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Assessing and Meeting Residents' Needs: An Evaluation of Residence Hall Programming

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Thesis submitted
to the College of Education and Human Services
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in
Educational Psychology (Program Evaluation and Research)

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ABSTRACT

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Michael J. Beck

In this qualitative study, I examine how programming in college residence halls does and does not meet the needs of residents and resident assistants. Using focus group and individual interview data, I structure my analysis using Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. I suggest that residence hall programming—academic, social, or a hybrid of the two—is most valuable for its ability to meet residents' needs related to belongingness but that residence hall staff must place more explicit emphasis on residents' growth needs in order for self-actualization to be supported.

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Introduction

Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991) assert that program evaluation is more than merely “applied social science methodology” (p. 7). In their conceptualization of the field, both normative and theoretical concerns undergird the more visible pragmatic concerns; unlike some social science research, however, those pragmatic concerns exert a force equal to that of methodology and theory. Program evaluation, in short, always happens in the real world, but Shadish et al. do not dismiss it for this constriction. “At the same time,” they insist, “all evaluation practitioners are nascent evaluation theorists” (p. 35). In this project, an examination of the effectiveness of residence hall programming at a large public research university in the Mid-Atlantic Appalachian region, I have not forgotten Shadish et al.’s admonitions. I have worked to balance the pressing practical concerns of such a project (such as narrowing the scope of my evaluation to that which might be supported by my limited skills, time, and resources and making sure that my results are understandable by the program stakeholders and available in a timely enough manner to be put to use) with the responsibility of a program evaluation theorist to make sound methodological choices, include the voices of participants, and create new knowledge for both residence hall stakeholders and my fellow program evaluators.

I begin by describing my purpose, both narrowly and broadly. I then review the literature related to student engagement and residence hall programming, including its scopes, aims, and typical configurations. I follow by describing the context of this study and my methodology, including data collection methods, validity procedures, and analysis techniques. I then summarize my findings. I conclude with limitations of this study, discussion, and specific recommendations for my research site and other residence halls.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of residence hall programming at a large public research university in the Mid-Atlantic Appalachian region. Specifically, I wanted to investigate (1) which types of programs (social, academic, or hybrid) residents most benefited from, (2) what the residents' perceived benefits were, and (3) what needs were left unmet by the programming currently being offered. As this project was a program evaluation and not simply a research project, I also wanted to be able use my findings and discussion to generate clear, implementable recommendations that residence hall stakeholders could use to support better the residents, resident assistants, resident faculty leader (RFL), and other support staff at this resident hall and in others like it.

Hostetler (2005) proposes that if “their research is to be deemed good in the fullest sense...researchers must be able to make sound and articulatable, if not fully articulated, connections to a robust and justifiable conception of human well-being”—that is, “good research is a matter not only of sound procedures but also of beneficial aims and results” (p. 17). Good research must not just be methodologically and theoretically sound: it is my moral duty as a researcher also to produce research that is good more broadly, both for my immediate participants and for human well-being more generally. This imperative is, in part, what led me to program evaluation. In this project and in future projects, my purpose is to contribute to the common good in immediately realizable ways and in more lasting contributions to the knowledge in the my field.

Literature Review

This literature review examines research on both the academic programs and the interactions that take place within residence halls and the impact that those programs have upon the undergraduate residents who live within them.

Student Engagement

Kuh (2007) defines student engagement as “educationally purposeful” activities that “positively influence [students’] grades and persistence” (p. B12). Numerous practices beyond the classroom can result in meaningful engagement, ranging from extracurricular activities (Slocum and Rhoads 2009) to living in a residence hall (Pike 1999; Zhao & Kuh 2004). Ultimately, student engagement leads to student success, typically defined by retention metrics such as persistence between freshman and sophomore year or grade point average (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research 2002; Kuh et al. 2008)

Student Engagement and Retention in Residence Halls

Grade-point average in a student’s first year of college is significantly related to precollege characteristics, especially high school grade-point average and standardized test scores (Zheng, Saunders, Shelley, & Whalen, 2002). However, Sparkman, Maulding, Roberts, and Jalynn (2012) argued that graduation rates are unrelated to precollege characteristics and that college engagement, retention and academic performance may be related to other factors.

Several studies have examined factors affecting engagement and retention that are based in residence halls. Hossler (1981) pointed out that colleges rely on residence hall activities to improve retention without necessarily studying the effects of those programs. Student engagement in residence halls is affected by a cluster of factors, including race and gender, attitudes toward staff and other residents, and environmental factors such as outside employment,

noise, and a sense of belonging (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003). Luna (1998) found that one of the factors that residents said affected a decision not return in the subsequent academic year was a lack of sense of belonging to a community on campus. Leana (1994) argued that freshmen who lacked engagement in their residence hall community also lacked skills of self-sufficiency and would benefit from more direct involvement with adult faculty and staff in their college experience.

Meaningful for the purposes of this study are the findings by Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, and Leonard (2007) that first-generation college students experienced an easier transition to college socialization and engagement in the residence halls than first-generation students who lived elsewhere. Furthermore, first-generation college students who interacted with faculty within residence halls experienced an easier transition to college coursework.

Barriers to Student Engagement in Residence Halls

Numerous factors are potential barriers to student engagement in a residence hall community. One of the largest barriers is alcohol. The data are mixed in regard to whether or not living in a residence hall decreases the amount of alcohol consumed by students, but researchers agree that alcohol consumption is linked to lower rates of engagement in academic activities on campus (Brower, Golde, & Allen, 2003; Page & O'Hegarty, 2006; Schall, Kemeny, & Maltzman, 1991). Boekloo, Bush, and Novik (2009) contend that freshmen in residence halls who do not drink still frequently deal with secondhand effects of alcohol use, particularly females.

High levels of stress may also prevent student engagement; leading stressors include health problems, conflicts with a roommate, and conflicts with faculty or staff (Dusselier, Dunn, Wange, Shelley, & Whalen, 2005). On the other hand, students who feel at ease in their

residence hall because of strong group cohesion or infrequent loud noises are more likely to adjust well to college (Kaya, 2004). Dusselier et al.'s (2005) conceptualization of their study was particularly helpful when I was revising my study design, including the purpose of the study. Dusselier et al. fundamentally approached student engagement from a deficit standpoint, looking for obstacles to rather than supports for student engagement. I inverted this kind of thinking by looking first for the benefits that residence halls provide rather than the challenges residents are apt to encounter there.

Students from non-normative populations frequently struggle to engage in their residence hall community. Johnson et al. (2007) showed that black, Hispanic, and Asian students felt less of a sense of belonging to their residence hall community and to their college community at large than white students did. Whites and cultural minority groups also perceive racial differences in residence halls differently (Johnson, 2003). Likewise, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students differed from straight students in their perceived value of residence hall space set aside for GLBT students (Herbst & Malaney, 1999), and the process of coming out sometimes discourages GLBT students from participating in residence hall activities (Evans & Broido, 1999).

Academics and Residence Halls

Bess (1973) argued for an incorporation of academic life into residence life on college campuses. Residence halls now incorporate a host of programs to better integrate academics, ranging from first year seminars taught in residence halls to residential colleges to greater faculty involvement in the halls (Johnson & Cavins, 1996).

Many colleges and universities have created living-learning communities, which are residence halls with a targeted focus that is broadly academic, such as a Spanish language hall, a

substance-free hall, or a transfer student hall. Research on living-learning communities is mixed. Arms, Cabrera, and Brower (2008) showed that students in living-learning communities were significantly more engaged than students who did not have in-house academic advisers. However, Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Kurotsuchi (2008) found that precollege factors and participation in college clubs were stronger predictors of a student's involvement in civic life than participating in a living-learning community focused on civic action was. Studies such as Rowan-Kenyon et al.'s (2008) (a cross-sectional, multiple regression analysis of previously administered electronic survey data) focused on identifying the relationships between living-learning communities and engagement in large samples (Rowan-Kenyon et al. used data from nearly 1,500 surveys, for example). When describing the limitations of their study, Rowan-Kenyon et al. acknowledged the need for longitudinal rather than cross-sectional studies, a limitation of my study as well.

Shushok, Scales, Sriram, and Kidd (2011) argued that residence halls they termed the "learning model," in which planned programs in the halls were academic in nature, were the most worthwhile paradigm for university housing (p. 17). Yet studies examining whether living in a residence hall has a positive impact upon student outcomes are mixed. Some data suggest that students in residence halls have no significant impact on the academic performance of residents (Blimling, 1989; Smith, 2011). Other data indicate that students in residence halls earn higher grade-point averages than their peers who live elsewhere (Kanoy & Bruhn, 1996; Nowack & Hanson, 1985). Regardless of the individual resident's academic performance, Murrell, Denzine, and Murrell (1998) found that residents viewed hall staff as the most significant figures in the academic culture of the hall.

Resident Faculty

Colleges have also attempted to better integrate academics into residence hall communities through placing resident faculty in residence halls. Overall, resident faculty increase student engagement in their residence hall through various means, notably program planning, function hosting, and in-house advising (Benjamin & Vianden, 2011; Mara & Mara, 2011). Although faculty sometimes resent the role they must adopt as a consistent enforcer of policies such as alcohol rules (Rhoads 2009), they tend to be effective builders of community in residence halls (Ellett & Schmidt, 2011). One of the most exciting possibilities for faculty in residence halls is program planning. As Browne, Headworth, and Saum (2009) put it, “involving faculty in programming sponsored by student affairs, has potential benefits that are difficult to match when such collaboration is missing” (para. 6). Nevertheless, how faculty ought to be involved and how they should best build working relationships with other residence hall community members is still elusive. Browne et al. (2009), for example, leave much of their study design, data collection, and analysis methods unclear, only noting that it is based on the experiences of two faculty members in residence over the course of five years. In my study, I hope that more transparent methodology has resulted in clearer, more generalizable findings for other researchers reading my work.

Methodology

In this section, I describe the context for this project. I then discuss my decision to engage in qualitative research methods, in light of the project context and my primary research purposes. I then describe my data collection, analysis methods, and validity procedures in detail.

Context

This study was conducted during the 2012-2013 academic year at Plainview Hall (a pseudonym), a residence hall at a large public university in the Mid-Atlantic Appalachian region. The university's students are overwhelmingly (83%) white; 5% are African-American, 3.5% are Latino/a or Hispanic, 3% are two or more races, 1.5% are Asian, and fewer than 1% identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Four percent of the student body are non-resident aliens. Undergraduate tuition ranges from about \$7,500 for in-state students to just over \$21,000 for out-of-state students. Eighty-nine percent of undergraduate students receive financial aid. Of the approximately 29,000 students living on the university's main campuses, 22,000 are undergraduates. All unmarried, childless first-year students under the age of 21 are required to live in one of the university's 12 residence halls. Residence hall rates range from just over \$2,000 to nearly \$4,000 per term plus a meal plan (an additional \$2,000 per term). The average cost of room and board is \$9,300 per year.

At the time of this study, Plainview Hall was the residence hall located farthest from the center of campus and the smallest residence hall on campus, with a maximum enrollment of 212, although hall enrollment fluctuated day-to-day due to students transferring into and out of the hall or out of the university. Plainview Hall was co-ed. There were eight resident assistants, undergraduate or graduate students responsible for directing students to campus resources, enforcing residence hall rules, being the first point of contact in adjudicating roommate disputes, disseminating university announcements, and providing general support and leadership for the residents on their respective floors.

Plainview Hall was also home to a resident faculty leader (RFL) and his family, including his wife; Isaac, their large, friendly dog; and several cats. The RFL was a tenured faculty

member who served as a RFL in addition to his research and teaching duties. The RFL's duties included planning and executing academic programming and participating in and leading residence hall-based academic interventions (such as contacting and providing support for failing students at midterm). The RFL also planned and executed some social programming, although the focus of the position was academic. A residence hall director also lived in Plainview Hall full-time. His position was mainly focused on facility management and rules enforcement. In addition to live-in staff, there were custodial workers and a front desk receptionist during business hours each weekday. While I conducted this study, I also worked in Plainview Hall as a Live-Learn Community Specialist (LLCS). In my position as LLCS, I acted as the RFL's assistant. I was a point of contact for students in academic jeopardy, and I helped execute some of the academic and social programming. My research—that is, parts of this study—was also a part of my duties, as the RFL program was required to engage in systematic evaluation of its programming each year.

Participants

The participants in this study were all residents or resident assistants from Plainview Hall during the 2012-2013 academic year. In order to recruit both participants who regularly attended hall programming and participants who never or seldom attended, I publicized my study via in-person announcements at hall events and via IRB-approved fliers. (Fliers and posters were a regular, reliable method of disseminating all manner of hall information and were posted by the hall entrance and on boards throughout the hall.) I recruited resident assistants by describing the project and participant requirements at a regular staff meeting followed by an email summarizing that information. It is important to note that I did not, in terms of the hall's staff organizational structure, operate in any sort of evaluative or supervisory capacity for resident assistants. While I

did collaborate with the other members of the hall leadership team on programming, including the RFL and the residence hall director, it was clear to resident assistants that I had no input in matters relating to their employment at Plainview. Their participation in this study was not coerced, either overtly or covertly, by my position as LLCS.

In total, 11 residents and three resident assistants participated in the study. Of the 11 residents, three were male and eight were female. One resident was multiracial, and the other residents were white. One of the residents was an international student. Of the three resident assistants, one was male and two were female. One was Asian, and the other two were white.

Data Collection

Choosing a methodological stance. According to Polkinghorne (2005), “the experiential life of people is the area qualitative methods are designed to study” (p. 138). He clarifies by explaining that “the unit of analysis in qualitative research is experience, not individuals or groups. Qualitative studies vary in the kinds of experience they investigate; yet, their interest is about the experience itself not about its distribution in a population” (p. 139). From the outset of this project, I knew that, as Polkinghorne suggested, I wanted to get at the experience of Plainview Hall’s residents and resident assistants. While designing this study, I already knew who and how frequently students were attending hall programming. Attendance at individual RFL-sponsored events in Fall 2012 ranged from one to 54 (see Table 1). Attendance data indicated that 72 residents attended one or two academic programs in the first month of the 2012-2013 school year. The hall, in short, was made up of students who generally participated in at least some academic programs. This might have suggested that students were interested in bolstering their academic success; it might also have suggested that students were interested in making friends in their residence hall or desired the support provided in academic programs. My

goal, however, was to get at more than simply how many students participated and in what kinds of programs. I wanted to uncover more about residents' experiences during the programs and as a part of the hall community; I wanted to know how residents perceived their needs and how well the Plainview Hall programming was (or was not) meeting those needs. A qualitative study, then, was the most appropriate way for me to do so.

Table 1

Number of Residents in Attendance at Selected In-Hall Academic Offerings (Fall 2012)

Program Series Title	Number of Student Participants Per Event
Big Idea of the Month	13-17
Plainview sections of freshman seminar*	47 (total participation)
Fieldtrips to the University	1-9
Hall Council	15-54
Registration Breakfast	37 (total participation)
Spaghetti Sundays	28-49
Stuff You Should Know	3-18
Weekly Tutoring*	17 (total participation)

*"Academic support" program.

Montuschi's (2004) explication of objectivity in the social sciences was particularly instructive for me while designing this study. His primary claim is that "the choice (and efficacy) of certain resources and techniques of objectivity goes hand in hand with the way(s) in which the 'objects' of inquiry in each and any discipline are identified, classified, or described" (p. 110). This claim can be divided into two parts: (1) resources and techniques and (2) how the researcher conceptualizes objects of inquiry. As I describe in the previous paragraph, my unit of analysis was not an individual or a group; instead, it was the *experience of particular* individuals in a particular context. The participants in this study, then, became what Montuschi would call a "social object" (p. 116), as opposed to a natural object (something like a water molecule in a hard science context). The primary difference between these two types of objects is *interaction*, Montuschi asserts:

There is a feedback, or 'looping' effect involved with classifying people, where 'self-conscious knowledge plays much of a role.' *Kinds* of people may change, because the *people* classified as being of certain kinds might themselves change as a consequence of being so classified....when we refer to the difference between social objects of inquiry and the objects dealt with in the natural sciences, we specifically refer to the different way in which each category of objects relates to their classifications. (p. 116)

In this project, recognizing my participants and their experiences as social rather than natural objects led me to consider more carefully my own subjectivity, my own biases, and the effect of interactivity on the types of data that I collected and analyzed. Rejecting a postpositivist stance that requires a de facto move toward experimental design, I instead adopted data collection and analysis techniques that I hoped would privilege the voices of the participants.

Focus groups. In order to capture best the experiences of our residents, I relied on focus groups of eight or fewer participants. Morgan (1997) describes focus groups as:

basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between a researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator. The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible to with the interaction found in a group. (p. 2)

For this project, capturing the group dynamic of residents was a critical factor in deciding to conduct focus groups rather than individual interviews with all participants. Our residents' experiences are, for better and for worse, like many other undergraduates at typical large public universities: group belonging—within classes and academic programs, affinity groups, Greek

organizations, and residence halls—is critical for their success (see, for instance, Lee and Robbins's [1998] study of social connectedness and anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity among female undergraduates or Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods's [2007] study linking belongingness and first-year students' intentions to persist). I conducted two focus groups in early April. At this point, residents had nearly completed the school year but were not yet in the throes of preparing for and taking their final exams. My complete focus group protocol is included in Appendix A.

Interviews. After completing the focus groups, I completed individual interviews with the resident assistants. Sofaer (1999) specifically cites interviews as one of the qualitative methods that are useful in formative studies—that is, studies “used to provide early feedback to program operators” (p. 1108). Program evaluations like this study at Plainview are, in effect, continuously formative rather than summative studies. While the school year comes to an end each May and some individual programs may be abandoned, the residence hall system in large public universities and the programs offered therein are unlikely to be aborted in the foreseeable future. Rather, they will remain contexts under continued scrutiny—reshaped over time, perhaps, in efforts to become more profitable for universities and more beneficial for students. For resident assistants, individual interviews were preferable to focus groups for methodological and practical reasons. Methodologically, this decision diversified my data collection techniques. Practically, resident assistants have complicated, interlocking on-duty schedules, making a time when a group of resident assistants were not in class and not working hard to schedule. I used findings from my focus groups to shape the interview protocols for resident assistants, particularly regarding methods used by resident assistants to contact and communicate with residents. A complete individual interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

Analysis

A theoretical framework for understanding residents' needs. This project, at its core, is about our residents' needs. What are they? Are we meeting them? How might we meet more of them or better meet them? Initially, I had planned to rely on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in my analysis, but after reading and initially marking the data set, I abandoned this technique. Recalling Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991), I did not want this to be a simple exercise in applying social science methods; rather, as a program evaluator, I wanted my methods to be rigorous, yes, but also to lead to findings applicable to my participants. With this in mind, I shifted to an etic coding strategy—that is, a technique in which the researcher imposes an external structure or typology instead of waiting for themes to emerge—with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs as its foundation.

Erickson (1950) purported that development occurred throughout the lifespan in eight stages, with each stage corresponding to distinct social, psychological, and biological events. The first four stages, the child relies most heavily on parents and siblings (Jones, Vaterlaus, Jackson, & Morrill, 2014). The fifth stage, identity achievement versus role confusion, typically occurs in adolescence, a period that many people assume ends with the teen years or around when students graduate from high school but that some scholars (such as Arnett, 2000) suggest extends into young adulthood or through one's early twenties. Especially as more American students head off to four year colleges, later adolescence or young adulthood is marked by a significant lessening in family contact and a substantial shift from the strong influence of family members to that of peers. In order to achieve identity successfully (and, according to Erikson, his subsequent developmental stages), identity exploration must be supported during this stage.

Colleges and universities broadly and residence halls more specifically play an important role in supporting identity formation by providing contexts for exploration and testing. A student may try on a particular political identity when she attends a meeting of the College Democrats or question his identity as a person of faith when he attends an event at the campus Newman Center. Such experiences, according to Erikson, are vital for identity achievement and all later developmental milestones. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs illuminates the sorts of supports that college administrators, faculty, and staff must provide in order to make such developmentally significant experiences possible. According to Maslow, lower level needs must be met before individuals may consider higher level needs, eventually leading to self-actualization. Examining Maslow's hierarchy, then, is a critical component in determining whether or not institutions are adequately able to support students' identity formation.

Strategies. Using each level of the hierarchy (see Figure 1) as a coding theme, I coded the entire data set. I then compiled the data from each theme and shifted back to an emic coding mode to identify subthemes within each needs category. I also examined the data that did not fit into any of the needs categories. These data had their own codes ("fun," "academic," and "uniqueness"). Table 2 shows each theme and its respective subthemes. Once I completed coding, I tabulated the frequency of each code in data from residents, resident assistants, and overall. I also examined how the codes related to each other by examining which codes appeared side by side or in sequence.

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Table 2

Coding Themes and Subthemes

Needs				
<u>Physiological</u>	<u>Safety</u>	<u>Belonging</u>	<u>Self-Esteem</u>	<u>Self-Actualization</u>
Food	Home	Continuity of community	Achievement/mastery	Creativity
Fitness	Life skills	Frequent engagement	Means to achievement	Fulfillment
	Safety net	Community knowledge		Interests
		Community inclusiveness		
		Community belonging		
		Community responsibility		
		Community duty		
		Community suspicion/trust		
		Community building		
Other themes				
Fun				
Uniqueness (positive)				
Uniqueness (negative)				

Validity Procedures

Validity (or trustworthiness, reliability, or credibility in some researchers' parlance [Creswell, 2014]) procedures are an integral component of any and all research. I further recognize that validity procedures are *especially* critical in qualitative research, not because qualitative studies are less rigorous than quantitative, experimental design studies but because they are *perceived* to be by researchers working outside of qualitative paradigms and by lay readers of our research. To ensure validity in this project, I engaged in member checking after transcribing focus group and individual interview data. I spent prolonged time (an entire academic year) in the field. I engaged in triangulation using focus group data, individual interview data, field notes from hall events, and hall marketing materials. I also included discrepant data and engaged in peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Findings

Each theme listed in Table 2 provided insight into the met and unmet needs of our residents. In this section, I present my findings by theme. I include illustrative examples of the most pertinent codes and describe in what context and how frequently they appeared. (Appendix C includes each code, its definition, and an exemplary excerpt from the data set.) Table 3 summarizes how frequently and in which type of data all of the codes appear.

Table 3

Code Frequency and Location in the Data Set

Code	Total Appearances	Appearances in focus groups (residents)	Appearances in individual interviews (resident assistants)
<u>Physiological</u>			
Food	13	4	9
Fitness	1	0	1
<u>Safety</u>			
Home	13	13	0
Life skills	19	14	5
Safety net	4	3	1
<u>Belonging</u>			
Continuity of community	15	10	5
Frequent engagement	1	1	0
Community knowledge	51	20	31
Community inclusiveness	12	3	9
Community belonging	22	19	3
Community responsibility	1	1	0
Community duty	2	2	0
Community suspicion/trust	28	0	28
Community building	16	2	14
<u>Self-esteem</u>			
Achievement/mastery	29	10	19
Means to achievement	23	13	10
<u>Self-actualization</u>			
Creativity	3	0	3
Fulfillment	2	0	2
Interests	3	0	3
<u>Other</u>			
Fun	30	18	12
Uniqueness (positive)	16	14	2
Uniqueness (negative)	2	0	2

Physiological

Maslow's lowest needs category, physiological, was the least represented in the data set. Presumably, participants' status as residents implies that many of their basic needs—such as shelter, clothing, and food—are being met, at least for the duration of the academic term. One of the resident assistants briefly mentioned fitness while describing wellness programs offered in the hall, but there were many mentions of food. All residents (and resident assistants) are required to have at least a minimal meal plan, but the stereotype of the hungry undergraduate was pervasive, particularly in the individual interviews. The residents themselves mentioned food four times, mostly as incentive to attend hall programming, as illustrated by this exchange from the first focus group:

1R4: I go to things in the RFL apartment a lot. Pretty much whenever there's food, I will go.

1R5: I go to Hall Council, Spaghetti Sundays, and then when we have pancake dinners, which are delicious. [laughter]

The resident assistants recognize the appeal of food for the residents. In this excerpt from individual interview three, the resident assistant describes what kind of residents do not come to hall events:

RA3: You can count out the people that don't go to class. [laughter] You can count out the people that, unless there's food, they're not going to come to anything.

The same resident assistant acknowledges that food can be used to coerce residents, even if programming is subpar, and criticizes that practice:

RA3: Some of the programs are just...they're even hard to recruit for, because they're hard to find something in them that we know is of interest to college freshmen. And when

there's nothing for RAs to pull from that's intriguing, what we fall to is food. And I don't think that food is what we should be recruiting for. I don't think it should be, "Hey, here's a good meal, but you have to listen to an hour and a half presentation." It's sad, but that's what a lot of recruiting comes down to: "If you come, and you sit through this horrible presentation, we'll feed you."

The appeal of food at hall programming is acknowledged across the data set, but only RA3 is critical of how it can be used to manipulate residents.

Safety

The second level of the needs hierarchy, "safety," deals with law and order, stability, and freedom from fear. In the data set, this theme was manifested in four primary ways.

Home. Residents describe safety as feeling as if they are at home—that is, as protection and care that goes beyond what is required in relationships with peers as opposed to family members. In focus group one, R4, R5, and R6 describe some of the attributes of home-like care while talking about the early morning programming offered on the first day of registration:

1R5: ...I get the wake-up call to come down and schedule.

1R4: And I feel like that's something novel that other dorms don't do. They're not going to have people come to your door and knock to wake you up.

...

1R6: And here, we see the RAs all the time, and we see them walking down the hall, and we're like, "Hey, Dylan." And at other places, they're like, "We don't even know who our RAs are."

1R5: Like, "That's their room. Don't mess with them." [laughter]

The resident assistants, on the other hand, never allude to this home-like care, neither in terms of receiving nor giving such care.

Life skills. Both the residents and the resident assistants talked about life skills—that is, “common sense” sorts of activities that participants could almost certainly use in their lives after leaving the university. In focus group one, the residents described how life skills were effectively incorporated into freshman seminar:

1R4: I feel like the curriculum of it, just the basic curriculum, doesn't help you, but [my instructor] made us do resume, and that was really useful, because that got me thinking, "OK, what do I need to have on my resume?" It wasn't on the syllabus, but he made us do it.

1R1: I had it with [another instructor]. I just feel like the stuff in the book, it was pretty...

1R4: Common sense.

1R1: Yeah, common sense. You already know it. But [my instructor] also did the resume...I forget what chapter she did resumes...but yeah, it was pretty common sense stuff.

The residents in focus group two expressed an interest in outside speakers more focused on life skills:

2R7: ...maybe some economic or business professors. Because I know a lot of the kids here are interested in business or making money at college or what to do after. Or, when they earn money how to invest it.

The resident assistants also alluded to life skills, but their conception of the skills the residents needed were much more basic (and definitely elicited a chuckle from me). When asked to define student success, RA1 replied:

I almost define it on a case-by-case basis. Because if I have a student who is struggling to even get out of bed, getting them to go to class is a success, as far as I'm concerned.

Certainly getting out of bed every day is a life skill!

Safety net. Both residents and resident assistants described how hall programming provided a safety net; this code appeared much less frequently than other elements of the safety theme, however. This code often appeared in descriptions of hall staff members such as Susan, a tutor. 1R6 and 1R1 described working with Susan:

1R6: I like that Susan comes. She helps me. And, I mean, Susan helps us, but she really helps with scheduling, because we're in-between advisors right now. She helps us figure out classes. She helps with the ALEX program, because she knows how it works and can help us with specific things about it. ALEX is online homework for CHEM115 students.

...

1R1: ...ask her any questions, and she'll help. There was a bunch of people, and she'd jump around and help if you needed it.

The safety net code, like the “home” code, captures a particular kind of care, but it is tied to the residence hall and greater university environment rather than residents' families or homes.

Belonging

As is clear in Table 3, the theme of belonging was by far the most represented in the data set. Residents and resident assistants alike incorporate multiple, nuanced kinds of belonging and allude to them many times.

Community knowledge. “Community knowledge” is the code that appeared more than any other in the data set. This code referred to an operational knowledge of the residence hall and the larger university community; when participants talked about how to navigate a particular

system, who to ask for help, or the sequence of a university process, I used this code. RA1, for instance, described recruiting as a community knowledge procedure:

Recruiting really comes down to targeting specific people. Different RAs have different relationships with the same residents, so I might have a good relationship with Resident A, but another RA might have—well, not a bad relationship, but just not as friendly a relationship with Resident A. So, I might be able to pull Resident A into some programming whereas another RA just might not be able to because he doesn't have that connection.

While I also coded this excerpt as “community belongingness,” I have included it here to illustrate how perfunctorily RA1 described the recruiting procedure. Recruiting was simply another part of the residence hall workings and the university machine overall.

Residents had a similarly procedural view of making friends at the beginning of each academic year. In focus group one, the residents described this process:

1R5: At the beginning of the year at Hall Council, there were lots of people there...

1R2: It always happens that way.

1R5: But I mean, like, that's how the people who do it come out, and the people who don't want to do it stay in.

1R4: But that's how you meet people.

1R3: You go to those things.

Fitting into the residence hall and university community was connected to participants' ability to identify and navigate common process, many of which were incorporated in hall programming.

Community belonging. If community knowledge refers largely to processes and procedures, “community belonging,” the third most frequently occurring code in this theme, is

the result of those processes. For example, in the first focus group, community belonging is evident in the way that the residents rib one another for their reticence early in the year:

IR6: ...we talk to each other. [encourages IR1, IR2, and R3 to share]

IR6: IR3 is a hermit!

IR3: I am a hermit. [laughter]

IR6: God, did you come out at all first semester, IR3?

IR3: I feel like at the beginning, like the first two weeks, I was like, "I'm going to make friends!" And then I was like, "No, I'm not." [laughter]

IR6: But definitely the programs in the beginning were helpful in meeting new people.

Like the code "safety net," "community belonging" captures a kind of care or concern that is distinct from home and family life. Unlike "safety net," "community belonging" is more covert. It is an emotional, psychological care as opposed to a pragmatic, skills-oriented care (such as that provided by the hall Chemistry tutor).

Community building and continuity of community. Both "community building" and "continuity of community" require (1) recognition of the residence hall as its own distinct community within the larger university structure and (2) understanding that that structure may change in positive and negative ways over time. Unifying these two concepts is an overarching awareness of residents' and resident assistants' hand in creating and maintaining that community. RA3 sees community building as an explicit aim of her work promoting student success:

I don't need to see you every day, but if I don't know you, if I don't know stuff about you,

I'm not going to say that that's necessarily my fault, but if you're not getting involved in

having a conversation with me past, "Hi, how are you, good." I don't think that that's successful.

The residents similarly value acts of community building, originating from both other residents and the hall staff. 1R5 describes an example of community building:

Especially this semester when [the wellness coordinator] sits out there and asks people when they walk in the door if they want to sign up for this or when the RFL or LLCs came knocking on my door to come sign up for this. Stuff like that. And people know about it. And I can ask people, "Are you going to that program tonight?" And she'll know what I'm talking about.

In 1R5's example, it is clear that community building is a joint endeavor between the hall staff and residents like 1R5. The staff's efforts inspire 1R5's efforts to build community with other residents.

"Continuity of community" operates as a temporal extension of community building. This code is primarily present in callbacks to past programming. In focus group one, 1R2 waxes nostalgic about a previous year's programming:

If everyone wants to get to know everyone, you've got to have socials. And you have to have funding for everything. And I know in Hall Council we have a small budget, but sometimes...like, I don't even know if we had a holiday party this year. We might have dressed up for Hall Council. I've been to a couple, and we always went all out for them. I mean, black lights and everything. Decorations. But this year, I just don't think we had the right funding to do that, you know? But in the past, we've had much more...when I first came here, I've never had so much fun in getting involved, and it's dwindled

personally, throughout the years. I'm just trying to look out for people that are coming out so that they can have the same experience that I had.

It is clear that 1R5 views ensuring continuity of community as the responsibility of all community members, including herself. 1R6 immediately follows her comments with similar supporting remarks about the present academic year:

Being in Hall Council, I noticed at the beginning of the year, we totally had a lot of people come. And I feel like the people who actually signed up for Hall Council first semester really liked being there. And I'm not saying anyone doesn't like being there, but this semester, some people just push it to the side and don't really put forth the effort. Or they don't come to the meetings afterwards.

These examples indicate that continuity of community is an intra- and inter-year concept.

RA1 echoes the importance of inter-year continuity of community when describing the relationship between residents and resident assistants. RA1 describes resident assistants' influence with students in terms of poker chips:

We have, I like to say, poker chips or favors with them that the students will give in, and every student has a different amount. So one student might just have one. They just give you one shot, and that's it. Y'know, a student you know for a couple of years might be willing to give you quite a bit of poker chips.

Resident assistants' count on continuity of community as a means of recruiting residents. Greater continuity makes recruiting easier and more productive. *Good* programming ensures (to use RA1's metaphor) that resident assistants' and residents' bets "pay off" in the form of continued involvement in hall programming.

Community suspicion/trust. The final code from this theme that I will discuss in detail is “community suspicion/trust.” This code appeared more frequently than any other code in this theme except “community knowledge.” Interestingly, however, this code only appeared in individual interview data with the resident assistants. RA1 defines this code in part when discussing credibility:

Credibility. Yeah, exactly. When something doesn't go exactly as planned or they know what's going on and it kinda steps down or if a program is not as good as we try to make it out to be, we lost that credibility. It's almost impossible to gain it back with them.

This description is not unlike RA1's earlier poker chip metaphor, but in this instance the object being threatened is not the continued success of hall programs but the relationship between an individual resident and individual resident assistant.

The relationship between residents and resident assistants via social media was a concern for all three resident assistants; their discussions about Facebook in particular but also texting, email, and Twitter fall into the “community suspicion/trust” code. RA1 speaks to these concerns in detail:

We tend to have one case every year of a student is friends with an RA on Facebook, and the student posts a picture of themselves drinking in their room or in the dorms. And the RA won't be [laughter] purposely looking through the student's pictures—we don't care enough to do that. But if we come across a picture like that, we're required to give it to the Residence Hall Coordinator. And then we have to inform them, “Hey, you were stupid and put this on Facebook, and you're friends with me. Hey, my hands are tied.” And there's usually a case of that every year, and people go, “Ooo, I didn't know you

could get in trouble for stuff you put on the Internet.” [laughter] But it’s a sad fact. A lot of them don’t think of that.

RA2 describes how she deals with residents and Facebook:

I’m usually not Facebook friends with my resident—sometimes I am, but try not to, unless they leave the hall or something like that. We do have a hall Facebook page, but you have to “like” it to get the updates, so usually people don’t really know about it until it’s too late. And you can’t suggest a page to like to someone if you’re friends with them. And I don’t befriend most of my residents to keep a professional mentality.

RA3 does not share RA1’s and RA2’s hesitations:

Being friends with your residents on Facebook is helpful, too, I think. I’ve sent out some notices that way, and I think it’s a good option. Email is another way. I’ve sent out emails to quite a few residents. It’s just another way that you can reach them if you don’t see them a lot during the day, because a lot of them are MIA a lot of the time. Any way that you can reach them. Sometimes it’s hard to get them to accept you on Twitter. But, use whatever means necessary to get into contact with them!

Whether they decide to use social media to remain in contact with their residents or not, it is clear that the resident assistants have given the matter extensive thought.

Self-Esteem

The last basic needs level (that is, the last deficiency level) of Maslow’s hierarchy, the self-esteem theme was manifested in the data set entirely in relation to achievement and using two codes, “achievement/mastery” and “means to achievement.” Achievement/mastery is sometimes denoted via completion and sometimes via superior skill. In focus group one, 1R2 describes achievement/mastery in completion terms:

I've been here a while, and I've done pretty much every activity.

In this instance, achievement/mastery is a matter of saturation of experience. In contrast, RA1 describes how residents might demonstrate superior skill; in this excerpt, the skill in question is explicitly academic and demonstrated by final grades:

If I have a student how needs to get all those As and is getting three Bs and they can bump those up by going to resources, then that's a success.

I have also coded the latter example as “means of achievement.” Means of achievement indicates an explicit focus on the process or resources by which one might achieve. Frequently, this code appeared in descriptions of in-hall academic programming (like RA1’s description of a student going to “resources”), but this code also applied to other kinds of means of achievement. In focus group one, for example, the residents discussed programming related to health and wellness has a means of achievement:

1R5: The whole eating healthy, treating [finals] like a race.

1R4: Yeah, I didn't know that you should exercise if you were studying.

1R6: Yeah, it was information about studying to keep your brain awake.

In this excerpt, residents have identified specific non-academic behaviors that support academic achievement. Interestingly, although they discuss non-academic means of achievement, academic achievement was the only form of achievement the residents and resident assistants mentioned, either explicitly or implicitly.

Self-Actualization

Codes related to self-actualization, the final level of the hierarchy, are infrequent and only present in the individual interviews with the resident assistants. There are three codes in this

category: “fulfillment,” “creativity,” and “interest.” RA1 discussed “fulfillment” in the broadest sense when defining student success:

That’s really a tough question. And I guess it’s partly because I think...well, how can you really define success? Every individual person measure success separately.

RA2 demonstrated an awareness of self-actualization as manifested in “creativity” when describing her approach to creating fliers for hall programming:

It needs to be very graphic. There needs to not be many words. When you’re looking at words, it gets confusing and monotonous. It doesn’t really catch your attention, and it’s really boring. It’s like reading an essay. [laughter] Humor, I think, works.

Superficially, RA2 is simply describing what makes an eye-catching flier, but subtle connection she drew between reading a visual text and a written text and her clearly nuanced understanding of how best to communicate with the residents indicates a level of self-aware creativity.

Similarly, when RA3 described how to engage residents who have not participated in hall programming all year, her solution was simple—plan programming related to their interests:

As far as getting more people to come, I think it’s important that you plan programs that are interesting to them. And I think that is the biggest thing that needs to be a focus of all of these academic, social, whatever programs. They need to be thought of with the residents’ interest in the utmost importance. I think a lot of the time that is not what happens. Especially with academic programs.

Again, the superficial layer here (how to get more residents to attend programs) is simple and straightforward, but RA3 is able to connect the various kinds of programs as mechanisms for residents to explore their individual interests and reach self-actualization.

Other

The final category includes codes that were outside the needs hierarchy but occurred frequently enough and in such contexts that they were valuable in my understanding of the data set.

Fun. Residents and resident assistants repeatedly used “fun” or similar language to describe programs. Fun was applied in descriptions of the best past programming and to idealized, imagined programming. In focus group one, the residents describe “fun” when discussing some of the wellness programming:

IR4: I just liked doing that stuff. [laughter] I think it's really neat.

IR5: They're fun programs. They get your mind off school.

Me: What makes them fun?

IR2: They're not school-related.

IR4: You're up and you're moving, making smoothies.

IR5: You're not just listening to people talk. You're actually getting involved in it.

IR4: Yeah.

IR6: Like, ice skating was really fun.

The resident assistants recognize the value that the residents place on fun and recognize using fun as an opportunity for community building, as well. RA1 describes the value of social programs in terms of fun:

[Social programs give] them a chance to interact with other people in a stress-free environment. “You like X. I like X. Let's talk!” Or a movie. You just watch it and relax and know, oh, that that student over there loves Anchorman, and I can quote Anchorman at him for days on end.

For residents and resident assistants alike, “fun” was an integral part of how they evaluated the hall programming.

Uniqueness (negative and positive). The “uniqueness (positive)” and “uniqueness (negative)” codes reflect residents’ and resident assistants’ descriptions of how Plainview Hall is special and how it is either superior or inferior to the other residence halls on campus. In focus group one, the residents highlighted Plainview’s superiority:

1R4: And I feel like [registration breakfast wake-up calls are] something novel that other dorms don’t do. They’re not going to have people come to your door and knock to wake you up.

1R3: Yeah, and I’d just see everyone and think, “Well, you’re still asleep, too.”

1R6: Yeah. And comparing other halls’ programming to ours.

1R4: Yes, our programs are far above.

1R5: I feel like our hall has a bigger sense of community, having been to and spending a lot of time in other dorms. They don’t. They never see their RAs or anything. Ever.

In focus group two, the residents contrasted Plainview’s tutoring hours (which they praised) with tutoring at the chemistry department’s tutoring center:

2R7: Sometimes in the chemistry tutoring center, it’s hard, just because those students who work there are busy. It’s hard to get anyone’s attention, and sometimes you’re just like, “Help me!” It’s hard to get someone’s attention because there are either a lot of students there, or there are no tutors there. [laughter]

...

2R8: ...when people need tutors, they need specific attention to help them. They can’t just be in a room with 40 people.

But Plainview's uniqueness was also portrayed negatively. RA3 described the programming in another residence hall that she felt Plainview ought to emulate:

Some other halls have dinners that you would go to, and professors and students in certain programming areas and majors would come and you would be able to talk to each other about whatever you want, features, what careers there are.... We could ask questions. It was a real person in that field.... That kind of thing, I think, is beneficial. But we don't do that here.

In this excerpt, it was Plainview's failure to incorporate more interactive academic programming that made it unique.

Discussion

In this section, I contrast the residents' and resident assistants' characterizations of the residence hall community and of their own roles within that community. I then discuss how the community seems to be created and sustained. I analyze my participants' superficial recommendations about residence hall programming by connecting these recommendations to the various needs—both met and unmet, as expressed by Maslow's hierarchy—of the participants and the larger residence hall community. I conclude with the limitations of my study and use these limitations as a launching pad for my recommendations for future research and specific recommendations for Plainview Hall.

The Residence Hall Community and Its Members

Both the residents and the resident assistants clearly valued the sense of community in the residence hall. However, each participant group took part in this community differently. The participants' conceptualization of the community differed by their membership level. As shown in the findings, when residents talked about Plainview, they frequently did so in the language of

feeling safe and of feeling at home. They saw a community in which they and their neighbors in the hall were sheltered and nurtured by hall programming and by each other. The resident assistants, on the other hand, saw under the hood of the community: they understood that community trust between hall residents themselves and between residents and staff must be carefully constructed and navigated. This was most apparent in the way that resident assistants chose to communicate with residents and, specifically, the concern that resident assistants had with using social media to interact with their residents.

Despite these concerns, resident assistants and residents talked about and seemed to truly believe that the residence hall was a real community. Because a real community is *formed*, simply dwelling in Plainview Hall did not ensure membership. Both the active residents and the resident assistants admitted that the inactive residents did not rely on the residence hall and its programming to meet even the most basic sorts of needs—they could not be lured to a program even with the promise of free food!

Residents realized that community is first created individual-to-individual. Some of those interactions were staff-to-resident. The residents valued that they were engaged via room visits, greetings in the hallway, greetings at the front desk, and personalized invitations to specific programs. Some of those interactions were resident-to-resident. The programming acted as a vehicle for many of those resident-to-resident interactions. Several participants cited the importance of residence hall programming at the beginning of the year, when many residents' specific aim in attending programming was to make friends not to learn about Abraham Lincoln or literary criticism. When talking about programming that occurred later in the year, residents were interested in what they saw as “useful” programming that either provided adult life skills

(such as balancing a checkbook) or skills that directly support academic achievement (such as staying active and eating healthy during midterms).

Although residents and resident assistants wanted programming that was engaging, that seemed useful, and did NOT seem like going to class, the programming was ultimately a tool for community creation and maintenance. *In short, the content of the programming was inconsequential.* Residents preferred in very general terms programming that was “fun,” but ultimately what seemed to make something fun was whether or not it helped to build the community, not whether it delivered specific content or academic results.

One of my purposes for conducting this project was to determine which type(s) of programs residents most benefited from, but my findings did not lead me to a clear answer (academic, social, or a hybrid of the two). Instead, as I discussed above, the intent and content of any given program were not what gave it value. Residents most benefited from the community creation and support that programs provided, and although these benefits were social in nature, the programs needed not be. Academic, social, *and* hybrid programs yielded community benefits, so long as they engaged residents and facilitated resident-resident and resident-staff relationships. The residents themselves understood that membership in the residence hall community was the primary benefit of participating in programs. This is clear both from the frequency of codes related to belonging and to the nuanced distinctions between those codes. Residents’ multifaceted definitions of community, their understanding of their individual roles within it, and their acknowledgement of the need to nurture and sustain it all indicated residents’ perception of community as the key benefit of residence hall life.

However, Plainview Hall programming left residents’ self-actualization needs unmet, at least within the time frame of this study. Maslow (1954) differentiated self-actualization from the

other levels of his hierarchy, calling it a growth need rather than a deficiency need. Deficiency needs are needs that individuals will work to fulfill if there is a deficit in that area (e.g., if a person is hungry, he or she will attempt to find food). Belonging (and that sense of community that Plainview residents craved and worked hard to create and sustain) is a deficiency need, and residents seemed to be working hard to fulfill it. Growth needs, in contrast, do not arise from deficiency but from the desire to fulfill one's potential. According to Maslow, deficiency needs must be met before these higher level needs can be met, perhaps explaining the dearth of self-actualization expressed by residents. Resident assistants, on the other hand, demonstrated nascent grappling with self-actualization. Their more considered (albeit still underdeveloped) discussion related to what constitutes fulfillment and how to engage residents' interests suggested that residence hall programming might, over time, play a part in meeting self-actualization needs.

Limitations

While this study yielded significant insights about the kinds of needs that residence halls meet and how residence hall communities form, it is limited in several key areas, many of which ought to direct future research about residence halls and living-learning communities. Although I was in the field for an academic year, I did not continue to track participants or hall programming beyond that period, so I have no findings related to long-term implications. Moreover, the qualitative methods that I employ disallow drawing conclusions about causality, but the resulting findings might be used to generate variables in future large, empirical research on living-learning communities.

This study is also limited by its methodology. I did not conduct field observations, so my data do not capture authentic resident-resident, resident-resident assistant, and resident-hall administrator interactions, only descriptions of such interactions. Such observations, along with

including the voices of other stakeholders in the residence hall via interviews, observations, or document analysis, might have allowed me to operationalize student success, particularly from a student perspective.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations for Plainview Hall. Although delivering the content was not the most important function of the programming, the programming would draw more participants if it were more interactive. The residents repeatedly described programming that was “too much like a lecture,” “boring,” and not worth their time. The resident assistants knew that recruiting for content-based programs was difficult; consequently, the resident assistants relied on promises of free food to attract attendees. Rather than PowerPoint-based lectures from academic experts, those invited academic experts might simply lead a discussion over dinner. If experts do choose to engage residents in a presentation, they might consider incorporating a more active plan for the session, such as the inclusion of a make-and-take.

Because resident assistants recognize how important interactions are for community building and maintenance, they had all given significant thought to the level of appropriate resident-to-staff interaction on social media. Each resident assistant was left to make his or her own choice, and two of my three resident assistant participants elected not to befriend residents on Facebook, citing the privacy of both staff and residents. However, both resident assistants and residents agreed that social media can be a powerful tool in recruiting students to attend academic programming in Plainview. Rather than relying on peer-to-peer Facebook or Twitter connections, a public Plainview Hall account on the social media platform du jour could be used to alert residents to upcoming programs and events. The resident assistants could maintain this account while simultaneously protecting their privacy.

The deeper and more complex task for Plainview Hall, however, is more explicitly creating opportunities to nurture residents' growth needs. Part of the solution to this challenge lies in my first two recommendations. Creating more engaging programming with topics that pique residents' interest, relate to practical life skills or means of achievement, and encourage residents to build meaningful relationships within the resident hall community will better meet residents' deficiency needs (particularly belonging and esteem needs), thus enabling residents to shift their focus to their growth needs. However, more programming also ought to focus overtly on residents' self-actualization. Foulds (1971) demonstrated that such programs can bolster college students' self-actualizing thoughts and behaviors via an eight-week, guided group program focused on "the decision-making process, on the importance of choosing in awareness, and on accepting personal responsibility for one's choices and behavior" (p. 339). Anderson and Lopez-Baez (2011) suggested an instrument and method for measuring personal growth among college students that would be useful for residence hall programming designers, implementers, and evaluators interested in improving their ability to address, support, and assess residents' growth needs.

Recommendations for future research. This entire project—both my conceptualization, design, and implementation and the resident and resident assistants' responses—was conducted within an imposed interpretive framework of "student success." A ubiquitous term in the world of student affairs, student success metrics tend to be defined by researchers and administrators. Future research should explicitly aim to uncover how residence hall students themselves define student success broadly and successful residence hall experiences more specifically, and using these definitions, researchers should better operationalize "student success" from the onset of their studies. Furthermore, this project spanned only a single academic year. In order to study

more closely residents' progress toward self-actualization, longitudinal studies of residents (particularly those who eventually become resident assistants) would prove elucidating, as would the inclusion of more stakeholders' voices. In this regard, case study or portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) might be a valuable methodology to consider.

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Protocol

1. Hi, everyone. To start off today, I thought we might start out talking a little bit about ourselves, to make sure that we all know who each other are. Could you tell the group your name, what you're majoring in, and what academic support programs you've participated in through the hall?
2. (*if relevant*) Some of you have attended talks given by speakers here in the hall. (For instance, Big Idea of the Month and Stuff You Should Know talks). What do you think of these speakers' series in the hall?
 - a. What talks did you attend?
 - b. Could you tell me a little more about how these talks could be made better for you?
3. (*if relevant*) Some of you have attended tutoring sessions here in the hall. What do you think about the tutoring that the hall offers?
 - a. What subject were you getting help with?
 - b. Could you tell me a little bit about how you participated in tutoring on the days that you attended?
 - c. How could it be improved?
4. (*if relevant*) Some of you have visited the Academic Resource Centers on campus. What do you think of the ARCs?
 - a. Could you tell me about how you participated in the ARC you visited?
 - b. Did you visit the ARC because of a freshman seminar requirement?
 - i. Would you visit the ARC without the requirement?

5. *(if relevant)* Some of you have attended SORTS (Students on the Road to Success) seminars here in the hall. To refresh your memory, those talks were called “How to Write a Paper,” “How to Plan in College,” and “How to Study for Finals.” What did you think of them?
 - a. Have you been able to use anything that you learned from one of the SORTS talks, either in school or in your personal life?
6. *(if relevant)* Some of you took freshman seminar in the hall. What did you think of 191?
 - a. What did you think of the academic program requirements—attending tutoring , an ARC, or speakers in the hall?
 - i. How did you fulfill the program requirements?
7. Are there any academic support programs that you’ve participated in here in the hall that I haven’t asked about? What did you think of them?
8. Have you made friends with anyone in the hall because of an academic support program?
 - a. Could you tell us about it?
 - b. Has anyone made a study partner or formed a study group because of a hall program?
 - i. Could you tell us about it?
9. Overall, what do you think about the academic support programs in the hall?
10. What do you think of the recruiting techniques that the hall’s staff used to let people know about the programs?
 - a. Do you have any suggestions for next year?

11. Do you have any suggestions or comments about what to do in the hall next year?
12. Thank you so much for your time. Your responses will be transcribed by me—and remember, your identities will be protected—for use in my Ed Psych MA thesis. Hopefully, the results of this thesis can help improve student success for future residents! Thanks again, and have a great end of the semester.

APPENDIX B

Individual Interview Protocol

1. Hi there, *<insert student staff member's name>*. Could you tell me which of the academic programs to which you were assigned to recruit this year?
2. How did you go about recruiting for each program?
 - a. How do you feel about the recruiting techniques that you used?
 - b. What changes would you make in recruiting to make it more effective?
3. You might remember that 72 of the hall's residents attended fewer than three RFL programs of any kind in the fall. What do you think that we could do to engage those non-participants?
 - a. Do you think it's worth trying to engage the non-participants? Why or why not?
4. How do you feel about the way that residents respond to our academic programs?
 - a. How do you feel about our academic support programs?
 - i. Are they useful in getting out residents to succeed?
 - ii. What do you think of as "student success?" (I know it's a term that you hear a lot.)
5. Do you think that mostly social or mostly academic programs are more effective?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What about a blend of the social and the academic?
 - i. What should the blend be, if any?
6. Did you participate in any in-hall academic support offerings this year? Not as a recruiter, but as a student?

- a. (*if applicable*) which ones?
 - b. (*if applicable*) How did you feel about it/them?
7. Have you noticed students on your floor who have made friends because of an academic program at Plainview?
- a. (*if applicable*) Could you tell me about it? And keep their names secret, of course.
8. Thank you so much for your time. Your responses will be transcribed by me—and remember, your identity will be protected—for use in my Ed Psych MA thesis. Hopefully, the results of this thesis can help improve student success for future residents! Thanks again, and have a great summer.

APPENDIX C

Table C1

Complete Code Set, Definitions, and Exemplary Excerpts

Code	Definition	Exemplary Excerpt
<u>Physiological</u>		
Food	Participant(s) expresses a need or desire for food.	<i>1R4: I go to things in the RFL apartment a lot. Pretty much whenever there's food, I will go.</i>
Fitness	Participant(s) expresses a need or desire for physical fitness.	<i>1R5: The whole eating healthy, treating [finals] like a race. 1R4: Yeah, I didn't know that you should exercise if you were studying. 1R6: Yeah, it was information about studying to keep your brain awake.</i>
<u>Safety</u>		
Home	Participant(s) compares his/her current context to his/her or an idealized home.	<i>1R5: ...I get the wake-up call to come down and schedule. 1R4: And I feel like that's something novel that other dorms don't do. They're not going to have people come to your door and knock to wake you up. ... 1R6: And here, we see the RAs all the time, and we see them walking down the hall, and we're like, "Hey, Dylan." And at other places, they're like, "We don't even know who our RAs are." 1R5: Like, "That's their room. Don't mess with them."</i>
Life skills	Participant(s) describes the practical skills he/she perceives necessary in daily adult life.	<i>2R7: ...maybe some economic or business professors. Because I know a lot of the kids here are interested in business or making money at college or what to do after. Or, when they earn money</i>

		<i>how to invest it.</i>
Safety net	Participant(s) describes a situation in which he/she feels or desires to feel that he/she has academic, emotional, or social support structures.	<i>IR6: I like that Susan comes. She helps me. And, I mean, Susan helps us, but she really helps with scheduling, because we're in-between advisors right now. She helps us figure out classes. She helps with the ALEX program, because she knows how it works and can help us with specific things about it. ALEX is online homework for CHEM115 students.</i>
<u>Belonging</u>		
Continuity of community	Participant(s) describes the perceived need for and/or actions supporting the continued existence of the community.	<i>IR2: But in the past, we've had much more...when I first came here, I've never had so much fun in getting involved, and it's dwindled personally, throughout the years. I'm just trying to look out for people that are coming out so that they can have the same experience that I had.</i>
Frequent engagement	Participant(s) describes his/her perceptions of how frequently community members ought to engage with one another or how often he/she participates.	<i>IR6: I went to a lot of things.</i>
Community knowledge	Participant(s) describes knowledge about the community processes that he/she has accumulated after being a community member over a period of time.	<i>IR5: At the beginning of the year at Hall Council, there were lots of people there... IR2: It always happens that way. IR5: But I mean, like, that's how the people who do it come out, and the people who don't want to do it stay in. IR4: But that's how you meet people. IR3: You go to those things.</i>
Community inclusiveness	Participant(s) describes	<i>RA1: The people that come to</i>

	structural elements or community member actions that encourage or support new membership.	<i>two or three things and then slide off the radar, we could have a chance of bring those back, maybe.</i>
Community belonging	Participant(s) describes the perceived benefits of community membership, such as friendship.	<i>1R6: ...if I hadn't gone to Hall Council at the very beginning of the year, I don't think I would have talked to anybody. But usually I would just go there and go up to somebody and say, "Hey!" and introduce myself.</i>
Community responsibility	Participant(s) describes a specific instance related to a particular task or job that keeps the community functioning.	<i>1R2: Well, whenever I made signs, I remember one week, I forgot to make them, and no one—like 10 people—showed up. And people walked in, and they were like, "Is there a meeting?" And I went, "Yeah. I forgot to make signs." So it's really important that people do their job and stay with it.</i>
Community duty	Participant(s) describes general guidelines for actions or attitudes that keep the community functioning.	<i>2R8: If you don't want to show up, just say, "No thank you." If you sign up, you should be committed to go.</i>
Community suspicion/trust	Participant(s) describes issues of trustworthiness between community members and/or its effect on members' actions.	<i>RA1: Credibility. Yeah, exactly. When something doesn't go exactly as planned or they know what's going on and it kinda steps down or if a program is not as good as we try to make it out to be, we lost that credibility. It's almost impossible to gain it back with them.</i>
Community building	Participant(s) describes actions or attitudes that both set apart the residence hall as a distinct community and indicate members' commitment or lack of commitment to its continued	<i>1R5: Especially this semester when [the wellness coordinator] sits out there and asks people when they walk in the door if they want to sign up for this or when the RFL or</i>

	existence.	<i>LLCS came knocking on my door to come sign up for this. Stuff like that. And people know about it. And I can ask people, "Are you going to that program tonight?" And she'll know what I'm talking about.</i>
<u>Self-esteem</u>		
Achievement/mastery	Participant(s) expresses self-esteem by naming an achievement or activity that he/she has mastered or completed.	<i>IR2: I've been here a while, and I've done pretty much every activity.</i>
Means to achievement	Participant(s) describes specific actions or attitudes that lead to the mastery or completion of an achievement or skill.	<i>RA1: If I have a student how needs to get all those As and is getting three Bs and they can bump those up by going to resources, then that's a success.</i>
<u>Self-actualization</u>		
Creativity	Participant(s) indicates a desire for personal growth and self-awareness as related to activities requiring creativity or analysis of others' creative efforts.	<i>RA2: It needs to be very graphic. There needs to not be many words. When you're looking at words, it gets confusing and monotonous. It doesn't really catch your attention, and it's really boring. It's like reading an essay. [laughter] Humor, I think, works.</i>
Fulfillment	Participant(s) indicates a desire for personal growth and self-awareness as related to personally fulfilling activities or goals.	<i>RA1: That's really a tough question. And I guess it's partly because I think...well, how can you really define success? Every individual person measure success separately.</i>
Interests	Participant(s) indicates a desire for personal growth and self-awareness as related to activities perceiving as interesting.	<i>RA3: As far as getting more people to come, I think it's important that you plan programs that are interesting to them. And I think that is the biggest thing that needs to be a focus of all of these academic, social, whatever programs. They need to be thought of with</i>

Other

Fun

Participant(s) (often using the term “fun”) describes programming that he/she enjoys for reasons beyond academic or social benefits.

the residents' interest in the utmost importance. I think a lot of the time that is not what happens. Especially with academic programs.

1R4: I just liked doing that stuff. [laughter] I think it's really neat.

1R5: They're fun programs. They get your mind off school.

Me: What makes them fun?

1R2: They're not school-related.

1R4: You're up and you're moving, making smoothies.

1R5: You're not just listening to people talk. You're actually getting involved in it.

1R4: Yeah.

1R6: Like, ice skating was really fun.

Uniqueness (positive)

Participant(s) describes a positive feature of the community that makes it distinct from other residence halls.

1R5: I feel like our hall has a bigger sense of community, having been to and spending a lot of time in other dorms. They don't. They never see their RAs or anything. Ever.

Uniqueness (negative)

Participant(s) describes a negative feature of the community that makes it distinct from other residence halls.

RA3: Some other halls have dinners that you would go to, and professors and students in certain programming areas and majors would come and you would be able to talk to each other about whatever you want, features, what careers there are.... We could ask questions. It was a real person in that field.... That kind of thing, I think, is beneficial. But we don't do that here.