

A STUDY OF THE RESIDENT ASSISTANTS' INFLUENCE  
ON STUDENTS LIVING IN RESIDENCE HALLS REGARDING  
ACADEMIC, PERSONAL, AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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BY  
PATRICE M. HAAS  
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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN 54601  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Candidate: Patrice M. Haas

We recommend acceptance of this thesis in partial fulfillment of this candidate's requirements for the degree Master of Science. The candidate has completed her oral report.

Reid F. Horle

Thesis Committee Member

7/11/79

Date

Robert J. Huch

Thesis Committee Member

7/11/79

Date

Michael Holter

Thesis Chairman

7/11/79

Date

This thesis is approved for the College of Education.

Howard C. Rose

Dean, College of Education

7/30/79

Date

## Abstract

Haas, Patrice M. A Study of the Resident Assistants' Influence on Students Living in Residence Halls Regarding Academic, Personal, and Social Development. M.S.E. Thesis, College Student Personnel, 1979.

This study determined what impact the resident assistants (RAs) have on the students in the residence halls regarding academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior. Questionnaires were sent to a 20% random sample of the residence hall population, excluding RAs and students living in Baird Hall. Two hundred and eighty-seven (60%) of the surveys were returned.

The results indicate that the RAs influence the students' social behavior more than their academic concerns or personal development, and that the students' academic concerns are influenced the least. In general, the RAs affect the students positively regarding participation in hall or university activities, consideration of others' needs, and maintaining a community living atmosphere in the halls. None of the items resulted in a general negative feeling.

Comments written about the RAs at the conclusion of the questionnaire varied from very positive to very negative. Based on the results of the study and these comments, recommendations were made to the Housing Staff and to a future researcher of the impact of the resident assistants on the students.

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## Chapter I

Since the Colonial Period in the United States, institutions of higher education have accepted the responsibility of the "whole life" of the students. In general, early college presidents acted "in loco parentis" - they cared for the students' general welfare in place of the parents.

When the first dormitories were built, the students were required to reside on campus except by special permission. Professors, teaching fellows, and other workers in the college patrolled the dormitories and dining rooms, and they disciplined all offending students.

Residence hall life has gone through many stages of change since the Colonial Period, but now, the "whole life" of the student is a responsibility advocating more concern in higher education than ever before. DeCoster (p. 25) expresses his view of the responsibility.

Thus the residence community, peer relationships, and perhaps most importantly, the role of the residence educators and student development specialists perform a vital function for the integration of the total college learning experience. These efforts must continue to intensify if higher education is to be responsive to student needs, if the college experience is to have a humanizing effect upon students, and if we expect to facilitate the type of growth and maturation that will produce men and women capable of responding to the problems of modern society with compassion and integrity, as well as with intelligence.

Students are often employed to act as resident assistants or resident advisors in the residence halls to serve as leaders, helpers, and friends. These assistants or advisors probably have more consistent

contact with the students than any other college representative.

If the process of higher education,....., is observable anywhere on campus, it is probably most readily seen within the framework of the residence hall community for it is here that many students experience much of the learning that is part of 'higher education'..... (Miller, p. 164).

#### Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study was to determine and analyze what impact, if any, the resident assistants, hereafter referred to as RAs, have on the students in the residence halls at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse, hereafter referred to as UW-La Crosse. This study concentrated on three areas of possible RA impact: academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior.

"The types of problems with which counselors in residence halls are most frequently confronted may be classified as academic, personal, and social, ..... (Sifferd, p. 113)."

#### Need for the Study

This study was conducted to provide the Student Affairs Division of the University (and the Housing Office in particular) available first-hand information concerning further direction in one phase of the housing operation: RA training. Much time, money, and effort are spent each year to prepare and maintain a large RA staff in the halls. The results of this study helped determine if the investment of time and personnel was being utilized effectively. It further informed housing personnel of the impact of the RA staff in three specific areas of interest: academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior.

Decreasing student enrollment is a problem that will be facing the University in the near future. This could possibly mean that the residence halls will have vacancies. In order to alleviate this possibility, it will be necessary to make the residence halls appealing to the students. The kind of impact that the RAs have on the students can make a significant difference in determining if the halls operate at capacity level. The RA staff of the future will need to meet the needs of the residence hall students.

#### Questions to be Answered

1. What impact, if any, do the resident assistants have on the students in the residence halls regarding their academic concerns?
2. Is there a difference between men and women regarding the effect of the RAs on the students academic concerns?
3. Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the students' academic concerns?
4. Does the influence of the RAs regarding academic concerns vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification?
5. What effect, if any, do the resident assistants have on the students regarding their personal development?
6. Is there a difference between men and women regarding the influence of the RAs on the students' personal development?
7. Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the students' personal development?

9. What impact, if any, do the resident assistants have on the students in the residence halls regarding their social behavior?

10. Is there a difference between men and women regarding the effect of the RAs on the students' social behavior?

11. Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the students' social behavior?

12. Does the impact of the RAs regarding social behavior vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification?

13. On which of the three areas being researched (academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior) do the resident assistants have the most influence?

14. On which of the three areas of impact being researched (academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior) do the resident assistants have the least influence?

15. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed the resident assistants' impact to be generally positive?

16. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed the influence of the resident assistants to be generally negative?

17. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed generally no influence by the resident assistants?

18. Did the number of semesters male or female students lived in the residence halls make any difference generally regarding the impact of the resident assistants on the students' academic concerns, personal development, or social behavior?

### Method

A survey containing twenty-three questions was utilized to determine the impact of the resident assistants on the students living in the residence halls at UW-La Crosse during the second semester of the 1978-79 academic year. The questionnaire was sent to a 20% random sample of the residence hall population excluding students living in Baird Hall and all resident assistants. The responses to items A-Q were tabulated and analyzed individually and as part of one of the three areas of RA impact being studied: academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior. Items R and S were used in considering the reliability of the responses, and items T-W provided information about the various groups of students that responded to the questionnaire (Appendix B).

### Limitations

Results of this study cannot be generalized to include institutions others than UW-La Crosse. Additional limitations are:

1. Approximately 20% of the total residence hall population was surveyed. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all the students living in the residence halls.
2. The results are the results of spring 1979 and should not be assumed to be the general consensus of any other time.
3. The resident assistants may have influence on the students in other areas not included in this study, such as religious beliefs or political affiliations.
4. The answers to the questionnaire were subjective and the individual interpretations could have varied on any item.

### Definition of Terms

The following definitions were implemented throughout this thesis.

Student - a person enrolled in one or more university courses

Residence Hall - a large building located on the university campus containing living quarters for the students

Head Resident - a person employed by the university to act as the chief director of activities in each particular hall. The head resident lives in the residence hall.

Resident Assistant (RA) - a student employed by the university to serve as a liaison between the students living in the residence halls and the head resident.

Impact - effect or influence one person has on another

Social Behavior - actions of a person while in the company of one's friends or acquaintances

Academic Concerns - those aspects of a college student's educational experience that relate directly to course selection or course work

Personal Development - growth of a person's understanding about himself/herself in relation to the surrounding environment

Positive Influence - helpful thoughts or actions related to the students from the RA

Negative Influence - harmful thoughts or actions related to the students from the RA

Traditional Female Hall - living quarters on campus containing only female students

Traditional Male Hall - living quarters on campus containing only male students

Coeducational Hall - living quarters on campus containing male and female students

Freshman - student having earned 0 - 29 semester credit hours

Sophomore - student having earned 30 - 59 semester credit hours

Junior - student having earned 60 - 89 semester credit hours

Senior - student having earned 90 or more semester credit hours

Other - a student having already earned a degree or any other student not enrolled in a specific degree program

## Chapter II

### Review of Selected Literature

Arthur Chickering has described seven major dimensions of development that occur during the college years - competence, emotions, autonomy, identity, interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity. He wanted to realize the connection between these seven dimensions of student change and educational policies and practices. He noted that

some of these interrelationships are suggested for curriculum, teaching, and evaluation, residence hall arrangements, relationships with faculty and administration, relationships with peer institutional size, and institutional objectives (p. x).

Several educators in the past, and many now, are interested in the "whole life" of the college student. Sanford (1967) said "The time has come for us to control our zeal for imparting knowledge and skills, and to concentrate our efforts on developing the individual student (p. 8)".

Students in a residence hall, through daily experiences of living with peers, are able to gain an understanding of people. "The casual, natural activities that occur in a residence hall offer the best education for daily living (Wrenn, p. 300)". The relaxed atmosphere of the dormitory is conducive to informal discussions about many student concerns, such as budgeting time and money, trouble with classes, and the responsibility of being independent. Harold Hand stated:

The group living that goes on in the residence hall is an important part of the college's informal or extra-class curriculum. The nature and quality of the students' living group experiences are always an important and sometimes decisive determinant of the sort of person he is to become (p. v).

In 1922, Nicholas Murray Butler said "...the provisions of residence halls is quite important and as essential a part of the work of the University as is the provision of libraries, laboratories, and classrooms (Riker, p. 151)." Barger and Lynch added, "The residence hall is an educational setting which, if appropriately staffed, can become an excellent laboratory in interpersonal competence and citizenship (Riker, pp. 15-52)".

In April, 1971, 1,200 students from the general population of Cornell University graduate and undergraduate students were chosen to serve as a sample for a survey designed to determine a) the problems the students perceive themselves as having, b) perceived sources of help for these problems, and c) the problems that the students perceive as not being addressed by the university. Vocational choice and career planning along with personal unhappiness were the two most pervasive problems listed (one half of the responses checked these). "Bad grades, academic concerns, conflict in area of values, ethics, and philosophy of life, contraceptive information and prescriptions, serious personal financial problems, and conflicts with people you live with" were all problems reported by approximately one fourth of the sample. For 9 of 16 items, a significantly higher proportion of women over men reported problems.

One major finding was the pervasive use of 'friend' as a source of help. For the total respondent sample, a friend was the most frequently mentioned source of help for the problems of personal unhappiness, unhappy love affair, conflict with people you live with, troubles with your parents, troubles in your parents' family, and conflict in area of values. Females chose a friend more often than males, but the difference is not significant (Kramer et al., pp. 389-91).

The results of this study are in contrast to Houston's 1971 findings that academic aspects of student life are perceived as causing the most stress (Kramer et al., p. 391).

College residences provide the students opportunities for contact with different kinds of persons which can lead to increased ease and freedom in their relationship with others.

Because in his residence hall a student observes the impact of his behavior on others and feels the force of the group's behavioral norms and standards, he can better develop a personal system of values that he can hold with integrity (Chickering, p. 221).

According to Chickering (pp. 224-25), the results of a 1965 study by Scott and a 1966 study by Newcomb

...document two major points: first, that friendship and membership in various groups or subcultures influence development; and second, that interior design and architectural arrangements involving the placement of living units and their location in relation to one another influence the student's choice of friends, the group he joins, and the diversity of persons with whom he can have significant encounters. Thus there is good evidence the resident hall arrangements have powerful implications for student development.

According to Riker (p. 155), one of the objectives of the residence educator is to contribute to the personal growth and development of the students. Student development and residence educators can help students formulate their personal goals and discover how their educational experience fits together.

...Those dedicated to student development and education in college residence halls should accept an active role in discussions of accountability at every level of their institutions and should attempt to clarify the goals of the residence hall personnel (Stimpson and Simon, p. 238).

Stamatatos and Oliaro (1972) stressed the importance of actively affect-

ing rather than being controlled by the institutional environment.

To this point in time, many student personnel workers have been content to function as conduct regulators, therapists, providers of services, and as a liaison between student and administrators or between students and faculty. Their perception of role and place has hindered their effectiveness and kept them in a position of being controlled by the institutional environment rather than actively affecting it. Ironically, student personnel philosophy places its central focus on individuals as whole functioning persons and is concerned with overall intellectual, social, and personal development of each. And, such a commitment to individuals necessitates taking an active educational role that analyzes, understands, and ultimately helps to shape and create an environment that will be most conducive to the overall growth and development of the individual (Stimpson and Simon, p. 238).

Zunker conducted a survey in 1974 to identify those institutions that used undergraduate students in student personnel programs (personal, social, and academic counseling, and residence hall supervision) and undergraduate students as therapeutic agents (those used for counseling students with drug problems, personality disorders or sexual problems). The data collected indicated that most student paraprofessionals are used in residence halls.

A majority of the institutions sampled reported that student paraprofessionals make an effective and positive contribution to their institution's student personnel program, and a clear majority reported that they plan to continue using them (Zunker, p. 283-84).

Zunker and Brown (1966) found that student-to-student counselors can be as effective as professional counselors in academic adjustment guidance (Zunker, p. 282). Another study with similar results was conducted at Southwest Texas State College in 1959. The purpose was to evaluate certain aspects of the peer counseling program.

Two samples of 108 students (54 male and 54 female) were selected from 731 freshmen. Matching for students in the control group took

place with those students in the experimental group on the following eight variables: chronological age, sex, high school quarter rank, high school size, scholastic ability score, study orientation score, residency, and employment status. Those in the experimental sample received academic counseling from student academic counselors while those in the control group did not. The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes and the Effective Study Test were administered before and after the counseling sessions. On both variables, counseled freshmen earned significantly higher scores on the retest than did the matching uncounseled freshmen.

This same research was replicated in 1960, this time with academic grades being added as another means for assessing the counseling program's effectiveness. The results showed that academic counseling produced significant improvement in the subsequent scholastic achievement of counseled freshmen.

To summarize the research findings of these and other studies conducted by Brown it may be said that

a) the student-counseling-student approach produced significant improvement in the study skills and academic attitudes of most counseled freshmen, b) the counseled freshmen usually earned significantly better first-semester grades than did matched uncounseled students, and c) the anonymously obtained reactions of the majority of counseled freshmen were decisively positive to all evaluated aspects of the peer counseling programs (Brown, pp. 101-9).

Peer group intervention in counseling relationships has proven to have positive effects for both the student and the university. Forman (1971) has shown how student alienation decreases with the use of well-trained paraprofessionals. Similarly, Wolf (1969) has demonstrated the value of undergraduate counselors in residence halls when used as group

leaders to enhance interpersonal relations among group members (Delworth, p. 49).

According to Greenleaf (p. 181) one of the major objectives of using undergraduates effectively as members of the residence hall staff is the opportunity to provide for the personal growth and development on the part of the student assuming a staff role. A 1974 survey by Greenleaf concluded that the responsibilities of resident assistants varies greatly, ranging from assisting residents in developing guidelines for living in a group environment to encouraging personal growth (Layne, p. 393). Undergraduate students as peers in residence halls can challenge students in a different way than professional staff.

A peer who has respect and acceptance by students, who sets an example by his own way of doing things, can serve as a facilitator in bringing about valuable relationships between the professional staff and students who live in the hall (Greenleaf, p. 182).

Nickerson and Harrington (p. 5) are persuaded that student counselors and residence hall floor groups time and time again influence student behavior and attitudes in a manner not possible by professional counselors. Because the resident assistant lives close to the student, he/she has unlimited opportunity to experiment with ways of influencing student behavior. On the contrary, a professional counselor has very little chance to test the reality of what the client is telling the counselor.

Using a microcounseling model (MCT) for training RAs at Alabama State University, Thomas (1974) noted the following changes with resident advisors:

an increase in the use of human relation skills, an increase in the number of students going to the resident assistant with personal problems, and fewer problems referred to the director of residence hall programs and the vice-president for student affairs (Scroggins, p. 158).

A 1976 study by Shelton and Mathis indicated a theoretical link between assertiveness and RA effectiveness (Layne, p. 393). The following study supports their conclusion.

At the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 26 RAs (14 male and 12 female) volunteered to be part of an assertive training course, including four 90 minute sessions. The results show that significantly better performance was obtained by the assertive training group when compared to a control group of RAs on eye contact and response content, and willingness to be assertive more frequently in a variety of interpersonal contexts. However, the results also show that significant differences were not found on two measures of job performance as perceived by immediate supervisors or selected residents. Written reports by the RAs of events occurring did indicate on the job assertiveness. The authors believe that the lack of detection could be due to a lack of close contact with the RA of those doing the evaluation, hesitancy of supervisors or student residents to change impressions of the RA late in the school year, or, as a positive outcome, the RA could have been acting more assertively after the training without coming across as a changed person to the residents, therefore causing negative reactions (Layne, pp. 394, 396-97).

In September 1972, a study was conducted at Pennsylvania State University to determine what influence the behavior of the RA has on the maturation of the male students in the living unit and how the behavior of the RA is related to the observable behaviors exhibited by the students in the living unit.

The first sample included 229 male freshmen from 16 housing units. From these, Treatment A (6 units-81 students), Treatment B (5 units-

75 students), and Treatment C (5 units-73 students) were composed. The maturity of the student was measured by the Perceived Self-Questionnaire (PSQ).

Each RA was evaluated and received an assigned score ranging from 1-5 based on five different measures. RAs achieving a total average of 2.0 or below were designed as counselor oriented (those who advise and counsel students on academic, personal, and social matters, refer students to specialized agencies whenever necessary, and generally behave as student advocates). These counselor oriented RAs (6) were assigned to Treatment A. RAs achieving 4.0 or above were termed administrator oriented (maintain order in the living unit, focus on promoting maintenance of discipline and order among residents, acting as a university advocate). These administrator oriented RAs (5) were assigned to Treatment B. RAs scoring between 2.0 and 4.0 were eliminated from the study. Therefore, Treatment C did not contain RAs.

The results of the study indicated a significant relationship between RA behavior and the development of maturity among freshmen males. Students from counselor oriented units had maturity scores significantly higher than those from the units with the administrator oriented RAs. Freshmen from these units also had significantly higher GPAs than others. Students from the counselor oriented RAs had a) more contacts with the RAs concerning theft prevention, personal concerns, and informal matters, b) had lower assessments for physical damage to units, c) made more room changes within the unit and fewer requests to move out of the unit, d) had considerably more unit activities, and e) felt they knew their RA better, saw him more as a counselor and friend, and preferred to have him as their RA again (Zirkle and Hudson, pp. 30-32).

Hoyt and Davidson (1967) reported an assessment of 32 resident hall advisors by head counselors, house managers, and student residents at the University of Iowa. The reported results indicated that those advisors considered to be most effective were rated the highest on their interest in and competency with students. However, there was no relationship between the student ratings and the supervisors' ratings of those advisors that fulfilled the "buddy" or "authoritarian" roles. In addition, the effective advisors expressed more liking for and trust in students than did the ineffective advisors (Williams and Reilly, p. 223).

A study conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point showed the residents' perception of the RA on several items on the questionnaire. Each item was rated according to a five point scale, "1" representing "strongly agree" to "5" representing "strongly disagree" with "3" indicating "neither". A total mean of all the residence halls combined was computed on each item.

The results indicated that the RAs most often were willing to help the students, encouraged participation in activities in the hall, respected and valued the individuality of the students, and maintained university regulations. The mean of all of these fell between 1.5 and 2.0. Those items least representing the RAs were: "encourages me to examine my values", "had some influence on my personal development", and has had some influence on my behavior. The mean for these items fell between 2.5 and 3.0. The mean of the remaining items was between 2.0 and 2.5: "could help me with my personal concerns", "is interested in my academic progress", "primary concern is helping students", "is a recognized

leader on the wing", "handles matters of discipline fairly", and "is open to criticism". None of the means fell into the 3.0 -5.0 category, indicating that all of the items on the questionnaire were occurring in the residence halls in a positive manner (Leafgren).

At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, a survey was conducted in 1972 by Susan Pelton to investigate student attitudes toward the residence hall program on this campus. One part of the questionnaire was specifically designed to determine if the RAs significantly affected attitudes toward the residence hall program in general.

Approximately 290 students responded to this portion of the survey. On the following items, 200 or more students responded with a "true": "my resident assistant willingly helps me", "my resident assistant knows me", "my resident assistant is open to criticism", "my resident assistant handles matters of discipline fairly", and "my resident assistant respects and values my individuality". Those items showing the most "false" responses were: "my resident assistant has at times challenged my values", "my resident assistant could help me in gaining greater insight into my own personality and potential", "my resident assistant has had some influence on my personal development", "my resident assistant has had some influence on my behavior", "my resident assistant could help me in making decisions about my educational or vocational plans", and "my resident assistant is interested in my academic programs (Pelton, p. 71)".

Vreeland and Bidwell (1965) found that peer involvement in a house increased the already marked effect on values and attitudes. Farnsworth (1963) commented:

In dormitories...one aggressive girl can quite definitely change the sexual behavior of several girls in the group. If there are three or four girls in a given entry who are the prestige girls and who have high standards, they can cause others to hold onto the ideas with which they came to college in the first place (Chickering, p. 229).

In 1954 at Michigan State, 525 men were used as a sample to answer a questionnaire to determine leadership ratings of prospective resident assistants. The male students were asked to list those men that they would most prefer as RAs as well as those they would least prefer. In order to clarify the image of the role of the RA, they were also asked to explain "Why" to each response.

The 16 RAs in office at the time were listed as the favorites of all the students listed. The study indicated that peers hold an image of such leaders as RAs described as "1) friendly, cooperative, and pleasant; 2) responsible; 3) mature and respected; 4) intelligent and capable; 5) considerate; 6) moral, and 7) quiet (Kidd, p. 4)."

In summary, there is a vast amount of literature available dealing with all aspects of residence hall life. Most researchers in the area agree that the college years are prime time for many types of human development. Most are also in congruence that the experiences received in a residence hall environment are more valuable to the students' growth than the education obtained in the classroom.

Institutions of higher education are using many undergraduate students as paraprofessionals in residence halls. Their responsibilities are varied, covering a large range of activities. These paraprofessionals, in general, have had a positive impact on the development of the "whole life" of the students. In fact, some researchers have

concluded that the resident assistant or resident advisors are as effective, if not more effective, than professional counselors.

### Chapter III

#### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact the resident assistants (RAs) at UW-La Crosse have on the students in the residence halls regarding their academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior. This study was conducted during the spring semester of the 1978-79 academic year.

For the purpose of collecting the data, a questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to a 20% random sample of the residence hall population at UW-La Crosse, excluding RAs and all students in Baird Hall, which had peer assistants (PAs) instead of RAs. The random sample, which consisted of 490 students, was obtained from the Computer Center at UW-La Crosse.

The instrument used for this study was two pages in length. The first page contained items A-Q. The students were instructed to determine for each item the degree of influence which their present RA had on them. The responses were based on a Likert scale of 1-5. A response of "1" indicated "very negatively", "2" - "negatively", "3" - "no influence", "4" - "positively", and "5" indicated "very positively". Each item (A-Q) pertained to academic concerns, personal development, or social behavior. Several of the items were pertinent to more than one of these three areas, because the potential development for each category overlaps with the other two categories. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

The second page of the questionnaire contained items R-W. Items R and S were answered with a "1" indicating a "yes" response or "2" indicating a "no" response. These two questions pertained to the amount of contact the RA and student have had with each other. Items T and U dealt with the sex and credit hour classification of the respondent. V and W informed the writer of the type of residence hall the student lived in at the time of completing the questionnaire, and the number of semesters the student lived in the residence halls at UW-La Crosse. After the last item, there was space provided for any comments by the students.

Once the instrument was designed, a pilot study was conducted to determine the clarity of the questionnaire. Eight residents of East Hall, a female residence hall for students attending Western Wisconsin Technical Institute, completed the survey and commented on the clearness of the instructions and items. As a result of this feedback, no changes were made.

The questionnaires were mailed through the campus mail system. Also enclosed in the envelopes were a cover letter (Appendix A) and another envelope addressed to the writer at the University Housing Office. The letter contained an introduction of the writer, the purpose of the study, instructions on completing and returning the form through the campus mail system, and an assurance of the students' anonymity being maintained.

Two hundred and eighty seven surveys were returned, or 60% of those mailed. The returned surveys were taken to the Computer Center, where the responses to each questionnaire were key punched. The Computer

Center was requested to provide the total number of responses for every option of each item. Also requested were the total number of responses for every option of each item according to the following categories: male, female, freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, other, live in traditional male hall, live in traditional female hall, live in coeducational hall, lived in residence hall one semester, lived in residence hall two semesters, and lived in residence hall three or more semesters.

The print out with all of the requested totals was ready approximately three weeks after the questionnaires were delivered to the Computer Center. At this time the completed questionnaires also were returned so that the comments made by the respondents could be assessed.

## Chapter IV

### Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact the resident assistants at UW-La Crosse have on the students regarding academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior. The data for this study were obtained during the second semester of the 1978-79 academic year at UW-La Crosse by use of a questionnaire sent to a 20% random sample of students living in the residence halls, excluding all RAs and all students living in Baird Hall, which did not have RAs.

In this chapter, the results of the survey are presented on Tables 1-17. One student did not respond to questions indicating sex, credit hour classification, or type of residence hall. Two students did not respond to the question indicating the number of semesters they lived in a residence hall. The responses of each item on page one of the questionnaire are discussed briefly, grouped according to areas of RA impact: academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior. Several of these items are considered in more than one of the three areas of RA impact, since the students' growth cannot be divided into three independent areas. For example, a student who has recently improved his self concept (personal development) may interact differently in a crowd (social behavior). The author chose to consider item H under Academic Concerns and Personal Development, and items E and G under Personal Development and Social Behavior.

Table 2

Item B

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	NR	%
Overall Total	287	2	.70	1	.35	246	85.71	35	12.20	2	.70	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	71	86.59	9	10.98	1	1.22	0	.00
Female	204	2	.98	0	.00	174	85.29	26	12.75	1	.49	1	.49
Freshman	180	2	1.11	0	.00	146	81.11	29	16.11	2	1.11	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	1	1.10	86	94.51	4	4.40	0	.00	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	9	81.82	2	18.18	0	.00	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	14	82.35	3	17.65	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	0	.00	100	82.64	17	14.05	1	.83	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	0	.00	1	.68	131	88.51	15	10.14	1	.68	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	32	88.89	3	8.33	0	.00	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	0	.00	130	81.25	26	16.25	2	1.25	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	1	1.12	82	92.13	6	6.74	0	.00	0	.00

At the conclusion of the discussion of each of the three areas of impact, the questions asked in Chapter I pertinent to that particular area are answered. Questions 13-18 are answered after the discussions of all three areas. Then the results of items R and S are discussed, followed by a summary of the comments written by the students at the conclusion of the questionnaire.

#### Academic Concerns

Academic concerns are those aspects of a college student's educational experience that relate directly to course selection or course work. Items B, D, H, M, and Q of the questionnaire were considered to be academic concerns.

The responses to Item B (Table 2) showed the students' perceptions of the influence of the RAs on the students' choices of courses and/or major/minor. Two hundred and forty-six or 85.71% of the total respondents marked "3" indicating "no influence" from the RAs on this item. Freshmen (17.22%), juniors (18.18%), and students living in a traditional male hall (17.65%) specifically showed more positive influence than did students from the other possible groups. Two freshmen living in a traditional female hall indicated a very negative influence from their RAs, and one male sophomore living in a coeducational hall feels a negative influence from his RA regarding his choice of courses and/or major/minor. The author does not feel that there were enough negative responses to be meaningful. Therefore, it may be said that the RAs have little impact, positive or negative, on the students regarding their choice of courses and/or major/minor.

Table 4  
Item D

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	NR	1	2	3	4	5	
Overall Total	287	2	.70	6	2.09	254	88.50	23	8.01	1	.35	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	2	2.44	73	89.02	7	8.54	0	.00	0	.00
Female	204	2	.98	4	1.96	180	88.24	16	7.84	1	.49	1	.49
Freshman	180	2	1.11	4	2.22	155	86.11	18	10.00	0	.00	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	1	1.10	84	92.31	5	5.49	1	1.10	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	1	9.09	10	90.91	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	15	88.24	2	11.76	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	3	2.48	104	85.95	10	8.26	1	.83	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	0	.00	3	2.03	134	90.54	11	7.43	0	.00	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	33	91.67	2	5.56	0	.00	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	4	2.50	135	84.38	18	11.25	1	.63	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	2	2.25	84	94.38	3	3.37	0	.00	0	.00

Item D (Table 4) asked the students to rate the influence of the RAs on the amount of time they studied. Overall, 254 students or 88.5% again responded with a "3" - "no influence". All three seniors indicated that there is no influence from the RAs on this item. The RAs have more of a positive impact on some of the freshmen (10%), students living in a traditional male hall (11.76%) and those who lived in a residence hall for two semesters (11.25%), who are probably freshmen. One junior (9.09% of all juniors completing the survey) feels a negative influence from the RA on the amount of time he/she studied. There are negative influences on other groups also, but the percentages are minimal. In general, the RAs do have minimal impact on the amount of time the students study.

"Continuing my college education", Item H (Table 8), also resulted in no influence by the RAs in 232 or 80.84% of the possible 287 responses. However, 20.73% of the male students, 18.89% of the freshmen, 18.18% of the students in a traditional female hall, 17.56% of the students living in a coeducational hall, and 20% of the students who lived in a residence hall for two semesters indicated a positive influence from their RAs on continuing their college education. On this item, only five students feel a negative influence from the RAs. Overall, 81% of the respondents indicated no influence from the RAs concerning continuing their college education. Most of the remaining 19% of the students feel a positive impact.

Item M (Table 13) dealt with anxieties about class work and/or exams. There were more responses indicating a positive influence by the RAs on this item than on any of the other academic concerns discussed

Table 8

Item H

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	NR	%
Overall Total	287	2	70	3	1.05	232	80.84	35	12.20	14	4.88	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	0	.00	65	79.27	14	17.07	3	3.66	0	.00
Female	204	2	.98	3	1.47	166	81.37	21	10.29	11	5.39	1	.49
Freshman	180	2	1.11	0	.00	143	79.44	23	12.78	11	6.11	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	3	3.30	74	81.32	12	13.19	2	2.20	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	10	90.91	0	.00	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	16	94.12	1	5.88	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	1	.83	95	78.51	14	11.57	8	6.61	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	0	.00	2	1.35	120	81.08	20	13.51	6	4.05	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	1	2.78	29	80.56	4	11.11	1	2.78	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	0	.00	126	78.75	21	13.13	11	6.87	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	2	2.25	75	84.27	10	11.24	2	2.25	0	.00

Table 13  
Item N

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages										
		1	2	3	4	5	NR	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Total	287	3 1.05	0 .00	194 67.60	78 27.18	11 3.83	1 .35					
Male	82	0 .00	0 .00	54 65.85	27 32.93	1 1.22	0 .00					
Female	204	3 1.47	0 .00	139 68.14	51 25.00	10 4.90	1 .49					
Freshman	180	3 1.67	0 .00	121 67.22	47 26.11	8 4.44	1 .56					
Sophomore	91	0 .00	0 .00	61 67.03	27 29.67	3 3.30	0 .00					
Junior	11	0 .00	0 .00	8 72.73	3 27.27	0 .00	0 .00					
Senior	3	0 .00	0 .00	2 66.67	1 33.33	0 .00	0 .00					
Other	1	0 .00	0 .00	1 100.00	0 .00	0 .00	0 .00					
Trad. Male Hall	17	0 .00	0 .00	11 64.71	5 29.41	1 5.88	0 .00					
Trad. Female Hall	121	3 2.48	0 .00	71 58.68	37 30.58	9 7.44	1 .83					
Coad Hall	148	0 .00	0 .00	111 75.00	36 24.32	1 .68	0 .00					
Res. Hall 1 Sen.	36	0 .00	0 .00	26 72.22	9 25.00	0 .00	1 2.78					
Res. Hall 2 Sum.	160	3 1.88	0 .00	105 65.63	43 26.88	9 5.63	0 .00					
Res. Hall 3 or more Sen.	89	0 .00	0 .00	61 68.54	26 29.21	2 2.25	0 .00					

thus far. Overall, 27.18% answered "positively" and 3.83% answered "very positively". More than 1/3 of the students in the following categories feel a positive influence from their RAs regarding anxieties about class work and/or exams: male, seniors, live in traditional male hall, and live in traditional female hall. Three freshmen who lived in a traditional female hall for two semesters experienced a very negative influence from their RAs on this item. Even though the RAs' influence has been more positive on this item than any other discussed so far, there were 194 of the total 287 respondents who feel no influence from their RAs regarding anxieties about class work and/or exams.

"Getting through the 'red tape' at the University", Item Q (Table 17), showed no influence by the RAs the majority of the time, especially by the upper classmen. The overall impact is 1.39% very negative, 1.39% negative, 61.32% no influence, 25.44% positive and 9.41% very positive (Three students, 1.05%, did not respond to the question). The resident assistants have a positive impact on almost half (47.06%) and a very positive impact on 17.65% of the males living in a traditional male hall. Of all the males responding to the questionnaire, 35.37% marked "4" (positively) and 12.20% marked "5" (very positively). The freshmen (37.22%) and the sophomores (32.97%) feel more positive influence than the juniors (27.27%) and the seniors (0%). The author believes that it is accurate to say that the longer a student has been involved in the process of getting a college education, the more he/she understands the milieu of the system, and the less that student is dependent on the information of others.

In response to the first question listed in Chapter I - What impact,

Table 17  
Item Q

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	NR	%
Overall Total	287	4	1.39	4	1.39	176	61.32	73	25.44	27	9.41	3	1.05
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	42	51.22	29	35.37	10	12.20	0	.00
Female	204	4	1.96	3	1.47	133	65.20	44	21.57	17	8.33	3	1.47
Freshman	180	4	2.22	2	1.11	104	57.78	49	27.22	18	10.00	3	1.67
Sophomore	91	0	.00	2	2.20	59	64.84	22	24.18	8	8.79	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	8	72.73	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	6	35.29	8	47.06	3	17.65	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	4	3.31	0	.00	78	64.46	26	21.49	11	9.09	2	1.65
Coeed Hall	148	0	.00	4	2.70	91	61.49	39	26.35	13	8.78	1	.68
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	26	72.22	7	19.44	2	5.56	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	4	2.50	1	.63	86	53.75	48	30.00	19	11.88	2	1.25
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	3	3.37	62	69.66	18	20.22	6	6.74	0	.00

if any, do the resident assistants have on the students in the residence halls regarding their academic concerns? - at least 60% of the responses to the survey indicated that the RAs have no impact on the students regarding their academic concerns. In general, the most positive impact of the RAs is experienced by the freshmen and students living in a traditional male hall. Although there was a sentiment of negative influence expressed on all of the items by the students in the various categories, it was always a small portion of the total and did not warrant further consideration. The RAs have a more positive impact on the students concerning anxieties about class work and/or exams and getting through the "red tape" at the University than any of the other academic concerns discussed in this study.

Is there a difference between men and women regarding the effect of the RAs on the students' academic concerns? was the second question. On the items listed under academic concerns, 75% of the female and 74% of the male responses indicated that these students are not influenced by their RAs. However, 16% of the female responses and 21% of the male responses were of a positive influence. Both female and male participants indicated a very positive answer with 4% of all the responses. The females feel a negative or a very negative influence more often than did the males. In general, the male students are affected positively slightly more than the female students, while some female students feel a negative impact.

The responses to the third question - Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and co-educational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the

students' academic concerns? - indicated that students living in a traditional male hall are influenced positively more often than students in the traditional female halls and coeducational halls. There was a similar proportion (approximately 4%) of responses showing a very positive influence from the RAs for students in all three types of halls. Students living in traditional female halls showed some negative influence from the RAs (as also shown in the male-female discussion). The majority of the students in all three types of halls - traditional male (69.4%), traditional female (74.2%), and coeducational (79.4%) do not seem to be affected by the actions of their RAs regarding academic concerns.

Does the influence of the RAs regarding academic concerns vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification? The data obtained by this survey suggested that the impact of the RAs does vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification. The freshmen are influenced the most and the seniors, the least, as anticipated by the author. Nevertheless, the freshmen, sophomores, and juniors indicated a similar amount of very positive influence from their RAs, while the seniors showed none. Even though the freshmen are influenced more than the other classes of students, 74.2% of the freshmen answers pertaining to academic concerns showed no influence by the RAs, and 93.4% of the seniors' answers also indicated no influence by the RAs regarding academic concerns.

#### Personal Development

Personal development is described as the growth of a person's

Table 5

Item 2

Categories of Students	Responses and Percentages										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Overall Total	287	1 .35	7 2.44	98 34.15	142 49.48	38 13.24	1 .35				
Male	82	0 .00	0 .00	29 35.37	43 52.44	10 12.20	0 .00				
Female	204	1 .49	7 3.43	68 33.33	99 48.53	28 13.73	1 .49				
Freshman	180	1 .56	4 2.22	53 29.44	93 51.67	28 15.56	1 .56				
Sophomore	91	0 .00	2 2.20	38 41.76	42 46.15	9 9.89	0 .00				
Junior	11	0 .00	1 9.09	5 45.45	4 36.36	1 9.09	0 .00				
Senior	3	0 .00	0 .00	1 33.33	2 66.67	0 .00	0 .00				
Other	1	0 .00	0 .00	0 .00	1 100.00	0 .00	0 .00				
Trad. Male Hall	17	0 .00	0 .00	4 23.53	10 58.82	3 17.65	0 .00				
Trad. Female Hall	121	1 .83	5 4.13	38 31.40	54 44.63	22 18.18	1 .83				
Cord Hall	148	0 .00	2 1.35	55 37.16	78 52.70	13 8.78	0 .00				
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0 .00	0 .00	17 47.22	18 50.00	1 2.78	0 .00				
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	1 .63	5 3.13	39 24.38	83 51.87	31 19.38	1 .63				
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0 .00	2 2.25	40 44.94	41 46.07	6 7.74	0 .00				

understanding about himself/herself in relation to the surrounding environment. Items E, F, G, H, K, L, N, O, and P of the questionnaire are considered to be part of the students' personal development by the author of this paper. Item H has already been discussed under Academic Concerns and is not discussed in this area. However, the data obtained for item H are considered under Personal Development in compiling the totals of the various groups of students.

"My consideration of others' needs", item E (Table 5), showed a positive response 49.48% of the time and a very positive response 13.24% of all the responses. In considering the needs of others', a positive influence from the RAs was indicated by 64.64% of the male responses, 67.23% of the freshmen, 66.67% of the seniors, 76.47% of the students in a traditional male hall, and 62.81% of the students living in a traditional female hall. Seven responses from the total 287 expressed a negative influence from the resident assistants on this item. All seven were from female students.

The results of item F (Table 6) showed that 196 (68.29%) of the students are not influenced by the RAs in accepting themselves. Seven female students and one male student indicated a negative or very negative response, while 20% of the freshmen answered "positively" and another 11% responded with "very positively" to this item. Female students and students living in a traditional female hall also indicated more positive influence from their RAs than the other groups of students concerning accepting themselves.

Item G (Table 7) showed over half (56.79%) of the students who responded to the questionnaire feeling no influence from their RAs in

Table 6  
Item F

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	NR	1	2	3	4	5	NR
Overall Total	287	3	1.05	5	1.74	196	68.29	55	19.16	27	9.41	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	61	74.39	17	20.73	3	3.66	0	.00
Female	204	3	1.47	4	1.96	134	65.69	38	18.63	24	11.76	1	.49
Freshman	180	3	1.67	2	1.11	118	65.56	36	20.00	20	11.11	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	2	2.20	67	73.63	16	17.58	6	6.59	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	1	9.09	7	63.64	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	13	76.47	3	17.65	1	5.88	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	1	.83	80	66.12	20	16.53	17	14.05	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	1	.68	4	2.70	102	68.92	32	21.62	9	6.08	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	28	77.78	5	13.89	2	5.56	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	3	1.88	3	1.88	99	61.88	34	21.25	21	13.13	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	2	2.25	67	75.28	16	17.98	4	4.49	0	.00

Table 7

Item G

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	NR	%
Overall Total	287	1	.35	7	2.44	163	56.79	93	32.40	22	7.67	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	56	68.29	23	28.05	2	2.44	0	.00
Female	204	1	.49	6	2.94	107	52.45	69	33.82	20	9.80	1	.49
Freshman	180	1	.56	4	2.22	98	54.44	60	33.33	16	8.89	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	2	2.20	56	61.54	28	30.77	5	5.49	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	1	9.09	7	63.64	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	1	33.33	2	66.67	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	10	58.82	7	41.18	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	0	.00	5	4.13	62	51.24	41	33.88	12	9.92	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	1	.68	2	1.35	91	61.49	44	29.73	10	6.76	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	2	.00	28	77.78	5	13.89	2	5.56	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	1	.63	5	3.13	81	50.63	58	36.25	15	9.38	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	2	2.25	53	59.55	29	32.58	5	5.62	0	.00

finding solutions to problems with peers. Most of the remaining responses indicated a positive influence from their RAs, two (66.67%) of the seniors responding positively. These findings were unexpected by the author since the three seniors indicated no influence from the RAs in choosing friends. Students living in traditional male halls, who so far have been affected more positively by the RAs than any other group of students on finding solutions to problems with peers were influenced positively by the RAs in 41.18% of the responses to the questionnaire. However, this group indicated no negative influence regarding this item. Also, 61.49% of the students living in a coeducational hall indicated no influence from their RAs in finding solutions to problems with peers.

Two hundred and sixty-five students (or 92.33%) indicated no influence by their RAs on discovering solutions to problems with their parents/guardians (Item K, Table 11). There were only two negative responses to the item. Ten students living in a traditional female hall indicated that they feel the impact of the RAs more positively than did other students. Further research on this item could determine why the RAs are not having a positive impact on the students regarding solutions to problems with parents/guardians. The author believes it is possible that the students do not feel comfortable enough with the RAs to discuss such a personal problem or that the RAs are not trained well enough to have a positive effect on students looking for solutions to problems with their parents/guardians.

Item L (Table 12) dealt with the students' understanding of their own personality and potential. The overall total suggested that more than  $3/4$  (76.31%) of the students surveyed are not influenced by their

Table 11

Item X

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Total	287	2	.70	0	.00	265	92.33	14	4.86	5	1.74
Male	82	0	.00	0	.00	61	98.78	0	.00	1	1.22
Female	204	2	.98	0	.00	183	89.71	14	6.86	4	1.96
Freshman	180	2	1.11	0	.00	165	91.67	9	5.00	3	1.67
Sophomore	91	0	.00	0	.00	85	93.41	5	5.49	1	1.10
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	10	90.91	0	.00	1	9.09
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	17	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	0	.00	105	86.78	10	8.26	3	2.48
Coed Hall	148	0	.00	0	.00	142	95.95	4	2.70	2	1.35
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	32	88.89	3	8.33	0	.00
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	0	.00	146	91.25	8	5.00	4	2.50
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	0	.00	85	95.51	3	3.37	1	1.12

Table 12

Item 1

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Overall Total	287	1	35	2	70	219	76.31	55	19.16	9	3.14	1	.35
Male	82	0	00	1	3.22	64	78.05	15	18.29	2	2.44	0	.00
Female	204	1	.49	1	.49	154	75.49	40	19.61	7	3.43	1	.49
Freshman	180	1	.56	2	1.11	136	75.56	33	18.33	7	3.89	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	0	.00	71	78.02	18	19.78	2	2.20	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	8	72.73	3	27.27	0	.00	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	14	82.35	3	17.65	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	1	.83	1	.83	87	71.90	26	21.49	5	4.13	1	.83
Cord Hall	148	0	.00	1	.68	117	79.09	26	17.57	4	2.70	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	31	86.11	4	11.11	0	.00	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	1	.63	2	1.25	115	71.88	34	21.25	8	5.00	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	0	.00	71	79.78	17	19.10	1	1.12	0	.00

RAs on this subject. Approximately 19% of the male, female, freshman, and sophomore groups answered with a "3" meaning "positively" and approximately 3.4% of the same group answered with a "5" meaning "very positively". The junior (27.27%) and senior (33.33%) responses showed more of a positive influence from their RAs than the underclassmen, but did not indicate a very positive influence. Three students indicated a negative impact from their RAs regarding the understanding of their own personality and potential. The author feels that this is not a large enough number of negative responses to consider further. In general, the majority of students are not influenced by their RAs in understanding their own personality and potential.

Item B (Table 14) concerned the influence of the RAs on the students when they (the students) are upset. The responses to this varied from "very negatively" (three students) to "very positively" (21 students). One hundred and eighty-six respondents (64.81%) suggested that the RAs have no influence on them when they are upset. The females showed a positive influence in 29.90% of the responses and a very positive influence in 9.31% of the responses, students living in a traditional female hall showing similar results. Also, students in a coeducational hall responded 22.30% of the time "positively" and 4.73% of the time "very positively". In general, 186 (or 64.81%) of the respondents indicated that their RAs do not have an impact, positive or negative, on them regarding their thoughts when they're upset.

Item C on the questionnaire (Table 15) resulted in 74.91% of the responses being "no influence". This item concerned thoughts about the

Table 14

Item N

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Overall Total	287	3	1.05	4	1.39	186	64.81	72	25.09	21	7.32	1	.35		
Male	82	1	1.22	2	2.44	65	80.49	11	13.41	2	2.44	0	.00		
Female	204	2	.98	2	.98	119	58.33	61	29.90	19	9.31	1	.49		
Freshman	180	3	1.67	3	1.67	112	62.22	45	25.56	15	8.33	1	.56		
Sophomore	91	0	.00	1	1.10	61	67.03	25	27.47	4	4.40	0	.00		
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	8	72.73	1	9.09	2	18.18	0	.00		
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00		
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00		
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	13	76.47	4	23.53	0	.00	0	.00		
Trad. Female Hall	122	1	.83	2	1.65	60	56.20	35	28.93	14	11.57	1	.83		
Coed Hall	148	2	1.35	2	1.35	104	70.27	33	22.30	7	4.73	0	.00		
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	2	5.56	25	69.44	6	16.67	2	5.56	1	2.78		
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	3	1.88	2	1.25	97	60.63	44	27.50	14	8.75	0	.00		
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	0	.00	62	69.66	22	24.72	5	5.62	0	.00		

Table 15  
Item 0

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	NR	%
Overall Total	287	6	2.09	16	5.57	215	74.91	34	11.85	15	5.23	1	.35
Male	82	0	.00	6	7.32	53	64.63	17	20.73	6	7.32	0	.00
Female	204	6	2.94	10	4.90	161	78.92	17	8.33	9	4.41	1	.49
Freshman	180	4	2.22	11	6.11	131	72.78	24	13.33	9	5.00	1	.56
Sophomore	91	2	2.20	5	5.49	71	78.02	8	8.79	5	5.49	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	8	72.73	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	13	76.47	3	17.65	1	5.88	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	4	3.31	6	4.96	96	79.34	11	9.09	3	2.48	1	.83
Coad Hall	148	2	1.35	10	6.76	105	70.95	20	13.51	11	7.43	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Res.	36	0	.00	1	2.78	28	77.78	5	13.89	1	2.78	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Res.	160	4	2.50	11	6.87	116	72.50	21	13.13	8	5.00	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 for more Res.	89	2	2.25	4	4.49	69	77.53	8	8.99	6	6.74	0	.00

use of alcohol and/or drugs. Six females (four freshmen and two sophomores) indicated a very negative influence from their RAs and 16 others (6 males and 16 female - 11 freshmen and 5 sophomores) indicated a negative impact from their RAs regarding the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Of the participating male students, 28.05% experienced a positive or very positive influence while 20.94% of those living in coeducational halls indicated a positive impact from their RAs. All of the seniors marked "3" indicating "no influence" from their RAs on this particular matter.

"My feelings pertaining to sexual activity", (Item P, Table 16) showed that 100% of the seniors are not influenced by their RAs on this matter, and that a large percentage of all the students in the other groups also feel no influence from their RAs regarding their feelings pertaining to sexual activity. Of the students living in a traditional male hall, 17.65% marked "4" meaning they are influenced "positively" and "5" meaning "very positively". Thirteen students total indicated either a negative or a very negative influence. Twelve of these are female, and one is male. There does not seem to be much of an impact from the RAs regarding the students' feelings about sexual activity.

What effect, if any, do the resident assistants have on the students regarding their personal development? For all of the items (except item E) of the questionnaire considered as part of the "Personal Development" section of this study at least 56% and as much as 95% of the responses indicated no influence from the RAs. However, the responses to item E - consideration of others' needs - showed that the RAs have a positive impact on 50% of the students and a very positive impact on

Table 16

Item P

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages															
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Overall Total	287	9	3.14	4	1.37	271	87.46	16	5.57	6	2.09	1	.35				
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	66	80.49	11	13.41	4	4.88	0	.00				
Female	205	9	4.41	3	1.47	188	92.00	5	2.45	2	.98	1	.49				
Freshman	100	7	3.89	3	1.67	195	85.07	9	5.00	4	2.22	1	.56				
Sophomore	91	2	2.20	1	1.10	81	89.01	5	5.49	2	2.20	0	.00				
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	9	81.82	2	18.18	0	.00	0	.00				
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00				
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00				
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	13	76.47	3	17.65	1	5.88	1	.00				
Trad. Female Hall	121	8	6.61	2	1.65	105	87.60	3	2.48	1	.83	1	.83				
Coed Hall	148	1	.68	2	1.35	131	88.51	10	6.76	4	2.70	0	.00				
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	34	0	.00	0	.00	31	86.11	3	8.33	1	2.78	1	2.78				
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	7	4.38	3	1.88	139	86.88	8	5.00	3	1.88	0	.00				
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	2	2.25	1	1.12	79	88.76	5	5.62	2	2.25	0	.00				

13% of the students. The item in this section with the most amount of "no influence" answers was item K, which pertained to solutions to problems with parents/guardians. The questions concerning the use of alcohol and/or drugs and feelings pertaining to sexual activity caused the most negative responses of all of the items in this area of possible RA impact.

The responses to the sixth question - Is there a difference between men and women regarding the influence of the RAs on the students' personal development? - are very similar for the male and female groups. The slight differences that do exist show 2% more of the females to be very positively influenced than the males. One percent of the males are more positively influenced, and 3% more of the male respondents indicated "no influence". Therefore, it may be said that there is a slight difference between men and women regarding the influence of the RAs on the students' personal development, but the difference is not meaningful.

Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the students' personal development? The results of the survey showed that, for questions pertaining to the students' personal development, students living in coeducational halls and those living in traditional male halls indicated very similar amounts of influence from the RAs. Seventy-three percent of all the responses of the students living in coeducational halls and 74% of the students in traditional male halls were "no influence". Students in a traditional female hall had a similar amount of "positively" answers as students in the other two types of halls, showed approximately 3% more responses of "very positively", and had 5% - 6% fewer "no influence" responses,

meaning that a negative influence occurs slightly more for these students in the area of personal development than the other students.

Does the influence of the RAs regarding personal development vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification?

The seniors indicated "no influence" in 81% of the responses, more than any other class of students. Sophomores showed 74% and juniors 73% of the responses to be "no influence", while freshmen indicated the same in 69% of the responses. Twenty-one percent of the freshmen responses, 20% of the sophomore responses, 16% of the junior responses, and 19% of the senior responses were "positively". The seniors had no responses indicating a very positive impact from their RAs, the juniors - 8%, sophomores - 4% and 7% of the freshmen responses indicated a very positive impact from their RAs on matters concerning personal development. Although the RAs have more of a positive impact on the freshmen than the other classes of students, the differences between the classes are minimal according to the results of the survey. These findings were not anticipated by the writer of this thesis.

Social Behavior

Social behavior is described as the actions of persons while in the company of one's friends or acquaintances. Items A, C, E, G, I, and J are considered to be part of social behavior by the author of this paper. Items E and G have already been discussed under Personal Development and are not discussed in this area. However, the data obtained for these items are considered under Social Behavior in compiling the totals of the various groups of students.

Table 1

Item A

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Overall Total	287	1	35	13	4.53	120	41.81	178	61.60	25	8.71	0	.00
Male	82	1	1.22	3	3.66	39	47.35	34	41.46	5	6.10	0	.00
Female	204	0	.00	10	4.90	80	39.22	94	46.08	20	9.80	0	.00
Freshman	180	1	.56	8	4.44	64	35.56	88	48.89	19	10.56	0	.00
Sophomore	91	0	.00	3	3.30	47	51.65	36	39.56	5	5.49	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	2	18.18	5	45.45	3	27.27	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Traditional Male Hall 17	17	0	.00	0	.00	6	35.29	11	64.71	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall 121	121	0	.00	8	6.61	46	38.02	54	44.63	13	10.74	0	.00
Coed Hall 148	148	1	.68	5	3.38	67	45.27	63	42.57	12	8.11	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sen. 36	36	0	.00	0	.00	19	52.78	16	44.44	1	2.78	0	.00
Res. Hall 2 Sen. 160	160	1	.63	9	5.63	50	31.25	80	50.00	20	12.50	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sen. 89	89	0	.00	4	4.49	49	55.06	32	35.96	4	4.49	0	.00

The responses to item A (Table 1) indicated that the RAs affect participation in hall or university activities to 53.31% of the students responding to the questionnaire. There was a "no influence" response given by 120 (41.81%) of the students. Students in a traditional female hall (10.74%) and freshmen (10.56%) expressed a very positive impact from their RAs regarding participation in hall or university activities. Fourteen students (4.53) said they feel a negative influence from their RAs on this matter, the largest percentage (18.18%) from the junior class. In a future study it would be interesting to also note the year of the RAs. Perhaps in the case of the negative responses to item A, the juniors had a sophomore RA, creating a negative attitude.

Item C (Table 3) concerned choice of friends. In the overall total, 244 (85.02%) said their RAs have no influence on their choice of friends. Two female freshmen reacted "very negatively" to this item, and six students reacted "negatively". A positive influence was indicated by 29.41% of the students living in a traditional male hall. All three seniors participating in the study indicated "no influence" from their RAs in choosing friends. It is the author's belief that seniors have probably established their college friendships prior to the senior year.

Item I (Table 9) dealt with the impact of the RAs on a community living atmosphere in the residence halls. A positive feeling was expressed in 48.78% of the responses and a very positive response was indicated by another 23.34%. Students living in a traditional

Table 3  
Item C

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Overall Total	287	2	6	244	85.02	29	10.00	4	1.39	2	.70		
Male	52	0	1	1.22	70	85.37	8	9.76	3	3.66	0	.00	
Female	204	2	5	2.45	173	84.80	21	10.29	1	.49	2	.98	
Freshman	180	2	1.11	5	2.78	154	85.56	17	9.44	1	.56	1	.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	1	1.10	76	83.52	11	12.09	2	2.20	1	1.10
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	9	81.82	1	9.09	1	9.09	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	3	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	12	70.59	5	29.41	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	2	1.65	103	83.47	14	11.57	1	.83	1	.83
Coed Hall	148	0	.00	4	2.70	130	87.84	10	6.76	3	2.03	1	.68
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	1	2.78	29	80.56	5	13.89	0	.00	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	4	2.50	132	82.50	20	12.50	2	1.25	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	1	1.12	81	91.01	4	4.49	2	2.25	1	1.12

Table 9

Item I

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Overall Total	287	4	1.39	16	5.57	60	20.91	140	48.78	67	23.34	0	.00
Male	82	2	2.44	3	3.66	17	20.73	30	36.34	22	26.83	0	.00
Female	204	2	.98	13	6.37	43	21.08	101	49.51	45	22.06	0	.00
Freshman	180	4	2.22	7	3.89	29	16.11	92	51.11	48	26.67	0	.00
Sophomore	91	0	.00	8	8.79	25	27.47	42	45.05	17	18.68	0	.00
Junior	11	0	.00	1	9.09	4	36.36	4	36.36	2	18.18	0	.00
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	.00	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Tred. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	2	11.76	7	41.18	8	47.06	0	.00
Tred. Female Hall	121	2	1.65	11	9.09	24	19.83	50	41.32	34	28.10	0	.00
Cord Hall	148	2	1.35	5	3.38	34	22.97	62	41.90	25	16.89	0	.00
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	11	30.56	19	52.78	6	16.67	0	.00
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	4	2.50	9	5.63	21	13.13	77	48.13	49	30.62	0	.00
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	7	7.87	27	30.34	43	48.31	12	13.46	0	.00

male hall responded 41.18% of the time "positively" and 47.06% of the time "very positively". There were no negative responses by this group. In general, the RAs have more of a positive impact on the students concerning a community living atmosphere in the residence halls than any other item on the survey.

Interaction with others on a social basis, Item J (Table 10), is accomplished without the influence of the RAs, according to 176 (61.32%) of the total respondents. Approximately 1/3 of the females, freshmen, seniors, and students in a traditional female hall answered "positively" to the influence of the RAs. More than 5% of all the groups of students except seniors indicated a very positive influence from the RAs regarding interaction with others on a social basis. The amount of negative responses to this item were minimal and not meaningful.

In response to the ninth question - What impact, if any, do the resident assistants have on the students in the residence halls regarding their social behavior? - it seems that the RAs have more of a positive impact on the students in the residence halls regarding their social behavior than the students' academic concerns or personal development. Eighty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the RAs do not influence them, positively or negatively, in their choice of friends, but 48.78% and 23.34% of the respondents answered "positively" and "very positively" respectively to the impact of the RAs in transmitting a community living atmosphere in the halls. Also, more than half of the respondents indicated either a positive or very positive impact concerning their participation of hall or university activities and

Table 10  
Item J

Categories of Students	N	Responses and Percentages									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Total	287	2	70	4	1.39	176	61.32	66	29.97	18	6.25
Male	82	0	.00	1	1.22	51	62.20	24	29.27	6	7.32
Female	204	2	.98	3	1.47	124	60.78	62	30.39	12	5.88
Freshman	180	2	1.11	2	1.11	105	58.33	60	33.33	10	5.56
Sophomore	91	0	.00	2	2.20	59	64.84	23	25.27	7	7.69
Junior	11	0	.00	0	.00	8	72.73	2	18.18	1	9.09
Senior	3	0	.00	0	.00	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	.00
Other	1	0	.00	0	.00	1	100.00	0	.00	0	.00
Trad. Male Hall	17	0	.00	0	.00	12	70.59	4	23.53	1	5.88
Trad. Female Hall	121	1	.83	1	.83	73	60.33	38	31.40	7	5.79
Coed Hall	168	1	.68	3	2.03	90	60.82	44	29.73	10	6.16
Res. Hall 1 Sem.	36	0	.00	0	.00	24	66.67	10	27.78	1	2.78
Res. Hall 2 Sem.	160	2	1.25	2	1.25	89	55.63	56	35.00	11	6.87
Res. Hall 3 or more Sem.	89	0	.00	2	2.25	61	68.54	20	22.47	6	6.74

consideration of others' needs, which coincide with the idea of a community living atmosphere.

Is there a difference between men and women regarding the effect of the RAs on the students' social behavior? According to the responses of the questionnaire, the RAs effect the female students' social behavior positively and very positively slightly more than the male students' social behavior. However, 2% more of the female respondents indicated a negative influence on items pertinent to social behavior than did male participants.

Do the students in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) differ from one another in the impact of the RAs on the students' social behavior? Students living in a traditional male hall are influenced positively and very positively more often than students in traditional female halls and coeducational halls, according to the data collected. In addition, these male students did not indicate any negative or very negative responses to any of the items under Social Behavior. Approximately 5% of the students in the traditional female halls and 3% of the students in a coeducational hall answered "negatively" or "very negatively" to items in this area. Over half (53%) of the students living in a coeducational hall are not influenced by their RAs concerning social behavior, and 47% of those in a traditional female hall showed the same results.

The twelfth question is: Does the impact of the RAs regarding social behavior vary if the students are grouped according to credit hour classification? The freshmen students' responses indicated that

47% of them are not influenced by their RAs concerning social behavior, while 38% are affected "positively" and 12% are affected "very positively". Three percent of the respondents from this class answered "negatively" or "very negatively". The sophomores (55%), juniors (58%) and seniors (61%) showed by their responses that the RAs don't have a positive or negative impact on them. Another 5% of the sophomores indicated that they are affected negatively by their RAs regarding social behavior, and 9% of the juniors' responses were "negatively" or "very negatively". From the data obtained, it may be said that the RAs have the most positive impact on the social behavior of freshmen.

#### Answers to Questions 13-18

13. On which of the three areas of impact being researched (academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior) do the resident assistants have the most influence? The RAs have more influence on the social behavior of the students than their academic concerns or personal development. The respondents indicated a positive influence in 36% of their answers regarding social behavior, and another 10% showed the influence to be very positive. Four percent of the students are influenced negatively or very negatively by the RAs regarding their social behavior.

14. On which of the three areas of impact being researched (academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior) do the resident assistants have the least influence? The resident assistants have the least impact on the students' academic concerns, according to the results of the survey. In the academic area, 77% of the responses

were "no influence", while this same answer occurred 50% of the time concerning social behavior and in 71% of the personal development responses.

15. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed the influence of the resident assistants to be generally positive? More than half of the respondents answered "positively" or "very positively" to items A - participation in hall or university activities (53%), E - consideration of others' needs (63%), and I - a community living atmosphere in my hall (72%).

16. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed the influence of the resident assistants to be generally negative? None of the items on the questionnaire showed the influence of the resident assistants to be generally negative.

17. Which specific items on the questionnaire, if any, showed generally no influence by the resident assistants? No influence by the RAs was shown in over 50% of the majority of the items on the questionnaire. These specific items are: B - choice of courses and/or major/minor (85.71%), C - choice of friends (85.02%), D - amount of time I study (88.50%), F - acceptance of myself (68.29%), G - solutions to problems with peers (56.79%), H - continuing my college education (80.84%), J - how I interact with others on a social basis (61.32%), K - solutions to problems with my parents/guardians (92.33%), L - understanding of my own personality and potential (76.31%), M - anxieties about class work and/or exams (67.60%), N - my thoughts when I was upset (64.81%), O - thoughts about the use of alcohol and/or

drugs (74.91%), P - my feelings pertaining to sexual activities (87.46%), and Q - getting through the 'red tape' at the university (61.32%).

18. Did the number of semesters male or female students lived in residence halls make any difference generally regarding the impact of the resident assistants on the students' academic concerns, personal development, or social behavior? In the area of academic concerns, students who lived in a residence hall three or more semesters indicated "no influence" from their RAs in 82% of the responses. Those students living in the residence halls one semester indicated "no influence" in 81% of their responses. Students who lived in the residence halls two semesters indicated the most influence from their RAs, 24% of the responses being "positively" or "very positively". Approximately 3% of all the respondents of the questionnaire, no matter how many semesters they lived in a residence hall, showed either a negative or very negative impact from their RAs on academic concerns.

In regard to the students' personal development 77% of the students who lived in the hall one semester, 73% of those who lived in a hall three or more semesters, and 67% of those who resided in a residence hall two semesters are not influenced by their RAs. Again, approximately 3% of all the responses, no matter how long the students lived in the residence halls, showed a negative or very negative influence. Students who lived in the halls two semesters seem to be influenced the most by their RAs.

The students having lived in the residence halls one semester said "no influence" 60% of the time on the items pertinent to social

behavior. The respondents who lived in the residence halls three or more semesters showed similar results of no influence in 58% of the responses. Those who lived in the halls two semesters are affected the most by their RAs regarding social behavior. This group responded "positively" or "very positively" more than the other groups. Some of the responses from all the groups, no matter how long they lived in a residence hall, were of a negative or very negative influence from their RAs regarding social behavior.

#### Items R and S

Item R - My resident assistant contacts me at least once a week - and item S - Do you feel that you have had enough contact with your resident assistant to be able to fairly rate the items on the questionnaire? - were answered with a "1" - "yes" or a "2" - "no". According to the results of the questionnaire, 168 (58.54%) of the students responded "yes" and 118 (41.11%) responded "no" to item R. Two hundred and twenty-one (77%) of the respondents indicated that they knew their RAs well enough to fairly rate them, while 63 (21.96%) of the students did not feel that they could fairly rate their RAs on the questionnaire.

#### Summary of Comments by Students

The comments written by the students at the conclusion of the questionnaire varied from the RAs being excellent to the RAs are never available and couldn't care less about the students. Some of the students couldn't praise their RAs enough. They said they (the RAs) were always willing to give them some time, no matter how busy they

were, yet they didn't interfere with the students' personal lives. Others said they had indicated "no influence" many times on the questionnaire, but felt that their RAs could be helpful to them; they had not approached their RAs with their concerns. Some of the students noted that their RAs were never in the hall, were too involved in their own lives, and, in general, were not good RAs. Some of the students remarked that the items on the questionnaire were not pertinent to the duties of the RAs. In addition, others commented that RAs should only be responsible for operational duties involved in running a residence hall. It is obvious from this assortment of comments that both the RAs and the students have varied ideas about the responsibilities of the RA position. The students' perceptions of the duties of the RAs may have implications for the Housing Staff regarding future RA training.

## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

This study determined what impact, if any, the resident assistants have on the students who live in the residence halls at UW-La Crosse. The data was collected by means of a survey sent to a 20% random sample of the students who lived in the residence halls during the second semester of the 1978-79 academic year with the exception of RAs and students who lived in Baird Hall. Three specific areas of RAs impact were researched: academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior.

Thirty-six percent of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that their social behavior is influenced by the RAs positively and another 10% responded "very positively". Fifty percent of the students indicated no influence in this area, while in the area of academic concerns 77% of the responses were "no influence" and 71% of the personal development responses also indicated no influence.

The Students' perceptions of the influence of the resident assistants were shown to be generally positive regarding participation in hall or university activities, consideration of others' needs, and maintaining a community living atmosphere in the residence hall. There were more positive (49%) and very positive (23%) responses for item I (a community living atmosphere in the residence hall) than for any other item on the questionnaire. None of the items on the questionnaire received generally negative responses. For the majority of the items,

more than 50% of the responses were "no influence". The results of the survey indicated that the RAs have the least amount of influence on the students regarding solutions to problems with parents or guardians.

Dividing the students into various groups by sex, type of residence hall, credit hour classification, and number of semesters the students lived in a residence hall, comparisons among the groups were made according to the responses. The male students responded slightly differently than the female students.

Students living in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) indicated responses very similar to one another. However, there was not a single negative or very negative response to any item throughout the questionnaire from the men living in a traditional male hall. Students in a traditional female hall and coeducational hall responded "negatively" and "very negatively" a few times.

The freshmen responses were of more influence, positive and negative, in all three areas of impact than those of any of the other classes of students. The seniors showed through the survey that they are influenced by the RAs less than any of the other classes.

Students who lived in the residence halls two semesters indicated an influence by their RAs more often than students who lived in the halls one semester or three or more semesters. The students who lived in the residence halls for the longest period of time responded to "no influence" more often than the other students in all three areas of impact.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they are contacted by their RAs at least once a week. Seventy-seven percent of the students participating in the survey said they knew their RAs well enough to be able to fairly rate them on this questionnaire. Comments written about the RAs by the students at the conclusion of the survey ranged from remarks of excellent RAs to very poor RAs.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions appear to be justified on the basis of the data obtained and analyzed in this study:

1. The RAs have more influence on the students' social behavior than their academic concerns or personal development.
2. The RAs do not have an impact on the academic concerns or personal development of the majority of the residence hall students.
3. The resident assistants' influence is generally positive regarding participation in hall or university activities, consideration of others' needs, and maintaining a community living atmosphere in the halls.
4. The RAs generally do not influence the students negatively.
5. The RAs have the least amount of influence on the students regarding solutions to problems with parents or guardians.
6. A slight difference occurs in the amount of influence the RAs have on male students versus female students. This slight difference, which occurs in all three areas of impact, was not considered large enough for further consideration.

7. Students living in the three types of residence halls (traditional male, traditional female, and coeducational) are influenced by their RAs very similarly. Overall, the students living in a traditional male hall are influenced positively slightly more than the others, and the students in a traditional female hall are influenced negatively slightly more than the others. The differences that do occur among the students in the three types of residence halls are not large enough to suggest that the type of hall can make a difference in the impact of the RAs on the students regarding academic concerns, personal development, or social behavior.

8. The resident assistants have the greatest amount of influence on the freshmen and the least amount of influence on the seniors.

9. Students who have lived in the residence halls two semesters are affected more by their RAs than the other students.

10. Some of the resident assistants are perceived as excellent RAs by the students and are highly respected, and others are perceived by the students as not being helpful.

#### Recommendations

Based on the results of this study and the comments written by the students at the conclusion of the questionnaire, the writer of this paper recommends the following:

1. The RAs be rated by the students in their cubes or wings of the residence hall at midterm during the first and second semesters of every academic year, and that the evaluation be discussed soon afterwards between the individual RAs and the Hall Director in order that

any needed changes can occur during the same term.

2. According to the students' comments, the resident assistants should be required to be on their floor in the residence hall more often than is now required.

3. That the Housing Staff discuss the items on the questionnaire which resulted in over 50% of the responses being "no influence" to determine if it is their objective that the RAs have more influence on the students regarding these particular items.

4. That the Housing Staff further explore these items in which they desire more influence from the RAs by means of expressing these particular items more in depth in a subsequent study to determine if, in fact, the RAs do not have much influence on the students, as indicated by this study.

5. That additional in-service training be held for the RAs following mid-semester activities to assure that they are acquainted with and are communicating with the students.

6. That any future researcher give more thought and investigation as to what comprises academic concerns, personal development, and social behavior.

7. That some open ended questions be included in addition to the subjective items to encourage discussions of specific items, i.e., solutions to problems with parents or guardians.

8. That the questionnaire be kept short in order to assure a desirable rate of return.

9. That a question be added to indicate the credit hour classification of the student's present RA and the amount of years he/she has

been an RA. RA.

10. That the instrument be mailed as early in the semester as possible before the students become occupied with large papers and exams.

11. That students who have not lived in the residence halls at least one complete semester with their present RA be excluded from the sample, especially if the study is conducted within the first few weeks of the semester.

12. That students completing the questionnaire be given an opportunity to interview personally with the researcher concerning the impact of their RAs.

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## Appendix A

February 21, 1979

Dear UW-L Student,

I am a graduate student in College Student Personnel and, as part of my degree requirement, am conducting a study on your feelings about your RA. The purpose of this study is to be able to make recommendations to the Housing Office regarding RA training. Your honest opinion will help make this study valid.

Please take the five minutes required to fill out the enclosed questionnaire. Your answers will be anonymous; therefore, there's no need to sign your name. When you've completed the questionnaire, just slip it in the enclosed envelope addressed to me and put it in the on campus mailbox in your residence hall lobby. I would appreciate having your response mailed by Thursday, March 1. Thank you very much for being a part of this important study.

Sincerely,

Pat Haas  
Graduate Student  
Housing Office

Appendix B

UW-L Residence Hall Survey - Semester II, 1978-79

According to the scale below, please indicate to which degree your  
present resident assistant (RA) has influenced you in the following items.

- 5 - very positively
- 4 - positively
- 3 - no influence
- 2 - negatively
- 1 - very negatively

My present resident assistant has influenced me concerning:

- A. \_\_\_ my participation in hall or university activities.
- B. \_\_\_ my choice of courses and/or major/minor.
- C. \_\_\_ my choice of friends.
- D. \_\_\_ the amount of time I study.
- E. \_\_\_ my consideration of others' needs.
- F. \_\_\_ acceptance of myself.
- G. \_\_\_ solutions to problems with my peers.
- H. \_\_\_ continuing my college education.
- I. \_\_\_ a community living atmosphere in my hall.
- J. \_\_\_ how I interact with others on a social basis.
- K. \_\_\_ solutions to problems with my parents/guardians.
- L. \_\_\_ my understanding of my own personality and potential.
- M. \_\_\_ my anxieties about class work and/or exams.
- N. \_\_\_ my thoughts when I was upset.
- O. \_\_\_ my thoughts about the use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- P. \_\_\_ my feelings pertaining to sexual activity.
- Q. \_\_\_ getting through the "red tape" at the University.

Please answer 1)yes or 2)no.

R. \_\_\_\_ My resident assistant contacts me at least once a week.

S. \_\_\_\_ Do you feel that you have had enough contact with your resident assistant to be able to fairly rate the items on this questionnaire?

Please indicate the appropriate reply in the space provided.

T. \_\_\_\_ I am:  
1)male      2)female

U. \_\_\_\_ I am a(n):  
1)freshman (0-29 credits)      2)sophomore (30-59 credits)  
3)junior (60-89 credits)      4)senior (90 credits or more)  
5)other

V. \_\_\_\_ I live in a:  
1)traditional male hall      2)traditional female hall  
3)coeducational hall

W. \_\_\_\_ I have lived in a residence hall at UW-L (including this semester):  
1)one semester      2)two semesters      3)three or more semesters

Please feel free to make any comments.