higher self-efficacy in their ability to complete the task. As stated by Bandura (1977), "seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts" (p. 197). A staff member will have higher levels of efficacy belief if they observe another staff member or their supervisor persevere through a task regardless of

previous failure. In contrast, seeing a supervisor shy away from a task that was unsuccessful

could have a negative impact on

the observer's ability to perform that task.
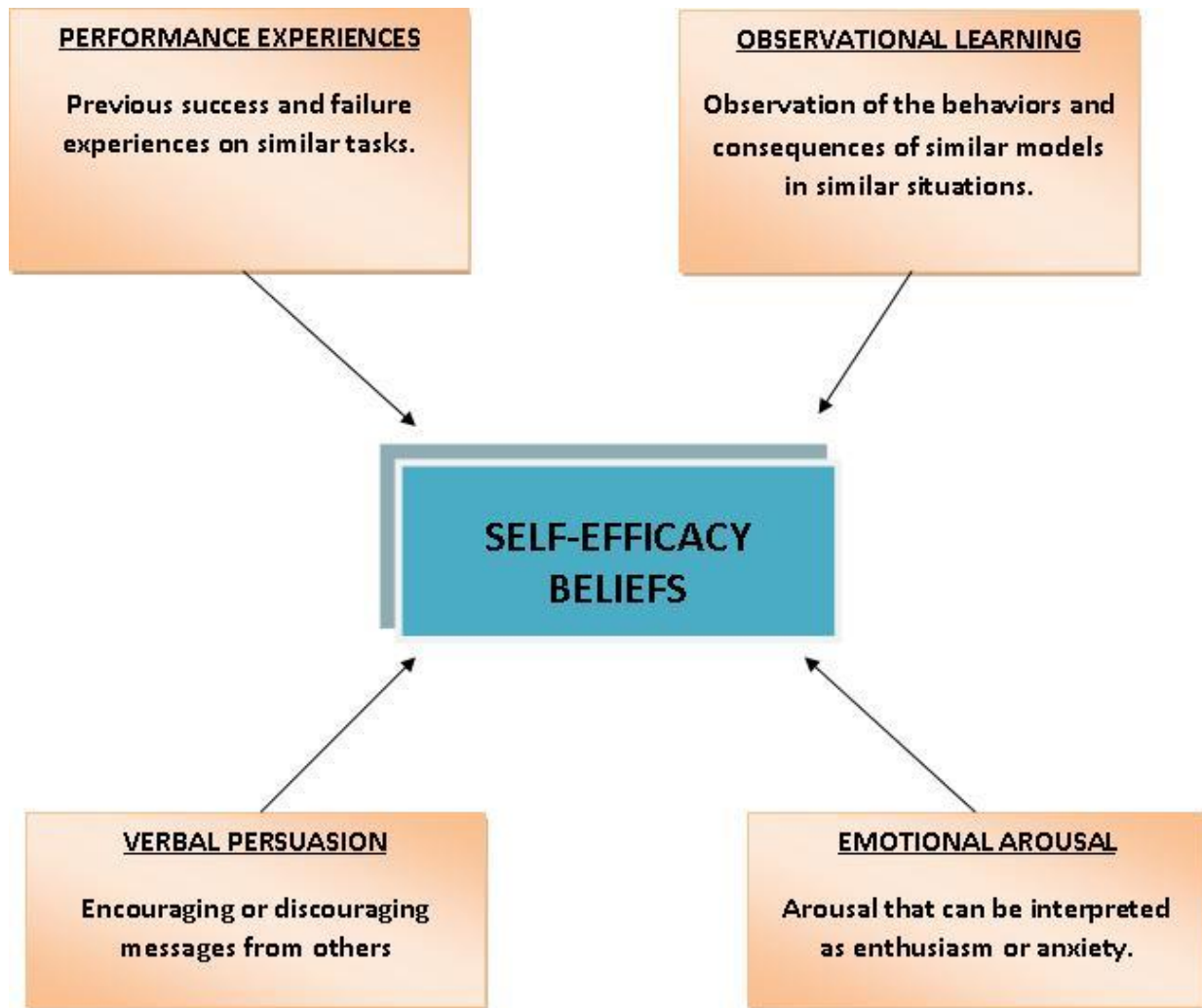
Figure I. Self-Efficacy Beliefs – revised from Bandura (1977)

2.13 Verbal Persuasion. Verbal persuasion is the impact others' expectations have on a

person. If a staff member is told by the supervisor they can do a specific task and are

continuously encouraged they are more likely to believe they can complete the task, regardless of

previous failures. In contrast, if an authoritative figure or someone who has influence over a staff

member demeans and talks down they are less likely to believe they can complete a given task. They would have lower levels of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) discusses this approach as being the most commonly used tactic because it is readily available and easy. An example of verbal persuasion would be the impact a Resident Director (RD) has on an RA. If the RD encourages the RA and uplifts this staff member, speaking positive affirmations, this person is more likely to believe they can accomplish any task.

2.14 Emotional Arousal. Lastly, a person's psychological state or emotions play an intricate part in their self-efficacy belief. Bandura (1977) states, "stressful and taxing situations generally elicit emotional arousal that, depending on the circumstances, might have informative value concerning personal competency. Therefore, emotional arousal is another constituent source of information that can affect perceived self-efficacy in coping with threatening situations" (p. 198). In practical application, an RA that has had a bad experience when breaking up a party where alcohol and drugs were present may develop anxiety when faced with this situation again, resulting in lower self-efficacy in the ability to break the party up.

Federici and Skkaalvik (2012) discuss self-efficacy as being necessary. An individual that possesses high levels of self-efficacy exerts more effort and is more likely to persevere through obstacles which in turn promotes "positive perceptions of one's own capabilities" (p.297). Providing staff with thorough and continuous training and continuing to encourage them along the way will help them believe they can tackle even the most tumultuous task. It is important to note, due to the many roles and tasks RAs are expected to perform, their self-efficacy beliefs may vary depending on the situation. As noted in Dezine and Anderson (1999), an RA may have high self-efficacy in their ability to put on an educational program in the residence hall.

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However, they may have low self-efficacy when dealing with a student experiencing suicidal thoughts.

2.15 Summary

There is a great emphasis on the RAs because of the impact their position has on others. However, having so much responsibility and still being a college student and peer to those you hold accountable for their actions, and ensuring you do well academically can take a toll on a person (Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989). Mastery of the position and confidence in your abilities is critical to the RA position. Choosing individuals who have the innate characteristics to be successful in the position and perform at their fullest potential is essential to those involved in the recruitment process. Training should include topics such as time management, establishing boundaries between the paraprofessional position and the residents, conflict mediation, to name a few. These topics should be presented to the staff in a way that is effective and retainable.

A detailed description of the RA position has been given above. These paraprofessional students matriculating full time status are tasked with keeping order in their respective residence halls. They directly oversee their peers and are charged with being a teacher, advisor, counselor, and police officer, all while growing, maturing, and establishing their own identity. The theoretical frameworks used to drive this case study analysis was Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. In the following chapter, the investigator will describe in detail the methodology employed in the three cases that were examined in this comparative case study analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This comparative case study analysis has two intentions. The first purpose is to assess the psychometric properties of the instruments used in the three studies being examined. The second purpose is to explore the relationship between the variables proposed. This section of the case study analysis will give a better understanding of the methods used. There will be an emphasis on the participants involved in this study, the instruments used to gather the data, the process the researcher employed to collect the data and an interpretation of the data collected. Three cases in which researchers explore RA training and its benefits for Ras will be examined in detail.

Case study one, identified as "Curricular Design" (2012), focuses on the design of RA training programs, the background of those presenting at training and designing the program and to what extent designers used integrated course design (Fink, 2003) to develop meaningful learning experiences. "Curricular Design" adds significance to this comparative case study analysis because it provides an in-depth analysis of training designs that exist.

Case study two, identified as "Learning Outcomes" (2014), focuses on the importance establishing clear learning outcomes for a training program. Once learning outcomes have been established, the designer should develop a way to assess if those learning outcomes were met. "Learning Outcome" adds significance to this comparative case study analysis because it provides a thorough examination of the importance of evaluating a training program afterwards to determine if those learning outcomes and objectives were met.

Case study three, identified as "Meaningful Training" (2009), focuses on building relationships with other paraprofessional staff members. Next, this study focuses on retaining the information presented. Finally, this study hones in on an RAs ability to apply the knowledge

gained. "Meaningful Training" adds to the importance of this comparative case study analysis because it provides a snapshot of the end result of a thoroughly planned and executed training program.

The remaining content in this chapter will consist of a thorough description of each case. The researcher will present the methodology for each case. Next, the results and findings will be discussed. This information will support the importance of RA training and the impact on RA self-efficacy.

Case Study One: Koch, V., August 2012, An Exploration of Current Practices in Curricular Design of Resident Assistant Training Programs, Chicago, Illinois/file:///C:/Users/brandy.garlic/Downloads/Exploration%20of%20practies%20in%20 curricular%20design%20of%20RA%20training%20(1).pdf

3.1 Curricular Design

Koch (2012) conducted a study titled "An Exploration of Current Practices in Curricular Design of Resident Assistant Training Programs" in an effort to examine the various designs that exist to train RAs, the experience and professional development of the facilitators of these training programs, and to what extent Fink's (2003) integrated course design was used to enhance the learning of RAs. Koch had three specific research questions in mind while conducting this study. First, the researcher wanted to know how contemporary RA training programs are designed. Second, the researcher wanted to know if RA training programs designed to create significant learning experiences. Finally, the researcher wanted to know whether RA educators use knowledge of curricular design to develop RA training programs.

3.2 Methodology

      3.3 Research Design. Koch (2012) conducted a cross-sectional analysis using qualitative and quantitative instrument. The instrument consisted of 52 questions and was designed by the researcher. Field (2013) says psychometrics is the field of study dedicated to the construction and validation of measurement instruments and procedures. The process of validating an instrument includes assessing validity and reliability measures. Mertens (2010) discusses internal validity of an instrument. It describes the extent to which an instrument measures what it was intended for. Portions of the survey used in this research were replicated from a study conducted by Bowman and Bowman (1995). The researcher obtained approval from the authors and edited the survey to create closed response questions. The researcher decided on 49 topics to include in this survey. Of the 49 topics, 27 were replicated from Bowman and Bowman and 22 were added based on the researcher's professional experience and from a pilot test.

      3.4 Study Participants. In this study, Koch (2012) used a convenience sampling method. After receiving approval from the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) the researcher received contact information for one person at each institution with an active membership. The researcher received contact information for 805 potential participants. The researcher intended to send the instrument to the individual directly responsible for RA training.

      3.5 Data Collection. Koch (2012) received authorization from the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) to use their participants in his study. This national organization provided the researcher a list of colleges and universities that have active membership. Of those on the membership roster for each university, the researcher selected the individual who was likely to oversee training. An initial email introducing the study

including informed consent was sent to potential participants. The researcher reports that there will be follow ups with any undelivered emails. The 805 potential participants were able to weigh in on the instrument from October 2011 to November 2011. Reminder emails were sent out on days seven, 14 and 20 to those who had not successfully submitted the instrument. The researcher received responses from 338 institutions, this was a response rate of 41.9%.

3.6 Data Analysis. After receiving the qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher analyzed the data. The quantitative information was assessed using frequency data, cross tabulations, ANOVAs and regression. When measured, the two scales used in the instrument had a Cronbach Alpha of .70. The researcher reports coding and analyzing the qualitative data. However, the researcher does not mention a specific software that was used to assist with coding.

Finally, the researcher compared various forms of training described in detail by Bowman and Bowman (1995) to modern RA training methods. Koch (2012) hypothesized current RA training programs were more learning-centered and focused on the holistic student when compared to a previous study done by Bowman and Bowman.

3.7 Significance. As indicated by Eichenfield, Graves, Slief and Haslund (1988) in Bowman and Bowman (1995), often times RA training is viewed as more important than recruitment and selection because "effective training may compensate for possible shortcomings in the RA candidate or flaws in the selection process" (p. 39). "Curricular Design" is important to this case study analysis in that it gave the reader a clear understanding of how RA training programs have evolved over time to focus on the long term development of the RA, emphasized the importance of intentional training and the readiness of those facilitating these training sessions. This study supports the recommendations discussed later in this comparative case study analysis.

Case Study Two: Diesner, M., Developing Learning Outcomes for Resident Assistant Training, Fall 2014, Newark, DE, file:///C:/Users/brandy.garlic/Downloads/developing%20learning%20outcomes%20for%20ra%20training.pdf

3.8 Learning Outcome

Diesner (2014) conducted a study titled, "Developing Learning Outcomes for Resident Assistant Training", to study the effectiveness of the existing learning outcomes, develop clear and concise learning outcomes and to identify how the new clearly defined learning outcomes effect RAs' job experience. Diesner had four specific questions that guided this study. First, the researcher wanted to determine the importance of learning outcomes in higher education and student affairs. Second, Diesner wanted to gain a better understanding of what a student learns from leadership experiences in higher education. Third, the researcher wanted to define the key elements of the Resident Assistant position. Finally, the researcher looked at what Residence life staff believe RAs should be learning from their experience.

3.9 Methodology

3.10 Research Design. Diesner (2014) conducted a qualitative research study inclusive of interviews, focus groups and an analysis of documents and artifacts. All interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and then coded.

3.11 Study Participants. Diesner (2014) used a convenience sampling method to drive this study. The professional staff that participated were employees at Towson University. The staff held their current position, Director of Residence Life, Assistant Director of Residence Life, and Residence Life Coordinator, between one and 14 years. The groups' experience working in

residence life ranged from three to 26 year. Diesner reported all but one of the participants had been a Resident Assistant in the past.

Convenience sampling method was used to gather the participants in the paraprofessional focus group. Diesner (2014) reported this group consisted of six second year RAs. The diverse group of students contained four males, two women, one African American student, and they came from six different residence halls.

3.12 Data Collection. Diesner (2014) analyzed documents and artifacts, professional staff interviews and paraprofessional staff focus groups in this study. Artifacts and documents from the 2012-2013 academic year at Towson University were used. Diesner carefully analyzed documents including but not limited to the RA contract, supervisor and peer evaluation form, rehire form, job description, RA course syllabus, Housing and Residence Life (HRL) mission statement, and the Division of Student Affairs learning outcomes.

Diesner (2014) reported that he conducted interviews with seven professionals at this institution who served on the RA Committee during the 2012-2013 academic year. The researcher used a predetermined set of questions to guide the discussion and allowed for any pertinent follow up dialogue following the interviews.

The researcher conducted a semi-structured focus group. Diesner (2014) had a set of 17 questions which he used to guide the discussion. The group consisted of six second-year RAs, coming from six different buildings. Four males and two females were included in this semi-structured focus group. The anonymous participants agreed to have the interviews recorded, which were later transcribed and coded for themes.

3.13 Data Analysis. Diesner (2014) analyzed eleven documents when completing this study: the RA contract, supervisory and peer evaluation forms, rehire form, RA Resource Guide, job description, RA course syllabus, in-service agendas, residential engagement manual, HRL mission statement, and the Student Affairs divisional learning outcomes. Diesner considered four questions when reviewing these documents. First, does the document communicate about the responsibilities of an RA? Second, does the document communicate about what RAs will be expected to learn and how congruent is this with the outcomes identified in the literature? Third, are there any consistencies and inconsistencies within the document? Finally, are there any consistencies and inconsistencies as a part of the RA position?

The researcher (Diesner, 2014) analyzed the various artifacts throughout this study to answer the questions that guided this research. When examining the Student Affairs Learning Outcome, it was determined that outcomes one, three and eight focused more on the RA position. Those outcomes are:

> 1) develop compassion, integrity, and social responsibility, fostering a commitment to community and the common good.

> 3) Increase their self-awareness, appreciation of others, and diverse interactions, resulting in mutually beneficial outcomes and relationships.

> 8) Leave Towson University with shared memories, school pride, connection to campus, and life-long relationships (Diesner, 2014, p. 24).

The researcher (Diesner, 2014) has determined these learning outcomes do not provide significant direction for the development of RA learning outcomes. However, it is very important that the housing departments learning outcomes contribute to the division's outcome.

Diesner (2014) examined the Housing and Residence Life mission statement. It was determined that although the mission statement was not directly related to the RA responsibilities, it provides direction for the entire department.

The researcher (Diesner, 2014) continued this research by examining the RA job description. The job description is broken down into six sections with a total of 18 job expectations. The researcher determined there were three areas that were highlighted more than others. Those areas included positive interactions with residents, policy enforcement, and administrative duties. These areas are very important to the job that the RA is tasked with performing.

The RA contract was examined during this study. The RA contract is divided into 12 sections. However, certain topics are intertwined in multiple sections in an effort to add emphasis on their importance to being successful in this position. Diesner (2014) says, "It is expected that Resident Assistants put their position second only to their academic success" (p. 29). This statement is supported with limitations for first, second, and third year RAs. First year RAs are limited to working ten hours at another job or student leadership position. Second and third year RAs are limited to working 15 hours at another job or student leadership position. The department limiting the amount of extracurricular involvement RAs are allowed alludes to the amount of learning that will take place on the job.

The RA Resource Guide was examined by Diesner (2014). This document is broken into nine sections. The Resource Guide provides those in the position with the resources they need to be successful. Some of the documents included in the resource guide are included in other documents previously discussed. Others such as incident reports, policies, emergency procedures and campus resource rosters are included here as well.

The Residential Engagement Manual is given to RAs during RA training. This document provides RAs with a framework for successfully programming in the residence halls. It guides RA from the idea of a program, through successful implementation and advertising, to assessing and evaluating the program at the end. When speaking about the importance of programing and the complex process of putting on a successful program, Diesner (2014) says, "while this can provide deep learning opportunities for the Resident Assistant, it also requests that they first master or, at a minimum, understand the outcomes they are attempting to deliver" (p. 31). RAs must first determine what they want the participants to gain from their program before planning and executing it. Diesner further points out, although other documents provide the logistical responsibilities for this position, this document adds a greater emphasis on the growth and development the staff will experience.

Next, Diesner (2014) examined the RA training schedule which was inclusive of 88 hours of instruction for new and returning staff, team bonding and building activities, and preparing the residence halls for opening. The author suggests a more constructivist approach going forward to assist with more efficient use of training time. Diesner also suggested moving toward an online module to allow more time to be spent bonding, preparing the residence halls, and performing administrative duties.

In the fall semester, at this university, new RAs are required to register for the RA course. They must also successfully complete this class in order to retain their RA position. This course, taught by the professional staff in the Residence Life department, is in place to continue to maximize the RAs learning experience and assist them in becoming masters at the job they were hired to do. Throughout the academic year, the department has monthly in-services. These sessions are geared toward providing the RAs with more tools needed to be successful. Through

guest speakers, professional staff within the department and written forms of communication, these sessions help the RA build a better community among their staff and in their halls, assist with what to do in emergency situations, and assist them in their role as a referral agent. The author (Diesner, 2014) suggests the department move some information to paper handouts and use the time during in-services for small group reflection.

At this university, the supervisor evaluates the RA using a RA Supervisory Form. Each RA is evaluated at the end of the fall semester on seven focal areas using a five point Likert scale. Diesner (2014) examined there are a few inconsistencies between thee stated job responsibilities and the areas taught during training. It appears that RAs are being evaluated in areas that are not consistent; the areas evaluated are not areas of focus in either the job description or the training RAs receive. Diesner suggests the training and job description become better aligned so RAs have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do in the position and what they will be evaluated on. Diesner says, "Having specified learning outcomes for the Resident Assistant position could help to provide consistency in language and focus" (p. 39).

The next document evaluated was the RA Rehire Application. An RA that wishes to return the next academic year must submit a Rehire Application. RAs are tasked with answering seven open ended questions. Approximately 50% of the staff that applies are rehired. The author reports the importance of the supervisory form; this form usually is an indicator of who is likely to be rehired and who may not. Considering the supervisory form shows progress, if an RA is not progressing well at the time of the evaluation this may be an indicator that they may not do well going forward or will have to show significant improvement. Diesner (2014) concludes by discussing the rehire process, although used to provide feedback, "the process could be improved by refocusing on a combination of specific learning outcomes and future goals" (p. 41).

The researcher continued with the investigation and later suggested certain learning outcomes should be put in place for this particular university. Throughout this case study, Diesner (2014) did not specifically answer the questions originally discussed. However, the author did discuss all artifacts and interviews in an attempt to answer the questions guiding the research.

The researcher organized the answers to the interview structured questions into three categories; RA Responsibilities, RA Knowledge and Skills, and RA Development. After Diesner (2014) transcribed the interviews, five themes emerged; Communication, Crisis and Conflict, Teamwork, Community and Relationships and Administration.

3.14 Significance. When developing learning outcomes for training, practitioners should thoroughly examine all aspects of the position to determine what major learning domains should be addressed. RA training learning outcomes should be in sync with the division's learning outcomes, this was found by Diesner (2014). In this study of the Student Affairs Division, the governing body that oversees a number of student service departments at a university, learning outcomes were examined to develop RA training learning outcomes. This comparative case study analysis was significant in that it provides a clear understanding of the importance of intentional learning outcomes in order to produce the desired results. This study helps make recommendations later.

Case Study Three: Kennedy, D., Exploring How Resident Advisors Create Meaning of Their Paraprofessional Fall Training and its Transfer: A Constructivist Case Study, May 2009, Greeley, Colorado, file:///C:/Users/brandy.garlic/Downloads/kennedy%20final%20dissertation%20to%20print%20(1).pdf

3.15 Meaningful Training

Kennedy (2009) conducted a study titled, "Exploring How Resident Advisors Create Meaning of Their Paraprofessional Fall Training and its Transfer: A Constructivist Case Study", to study how RAs make meaning of their training experience and how the knowledge gained is later applied to better the community they serve. The researcher conducted a qualitative case study grounded in a constructivist paradigm.

3.16 Methodology

3.17 Research Design. In this study, Kennedy (2009) gathered information from participants through an intrinsic case study design. This design allowed the researcher to use information gathered from participants to develop themes. The researcher focused on RA training and the application of the training to assist job performance.

3.18 Study Participants. The researcher was intentional when selecting participants for this study. Kennedy (2009) wanted a diverse group of RAs to participate. With the assistance of a few colleagues at Hunter University, the pool was narrowed down to RAs employed during the 2006-2007 academic year, representing first, second or third year males and females. Twelve participants were selected to participate in this study. Each individual participated in all four rounds of data collection.

3.19 Data Collection. The data for this case study were collected in several different ways; interviews and focus groups, observations, documents and artifacts, participant journals, and researcher journal. Kennedy (2009) recorded all information and then transcribed it. Next, the researcher coded the data to see what themes existed. Following coding the data, the researcher proceeded to bracketing. As cited by Kennedy, Janesick (2000) says "Bracketing was

used as a technique to break data into manageable 'chunks' in order to capture distinct categories that could be interpreted with participants, making analysis more manageable" (p. 98).

3.20 Data Analysis. The researcher used coding, bracketing, and crystallization to build a "coherent justification for themes" (Cited in Kennedy, 2009 from (Creswell, 2003, p.196). These three methods of analyzing the data add to the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.21 Significance. The research conducted by Kennedy (2009) adds to the body of knowledge for student affairs, specifically residence life professionals. This study shows the importance of the job RAs perform. It also infers the importance of RA training so the job is performed at a higher level. The importance of continuous training is also discussed in this case and has been documented by other researchers (Bowman & Bowman, 1995; Bowman & Bowman, 1998; Denzine & Anderson, 1999). This case is significant to this case study analysis in that it provides a better understanding of how RAs apply the information they learned during training. The application of knowledge could tell the researcher the areas RAs have higher levels of efficacy and ultimately what information was retained. This could also tell the researcher which sessions were facilitated in an effective manner. This study helped to make recommendations in Chapter V.

Author and Category	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
	Koch, V (2012); "Curricular Design"	Diesner, M (2014); "Learning Outcomes"	Kennedy, D (2009); "Meaningful Training"
Title	An Exploration of Current Practices in Curricular Design of Resident Assistant Training Programs	Developing Learning Outcomes for Resident Assistant Training	Exploring How Resident Advisors Create Meaning of Their Paraprofessional Fall Training and its Transfer: A Constructivist Case Study
Purpose	Examine the various designs that exist to train RAs, the experience and professional development of the facilitators of these training programs, and to what extent Fink's (2003) integrated course design was used to enhance the learning of RAs.	Examine the effectiveness of the existing learning outcomes; develop clear and concise learning outcomes and to identify how the new clearly defined learning outcomes effect RAs' job experience.	Examine how RAs make meaning of their training experience and how the knowledge gained is later applied to better the community they serve.
Conceptual Framework	Fink's Integrated Course Design Model	Theory of Self-Authorship	Constructivist Theory
Data Analysis	The researcher analyzed qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was examined using frequency data, cross tabulations, ANOVA and regression. The researcher reports coding and analyzing the qualitative data.	The researcher analyzed artifacts from the university to determine if the learning outcomes stated were being fulfilled. If it was determined the learning outcomes were not being fulfilled the reasearcher suggested alternate learning outcomes.	The researcher used coding, bracketing and crystallization.
Findings	"Curricular Design" is important to this case study analysis because it gave the reader a clear understanding of how RA training programs have evolved over time to focus on the long term development of the RA, emphasized the importance of intentional training and the readiness of those facilitating these training sessions.	When developing learning outcomes for training practitioners should thoroughly examine all aspects of the position to determine what major learning domains should be addressed. RA training learning outcomes should be in sync with the division's learning outcomes.	This study shows the importance of the job RAs perform. It also infers the importance of RA training so the job is performed at a higher level. The importance of continuous training is also discussed in this case and has been documented by other researchers (Bowman & Bowman, 1995; Bowman & Bowman, 1998; Denzine & Anderson, 1999).
Missing Information/ Assuptions	This researcher did not explore in great depth the use of social media and technology to assist with the training process. Also, how can training be accomplished when a university is faced with financial constraints?	How come only one university was examined? Is there a difference between HBCU RA training and PWI? Is there a difference between a small and large school's RA training?	Recommendations on the length of training is missing. Also, focusing on other universities as opposed to just one could yield different results. Cross training RAs with other universities is another topic worth exploring.

Figure II. Three cases examined for this comparative case study analysis.

3.22 Summary

The purpose of examining these three studies was to guide the researcher in an effort to determine the significance RA training has on RA self-efficacy. Each of these studies had a significant role in developing a better understanding of the effects training has on a person's efficacious beliefs. Figure 1 provides the reader with a synopsis of the three cases examined for this comparative case study analysis. The literature review suggests there is a correlation and all three studies discuss the importance of training and its effect on job performance, motivation and job satisfaction. Also, the literature suggests there is a correlation and all three studies discuss the importance of RAs believing they can perform the job they are tasked with doing.

In Chapter four, the investigator examined the findings in a methodical way. A thorough description of each case inclusive of the methodology and the significance each has on this comparative case study analysis has been presented. Throughout the examination of these three cases coupled with the literature reviewed, the investigator used the similarities and differences to identify emerging themes as they pertain to RA training and its impact on RA self-efficacy. The investigator paid close attention to the sources used for each case. The investigator then discusses the results and findings of this comparative case study analysis, develop a table that will help compare and contrast the results, and provide recommendations that will add to the body of knowledge for higher education administrators, student affairs professionals, residence life staff, and training facilitators.

CHAPTER IV: INTRODUCTION OF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The three cases selected for this comparative case study analysis were done intentionally. They provide insight into the impact training has on the self-efficacy of Resident Assistants. Each of the three studies has a different view on training and its impact on RAs. However, all prove the importance of training and the importance of RAs fulling having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. In this chapter, a thorough comparative analysis was conducted in an effort to uncover common themes, findings and conclusions.

The case conducted by Koch (2012) titled, "An Exploration of Current Practices in Curricular Design of Resident Assistant Training Programs", served as the foundation of this comparative case study analysis. This case took a close look at the various designs university housing officers use to train their RAs. This case also took a close look at the experience and professional development of those facilitating training programs and to what extent the used Fink's (2003) integrated course design to boost the learning that takes place. The case conducted by Diesner (2014) titled, "Developing Learning Outcomes for Resident Assistant Training", emphasized the importance of examining the effectiveness of the learning outcomes already in place. After these learning outcomes were examined, the researcher developed clear and concise learning outcomes to assist the RAs in being more effective and intentional in their job and the experience they gain from this role. Kennedy (2009) conducted a study titled, "Exploring How Resident Advisors Create Meaning of Their Paraprofessional Fall Training and its Transfer: A Constructivist Case Study". This study took a close look at how RAs make meaning of their training experience. This researcher also was interested in examining how the knowledge RAs gain during training was later applied to building community in their residence hall.

The remainder of this chapter will compare major components that are distinctive topics discussed in research. Each section will give a detailed description of each study. Finally, a cross analysis of the three studies used in this comparative case study analysis will be provided. The cross analysis will look at themes, various components of each study conducted and highlight strengths and weaknesses.

4.1 Research Study Design

The three cases examined in this comparative case study analysis offer three different research study designs. Creswell (2009) posits a research design is the procedure of inquiry. He continues to discuss three different research design approaches. Qualitative research gives you an understanding of "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (p.4)." Quantitative research tests various theories by examining the relationship between different variables (Creswell, 2009). Mixed methods approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Some researchers believe this combination provides a better understanding of a research problem than just one approach over the other (Creswell, 2009; Mills, 2011). All cases used in this comparative case study analysis examined the impact training has on RAs ability to perform their job effectively.

Case Study One - Curricular design. Koch (2012) conducted this study using a cross-sectional survey design. This researcher wanted to collect both quantitative and qualitative information. The researcher developed a 52 question instrument and distributed it via email. This is a change from Bowman and Bowman's (1993) earlier research, their instrument was mailed to housing administrators. The researcher sought permission from Bowman and Bowman to replicate their survey. However, they also wanted permission to alter some of the questions to ensure they are meeting the needs of modern day RA training programs. The questions reflected

on three types of training programs: in-service training, retreats or workshops, and academic courses.

Koch (2012) attempted to answer three research questions. "1) How are contemporary RA training programs designed? 2) Are RA training programs designed to create significant learning experiences? 3) Do RA educators use knowledge of curricular design to develop RA training programs?"

Research question one was answered through a variety of inquiries to give the researcher a better understanding of the training programs that exist at various universities, how the information is presented, and what topics are discussed. Koch (2012) wanted to know if universities offer a RA class. If so, was the class for credit or not for credit. The researcher wanted to know if there were in-service training conducted though out the semester or if there were multi-day training sessions before the start of a semester. This instrument allowed the researcher to see if institutions offered training online and if they did, how that training program was developed. Koch (2012) was interested in finding out if housing administrators used student development theories to guide their training and if so, what instrument(s) were used to determine their effectiveness.

Research question two was answered through comparing a university's RA training program to that of Fink's (2003) integrated course design established to create significant learning experiences.

Research question three was answered through questions asking participants to disclose their formal education and any professional development they may have participated in.

Participants were also asked to indicate how many years they held a full-time position in higher education.

Case Study Two - Learning outcomes. In this study, Diesner (2014) examined eleven documents in an attempt to answer the research questions. This qualitative purposeful sampling approach analyzed the RA contract, supervisory and peer evaluation form, rehire form, the Resident Assistant Resource Guide, job description, Resident Assistant course syllabus, in-service agendas, residential engagement manual, Housing and Residence Life mission statement, and the Student Affairs divisional learning outcomes. In addition to examining artifacts and documents, the researcher conducted interviews with the professional staff and focus groups with some of the RAs. Later the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded in an effort to determine common themes.

There were four research questions that helped guide this study. "1) What is the importance of learning outcomes in higher education and student affairs? 2) What should a student learn from leadership experiences in higher education? 3) What are the key elements of the Resident Assistant position? 4) What do Residence Life staff members believe Resident Assistants should be learning from their experience?" The ultimate goal of this case was to identify the learning outcomes for the Towson University Resident Assistant experience and to determine if the learning outcomes in place were as effective as the professional staff intended

Case Study Three - Meaningful training. Kennedy (2009) conducted a qualitative case study that uses a constructivist grounded theory as the foundation. Charmaz (2000) describes this approach by saying

Constructivist grounded theory celebrates firsthand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes

a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods

for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes the

relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the

viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings

(p. 510).

The purpose of this study was to examine how RAs make meaning of their training

experience, specifically in the fall semester. Kennedy (2009) also closely explored how RAs take

the knowledge gained during training and apply it to their community in the residence hall. This

research was conducted at Hunter University and was driven by two questions. "1) Are RAs

equipped to address the challenges they will face in the role given the information learned in

training? 2) Are housing programs and their staff meeting the needs of students through student

staff training?"

Cross Analysis of Study Design

Creswell (2013) discovered the research design is the plan for conducting a study. A

thorough examination of the three studies used provides investigators with a clear understanding

of the different types of study designs that can be employed when conducting research. Koch

(2009) used a quantitative and qualitative design, also called mixed methods (Creswell, 2009).

The mixed method approach helps to strengthen this study. Diesner (2014) conducted a

qualitative study that examined documents and artifacts and also included interviews with

professional staff and focus groups with RAs. Incorporating both professional staff and RAs in

this study helps strengthen it. This allows the researcher to gain firsthand experience from those

on the frontline. Kennedy (2009) conducted a qualitative case study using a constructivist

grounded theory as the foundation. This researcher also conducted individual interviews and

focus groups to gain a better understanding of the problem being investigated. However,

Kennedy (2009) also incorporated journals and observations which allowed for a more in-depth

analysis of the participants. The journals, although the researcher is the only one who opted to

use this method, allowed for the researcher to write down follow up questions, thoughts, and

ideas that could be addressed during the next encounter with the participants. The observations

allowed the researcher to see firsthand how the information learned through training was being

applied to benefit the community.

The three cases examined had different research questions that guided their study.

Creswell (2013) stated "the intent of qualitative research questions is to narrow the purpose to

several questions that will be addressed in the study (p.138)." The cases that have been examined

for this comparative case study analysis were guided by questions that vary. Some of the

questions the researcher hoped would be answered through the documents and artifacts that were

examined. Some of the questions the researchers hoped would be answered through personal

contact such as interviews and focus groups. Koch (2009) had questioned that were directed at

the design of the training programs, the facilitators who put the training together and those that

facilitate the different sessions, and whether the training programs are created so the RAs learn a

significant amount of useful information. Diesner (2014) generated questions that were directed

toward the importance of learning outcomes in higher education, what student leaders learn in

their leadership position, what are the key roles and responsibilities of the RA position and are

the RAs learning what the Residence Life staff intends for them to learn. Kennedy's (2009) study

was guided by questions directed toward RAs being adequately prepared through training to

address the various challenges faced in the residence halls and if training meets the needs of the student staff.

Common Themes of the Study Design

A theme that emerged while reviewing these three cases is that the researchers conducting these studies found it important to examine the training RAs receive. The researchers wanted to gain a better understanding of whether the resources in place were effective enough so the RAs are able to fulfill their duties. These researchers also recognized the importance of intentional training and how important it is for the RAs to fully understand the information that is presented to them so they can adequately perform their job.

4.2 Study Participants

Creswell (2013) emphasizes the importance of the participants in a qualitative research study. The researchers must keep focus on learning the meaning the participants hold about the problem or issue being examined (p.47). The researcher must remove all bias and allow the participants to guide the themes that emerge around the topic being examined. Themes that are developed in qualitative research "should reflect multiple perspectives of the participants in the study (p.47)." The following is a detailed examination of the participants used in the three cases being examined in this case study analysis.

Case Study One - Curricular design. Those that participated in Koch's (2012) study were members of the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (AUCHO-I). Individuals from 827 higher education institutions across the United States were asked to participate. Although ACUHO-I is an organization that represents colleges and universities in the United States and internationally, including six outside countries--Australia,

Canada, China, England, New Zealand and South Africa--Koch (2012) opted to only include colleges and universities within the U.S.. Those who participated in this study included 287 individuals who are directly responsible for RA training programs and 51 individuals who, although they are not responsible for RA training programs, were able to answer questions about the RA training program at their college or university.

A large percent of respondents were from four-year public or private institutions, approximately 5% represented two-year institutions. The housing capacity at the universities that participated ranged from 188 beds to 14,500 beds. Approximately two-thirds of the participants employed fewer than 100 RAs. On average, participants employed 70 RAs. However, the numbers ranged from three to 400. The amount of residents these RAs are responsible for ranged from institution to institution. Two-thirds of the RAs were responsible for 40 or fewer students. Approximately 28% were responsible for 41-80 residents.

Case Study Two - Learning outcome. Diesner (2014) conducted a qualitative study that was a combination of a thorough review of artifacts and documents and interviews and focus groups with professional and paraprofessional staff. Interviews were conducted with the professional staff that comprises the residence life staff at Towson University. These seven individuals are made up of the "Director of Residence Life, two Assistant Directors of Residence Life, and four Residence Life Coordinators" (Diesner, 2014, p.43). These participants' experience ranged from three year working in Residential Life to twenty six years. All held their current positions between one and fourteen years. All individuals that participated in the interview have experience supervising RAs for a minimum of three years. All participants served on the 2012-2013 Resident Assistant Committee. Diesner states this committee "oversees the recruitment, selection, training and development of the RAs" (p.43).

A focus group was also conducted involving Resident Assistants from Towson University. Diesner (2014) used six second year RAs to gather information from. In order to participate these individuals had to be at least a second-year RA. They represented six different residential areas on campus. Four of the individuals identified themselves as being male and two were female. Diesner reported "one student of color participated" (p. 61).

Case Study Three - Meaningful training. Kennedy (2009) was very intentional with the selection of the participants for this study. After careful review of the 2006-2007 RA roster, the researcher decided on four individuals that would provide honest feedback. Considering the researcher was previously employed at the institution being researched, this was not only easy to narrow the list down but the researcher's knowledge of those on the RA roster was convenient. Needing more participants, the researcher reached out to the assistant directors and graduate resident directors for guidance on choosing the remaining individuals. The intention behind using a mix of familiar and non-familiar RAs was to provide a cross-section of the RA staff. Ultimately, twelve participants were selected and were involved throughout the entire time these data were collected. The participants ranged in experience from one to three years' in the position and ranged in gender.

Cross Analysis of Participants

Koch (2012) used the membership list from the international housing organization, ACUHO-I, as potential study subjects. This is a strength because a large number of colleges and universities are members in this organization because they are employed at residential colleges. However, a weakness of this study is that the researcher opted not to use the international colleges and universities. Using the international institutions could have provided the researcher and investigators with the ability to compare and contrast the experience of international RAs

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versus the experience of RAs in the United States. Another weakness of this study is that the RAs were not included. Those who design the training program and facilitate the sessions were able to provide feedback, but the RAs that absorb the information were not included.

Diesner (2014) conducted a study at Towson University and used the Resident Assistant Committee that oversees recruitment, selection and training of the RAs. The intentional use of the committee that is charged with not only recruiting and hiring the right students to fulfill this role, but they are also in charge of adequately training and developing these individuals is a strength of the study. Selecting the right groups of professionals to participate in this study is definitely a strength. However, only six RAs were selected to provide feedback. If the purpose of this study is to identify learning outcomes for the RA experience, a better use of the RAs is needed. A larger and more diverse group of RAs may yield different results.

Kennedy (2009) examined the participants from a variety of different angles. A strength of this study is that the researcher gathered feedback from the twelve participants through individual interviews, focus groups, and on the job observation. However, Kennedy (2009) disclosed under "Ethical Considerations of the Study" that previous employment at the institution and in the department being researched may be a delimitation. The interaction between the researcher and the participants may influence their responses based on their personal feelings of the researcher's job performance while still employed at the institution, this potential bias could be viewed as a weakness.

It would have been great to see one of the researchers interview or conduct a focus group with the residents in the different residence halls to see if they believe the RAs are performing their job to the best of their ability. This would provide the researcher with feedback from a

variety of angles, the training that was given, the RAs performance and how satisfied the residents are with the job performance.

Common Theme in Participants

It was difficult to identify a common theme of the participants used in the three cases examined for this comparative case study analysis. Diesner (2014) and Kennedy (2009) opted to interview and conduct focus groups with RAs in their study. However, Koch (2012) only included professional staff in a position to design RA training at institutions associated with ACUHO-I.

4.3 Data Collection

Creswell (2013) says data collection is "gaining permissions, conducting a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing means for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing forms of data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise" (p.145). The following will give a detailed description of the different data collection processes used in the three cases examined in this case study analysis.

Case Study One - Curricular design.

The process of collecting the data for this case was piloted prior to formally collecting the data. Koch (2012) piloted the survey that would ultimately be used to collect the data for this case with twelve student affairs professions in the United States. These individuals were asked to provide feedback on the design of the questions, the time allotted for completing the instrument, the ease of flow through and clarity of the questions. After receiving feedback from the pilot group, Koch made the necessary changes and proceed with collecting data.

The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) permitted Koch (2012) to use their members in this study. An email was sent to the individual listed as being a representative for the housing department of various colleges and universities. After undeliverable emails were returned and some of those email addresses adjusted, Koch was able to send 805 emails to potential participants. A follow up email was sent on days seven, 14 and 20 to those who had not responded during the October 14 to November 4 timeframe. Finally, Koch received 338 useable responses for a rate of 41.9%.

Case Study Two - Learning outcomes. This case used a purposeful sampling approach when collecting data. Creswell (2009) defines purposefully selected data collection procedures as intentionally selecting participants, documents, or visual material that will best assist the researcher gain a better understanding of the problem or research questions (p.178). Diesner (2014) purposefully selected documents and artifacts at Towson University. The researcher gathered all of the artifacts and documents and carefully examined them in an effort to determine if the existing learning outcomes were clearly defined and assisted the RAs have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility.

Diesner (2014) also conducted group interviews with the professional staff and focus groups with the paraprofessional RAs. After the researcher analyzed the findings to determine if the learning outcomes the department had in placed aligned with the training and development that actually took place. The researcher used the recorded interviews, transcribed them and analyzed the information gathered to develop themes. The researcher asked questions pertaining to three categories; RA responsibilities, RA knowledge and skills and RA development. These categories closely aligned with the key questions guiding this study.

Case Study Three - Meaningful training. Kennedy (2009) collected data in a very systematic way. This researcher explored the training RAs receive and the application of that training through various methods. The researcher conducted individual interviews, focus groups, observed the RAs' interaction, and examined artifacts. Also, participants were asked to keep a journal and the researcher kept a journal.

The researcher asked open-ended and semi structured questions during the interviews and focus groups. Kennedy (2009) was very accommodating with the participants when setting up the individual interviews and focus group times. It is reported that, "two focus group dates and times were selected each of the four times I collected data so that every participant could attend at least one. During the four to five day time period of data collection, individual interviews occurred before and after the focus groups, due to the complexities of finding a mutually agreeable date and time" (Kennedy, 2009, p.93). The researcher reports holding interviews and focus groups throughout campus in spaces that the RAs are familiar and comfortable with; classroom spaces offices, dining hall, and even individual rooms. Most of the interviews lasted about an hour and a half, while the focus groups were about two hours.

The researcher (Kennedy, 2009) asked open-ended questions during the individual interviews that stemmed from conversations with peers and colleagues and data collected from previous interviews. Some questions used are: "What did you learn during training? What did you want to get out of the RA position? And which RAs did you see interacting the most with RAs?" (p. 62). Focus group questions were developed the say way as the individual interview questions. The researcher asked open-ended questions that were generated from responses received during individual interviews. All questions during the focus groups were asked in an effort to complement questions asked prior to their meeting. Some questions that were asked:

"How do you learn about RAs' perceptions and attitudes of the RA position? How would you assess an RAs motivation to apply what they have learned to their community? And how do you learn about other RAs perceptions and attitudes of Fall RA training?" (p. 65).

The researcher reports attending multiple training sessions added to the data collected for this study. In an effort to observe the participants further, the researcher observed them in their residence halls interacting with their community. Kennedy (2009) paid close attention to "verbal and nonverbal communication, relationships, and symbols of training transfer" (p. 96). Kennedy observations ranged "from informal interactions of RAs providing resources to residents and each other to the creation of bulletin boards based on information learned in training" (p. 96).

In addition to the focus groups, interviews and observations, documents were examined. The training schedule, outlines of the various sessions, visual aids for the different sessions presented during training, and any handouts that were given gave the researcher a better understanding of what the RAs were taught. Participants were provided with the opportunity to write in a journal reflecting on their training experience and how the information received during training was implemented in the residence halls to better their community. The participants opted to reflect on their experience and application of knowledge through conversations, focus groups and other personal interactions with the researcher. Although the participants did not keep a journal, Kennedy (2009) did maintain a journal to reflect on questions, thoughts and ideas.

All information, interviews, focus groups, observations, documents and journals were transcribed. After the data were transcribed, the researcher proceeded to code them into categories. After coding the data, the researcher began bracketing the information. Bracketing is a system of breaking large amounts of information down in to manageable chunks (Creswell, 2013). After bracketing the data, Kennedy (2009) began the process of crystallization. This

process allowed the researcher to not only develop themes for this research but gain a better understanding of the information collected and how it applies, not only to the RA position, but how various disciplines affect the information RA learn and the ability to retain and then apply it.

Cross-Analysis of Data Collection

Kennedy (2009) does not report using a specific coding software. A strength of this study is the attention to detail employed in order to not only conduct a thorough study but also to determine underlying issues or concerns. An example that was given by the researcher is, if a training day lasts from 8:00AM until 10:00 PM which is often the case during training periods, the RAs are going to be exhausted. However, the exhaustion comes from a variety of areas. The literature review has proven the demand for this position has evolved over the years, which means more information is going to needed to be retained in order to do the job effectively. However, some important points in education and in psychology are that the human brain can only take in a certain amount of different information in short periods of time. The act of crystallization allowed this researcher to examine RA training and how the information learned is applied to build community. It also helped the researcher empathize with and gain a better understanding of why RAs are not retaining all information. Also, the researcher raised a how long days may affect other things such as their attitude toward and attentiveness during training.

Another strength is that, much like Kennedy (2009), Diesner (2014) conducted interviews and focus groups to gain a better understanding of the needs of the RAs and to understand if the staff and training was meeting their needs. These two researchers also examined artifacts such as training schedule, handouts from training sessions, RA job description, etc. This provided the researcher with a clear understanding of what the RAs were trained on and if the job description

matches what the RAs are taught. Koch opted not to include RAs in the data collection process was a weakness. However, the study was a very strong study, very informative and beneficial to the housing and residential education practitioners.

Common Theme in Data Collection

Similar to the results in the Common Themes in Participants section, it was difficult to find a common theme in data collection processes when analyzing these three cases for this comparative case study analysis. All three cases did, however, use a quantitative approach which allowed themes to emerge with the three cases.

4.4 Findings

The findings section reports the findings from the data collected. This section should not include any biases or interpretation, just the facts (Creswell, 2009). The following will be a detailed description of the findings from the three cases examined in this comparative case study analysis. Also, a cross analysis of the findings of the three cases and the common themes that emerged when examining the findings.

Case Study One - Curricular design. Koch (2012) used three research questions to guide this study. "1) How are contemporary RA training programs designed? 2) Are RA training programs designed to create significant learning experiences? 3) Do RA educators use knowledge of curricular design to develop RA training programs?" (p. #). The following are the findings of this study and the answers to the question listed.

In response to research question number one, the results from Koch's (2012) study showed RA training programs addressed a number of relevant topics. Most included topics such as safety and security issues. Although very important, most participants did not address issues

that are essential to properly deal with issues that are relevant today. Less than one third of the participants reported including topics such as gambling (66%), religious literacy (49%), hazing (44%), spiritual development (41%), and white privilege (40%). Surprisingly, some topics dealing with safety and security such as active shooter training or response was not included (38%). Another topic that is a hot topic in the media now is bullying; 33% of the participants reported they did not address this during training.

In response to research question number two, although participants responded stating they used theories to develop training, further analysis showed different results. Approximately 54% of the respondents stated they use student development theory as a framework for developing their training program. However, "when asked how frequently the theories were used, most replied, on average, 'never' to 'sometimes'" (Koch, 2012, p. 151).

This study found that RA educators were not prepared for the responsibility of designing training programs. Approximately 338 participants were in charge of the training programs for approximately 18,500 RAs. The data show 90.8% of the respondents earned advanced degrees and 55% of those individuals, at the time, were considered mid-level professionals with experience ranging from four to twelve years, less than 20% completed coursework and professional development in curriculum development. Koch (2012) reported 35% of the respondents did not complete any professional development or coursework dealing with curriculum development. While the researcher did an analysis of demographic variables to see if any of the participants possess all of the variables; formal education, professional development, years of experience, highest level of education and the use of integrated course design (ICDD) or use of significant learning goals, it was found to have no significance.

With little formal education and minimal professional development guiding the RA training developers, Koch (2012) concludes these individuals depend on past educational experiences to guide their duties and justify the training programs they develop. Fink and Fink (2009) is quoted by saying,

> The vast majority of college teachers have had no formal preparation for their roles and responsibilities as professional educators. As a result, what they do in most cases is teach the way they were taught: they continue the traditional ways of teaching in their respective disciplines (p.108).

Koch (2012) concludes student affairs practitioners may have followed faculty members. Well intended RA training educators often approach designing training programs with a "how hard can it be mindset" (p. 96). However, Koch maintains the fact that "most RA educators develop their training programs as a series of workshops presented by content experts rather than a comprehensive, intentionally-designed learning experience" (p. 93).

Case Study Two - Learning outcomes. Diesner (2014) used four research questions to guide this study. "1) What is the importance of learning outcomes in higher education and student affairs? 2) What should a student learn from leadership experiences in higher education? 3) What are the key elements of the Resident Assistant position? 4) What do Residence Life staff members believe Resident Assistants should be learning from their experience?" (p. 3).

After careful review of learning outcomes put in place by supporting organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), Diesner (2014) concluded the importance of learning outcomes in higher education and student affairs is to "help define exactly what a student should be learning from

particular responsibilities and how to best design strategies and assessment for the learning" (p. 71).

Diesner (2014) concludes this study by stating, after careful review of the data collected through the literature, interviews, documents, and focus groups, there are six key elements of the RA position. Those key elements are communication, teamwork, crisis and conflict resolution, community building, administrative skills, and diversity. It is important that RAs have a clear understanding of what each of these key elements are, how to implement them in their residential facility and if they encounter issues, how to handle those issue. For example, Watt (2007) says "in part, becoming culturally competent involves becoming aware of one's own privileged status in relation to racism, sexism, ableism, classism, etc. on a personal and political level. Most often, that awareness comes through having emotionally charged dialogue with others" (p. 116). Proper training is important so RAs are able to properly deal with these topics when they encounter them in the residence halls.

Case Study Three - Meaningful training. Kennedy (2009) collected data at Hunter University. This study was driven by two questions. "1) Are RAs equipped to address the challenges they will face in the role given the information learned in training? 2) Are housing programs and their staff meeting the needs of students through student staff training?" (p. #).

In the end, Kennedy (2009) admitted difficulties faced while conducting this research. Kennedy states,

> I question whether I have truly honored their meaning-making of Fall RA training and what they have applied throughout the year… each person experienced RA training in very different ways. Although the five themes of Building RA Relationships, Awareness and Influence of RDs, RA Experience Over Time, RA Training Structure, and RA Training Content Remembered stretched across all 12 participants' lives, I feel I have

missed so much about their individual experiences both in and after training that I question how much I have been able to honor their stories in this manuscript (p. 306).

Although Kennedy (2009) admittedly struggled to answer the questions that guided this study, this researcher did conclude a very important point. A strong relationship with other RAs and their supervisor was the key element to the amount of effort a staff member would put forth in all aspects of the job. Strong relationships with other staff members could be the difference between a staff member switching desk duty shifts throughout the year, collaborating with a program, knowing who has worked for the department longer, could help in crisis situations when dealing with residents. Kennedy says, "without the foundation of close, intentional relationships built during Fall training, these aspects of working as an RA on a team become significantly more challenging" (p.307). Participants in this study said "if they could survive training, they could survive as an RA" (p.310).

4.5 Summary

Each of the three studies examined in this comparative case study analysis reiterated the points made in the literature review; the importance of the RA position to a college or university. Each study had a different perspective and approach to determining what is needed in order to make RA training successful. Two studies were qualitative and consisted of examining artifacts, interviews and focus groups. These two studies used RAs as participants and professional staff. These studies also were conducted at one university, as opposed to the third case which focused on getting feedback from hundreds of universities in the U.S. While conducting a cross analysis of the three cases themes emerged. Strengths and weaknesses of the three studies were identified. The findings have been discussed in great detail. The findings will help guide the recommendations presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

With college students spending 65 to 70% of their time on campus in their living space, residence hall staff, programs, and the facilities in which students live in have a large impact on students and parents perception of a given university (Greenleaf et al., 1967). If this statement is true there is one fact that is beyond the scope of everyday activities and that is the importance of the facilities and the staff. "It has been found that colleges have gained many advantages in employing carefully selected undergraduate students to help meet the objectives of residence hall programs" (Greenleaf et al., 1967, p. 7). Colleges and universities have used RAs to ensure peace in the residence hall, put on programs and to assist various universities develop holistic students upon graduation. With the influence of RAs being as great as it is, it is important to focus on their development as a student leader, ensuring they are fully trained to handle any situation that may come up and to be able to hold their peers accountable when residents are breaking the rules.

Proper training is necessary; however, this study was designed to determine the impact training has on RA self-efficacy. "Individuals who see themselves as masters of their own fate, rather than at the mercy of luck, fate or powerful other people tend to cope better with stress, and generally make more effective and satisfying leaders (Bandura, 1995)." According to McCormack (2001) states, self-efficacy "is critical to the leadership process" because it directly affects the motivation, development and execution of a leader's strategies and goals. Self-efficacy is closely aligned with self-confidence (Bass, 2008).

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to examine the impact training has on RA self-efficacy. This comparative case study analysis used three existing studies to

guide the findings and conclusion. Each of those findings have been used to make suggestions and recommendations.

5.1 Proposed Solutions

After a thorough review of the literature, coupled with the findings of the three cases chosen for analysis, it was posited that training has an impact on the self-efficacy of RAs. With that being said, we must consider some proposed solutions. In the following section of this chapter, the findings of each study that assisted in supporting these solutions were organized in to four sections. Figure 3, the Garlic Training RA Training Model, gives the reader a visual and an overview of the proposed solutions. The Training Program Designer plays an important role in training and the impact this material has on RAs self-efficacy. The Facilitators of the various training sessions play a vital role in how the information is presented to the staff. Literature has shown this is an important part, the ability to transfer knowledge, and is necessary in order to apply the information retained. The Training Topics presented should coincide with the tools needed in order for the RA to be successful. Finally, presenting information is necessary. This section discusses the different ways the training program designer could set up ways the training topics can be presented to the RAs to increase their self-efficious beliefs in their ability to perform their job at optimal level. The suggested solutions are supported by the literature review and the case studies examined.
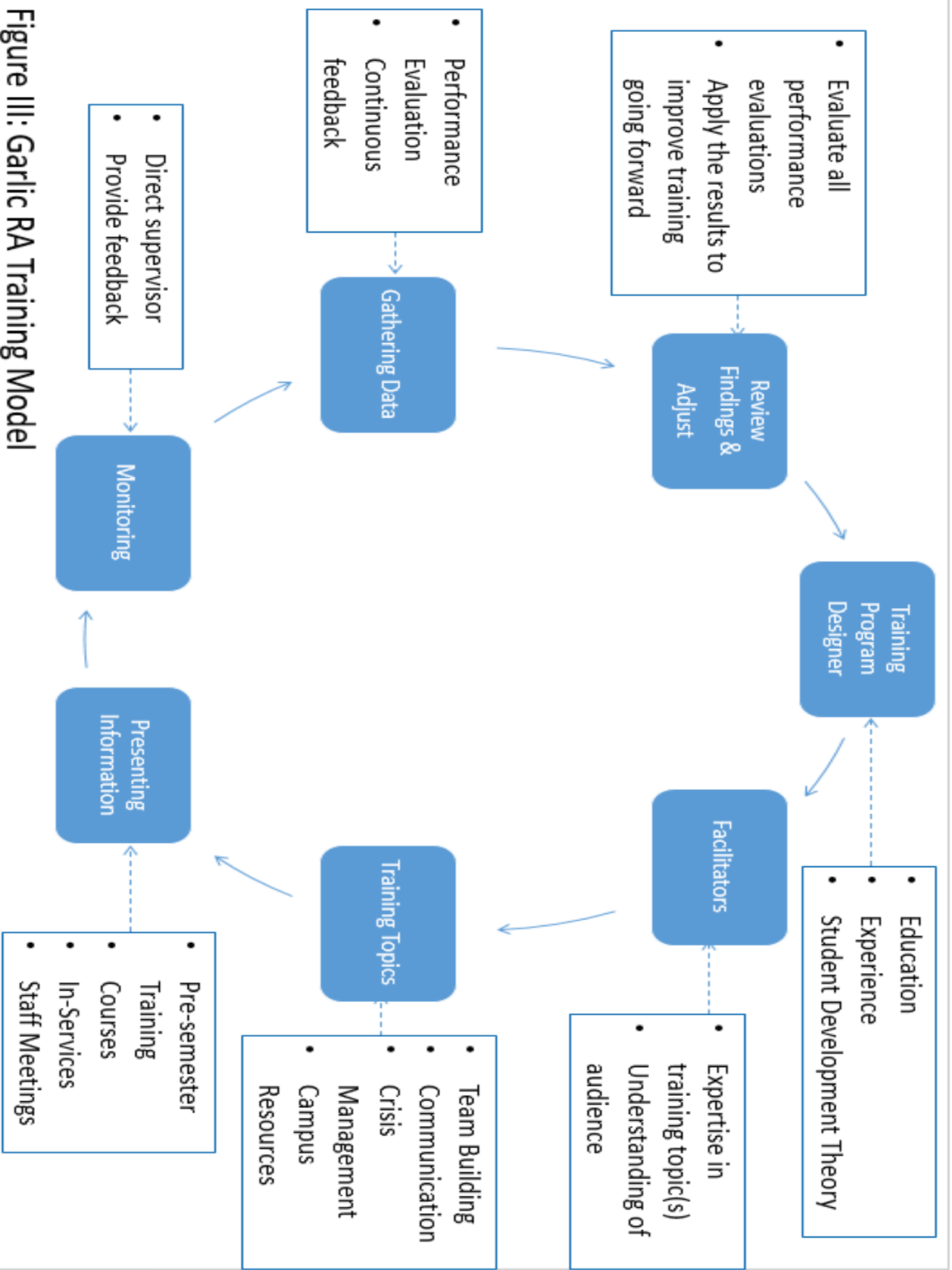
Figure III: Garlic RA Training Model

Training Program Designers. As discussed in Koch (2012), most universities understand the importance of allowing a theory to guide their training. However, this study also found most colleges and universities were not using theories to guide their training program. Practitioners in the position of training program designer should have a clear understanding of the different Student Development Theories that are out there.

Astin (1999) discusses Student Involvement Theory in depth. The researcher argues that students' involvement on campus shapes them over time. Later, he renamed this process engagement. Engagement includes a student's involvement in campus co-curricular activities, their interaction with their peers, and their academics (Kuh, 2009).

As discussed in Chickering and Schlossberg (1995), the Schlossberg's Transition Theory is used to better understand people who go through a transition stage. A transition is defined as "any event, or nonevent, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Schlossberg, Water, & Goodman, 1995, p. 27). Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggested seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education to encourage engagement. These principles are student and faculty contact, cooperation from students, active learning techniques, timely feedback, emphasize time on task, communicate high expectations and respect diversity. Although researchers have studied the psychosocial development of college students for many years, Chickering's (1969) Theory of Psychosocial Development in College Students is a theory that is often used by researchers when examining college students.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) collaborated in refining Chickering's (1969) study of the psychosocial development of college students. The two came up with seven vectors of development most students work through while in college. The seven vectors of development include "developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward

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interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing

purpose and developing integrity" (Bliming, 2003, p. 84). Figure 2 provides a visual of

Chickering's seven vectors of development and how students generally move through these

phases over their time in college.
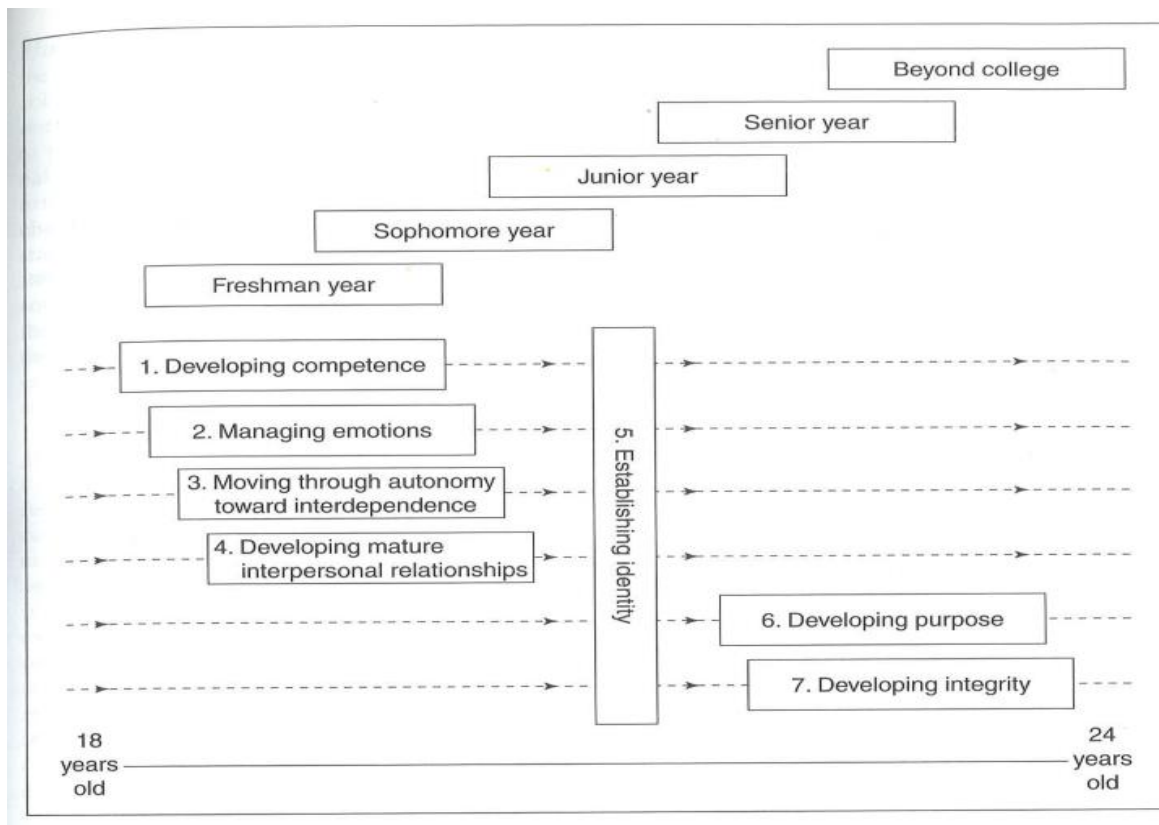
Figure IV: Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of development

Developing Competence. The first vector is developing competence. According to

Merriam Webster (2016), competence is the ability to do something well or the quality or state of

being competent. When a college student arrives at a university they are unfamiliar with the

administration, the infrastructure, the classes, and the expectations. Over time they develop

mastery of their environment. Bliming (2003) discusses three forms of competence students

work through. The first form of competence is intellectual. Students must believe they have the

ability to succeed academically in a given university or college. Feedback from peers, faculty and staff is essential. Simultaneously, physical/manual competence is needed. This is where students determine if the university is a good fit for them. The third form of competence that is essential is interpersonal competence. Students need to feel a sense of belonging. This comes through establishing friendships, dating, and other forms of social interaction including but not limited to joining organizations on campus, bonding with the residents in residence halls, etc. Upcraft and Pilato (1982) say "Students must be able to intellectually and interpersonally cope with what comes and do what they set out to do" (p. 42).

Managing Emotions. A student's ability to manage their own emotions is vector number two. This is established through two processes. Bliming (2003) says "The first is moving from controlling one's own behavior because of external influence to a process of controlling behavior through internal processes" (p. 87). This process means shifting locus of control from parents or an authoritative figure telling students when they do wrong, to students taking responsibility for their own actions and recognizing when they do wrong. The second part of this process is differentiation and integration. This four step process includes awareness of one's emotions, acting on those emotions, receiving feedback about these actions and exercising internal control, and integrating emotions. Students must be able to do things independently and seek help when needed (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982).

Moving through Autonomy toward Interdependence. The vector moving through autonomy toward interdependence is one that people experience all throughout life. Bliming (2003) says as early in life as toddler years, people begin establishing themselves as individuals. They begin to steer away from the crowd and establish their own way of being. College students break away from their parents or guardians providing for them financially and get jobs to support

themselves. Another part of moving toward interdependence is living on your own. For some, living in the residence halls is there first opportunity to not only be financially free and have a sense of independence. Although parents are usually involved in paying tuition, making car payments, etc., students begin this process of moving toward interdependence by being away from home and taking control of their everyday schedule, academics, involvement, friends, and relationships.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Chickering and Reisser (1993) concluded, as people mature over time their relationships with others become more meaningful. Students develop a greater tolerance for others. They begin to understand they do not have to surround themselves with everyone. Their circle of friends becomes closer and sometimes smaller, yet has more meaning. Most are not ready to fully embrace interpersonal relationships until they are secure in themselves (Bliming, 2003). Once a student has reached this maturation stage there is a shift "toward greater trust, independence, and individuality" (p. 88).

Establishing Identity. The next stage discussed in Bliming (2003) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) of Chickering's seven vectors of development is establishing identity. This stage is as important as the others; however, once a student is able to establish themselves as an individual, the maturing and development that takes place helps bring definition to their personality. "The first four vectors – competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, and developing mature interpersonal relationships – form the framework for the establishment of an identity" (Bliming, 2003, p.88). Upcraft and Pilato (1982) state, when defining vector number four, students have to establish a sense of self by having a clear understanding of their physical needs, appearance, and identifying sexual roles and acceptable behaviors.

Developing Purpose. Understanding one's purpose in life is very important. Bliming (2003) discusses a person's ability to determine their vocational or career plan and how it will assist with developing and establishing what one's purpose is in life. A person who loves animals may opt to be a Zoology major in college with hopes of becoming a zoologist or veterinarian upon graduation. An individual who has a passion for listening to people and helping them through their problems may be interested in a career as a counselor and may seek out a counseling major in college. Having a clear understanding of what you have a passion for in life and what makes you happy will help you determine what your purpose is. Upcraft and Pilato (1982) are quoted as saying, "Students must develop a sense of purpose in their lives, leading to plans and priorities for their careers, avocations, and life-styles" (p. 42).

Developing Integrity. The final vector discussed in detail in Bliming (2003) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) of Chickering's Psychosocial development in college students is a person's ability to develop integrity. Integrity is something that humans continue to develop and refine over time. "It is a continued process of growth and development" (Bliming, 2003, p. 90). Integrity is generally established and recognized after a student leaves college. This improves and advances with experience, trial and error. Blasi (1980) believes as an individual's moral development increases, that person is more likely to act in a way that coincides with those values.

Training Program Designers should not only have the experience of working in higher education, specifically residence life, they should also have the education and knowledge of student development theories such as Chickering's Psychosocial Development to guide their decisions regarding RA training.

Facilitator. A challenge for training program designers is finding facilitators with an expertise in of the various training topics who are also able to articulate the information in an engaging, interactive, yet thorough manner. Green, Bollinger, Blattner and Gonzalez (2011) reiterate this point by saying, "our non-residence life presenters often struggle and are much more comfortable with their PowerPoint and a clicker. It requires a lot of work on our part to get [facilitators] to think and present differently" (p.45). Facilitators who have an understanding of their audience and their needs would be beneficial.

Training Topics. Researchers agree that training is important to the performance of RAs, however, researchers differ on the various topics that staff members should be trained on. Depending on the location of the university, certain training topics may be more important and require more emphasis than others. For example, a university that is closer to a military base may have more military personnel or military families living on campus. As a result, it would require more sensitivity training to military personnel. A university that has a larger Muslim population may require more sensitivity training to the Muslim religion. A university that has suddenly experienced an active shooter situation, although in hindsight, may require active shooter training. Although the topics mentioned are topics that would be beneficial to all, training program designers have to recognize the budget constraints that most universities face and the amount of time it takes to present a broad variety of topics. However, focusing on key topics that RAs need in order to get started, team building among the staff, how to communicate well with others, crisis management and conflict resolution skills, teaching them the resources available on campus so they become a resource to their residents and important topics that training program designers should focus on.

Team building. Kennedy (2009) concluded one of the most important parts of the job is the bonds created with other staff members and their director supervisor. Kennedy is quoted by saying

> By far, participants emphasized in every interview and focus group the importance of building relationships with other RAs on their staffs during training, as well as maintaining those connections throughout the year. While they had a sense that information presented to them during training sessions was important, the RAs believed they learned what it meant to be an RA and how to actually do the job from each other and from returning RAs in particular (p.330).

Ultimately, if an RA is not clear on something that was taught in training or how to handle a situation, their familiarity and bond with their co-workers and supervisors is very important. Kennedy (2009) also posits another finding from this study was relationship-based. The importance of having a "supportive, respectful, and empathetic supervisor (p. 330)" made a big difference when it comes to participation during training. Some RAs mentioned if they had a positive relationship with their supervisor they were more likely to pay attention during training sessions, as a result, get more out of training. However, those who reported have a negative relationship with their supervisor payed attention less during training and ultimately assisted in deciding whether to return the next academic year as an RA.

Relationship building is very important and program training designers should value its importance by scheduling time for team building. Most universities hire in the Spring for the Fall semester. Once that decision is made, team building and team bonding should begin. The more comfortable staff members are with each other and their supervisors, the more effective and efficient they will be in the RA position.

Crisis management and conflict resolution. It is crucial to the success of the staff in the residence halls to have a good working relationship with the Counseling Department, the Police

Department and the Office of Judicial Affairs. These departments are critical to the self-efficacy of RAs as it pertains to the crisis situations and judicial infractions they encounter. With RAs having to hold their peers accountable for their wrong doings on campus it would builds a higher level of self-esteem and confidence in the RAs if they received initial training and continued in-service training from the areas listed above. The counseling department would be able to explain signs and symptoms of a depressed student and provide RAs with guidance should they encounter a depressed resident. The counseling department would also be able to provide RAs with guidance should they encounter a resident that may have been a victim of sexual assault, rape, mental health issues, Veterans Affairs, PTSD, etc.. In "Rethinking Resident Assistant Training" Green, Bollinger, Blattner, and Gonzalez (2011) discuss RA training, past, present and the future. During this discussion, one of the individuals being interviewed mentioned in the future, their institution will dedicate a full afternoon to Behind Closed Doors scenarios dealing with mental health issues. Behind Closed Doors are scenes that may happen in the residence halls acted out by staff members to test RAs ability to handle various situations. Behind Closed Doors are usually done after RAs receive information on how to handle the scene that will be acted out; this is similar to a post test.

Dedicating an afternoon of Behind Closed Doors solely to scenes dealing with mental health issues emphasizes the importance of RAs being confident in their ability to handle these situations when they happen. This also hits home the point that mental health issues are a hot topic and Student Affair practitioners, specifically Housing professionals, should be proactive in training their staff to recognize signs of mental health issues and remaining vigilant in the procedures that should take place once a mental health issue is identified.

Another individual that participated in Green, Bolinger, Blattner and Gonzalez's (2011) "Rethinking Resident Assistant Training", discussed the importance of including Behind Closed Door scenes that deal with Veterans. Depending on where a college or university is located, some universities may see more of a certain population than others. The participant included in the Green, Bolinger, Blattner, and Gonzalez study mentioned, after receiving feedback from the Veteran's Affairs office, the training program designers felt it necessary to make sure the staff was more "veteran friendly (p.46)".

The campus police department or the local police department would be able to explain the procedure and process they would like the RAs to follow should they encounter illegal substances, drug paraphernalia or any other incidents that would need a police or security officer to respond. The Judicial Affairs Department would be able to explain in great detail how violators will be held accountable for their actions and how the RAs role in this process assists with getting criminals out of the campus community.

Direct communication among these departments could assist the RAs with doing their job effectively. However, continued direct communication through monthly in-services would build stronger partnerships between the departments and could increase the self-efficacy of RAs as it pertains to crisis and judicial infraction situations.

Campus resources. Applying for a parking pass near the staff member's respective residence hall is important. Should a situation occur and assistance is needed at a different residence hall, you would want to be able to get to your vehicle in a timely manner. The need for a parking pass and cars on campus is contingent upon if the university allows students and staff to have cars on campus. Another important topic is the payroll system. Learning when timesheets are due and if a timesheet is not submitted on time, what is the process for correcting this error?

Also, the payroll schedule should be shared with new and returning RAs so they are aware of when they should receive their pay. If the university has a timely warning system in place all RAs should be required to be a part of this communication. The Jeanne Cleary Act was implemented in the 1990s. The Jeanne Cleary Act, named after 19 year old Jeanne Cleary, who was raped and murdered in her residence hall at Lehigh University in the late 1980s. The death of Jeanne Cleary stirred up conversation surrounding unreported crimes on campus at all colleges and university that participate in federal financial aid programs. As a result, colleges and universities are required to disclose security policies, keep a public log of all crimes committed, publish an annual crime report and send out timely warnings to students and employees about crimes that may pose a threat (Whissemore, 2016). It is important for all staff, including the RAs who are on the front line in the residence halls, to be aware when a crime happens on campus. This information can easily be passed on to the resident on their floor, wing or in the residence hall.

RAs should be made aware, through training, of the various resources on campus. They should be the encyclopedia for their residents; they should know where a should go if they need just about anything. However, should an RA not know how to assist a resident, they should know someone who can. Redirecting a resident when you do not know the answer to their question is a very important part of training as well. As was discussed in Kennedy (2009), although training program designers try to include as much information as they can in to the various training sessions, it is difficult for new and returning RAs to retain all of the information.

Presenting Information. The frequency of important topics being presented varies from university to university. The amount of times topics are presented also varies based on a variety of things, current events, the needs of the residents, and the needs of the staff to name a few. If a

new law is passed or policies and procedures at the university level change and those changes could affect the residence halls, the residents or the staff, the training designers and staff with in the department must be in tune with these changes and may feel it necessary to present certain topics immediately. As a result, an emergency meeting may be called. Another example could be involving the residents in a residence hall. If there is an increase in roommate conflicts, a refresher on community building, communicating with others, and roommate agreements may be the topics that need to be presented again. If there is an increase in conflicts, the RAs may have a lower level of self-efficacy in their ability to resolve conflict. To uplift the staff in their efforts to maintain order and to boost their self-efficacy belief in their ability to perform their job, the training designer may call a building meeting to address this concern with the residents. In addition, the training designer may call an emergency meeting with the staff to reiterate how to handle conflicts. With all of this being said, there are traditional and more modern ways of presenting training material, pre-semester training, online courses, in-services, staff meetings, and professional development. The following will be a description of each of these ways to present information to increase RA self-efficacy.

   Pre-semester training. Training prior to the start of a semester is vitally important. This traditional method of training RAs may vary in length and content from university to university. Mason (2003) replaces the term pre-semester training with retreats. "Retreats are multi-day or weeklong experiences that students complete before the academic year begins and the residents move in" (p. 21). Mason continues by saying, "most institutions do a seven to fourteen day concentrated training program with the Residence Life Assistants (RLA) prior to move-in at the end of August" (p. 22). Green, Bollinger, Blattner and Gonzalez (2011) discuss the reality of not being able to address every topic that is necessary for the RA position. Given the complexity of

issues RAs and other housing staff members deal with, it is important to present as much information as possible without overwhelming the staff. However, it is important that training does not stop here. Continued training is as important as the foundational training provided before the semester begins.

Courses. Resident Assistant academic courses generally carry one to three hours of academic credit. Some universities require students to participate in a non-credit academic course as a part of the application process to become an RA. Bowman and Bowmans (1995) support this idea. This researcher recommends that an residence life related academic course be considered a part of the selection and recruitment process. The institution Diesner (2014) researched required new RAs to enroll and successfully complete a RA course their first semester in the position. Academic courses, for credit or not for credit, are the most formal and offer more contact hours over a longer period of time (Mason, 2003).

Nontraditional methods of presenting residence life learning material has been known to include online training courses. Green, Gollinger, Blattner, and Gonzalez (2011) discuss this approach as well. One participant discusses rethinking the training design to include online training modules in an effort to assist with saving resources. This would allow the department to not have to bring the RAs back as early as normally planned. "Budgets also prohibit having staff come too early for days and weeks of training. We are thinking about having some online training modules they can complete before they get to training and then maybe just have Q&A follow-up" (Green, Gollinger, Blattner, and Gonzalez, 2011, p.46).

In-services. Training throughout the academic semester for a short period of time to reiterate topics discussed during pre-semester training, current events or hot topics in the housing

field are generally discussed during in-services. Mason (2003) says, "in-service sessions are on-going one or two hour sessions offered throughout the academic year" (p. 20).

Staff meetings. Although training timeframes may vary from university to university, one thing that is universal, continued follow up to reiterate important topics is essential. By simply adding a section of the RA manual, a hypothetical scenario or a housing related current event to weekly or biweekly staff meetings would assist in emphasizing the importance of dealing with major and minor incidents in the residence halls properly and ensuring all staff remembers are adequately trained and confident in their abilities to handle situations when they occur. Being a practitioner in housing I know, it is not a matter of if a situation is going to occur, my colleagues should focus on when and incident occurs will the staff know how to conduct themselves.

Monitor. After the Training Program Designer has determined the various facilitators who will be presenting the suggested training topics and the training topics are reinforced through the various ways of presenting the information, the RAs need to be monitored to be sure they are doing their job in an effective and efficient way. Immediate feedback from their direct supervisor is important during this process.

Gathering data. In order to find out if the RA applied what they learned during training and did so with self-efficacy, they will need to be evaluated. The job performance of an employee is important to an organizations success. "Job performance is the most important dependent variable in industrial-organizational psychology (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992)." This fact is true in all businesses, higher education and residence life is no different. There are a number of different ways to measure job performance. Performance ratings are the most popular method used to assess an employee's efforts (Viswesvaran, Ones & Schmidt, 2002). The most popular subjective evaluations are recorded by direct supervisors (Viswesvaran, Schmidt & Ones, 1996).

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Direct supervisors are responsible for providing RAs with feedback on their performance and providing the Training Program Designer with the results.

Review findings and adjust. After all performance evaluations have been gathered by the Training Program Designer, this individual has to begin evaluating which areas the RAs need to improve. A thorough evaluation of how the RAs performed throughout the academic year will assist the Training Program Designer determine what adjustments need to be made to RA training for the next academic year. Continuing this process on an annual basis would be most beneficial for the department, the staff and will ensure the residents are receiving the services they deserve; a well-trained and fully equipped Resident Assistant.

5.2 Future Research

In the future, it would benefit Higher Education professionals and housing practitioners to expound on this research. Due to time constraints, this investigator conducted a comparative case study analysis using existing data. However, the ability to collect data at a university on the East Coast would be beneficial. Collecting data from a number of universities would allow the investigator the ability to compare the findings. Have a clear understanding of the training topics offered at one university verse another would add to the body of knowledge. Also, a comparison between Historically Black Colleges and Universities training and its impact on their RA self-efficacy compared to Predominately White Institution could yield varying results.

Another study that practitioners in the housing field would benefit from conducting is the relationship training has on a RAs self-efficacy moderated by job performance. Job satisfaction is another variable that housing professional staff members would benefit from investigating. The higher the RAs self-efficacy is the more satisfied the RA may be in their job. Also, does an

RAs demographic profile alter their self-efficacy. Studies have been conducted on students who become RAs their sophomore year. Are these individuals developed enough to handle this position? Are they mature enough to deal with the conflicts that come with the job?

5.3 Conclusion

Each of the three case studies examined, along with the literature reviewed assisted in exploring this topic deeper. The impact training has on the self-efficacy of RAs, an important topic that should be discussed amongst Student Affairs practitioners, Housing professional staff members and paraprofessional staff such as the RAs. Although it is very difficult to say specifically which topics should be included, the research suggests an absence of certain topics could be problematic. The Garlic RA Training Model, gives the reader a visual and an overview of the proposed solutions. The Training Program Designer plays an important role in training and the impact this material has on RAs self-efficacy. The Facilitators of the various training sessions play a vital role in how the information is presented to the staff. Literature has shown this is an important part, the ability to transfer knowledge and is necessary in order to apply the information retained. The Training Topics presented should coincide with the tools needed in order for the RA to be successful. Finally, Presenting Information is necessary. This section discusses the different ways the training program designer should set up the training topics to be presented to the RAs to increase their self-efficious beliefs in their ability to perform their job at optimal level.

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APPENDIX A

DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board — Human Subjects Protection Committee

March 16, 2017

Dear Brandy,

Delaware State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB)-Human Subjects Protection Committee has reviewed your project **"The Impact Training Has On The Self-Efficacy of Resident Assistants"**. After review of application, the Committee has **granted an exemption** from the IRB as it meets a Category of Exempt Research specified in 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at ▬▬▬▬▬ if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Friel
Chairperson, Human Subjects Committee (IRB)

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