

# The RA and JC Story: A Study of Residence Life at St. Olaf College

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This study intended to explore the interactions of residence life staff with each other and students, to that end, interviews were conducted with current and former JCs and RAs, as well as students and other residence life staff. Questions focused on recollections of staff experiences, staff effectiveness, perceptions of JC and RA roles as well as actual and theoretical conflict within dormitories. As a result of these interviews, it was found that JCs and RAs perceive themselves, and are perceived to have, very distinct roles and responsibilities. There was also wide appreciation of JC and RA rooming situations (pairs vs. singles), and the effects those rooming decisions had on staff member's relationships with students. Additionally, conflicts within dorm staff were shown to have considerable power to affect student to student, as well as student to staff relationships.

## STUDY SITE

### *St. Olaf at a Glance*

St. Olaf College is a liberal arts post secondary institution historically associated with the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) with a total student population of around three thousand. The student population is split fifty-five percent female to forty-five percent male. St. Olaf is one of two colleges located in Northfield, MN, a small rural community of approximately 19,000 residents forty miles south of the Twin Cities.

Like many colleges and universities, the St. Olaf community has its own distinct characteristics and peculiarities. As researchers, we thought a study of residence life staff would be very salient, given that ninety-six percent of the student body lives in some type of campus-run housing. The vast majority of students will therefore have had/have contact with the department of residence life over the course of their four years on the hill, be that a positive or negative experience.

The St. Olaf College residence life department is rather unique in terms of vocabulary concerning staff for residence halls. For example, the term RA (Resident Assistant) refers only to the student residence life workers living and working in upperclassman dorms. RAs live in singles (single occupancy rooms) and will often be responsible for one or more floors of a residence hall. A JC (Junior Counselor) is comparable to the RA position, but exists only in first-year residence halls. Initially started as a way to better integrate an increasing population of women on campus, the JC program asked “upper class women to forgo their housing arrangements in town in order to live in pairs in corridors of first year women,”

(Lagerquist, 107) a practice that has since become campus-wide. JCs live in pairs and are typically responsible for a single corridor on a floor. So, while there may be only one RA for every one or two floors there may be up to six JCs responsible for a floor. An SRA (Senior Resident Assistant) is a returning member of residence life staff who has a role similar to the RA position. An SHC (Student Hall Coordinator) is another returning member of residence life staff. They live in residence halls not occupied by an AC (Area Coordinator), taking on the roles and responsibilities given to him/her by the AC of that dormitory. ACs are professional, non-student staff who live in apartments located within the residence halls. Each AC is responsible for the residents and staffs of least two residence halls.

## METHODOLOGY

Our primary method for data gathering was a one-on-one interview utilizing a set of specifically focused questions. We also set up two focus groups, which used modified versions of the same questions. Specific questions were generated to explore particular themes and issues. Additional follow-up questions were asked to better explore interesting topics that came about during interviews. Interviews were typically conducted in quiet locations on campus in what would be considered a “semi-standard” fashion.

Residence life office staff were very forthcoming with aid and support for this study. A list of current and past RAs, JCs and ACs was made available to us although this was not utilized with any frequency to find interview candidates. Many of our interviewees were selected for the convenience of their participation

(i.e. friends, friends of friends). Three interviews for the study were conducted over the phone as the participants were not in the local vicinity.

Focus group participants were solicited from sociology/anthropology classes and/or classes taught by sociology/anthropology professors. Researchers came to these classes to ask directly for student participation in the focus groups. Solicitations were followed up by reminders sent via email. A small incentive of food was also provided at the focus group site.

## PROBLEM

As mentioned previously, due to the high level of interaction between students and residence life personnel there is a wide range of opinions, as well as questions, that surround “Res Life.” As researchers, each of us had particular questions that we wanted to answer. For example, how the nature of different staffs affect the ambience of a dorm, what essential differences exist between JC and RA staffs, what changes has residence life undergone from past years, as well as questions pertaining to JC and RA self perceptions.

Previous research on the topic of “residence life” was unexpectedly sparse. Research that does deal with student/staff interactions is also hard to apply generally, as individual institutions often operate under distinct regimes of student governance. Some research however, *does apply*.

A study done by Ronald J. Deluga and Shelly Masson explored the connection between specific personality traits and perceived effectiveness as an RA. These personality traits were defined as self-reported conscientiousness, extraversion, and

positive affect. “Conscientiousness”, another trait defined in the study, refers to “the extent to which the individual is dependable, achievement oriented, responsible, deliberate, and persevering in goal-directed behavior” (Deluga 226). “Extraversion” refers to those who are generally personable, who “genuinely like people and easily form close attachments with others” (Deluga 227). The third personality trait, “positive affect”, refers to those who have a habitually optimistic outlook on life, and often perceive themselves as being self-efficacious. For this study, ninety-nine university RAs with some or all of these personality traits were evaluated by three hundred seventy-two resident students.

This data was examined using an ANOVA test which indicated a connection between extraversion and positive affect personality traits to performance, but no connection with conscientiousness. The study suggests several alternative explanations for the ratings of the resident assistants. One explanation suggests that there might be a better connection of previous experience to effectiveness, a correlation that for the most part would not apply to the St. Olaf residence life staffs as there is a trend to be on staff for only a single year. It was also suggested that it is a flexible-response to various policy violations that make a resident assistant successful.

While this data gives some idea as to how individuals might contribute to a positive resident experience, it does fail to mention how the staff “as a whole” might affect this experience. This is likely due in part to the distinct resident life program at St. Olaf, especially the JC program, which pairs JCs together with fewer residents than an RA at another school might otherwise be in charge of, thus possibly fostering a more interactive staff experience.

Another study by Stanley Douglas Murphy and John Paul Eddy helps to give context to our project, it deals with the importance of pairing two staff members per corridor in residence halls. The study was concerned specifically with RAs, but it is acceptable to apply the findings to JCs for two reasons: the first is because the term JC is in use only at St. Olaf College, so JCs are actually just RAs for first-year dorms. Second, the study refers to RAs working in dyads, which is how the JCs work together. The study arranged for each of the RAs involved to pair with a volunteer who helped them lead their group of students throughout the year and at the end of the study the students were asked to rate the dyad according to a list of leadership criteria. With 81.7% agreement or strong agreement of effective leadership, “the data reported in this research study indicate that perceptions of students are positively enhanced when dyads are implemented in residence hall programming and training” (Murphy). These findings indicate that St. Olaf should see a positive student reaction to pairs of JCs working in each first-year corridor.

Ralf Darendorf’s conflict theory can also be applied to our study. Conflict theory came about as a way to correct the problems that critics found with structural functionalism, which was seen as “unable to deal with social change because of its focus on static structures” (Ritzer, 210). Darendorf proposed conflict theory as a way of explaining the way that change came about in society and he focused on power relationships in his arguments. He saw people as belonging to different conflicting groups according to their level of power and “once conflict groups emerge, they engage in actions that lead to changes in social structure” (Ritzer, 257).

The exercise of power is implicit to the roles that JCs and RAs play in the dorms and conflict is sometimes an inevitable result.

Robert K. Merton's theories on functions also proved to be helpful for the framing of this study. According to Merton, "*manifest functions* are those that are intended, whereas *latent functions* are unintended" (Ritzer, 245). JCs and RAs, through the exercise of their authority, fulfill many functions, both manifest and latent. Similarly important was his idea of the dysfunction, which is described as when "one social fact [has] negative consequences for another social fact" (Ritzer, 244). This is addressed in our findings.

## FINDINGS

### *Distinction between RAs and JCs/ Building Layouts*

One theme which was consistently impressed on us was the notion that JCs and RAs are distinct staff positions. It was often said to us that JCs and RAs are "different kinds of people," or that these positions attract different sorts. JCs are seen to be more "fun loving," more personable, someone you want to have as a friend, and "like a camp counselor." One RA interviewed for the study further commented on what she saw as the "obligation to socialize" for JCs. It was part of why she chose to be an RA she said, because RAs aren't expected to be as present in the lives of their residents. It was no wonder then that several RAs commented on how they felt unknown to many people and that they felt anonymous. JCs commented on how they knew the names of other JCs across campus and knew quite a bit about their dorms and respective problems/issues. RAs couldn't profess

the same knowledge, as RAs in other buildings were largely unknown. Both RAs and JCs however thought that the root of this difference might lie in how JCs and RAs are made physically accessible to their residents.

The layout of a building is extremely important they said. JCs are typically placed at the center of their corridors, forcing students to walk by them as they travel to and from class. JCs often keep their doors open for that very reason, in order to facilitate the interactions forced by the placement of their rooms and it was thought that this had/has a direct impact on the number of relationships formed between staff and students. RAs are similarly located in high-traffic locations of dorms, although most don't leave their doors open. Applying Merton's theory of manifest and latent functions, one could view the placement of RAs and JCs in centralized locations as having the manifest function of making them physically accessible to residents of the dorm. At the same time, this placement seems to have the latent function of allowing better enforcement of policy by giving staff members the ability to better observe their floors or corridors.

#### *Singles versus Doubles*

Our findings concerning JC living arrangements correlated with a previous study on dyad leadership. JCs themselves tended to feel that paired living and leadership was beneficial for interactions with residents. They felt that as a pair, they offered a wider range of personalities that allowed residents in the corridor to more easily relate to them. It was also thought that paired JCs complement each other and are able to share responsibilities. Our focus groups also agreed with the benefit of having two JCs because it gave them options when addressing problems. As an example, one focus group



participant explained that she had only one JC in her corridor and that she didn't feel comfortable with her. This meant that she was unable to get the support that she needed. Having two JCs mitigates this problem, as it provides a second source of support. Focus group participants also felt that first-year students required more guidance and therefore needed more JCs to address this need.

While JCs and students both thought it was important to have multiple JCs in a corridor, RAs felt that this was not necessary for RA living arrangements. In fact, the RAs seemed to feel that it was better to live alone because they were able to have space to themselves. They didn't see their interactions with students as being "crucial" to the students' functioning, since they dealt with upperclassmen who had already adapted to college life. The students also felt that RAs weren't as important to students' lives as JCs, so it wasn't necessary to have more than one per floor. In fact, students in the focus groups thought that it was best for RAs to live alone because this permits RAs to remain separate from other residents, allowing them to better resolve conflicts. If an RA were living with another person, the RA might be inclined to take that person's "side" if they were involved in a conflict. Living in a single therefore, was seen to permit more objective disciplinary action.

### *Friendships*

During several of our interviews, it was suggested that JC paired living was an additional aid to the formation of friendships with residents. RAs live almost exclusively in singles, so if a resident doesn't like their RA, that's that. There's no one else to fill the void. If a resident in a freshman dorm doesn't like one of their JCs, there's always the possibility that they may get along better with the other.

While on the topic of friendship, it is important to discuss the nature of friendship within and across staffs. It was broadly indicated that the vast majority of intra and inter-staff friendships exist prior to individuals becoming JCs or RAs. Friendships within a staff were frequently cited as contributing factors to a staff's ultimate success in its efforts to engage students but it seems that the strongest friendships tend to exist prior to one becoming a member of Res Life. In other cases, JCs were only friends with their roommates prior to becoming JCs, but did not have strong relationships with other staff members. One interviewee stated that "everyone knew at least two other people applying" but that most other applicants were unknown.

Residence life staffs are seemingly full of pre-existing friendships but a staff can also serve to create new relationships between students with similar interests. It is often difficult for upper-class students to meet new people outside their area of academic concentration, so working as part of a residence life staff has the potential to bring people together who would not otherwise have met. Res Life staff not only meet new people but there is the possibility that these encounters will result in friendships that last after the staff has finished its duties. Many of the staff members interviewed for this study still maintain contact with former co-workers and have periodic get-togethers to spend time with one another. Interviewees did not always know when or where they would see co-workers in the future, but many indicated that they would definitely try to maintain contact and see their fellow staff as much as possible.

From an AC perspective, friendships made or maintained within a staff should not be considered “necessary” but are certainly beneficial. As mentioned by one AC, those staff members that are friends might be more inclined to help with events, cover duty in case a switch is needed, and have a generally higher amount of empathy towards friends on the staff. What seems to be more important than friendship from an administrative standpoint is professionalism. While friendship may not always be possible, professionalism should be. Effective staffs are those that support each other by helping with programming, by helping with duty switches, and by confronting policy violations in a similar manner, or at least respecting the manner in which other staff members confront policy violations. One AC interviewed mentioned that it is when a staff starts bickering that a dorm starts to splinter, something that will be discussed in full later.

#### *JC and RA responsibilities*

Much as *personalities* of JCs and RAs are seen to be distinct, there was common agreement that the *roles* of these two positions differ considerably. It has already been mentioned that JCs tend to be viewed as friendly and companionable. No RAs that we spoke to made similar claims about themselves. Part of why this might be, and playing into the already established notion that JCs and RAs differ with respect to personality, is that JCs view themselves in a “transition” role, in the sense that they are helping their residents to transition from lives at home to life at college. RAs, distinct from JCs, seemingly no longer fulfill that role. An RA’s residents have already been at college for at least a year and are assumed to be settled and well adapted. It was interesting to note however, that both RAs and JCs see themselves fulfilling roles as “resources”, as someone who is there if a student

needed them. This help might take the form of simply being someone to talk to or it might be more contextual, helping students to work out issues with their roommates and living arrangements. Interestingly, JCs were seen to have the harder job in this regard, possibly due to the increased level of interaction with students that is expected of a JC.

However, it seems that by late second semester, the roles of the RA and the JC become very similar. One former JC noted that residents no longer need help with the transition into college and thus JCs become more of the type of policy enforcer that RAs are perceived to be. The same former JC noted, though, that JCs still seem to make more friends among the residents, and this continues throughout the semester.

#### *Res Life as a whole*

From students' perspectives, residence life staff tends to look fairly cohesive from the outside. Policy is the same across campus, positions are the same across campus, residence life staffers are therefore, also lumped together into an agglomerated whole. JCs and RAs both commented that this is not the case, in fact, it is quite disjointed. Different buildings have different staffs and each staff has its own methods and procedures for the execution of the school's policy.

It was mentioned in virtually every interview that staffs between buildings tend not to interact. While there is interaction between corridors during events such as "screws" (inter-gender, inter-corridor functions), these events are often held between corridors either in the same building or between corridors led by JCs who

are already friends with each other. Most other interaction between staffs occurs during training and doesn't involve residents at all.

### *Staff Selection*

ACs interviewed for the study mentioned that there is a stark difference in how staffs are selected at St. Olaf and how they are selected elsewhere. As the ACs described, at most other colleges and universities staff is selected in something akin to a "draft." ACs (or those of an equivalent position) bring previously prepared lists of their first-choice RAs, second-choice RAs, and so on based on interviews and previous impressions and then proceed to make picks for their staffs, one member at a time, making trades as necessary to balance a staff. At St. Olaf, there is no "draft". RA and JC pairs self-select their buildings in the same manner as the rest of the student body, what is known as "room-draw." In this system, students are randomly assigned numbers and are allowed to choose their rooming situation in a numbered order from lowest to highest. This is done completely separately from the rest of campus room-draw, each position (RA or JC) having its own selection period.

This distinct system at St. Olaf has both perks and drawbacks. With the "room draw" system, ACs have less control over the balance of their dorm while in the "draft" system, ACs are able choose their staff based on the strengths and weaknesses shown in the interviews done beforehand. Under the draft system, ACs are the ones who choose who lives where, previous friendships are not usually an issue, especially since RAs do not expect to be in the same dorm as their friends who are also applying to be RAs. However, due to the room-draw system's self-selective nature, staff members tend to be more enthusiastic about joining the staff

of a particular building, especially if the building was their first choice. One AC suggested that being able to choose where one will work adds an extra bit of dedication and enthusiasm.

#### *RA and JC self Perceptions*

One RA commented that although her position sets her apart in some way from the student body at large, she has never felt like she was “living in a fishbowl”. That is to say that she has never felt completely isolated and cut off, a possibility that was suggested to her by Pamela McDowell at her hiring. Another RA commented that her position as an RA did indeed isolate her from other students, particularly her friends who didn’t know how to act around her initially once she had been vested with “RA power”. It would seem that becoming a member of residence life staff at least has the potential to strain previous and current relationships with other students. This might be viewed as an example of Merton’s theory of dysfunction, as the function of being a member of Res Life interferes with the function of being a friend.

#### *Intra Staff Conflicts and Problems*

When conflicts occur in a staff, they often center around policy. This includes both policy violations by members of the staff and how members of a staff handle violation. One AC mentioned that conflicts tend to be centered on or between one to three members of the staff and that there is a three step process that is frequently employed to resolve the situation. First of all, staff members in question are spoken to by the AC to discuss options. This is followed by a general talk with the staff to prevent further escalation. If the situation cannot be resolved,

or if policy demands it, it is likely that the staff member(s) will be let go. In some cases, especially those concerning the implementation of policy, conflict can move farther than the one to three individuals and has the potential to split a staff. In one situation discussed during several interviews, a dorm in question was split ideologically as to how to deal with a policy violation. Half of the staff chose to confront policy in one manner, while the other half chose to confront policy in a completely, non-complimentary manner. The AC in this situation did everything in their power to try and mend this rift, but nothing worked. The staff had been irrevocably split.

It was also mentioned that ACs playing favorites on RA and JC staffs can lead to problems for a staff as a whole. Conflict arose for several of our interviewees when ACs dealt unequally with all members of their staff. Certain staffers were “better friends” with the AC which lead to perceived privileges and the gifting of more attention. These “favorites” were also perceived to have greater access to the AC when a problem presented itself (the staff member had the ACs cell-phone number etc.). In the same way that ideological differences have the potential to split a dorm (as in the example mentioned above), staffs feuds carry the same danger. Favoritism can breed discontent within a staff, which students pick up on and can trickle into the dorm. Students then feel collectively awkward around their “feuding” JCs/RAs and might be forced to “choose sides”.

Intra-staff dating was also mentioned as another source of potential trouble for a staff (e.g. breakups, fights, etc). Based on our interviews, in most situations staffs are able to work out relationship conflicts on their own, especially if the staff

members involved are able to maintain a certain level of professionalism, but it occasionally led to rifts in the social life of the entire dorm. For example, in one situation, a breakup seemed to be the reason for the lack of presence in the dorm by one staff member. This staff member's residents and fellow staff members often voiced their disapproval of that absence. In another situation, a staff breakup caused many staff members and residents of the dorm to take sides (a frequent danger for staff conflicts), effectively splitting the dorm. Tension on the staff eventually lessened as the relationship tension decreased. Like the situations in which conflict was caused by policy violation, professionalism seems to help in the prevention and/or alleviation of conflict caused by intra-staff dating.

One is able apply Darendorf's Conflict Theory to Res Life because of the hierarchal nature of power within the department. In some cases conflict inevitably emerges, such as with the situation with AC favoritism described earlier. There is also a potential for conflict among members of staff that hold the same level of power. For example, two members of a staff could experience conflict because they both hold the same amount of power but over different areas of the building. This is previously illustrated concerning conflict over policy interpretation. Conflicting ideas have the potential to affect the whole dorm and cause a change in the social environment of the building.

Several methods have been devised by former JCs and RAs as to how to prevent such conflicts in dorms. One former JC devised a "two-rule" program. Rule one states that members of a staff, whether RA or JC, need to do their job. That is, being there for residents, fulfilling programming requirements, and not



breaking policy themselves. This “two-rule” program’s second rule suggests that this same staff should hold each other accountable for their positions, essentially making sure that each of them follows rule one. By following these two rules, a staff can be unified in the execution of their duties, at least in spirit. Another former JC suggested that a staff should try and decide how it will confront policy violations early on, so that the entire staff will be on the same page when confronting violations. This would promote literal “unity” as to the execution of the staff’s duties.

Quite a bit of effort went into the investigation of staff conflicts, but from the information that one researcher gathered, conflict between members of a staff doesn’t appear to always be an issue. There aren’t always fights, disagreements, or battles over ideology, sometimes a staff will just operate smoothly without these problems. Problems or no, what was said to be important was the need for a staff to “have each other’s back” and maintain a “united front”. This applies to enforcement of campus policy and also more generally to the way a staff handles itself in the dorm. Failure of staff members to support their fellows can lead to a sort of “cool JC – mean JC” mentality forming among residents. One JC might universally be viewed as being understanding of the students (e.g. doesn’t bust residents for alcohol, noise) while another is viewed as a “tool”, an agent of the administration and not a “good” JC. This mentality can cause the residents of a dorm to choose the side of the JC they agree with, which again leads to dorm conflicts. Half the dorm agrees with one side, while the other half agrees with the other and the resident’s living space becomes a space of conflict.

### *How Conflicts Affect Residents*

Residents seem to be fairly perceptive as to how a staff is functioning as a whole, at least with regards to conflict. This is especially true when staffs split. In these situations, residents will often choose sides, thus moving the conflict outside of the staff itself and into the dorm as a whole. This phenomenon has been noted both on a large scale by several former JCs and on a small scale during one of our focus groups. Several of the students at one focus group mentioned that their JCs did not get along, undermining each other at every possible instant. This caused a split within their corridor based upon which JC the various residents got along with. Residents on either side of the conflict tended not to associate with each other, perpetuating and widening the conflict.

Several times, former JCs noted that it was through gossip spread by the residents that they themselves learned about what was happening in their dorms. In fact, one former JC mentioned that it was by stopping this gossip early on that they were able to stop a dorm-splitting conflict in its tracks.

### *Residence Life Staff in the Past*

Besides JCs, RAs and ACs, we also interviewed St. Olaf alumni who were a part of residence life in the 1970's and early 1980's. This was done with the intention of determining what sorts of changes had occurred from then until now in the St. Olaf Res Life department.

. The only reports of conflict from these JCs were about alcohol. In the 1970's the legal drinking age was 18, so many of the JCs felt uncomfortable "busting" their peers for legally drinking on a dry campus. Conflict arose among the JCs about when it would

be appropriate to reprimand their residents for alcohol use. Many JCs told us that they often went to bars with their residents in downtown Northfield or held parties at Heath Creek. They would drink together and party together, as long as it was off campus.

The JCs were very close to their residents. Many current JCs have said that they like their residents, but have not made any close or lasting friendships. All of the JCs from the past that we interviewed said that they created *very* close relationships with their residents. Some even said that, years later, they are still very close friends with their residents from when they were JCs. This might be partly due to the fact that JCs from the 1970's did not consider themselves to be staff. They were not compensated for working in Res Life and yet still competed with a large number of students for the job. They did not have to enforce policy on their residents. They had to make sure everyone was safe, but they rarely busted anyone for alcohol/drug use or other related issues.

Another pattern that arose was the closeness of the JC staff. All but one of the past JCs interviewed stated that the majority of the JC staff knew each other before becoming JCs. They specifically stressed the importance of knowing your roommate before becoming a JC. Having a "co-pilot" that knows you and that you can trust is crucial to a good residence life experience.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the RA position did not exist. Instead, they had HRs. The HRs were adults who lived in the dorms and who were in charge of the entire dorm that they lived in. They were the main source of disciplinary action in the dorm, as opposed to the JCs. Each HR had an SA (Senior Assistant) that helped them if they were unavailable. The JCs of the past all seemed to agree that the HRs were a much better resource than RAs. Some words used to describe the modern RA by these past JCs were

“narks” and “hard asses”. They are not and were not fans of having student RAs tattling on their peers. They believe that discipline should be left up to adults, which is how it was with the HRs.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

With this study, we sought to educate ourselves (and hopefully others) about residence life and the intricacies of the relationships staff form with each other and students. We think we have accomplished that and were led to some interesting findings as a result. As an example, we discovered, or more properly were “enlightened” as to the very real power that Res Life staffers have over their dorms. This goes beyond the simple disciplinary role that many attribute to Res Life, as it extends into the social realm as well. As mentioned previously, conflicts (and JC conflicts especially) have the potential to drastically affect the relationships of residents under their care. Students take sides and staffs can split. We were also enlightened as to the “relevance” of JC lives and conflicts to the wider campus.

It was noted as well that there seems to be very little with regards to “residence life” that isn’t strategically manipulated for specific gain. For example, we heard from JCs and RAs that their rooming situation (pairs vs. singles) was tremendously important for the development of staff-student relationships. Such decisions are purposeful, with specific aims in mind. There are reasons residence life functions as it does and with the current study we were finally clued-in as to what those reasons are.

### *Implications*

The findings of our study have clear implications/applications for the practice of dorm governance. Professional Residence Life staff, here and at other institutions, would be very interested to see what we have found (Pamela McDowell has said as much). Any information produced about Res Life would undoubtedly help for the training of new staff (perceptions, perceived roles, conflict resolution, sources of conflict etc.) Additionally, if Residence Life staff ever wished to “enlighten” students in general about residence life experiences, the information produced in our study might be of aid.

### *Further Research*

There are several different avenues that this project could take for further research. As many of our interviews were taken from convenience samples, what might be helpful to get an accurate view of changes in Res Life staff might be to systematically interview former staff members year by year, with an equal spread from each dorm. This might help to show how staffs’ views and policies change over time. Furthermore, it might be interesting for a similar study to be done at other institutions, both with solely RA programs and with other, alternative programs such as the JC program at St. Olaf. A comparison between these studies would provide a better understanding of the concept of Res Life overall.

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