The Use of Online Journals as Indicators of Situational Stress and Job Satisfaction in Resident Assistants

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THE USE OF ONLINE JOURNALS AS INDICATORS OF SITUATIONAL STRESS AND
JOB SATISFACTION IN RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

By

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ABSTRACT

This study endeavored to determine whether there were differences in situational stress and job satisfaction of Resident Assistants (RAs) who keep online journals and those who do not. 750 RAs, including 139 online journal keepers and 656 non journal keepers, responded via surveymonkey.com to the 50-item Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI), the 4-item Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank, and a series of demographic questions. Journal keepers also responded to 5 open ended questions designed to provide further depth, description, and understanding to the quantitative data. Statistical differences in situational stress resulting from Environmental Adjustment were identified with RA online journal keepers indicating higher levels of stress associated with this factor than RA non-journalers. Implications of the findings for the field of professional practice and future research suggestions are included in the full manuscript.
CHAPTER 1

The position of Resident Assistant (RA) is one of the most responsible and stressful student leadership roles in higher education. Resident Assistants are student leaders chosen to live and work in the residential living units on a college or university campus. They are hired to provide on-going and day-to-day leadership to a floor of approximately 40 – 60 residents in buildings ranging in size from fewer than 100 residents to well over several hundred, or even as many as 1,000 residents total. The duties of a typical RA include responsibilities such as counseling students, administrative tasks, risk and crisis management, educational and social program planning, community development, and helping students transition from home to the college campus. RAs must manage these diverse responsibilities while also maintaining an appropriate grade point average (GPA).

RAs are often privy to intimate details of the lives of individual residents and of the inner workings of the departments and universities for which they work. They are expected to maintain the privacy of their residents and employers and share details only with those with a specific need to know about them. These expectations can pose problems for RAs particularly when their responsibilities become complex and emotionally demanding. According to Dodge (1990):

“More and more, student RA's are dealing with such difficult problems as alcoholism, suicide, homophobia, racism, date rape, eating disorders, and stress. And some administrators are asking whether the job has become too big for students, many of whom are only sophomores or juniors… many RA's say they are forced to call for ambulances at least once a semester for students who have become incoherent and sick after drinking too much…officials at several institutions say a few resident assistants quit each semester because the job becomes too trying” (p. A1, A39-41).

The intensity and diversity of the demands upon RAs in the modern American college and university make it a student leadership role with high stress and strong emotional demands.

**Online Behavior Problems of Resident Assistants**

During the 2001-2002 academic year, several RAs at a large public research institution in Florida began writing online journals (sometimes referred to as weblogs or blogs) for public viewing on the Internet. This situation came to the attention of housing administrators when some RAs complained that they found disturbing content posted in these online journals by their fellow RAs. In these online journals, the RA authors shared very personal and intimate details about their private lives and feelings, their opinions about the behaviors and actions of other RA colleagues and supervisors, and confidential information about student residents who lived on their floors.

The RA authors frequently wrote in these online journals on a daily basis, at all hours of the day and night, posting their latest entries with all of the intimate details mentioned above. Moreover, the RAs linked their online journals with the online journals of others using the same internet journaling site. Thus, by accessing one of the journals, an interested reader could gain access to many other sites to which the first journal was linked. Students were able to comment on each other’s daily entries and provide additional descriptions and information about their moods and feelings through graphics, musical attachments, and video feed streams linked to individual journal entries.

The online journals of these student RAs created several problems for the university housing operation. Some RA staff teams were disrupted throughout the academic year by
arguments and conflicts that arose directly from information posted and read by others on a student’s online journal. Many of the postings reflected significant psychological turmoil including thoughts of suicide, depression, and struggles with identity issues. Some journal entries reflected aggressive and threatening tendencies on the part of the writer that suggested a potential for harm to other students who were identified by name in the text of the entries. The language of the journal entries was often quite vulgar in nature, including regular usage of offensive words, and abusive labeling of individuals by the authors. Surprisingly, the student writers of these journals were aware that their entries were accessible to others yet this awareness did not appear to temper the content or tone of their daily entries. Since most institutions have clear expectations that RAs serve as peer mentors and role models for other students, this online behavior raised questions about the ability of RAs to function effectively in their roles by their residents, peers, administrators, and supervisors.

Many colleges and universities have faced similar problems with RA online journals and postings on electronic message boards, Facebook, email, and other web-based media. Eberhart (2007) indicates:

“When students praise drunken behavior, laud academic irresponsibility, honor the use of illegal substances, celebrate immature sexual activities, and otherwise manifest unhealthy behaviors through their online pages, they reveal troubling attributes about themselves. Even if these depictions are not reflective of their true values and actual behaviors, students who represent themselves in these ways can quickly become associated with these negative qualities. These images can then become detrimental to students when they attempt to become involved in student leadership positions or academically enriching activities, such as applying to be orientation leaders, residence hall assistants, study abroad candidates, or undergraduate research assistants. The students’ profiles are generally easily viewed by individuals whose input is influential in the selection process. Even if individuals’ own profile remains free of damaging content, friends’ profiles or group pages may have pictures and statements that implicate students in negative behaviors, which can ultimately limit the learning opportunities available to them” (p. 23).

According to Read, “A growing number of colleges are moving to disabuse students of the notion that the Web is their private playground. The message: If you type something on…a blog, you better make sure it’s something you don't mind being read by administrators, employers — or your mother” (Read, 2006). One Director of Housing recently described the problems his campus and staff have faced with inappropriate RA journals online:

“We have had to terminate the employment of a professional staff member due to his online representations. Also, I have had a staff member randomly check online pages/statements of student staff and found "very questionable" alcohol, drug, criminal, sexist material. We plan on addressing this much more in our materials and training next year” (Personal Contact, 2007).

Ten program sessions at the 2007 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators/Association of College Personnel Administrators (NASPA/ACPA) conference in Orlando, FL were dedicated to issues of technology, including the student use of Facebook and other social networking sites, and the implications of such behavior for the work of Student Affairs professionals. Some institutions now incorporate clauses in their hiring contracts for RAs with specific directions on what can and cannot be posted online by those employed in the
RA position. The University of Central Florida developed the following policy statement regarding expectations for online behavior by RAs:

“Housing and Residence Life cautions you on your use of electronic media. There are many dangers out there to you when you disclose personal thoughts, pictures, or detailed information about yourself. Our professional staff will not seek out any of this information; however, when concerns are brought to our staff about illegal activity and or safety/security concerns our staff will confront these concerns immediately. Any internet profiles, live journals, blogs, web pages, etc. that do not represent the Department of Housing and Residence Life…in an appropriate manner should not be made available to residents. Non-compliance with this policy may result in employment termination. Area Coordinators will determine what is appropriate if any concerns come up” (Personal Contact, October 2007).

According to Crandall (2004), complications resulting from online communication patterns of RAs are now a specific focus area for training at some institutions, “…one staff member elaborated that their training session targeted “online communication and online journaling, specifically sharing personal information and resident information online, and the degree to which that is appropriate or ethical…” (p. 65). As evidenced by the proliferation of policy statements and targeted training programs clarifying expectations regarding appropriate uses of online journal and social networking sites by college and university paraprofessional staff, such as Resident Assistants, it is clear that RA behavior online is raising many concerns for higher education officials and housing and residence life administrators in particular.

**Online Journaling as an Indicator of RA Situational Stress and Job Satisfaction**

The contents of some RA online journals have information and descriptions that reflect RAs’ stress levels in various job-related situations as well as highly personal information pertaining to RAs’ experiences in the RA role. Due to the many pressures and demands of the job some RAs appear to utilize online journal writing as a means of venting their feelings and frustrations and gaining some catharsis from emotional problems associated with stress. Online journals may also provide a kind of “window” to the emotions and attitudes of RAs that provide important clues to job satisfaction. An examination of the use of online journals by RAs may therefore help to provide insight on some important questions associated with job stress and satisfaction in the contemporary work of RAs in higher education:

- Is the use of online journals by RAs associated with situational stress and job satisfaction?
- Do RAs who keep online journals report more/less situational stress than those who do not?
- Do RAs who keep online journals report higher/lower job satisfaction than those who do not?
- Is the frequency of use of online journals associated with higher levels of situational stress and job dissatisfaction?
- Do RAs who use online journals do so as a way to help resolve the stresses they experience on the job?
- What is the nature of the content that RAs choose to share in their online journals?
- What are the motivations that lead some RAs to write in their online journals?

The goal of this research was to shed light on the connections, if any, between the practice of online journaling and reported levels of situational stress and job satisfaction among contemporary RAs.
Statement of Significance

The practice of online journal writing by RAs and its potential relationship to job related stress and satisfaction has significant implications for practitioners in Student Affairs who are charged with training and supervising paraprofessional student staff members in residence halls. This research examined whether some RAs turn to online journaling as a method of coping with situational stress, and whether the use of online journaling is associated with job satisfaction. The findings of this research may be useful to administrators and educators to better understand the pressures and complexities of the RA role and to determine whether additional kinds of RA training may be necessary. In their recommendations for further research, LaRose et al. (2001) suggested that, “In addition to verifying the possible relationship between general internet use and measures of psychological well-being, it would be instructive to examine the impact of specific types of internet use (e.g. e-mail, chat rooms, online research, entertainment)” (p. 14).

Research Questions

The research questions for this research initiative are:

1. Are there differences in situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
2. Are there differences in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
3. Are there differences based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
4. Are there differences based on semesters/quarters employed as an RA in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
5. For RAs who keep online journals, are there differences in job satisfaction and situational stress factors based on a) the frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA?
This study compared the situational stress of RAs who keep online journals and those who do not to see what, if any, differences exist in situational stress between these groups (RQ1). Additionally, the study compared the job satisfaction of RAs who keep online journals and those who do not to determine what, if any, differences in job satisfaction exist between the groups (RQ2). Finally, situational stress and job satisfaction were analyzed by gender, race and age (RQ3) and number of semesters/quarters employed as an RA (RQ4). For online journal keepers, situational stress and job satisfaction rates were also compared based on frequency of entries (RQ5a), demographic variables (gender, race, & age) (RQ5b) and semesters/quarters employed as an RA (RQ5c).

**Definition of Terms**

*Resident Assistant (RA)* – An undergraduate student who receives some type of employment related compensation (i.e. cost of room, board, stipend, some combination of these, etc.) from the institution to hold a leadership role in an on campus residential living unit (residence hall, apartment building, etc.) where he/she has responsibility for the management and oversight of a specific living area (floor, wing, building, entry way, etc.) that is occupied by other resident students.

*RA Job Satisfaction:* “Any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person truthfully to say, ‘I am satisfied with my job,’” (Hoppock 1935, p. 47).

*Situational Stress* – According to Dickson (1975) stress is, “defined as ‘intense feeling’ and includes a variety of internal responses to external situations; such as irritation, anger, anxiety, etc (p. 105).” RAs experience situations in completion of their RA responsibilities that cause them various levels of stress as defined above. Situational stress can be measured as the level of emotional stress, as defined above, that is experienced through those situations encountered by an RA, in the completion of their employment responsibilities.

*Online Journaling* – is the practice of making entries on a regular basis (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) on an online journaling website such as [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com) about emotional experiences.
and events in the author’s life on that day or time period. Online journal entries can be linked to the journals of others and allow readers to leave comments and feedback to the author about their journal entries. (Note: Entries made on Facebook or other social networking sites do not meet the criteria for online journals as defined in this study.)

Assumptions
The underlying assumptions of this research include the following:
1. Only those currently employed as RAs will choose to participate in the survey.
2. Those who self-identify as online journal keepers will indeed be authors of online journals.
3. All respondents will be candid and truthful in their answers to the survey instruments.

Limitations
The potential limitations of this study include the following:
1. The sampling plan employed in this research initiative does not allow for randomness. Therefore, generalization of the findings may be difficult since sampling error is a potential liability.
2. The method requires participants to self-identify as Resident Assistants and as online journalers. There is a potential for someone who is not an RA to access the survey and complete it. There is also the potential for participants to not be truthful and identify as online journalers when in truth, they are not.
3. The directions on the RASI instruct participants to rate the level of stress they felt when experiencing a particular job related situation from 1 – least to 5 - most stress producing. In the event that a participant is asked to answer an item on the RASI regarding a situation or scenario that the participant has not encountered in the scope of their RA experience, the RASI instructs the participant to “imagine the amount of stress you would feel under such circumstances” and to rate that accordingly based on a 1 – 5 scale. What one imagines he or she would feel versus what they would actually feel in a particular circumstance may not be the same and may therefore pose a limitation in this study.
In preparing the review of the literature for this research initiative it became clear that much of the research related to the topic of this study was done some time ago. Since the needs of students coming to college have evolved significantly over the past decade and the demands of the RA job have become increasingly complex in response to those student needs, researchers have neglected to stay current in studying the needs, experiences, training and preparation of paraprofessional resident assistants. Hopefully, this research study will serve to generate renewed interest among researchers about this important group of students who serve as paraprofessional leaders in campus residence halls.

**History of College & University Housing and Residential Staff**

The provision of on campus housing first appears in the history of higher education during the Middle Ages when students in Europe were seeking to pursue their studies at universities in Oxford, Paris and Bologna (Cowley, 1934). According to Cowley, “In 1262 the Bologna faculties were lecturing to almost 10,000 students. In 1257 Oxford enrolled 3,000; and Paris in the same century numbered 30,000” (Cowley, 1934, p. 705). Cities during this time period were rather small, “seldom [numbering] more than five thousand” (Cowley, 1934, p. 705) residents. Therefore, the sheer numbers of students seeking an education at one of these institutions could swell a city’s population well beyond its ability to house all that needed shelter. Many students therefore sought housing accommodations in various places near the universities. “Some rented garrets, some boarded with masters, still others with townsmen, and a few took over houses of their own” (Cowley, 1934, p. 705). Eventually however, students began to gravitate toward one another, and establish their own self-governed living communities known in those early years as “socii…hospicia or hostels…paedagogies…and halls and colleges” (Cowley, 1934, p. 706).

Initially, the institutions themselves had little or no formal connection with these student run living environments, and students were permitted to move from one housing facility to another, as often as they wished to do so (Cowley, 1934). However, as the development of student housing progressed at the institutions of Europe, so too did the influence of institutional administration on student housing facilities. “In the course of two centuries the houses which students had established on their own initiative had passed entirely from their control into the hands of the university authorities” (Cowley, 1934, p. 706). University officials, rather than the resident students themselves, selected staff members, called “principals or paedagogues,” by “[appointing] older students and later members of the faculty” to serve in these roles, and look after the students living in the houses (Cowley, 1934, p. 706). Furthermore, no longer were students permitted to move so freely between one living situation and the next. According to Cowley, “In 1452 the chancellor of Paris ruled that no paedagogue could receive into his house a student who had left another paedagogium to avoid correction. Five years later he ordered that all students were required to live in paedagogies and that no new halls could be established without his permission” (Cowley, 1934, p. 706). At approximately the same time, similar rules and regulations were established at Oxford and Cambridge. Such was the birth of the residential college system at the Universities at Oxford and Cambridge – “a system…committed to the education and development of the total student…[and] to faculty and students [sharing] time and...
lodgings during out-of-class hours as well as coming together during formal instruction” (Winston et al, 1993, p. 168).

Since many of those who came to the New World colonies from England were themselves graduates of the Universities at Oxford and Cambridge, it is not surprising that “the English pattern of the residence unit being the center of both informal and formal education became the organizational standard of the American college” (Winston et al, 1993, p. 168). Students seeking a higher education in America, similar to their predecessors seeking opportunities at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford in the Middle Ages, tended to be young men who had to travel far from home, and far from the watchful and protective eye of their parents, to attend the institution of their choice (Powell, Plyer, Dickson, & McClellan, 1969). Additionally, many of the cities in which the early institutions of higher education in America were located, were ill-equipped to deal with the numbers of students coming to attend the institutions (Winston, et al, 1993). According to Winston, “The residence unit provided the atmosphere in which a social organization could be built around the students and faculty. Thus, the residence hall was essential to the pre-Civil War American college for both philosophical and practical reasons” (Winston, et al, 1993, p. 168).

However, according to Powell et al., “In contrast to the British [housing] method, which was intended to enhance the total education of the student, dormitories in America became mere places for board and lodging and the administration of a stringent set of regulations governing the daily lives of students” (Powell et al., 1969, p. 4). Given that the institutions initially established in America were predominantly for the preparation of clergymen and leaders, it follows that students would be expected to observe a strict regiment of activities throughout their day. The residential environment assisted in this effort by providing the necessary structure for such activities to take place. According to Cowley, “The founders [of America’s first institutions of higher education] were devoutly religious men who conceived of the college more as a religious institution than as a seat of learning. Professors and tutors were expected to pray regularly, morning and evening, with their students, and if a youngster misbehaved they believed with certainty that they were exorcising the devil when they whipped him” (Cowley, 1934, p. 708).

Student discipline and conduct in the dormitories became one of the major sources of concern and controversy in the history of on campus housing in America. “The dormitory concentrated into groups eager, active, healthy young men who were as capable of being whipped into an explosive rebellion as into a religious revival” (Rudolph, 1965, p. 97). Faculty members, who were responsible for living with students and monitoring their behavior while the students were away from the protective eye of their parents, often became witnesses to, and/or victims of, the anti-social behavior of students. According to Rudolph,

The dormitory helped to create an atmosphere that invited frustration, argument, and crime. In the commons room of a dormitory at South Carolina College in 1833 two students at the same moment grabbed for a plate of trout; only one of them survived the duel that ensued. Among the victims of the collegiate way were a boy who died in a duel at Dickinson, the students who were shot at Miami in Ohio, the professor who was killed at the University of Virginia, the president of Oakland College in Mississippi who was stabbed to death by a student, the president and professor who were stoned at the University of Georgia, the student who was stabbed at Illinois College, the students who were stabbed and killed at the University of Missouri and the University of North Carolina. For their misfortune these victims of college life could thank the dormitory, the
sometime house of incarceration and infamy that sustained the collegiate way (Rudolph, 1965, p. 97).

It was circumstances such as these, which began to shy faculty members away from living in university housing facilities with their students therefore “resulting in a temporary decline in residence hall popularity and effectiveness as an educational tool” (Winston et al, 1993, p. 169).

William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago in the late 1800’s and early twentieth century, saw that his new institution was built complete with several on campus residential facilities dedicated to housing students. According to Cowley, “[Harper] built four dormitories (57.3 per cent of the total building cubature at Chicago in 1893 was in dormitories) in the first group of university buildings and sought money for more. In 1900 he had erected seven” (Cowley, 1934, p. 759). Many other college presidents of the time followed Harper’s lead in building on campus living facilities including Yale’s president, Arthur T. Hadley, Dean Andrew F. West of Princeton and Woodrow Wilson, then President of Princeton, and later Lawrence Lowell of Harvard (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981). “Harper’s influence on higher education in the Midwest and throughout the country rekindled interest in the collegiate experience and a concern for the student as a complete individual” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 16). Winston et al. state that “by 1915 residence halls were being built at a faster rate than at any other time in the history of American higher education” (Winston et al., 1993, p. 171).

Another major impetus for the growth and expansion of university provided housing opportunities for students was realized as women began to seek out higher education in greater numbers in the early 1900’s. Many women’s institutions were founded as residential campuses including Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, Vassar and Smith (Cowley, 1934). According to Powell et al (1969), “The prevailing thought of the time (and for many years following) was that women needed to be protected, both from the evildoers and those who might express “evil” thoughts. This coupled with the colleges’ acceptance of the responsibility for educating women to be ladies and ultimately good wives and mothers, resulted in rigidly supervised dormitory living at the same time that men students were enjoying complete freedom from regulation of their non-academic lives” (p. 7).

The Beginnings of Non-Faculty Resident Advisors

It was in the provision of on campus housing opportunities for women that the first, non-faculty, residence hall staff members emerged on the higher education scene in the United States. “Preceptresses, who were the forerunners of what later were called housemothers, enforced a Victorian morality of young women in the sanctuary of their dormitories” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 16). According to Powell et al., “The ladies in charge of women’s halls inspected the rooms, criticized the manners and morals of the women, supervised behavior, and even screened callers who came to visit the girls” (Powell et al., 1969, p. 7). As women emerged from their days as students, many chose careers on college campuses as faculty members and administrators. According to Cowley, “Many of [the graduates of women’s institutions] joined the faculties of Middle Western colleges and universities, and they brought with them the housing philosophy. Some of them became deans of women, and, charged with the social and physical welfare of their students, they gave devoted and continuous attention to housing” (Cowley, 1934, p. 761).

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the passage of the G. I. Bill insured that there would be a tremendous influx of students to colleges and universities nationwide as “[it made it possible] for 360,000 veterans to postpone working and enter higher education” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 18). According to Blimling and Miltenberger, “This was the
era in which most of the residence halls were built, because the great influx of students created an immediate need for student housing” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 18). University housing spaces constructed during the 1950’s and 1960’s have in common certain architectural features that can still be seen on many campuses today. Double-loaded corridors with double rooms, limited common spaces, and shared bathroom facilities for upwards of forty residents insured that the majority of space available in an on campus residential facility would be “rentable” and therefore “revenue generating space” for student housing (Carlson, 2001). “No longer were [on campus residential facilities] an extension of the small intimate family that was created in a hall of sixty to eighty people; now they were large high rises that housed upwards of a thousand students” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 18).

With this influx of students, and the construction of high-rise halls with high concentrations of students living together, there was a greater need for residence hall staff to be on hand to address student issues and to re-examine the role of the experience of on campus living in the overall educational preparation of college students. During this time faculty became more focused on dealing with students in the context of the classroom leaving the student’s out of classroom experience to be dealt with by others. This nexus of circumstances gave rise to the proliferation of student affairs professionals charged with helping students negotiate the collegiate experience when they were not engaged in study or class specific pursuits. “The notion that the faculty was responsible for the students’ intellectual development and student affairs staff were responsible for the social and personal development came to be taken for granted on many campuses” (Schroeder & Mable, 1994, p. 8).

The Role of Resident Assistants in Contemporary Higher Education

In the 1970’s there came to be a new philosophy on campus, in which the residential environment began to be seen as a logical extension of the curricular and co-curricular lives of students. It was at this time that administrators began to see that, “Residence halls, rather than dormitories, [were] needed on college campuses. Residence halls…[were] designed to provide students with low cost, safe, sanitary, and comfortable living accommodations and to promote students’ intellectual, social, moral, and physical development” (Winston et al., 1993, p. 173). “Educational programming, resource centers in the residence halls, faculty-in residence programs, living and learning centers, and many other things…were developed in this era of expansion…to integrate the large numbers of students, living together in the new multistory dormitories, into the collegiate experience” (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981, p. 19). It was also at this time when resident assistants, graduate level staff members, and professionally prepared, masters-level professionals began to emerge as live-in leaders in the residence halls – receiving formalized training in order to provide guidance and support to residents in on campus living facilities (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981).

The RA role has continued to evolve throughout the years on college campuses. In a historical retrospective provided by Crandall (2004),

In previous times, the resident assistant roles were: policy enforcer, programmer, community builder, administrator, resource referral, role model, and friend. Now it seems the following roles need to be added in the resident assistant’s position: mediator, liaison, university representative, transitional agent, academic interventionist, tour guide, advisor to student groups, sibling substitute or surrogate sibling, and agent of the state (p.41).
The position of RA can be a source of significant stress for young adults who are dealing with their own developmental issues while simultaneously bearing some responsibility for the growth and development of 40 - 60 student peers.

As Ernest Boyer stated in Blimling’s *The Experienced Resident Assistant* (1993), “The resident assistant (RA) position is one of the most demanding assignments on a college campus. RAs confront daily the realities of dormitory life. Beyond the ordinary, day-to-day hassles, they must deal with accidents, abuse of alcohol, depression and questions about birth control and abortion. It is a 24-hour-a-day job, one that involves not just keeping order and finding light bulbs, but becoming deeply involved in shaping the lives of students and helping college accomplish its fundamental goals” (p.i).

The 2007 ACUHO-I/Educational Benchmarking satisfaction survey for RAs was completed by over 5,143 resident assistants from 58 institutions nationwide. The results of that survey indicated the 57% of the respondents were female and 43% were male. The sample was predominantly White American (69%), with African Americans numbering 13%, Asian Americans 5%, Hispanic American 5%, and 4% identifying as non-US citizens or permanent residents. Those responding were identified most frequently as juniors (37%), followed by seniors (31%), sophomores (29%), graduate students (2%), and freshmen (1%). The majority had been employed in the RA role for 2 to 4 semesters/3 to 6 quarters (52%), followed by those employed for less that 2 semesters/3 quarters (36%), those employed 5 to 6 semesters/7 to 9 quarters (10%), and those employed more than 6 semesters/9 quarters (2%). 80% of those responding reported a GPA of 3.00 or better on a 4.0 scale. 51% indicated that they intended to return to the RA position the following year with 15% indicating that they were eligible to return but had chosen not to, and 9% identifying as undecided (EBI, 2007).

**Individual Residence Hall Characteristics and RA Situational Stress**

Dickson (1981) studied how characteristics of housing programs including number of residents assigned to a particular RA, overall number of students per hall, total on campus population, gender breakdown of residents in a hall (coed or single gender), and level of experience of the RA contributed to situational stress levels of RAs. His research found no significant impact based on overall hall size on RA situational stress levels. RAs in women’s halls, however, had lower stress levels when dealing with situations involving large groups of residents than did RAs in coed or all male halls. According to Dickson (1981), “men residents are less responsive to leadership efforts by RAs, which increases RA stress” (p. 365).

Overall on-campus occupancy also had an impact on RA stress according to Dickson’s (1981) findings. RAs in housing systems with a total on campus population of 7000 students or more indicated less stress in situations where they had to hold individuals or small groups of residents accountable for behavior or disruption than RAs in systems with fewer than 7000 students. RAs in larger systems demonstrated higher stress levels in situations where interpersonal or counseling skills were required than RAs from smaller systems. According to Dickson, “one explanation could be that RAs [in larger systems] expect and accept confrontive functions [as being part of their job more regularly] whereas those in smaller systems anticipate or actualize less stress as a result of the more interpersonally familiar environment” (p. 365). Dickson (1981) further speculates that RAs in smaller systems may experience less stress in situations where counseling skills are required because they may feel more ready access to other supportive resources in a smaller system. One other explanation is that RAs in larger systems may be called upon to manage more frequent, complicated, and simultaneously occurring issues requiring counseling skills (i.e. significant roommate conflicts between residents in multiple
rooms) causing them higher levels of situational stress because of the sheer number and magnitude of the issues before them.

As would be expected, Dickson (1981) demonstrated that RAs who had been on the job longer indicated lower levels of stress when confronting student behavior than RAs with less experience most likely because they had managed such confrontations successfully in the past than RAs that were newer to the position. Dickson also determined that situations in which RAs had to modify their lives to meet the needs of the position, or where an RAs personal beliefs and values were in conflict with expectations of their role, were more stressful for more experienced RAs than for newer RAs. This indicates that new RAs may not understand initially how much of a lifestyle the RA position can be and how their own needs, beliefs, and values may be challenged in their positions.

Onofrietti (2000) found that while RAs do experience stress in their roles, stress did not seem to contribute to their decision to return to the position or not for another year. Onofrietti concluded that the opportunity to serve as a leader, the financial compensation, and other factors also played a role in RAs deciding to return to the job even though they may have experienced stress in the completion of their roles. While Onofrietti’s findings did offer some interesting possible conclusions regarding RAs and stress, the study’s findings were flawed in that the researcher took the mean of all of the 6 individual situational stress factor scores and used that number as the single stress score for the participant. This is an inappropriate use of the RASI as the situational stress factors are separate and cannot be combined to calculate a single score as an accurate measure of RA stress. Therefore, Onofrietti’s findings must be reviewed with the understanding that there may be a significant flaw in his calculations.

Role Ambiguity, RA Stress & Job Satisfaction

Knouse and Rodgers (1981) indicate that RA job descriptions are often written by administrators in charge of residential programs, rather than those who actually do the job, and may not capture or clearly describe the day to day realities of the job and what is expected from an RA in completion of their employment duties. According to Knouse and Rodgers, “Unclear responsibilities (e.g., Ensure students are aware of rationale for rules) are cited [in written job descriptions], and duties are written in ambiguous terms (e.g. coordinate and enforce). RAs may not understand what these duties mean; hence they may not be able to carry them out” (p. 396). Lack of clarity of job expectations and/or lack of understanding of the RA role may be a significant source of stress for some students entering and serving in the RA position.

The position of resident assistant often requires RAs to make on the spot decisions in circumstances in which there are no clear right or wrong answers or actions. This “gray area” in which the RA must often operate is another source of job related stress for student leaders in the residence halls. According to Deluga and Winters (1990), moderate negative correlations were discovered between this gray area for RAs, referred to as “role ambiguity” in their study, and the RA’s reported levels of “job satisfaction.” Deluga and Winters (1990) reported that, “higher levels of job ambiguity and conflict [were] associated with less job satisfaction” (p. 235). Targeted and thoughtful RA training workshops are an important component to increase the likelihood that paraprofessional student employees in the residence halls will understand what is expected of them on the job and will perform those duties in a consistent, effective, and appropriate manner (Murray, Snider, & Midkiff, 1999).

Butters and Gade (1982) studied job satisfaction and leadership variables with a small sample (68) of RAs in institutions located in the northern plains. Their results yielded no significant differences in job satisfaction rates based on gender and found overall RA job
satisfaction rates for the sample in their study to be “similar to the average of skilled and white-collar workers but below that of lower management positions” (p. 323). Butters and Gade stated, “these residence hall assistants were expected to be both rule enforcers as well as personal counselors and leadership models to fellow residents” (p. 323) indicating their understanding that seemingly divergent expectations, similar to role ambiguity, may be related to job satisfaction rates for RAs. Those in blue collar roles tend to have less role ambiguity than those in white collar or skilled employment roles. Those employed in roles where they have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them have higher rates of job satisfaction.

Onofrietti (2000) demonstrated that “higher [job] satisfaction was significantly associated with lower stress” (p. 115) for RAs who chose to return to the RA position for another year (persisters) versus those who chose to not to return (non-persisters). According to Onofrietti’s (2000) findings, “Of persisters, 80.2% reported being either satisfied or very satisfied [with the RA job] compared to 51.2% of non-persisters...35.5% of non-persisters reported being very dissatisfied or dissatisfied while only 12.8% of persisters were dissatisfied. Of those very dissatisfied with their jobs, 100% were non-persisters” (p. 116). These findings suggest that higher reported levels of job satisfaction are positively associated with RA staff retention.

RAs and Burnout

According to Nowack and Hanson (1983), paraphrasing Maslach and Jackson (1982), burnout is defined “as a construct characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, negativity, low commitment, and feelings of lack of personal accomplishment, fatigue and low productivity” (p. 546). Hetherington, Oliver and Phelps (1989) further indicate “that burnout is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings. Burnout can be considered one type of job stress. Although it has some of the same deleterious effects as other stress responses, what is unique about burnout is that the stress arises from the social interaction between helper and recipient” (p. 266). Given that RAs are regularly in assistance and service as peer leaders and helpers to their residents it is not surprising that burnout has been identified and studied within the RA population.

Nowack and Jackson (1983) demonstrated that RAs who viewed daily life stresses as “challenging rather than threatening” experienced less illness and less burnout in their roles. They also found that high levels of burnout were associated with lower job performance ratings of RAs by their residents. RAs are more productive in service to their residents when burnout is reduced or eliminated. As a result of their findings, Nowack and Jackson suggest a need to “identify RAs who are encountering considerable stress and coping poorly with the job [because] such staff members will tend to experience greater levels of burnout and illness, which may in turn affect job performance” (p. 549).

A subsequent study by Nowack, Gibbons and Hanson (1985) studied the impact of social support networks on instances of RA burnout. In this study social support networks were defined as “[encompassing] the number of others that one can turn to and the sense of satisfaction with that available support system” (p. 138). Nowack, Gibbons, and Hanson’s (1985) findings indicated that “the more satisfied the RAs were with their social support network, the less cynicism and the more personal accomplishment they reported” (p. 138). To the degree that and RA sees his/her online journal as an effective conduit of connection to their social support network, the online journal may serve as a significant buffer to RA stress and subsequent burnout indicators.

In some research stress has been identified as a precursor to burnout among RAs. Fuerher and McGonagle (1988) found that “women who worked [as RAs] in freshman residence
halls and men who worked with upperclass students consistently reported greater experiences of stress” (p. 248) than RAs employed in other areas. While women in this study “did not report experiencing feelings of burnout with any greater frequency than did men…women seemed to report more intense feelings of burnout,” (p. 248) when it did occur particularly on measures of emotional exhaustion (Fuehrer & McGonagle, 1988; Hetherington, Oliver, & Phelps, 1989). According to Fuehrer and McGonagle (1988) “women are not more likely to burn out than men are but in working with students, and especially with freshmen, they may experience some tremendous demands on their abilities” (p. 248).

The researchers further concluded that “RAs in freshmen residence halls, as a group, are more likely to report experiencing feelings of burnout than are RAs in upperclass residence halls” (p. 249). Similar findings were also reported by Hardy and Dodd (1998) and by Benedict and Mondloch (1989) who stated that “the freshmen residence hall is probably the most stressful because [RAs] must help significant numbers of residents deal with issues such as homesickness, long-distance relationships, misconceptions about college life, and possible academic failure” (p. 293).

According to Fuerher and McGonagle (1988), “stress produced in situations requiring environmental adjustment consistently predicts reports of burnout” (p. 249). As has been stated previously, the researchers suggest that issues of stress as a result of role ambiguity may provide an explanation into this finding. “When these students are called on as RAs to discipline or settle interpersonal conflicts with their peers, the confusion between friend and professional roles may become severe. They may find a need to stifle their personal patterns of social behavior, their values, and their friendships with fellow residents to complete successfully their resident assistant duties. With repeated stress of this kind, burnout may result” (p. 249).

Other Studies of RA Stress and Job Satisfaction

The social connection that RAs feel to others with whom they work in the residence hall has also been explored in the literature. Deluga and Winters (1991) identified several factors, including “desire for power, financial obligations, career development, and personal growth” (p. 550) that were associated “with higher levels of interpersonal stress” (p. 550) for RAs, while two factors, “helping behaviors and RA cohesiveness, were linked with higher levels of job satisfaction” (p. 550). According to the authors, “the link between job satisfaction and RA cohesiveness mirrors the mutual support and deep friendship bonds that can emerge among RAs…recruiting programs that emphasize RAs as team players and describe the merits of inter-RA relationships may attract additional candidates” (Deluga & Winters, 1991, p. 551) to the RA position.

A study of the effects of RA training programs as a method of stress reduction for student staff was conducted by Winston and Buckner (1984). RAs were assigned to one of three groups including a group that received peer helper training prior to assuming their RA responsibilities, a group that received peer helper training while performing the RA role, and a group that did not receive peer helper training but were employed as RAs. The results demonstrated that those receiving peer helper training prior to the assumption of the RA role felt “less let down or alone in their daily interactions with residents, especially in situations that may be classified as non-supportive” (p. 433), “reported less stress in using their counseling skills than did those RAs who had not taken the course” (p. 433), and “reported less stress when using confrontive skills than did either concurrently trained RAs or RAs who had not taken the course” (p. 435). According to Winston and Buckner (1984), “trainees who have the opportunity to explore the role of the RA, to practice and receive feedback on helping interactions, and to practice informal assessment
techniques before assuming the responsibilities of the RA position feel more comfortable and experience less stress in interpersonally tense situations than do either concurrently trained RAs or RAs who do not receive systematic peer helper training” (p. 435).

Comprehensive peer helper training and the timing of such training can have an important influence on levels of RA stress.

The Use of Technology in RA Job Roles

While the history of the role of residence hall staff is well documented in the existing literature, there is limited literature about communication patterns between RAs in face-to-face or online environments. Furthermore, similar limits apply to research regarding the use of technology and computer based communication systems in RA training or as factors in the development and maintenance of relationships between fellow RA staff members. One study that did address RA use of technology was conducted by Crandall (2004) during her RA focus groups. According to Crandall (2004), “Many resident assistants [stated] that the Internet has really given them many opportunities to find bulletin board, programming and door tag ideas. Some resident assistants spoke about how the use of e-mail improved communication among the staff and with their supervisors. One resident assistant stated that he checks his e-mail more than his answering machine. Another positive impact is for resident assistants who have responsibility for an area that may be spread out between floors or buildings; by using e-mail, a website, or listservs resident assistants are able to quickly distribute information” (p. 52).

While technology does have some benefits for the RAs in the execution of the roles and delivery of services, Crandall (2004) indicates that technology also creates some associated pitfalls that may further complicate the RA position,

“Isolation, illegal use of computers, academic problems, and erosion of interpersonal skills are current trends and issues that limit or may even threaten the resident assistants’ roles of community development, conflict mediation, and programming. Resident assistants are already recognizing how technology has impacted their position, and some are starting to be concerned about the negative impact on the residents…the major threat that technology brings is the isolation of students which greatly impacts the ability to build community and to help students get involved in campus life” (p. 55-56).

Given the amount of time RAs and college students in general, spend interacting with each other in online environments including chat rooms, email, instant messaging, Facebook, and online journal or weblog sites, it seems important to carefully study the influence that electronic communication is having on the relationships and stress levels of the RA.

Journal Writing

Journal writing has long been identified as an effective means for individuals to work through issues and daily events in an attempt to gain increased clarity and understanding of their environments and their personal reactions to situations and circumstances (Staton, 1980; Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997). According to Andrusyszyn and Davie (1997), “the journal can promote growth, help reconcile the personal with the professional self, and document the writer’s growth, development, and transformation” (p. 106). Used as both an adjunct to the learning process, and/or as an exercise to motivate a client in personal and group therapy settings, reflective journal writing activities have been helpful to encourage participants to reflect thoughtfully on their feelings and experiences.

Instructors at all levels of the academy, elementary through graduate school, have incorporated the practice of journaling as an essential and critical part of their curriculum and teaching styles (Staton, 1980; Hall, 1990; Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997; Cummings, 2001).
Some educators have engaged in a dialogue with their students through regular journal writing (Staton, 1980; Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997; Cummings, 2001). In such a framework, students are asked to keep a journal about the content of, and their feelings about, the course in which they are enrolled, and to pass the journal in to the instructor at regular intervals during the semester. The instructor then responds back to the student’s journal engaging, therefore, in a regular written exchange of ideas and interpretations between the student and teacher. Entries about the student’s personal life are generally not prohibited and often begin to be included in the journal as trust and familiarity between student and professor continues to develop throughout the term.

Studies of courses incorporating a journal-writing component indicate students are more likely to ask questions when given the opportunity to do so through the more private medium of the journal than if they only had the opportunity to ask their questions in the more public classroom setting (Staton, 1980; Cummings, 2001). Research on the inclusion of journal writing in the academic setting indicates that students tend to be supportive of journal-writing exercises provided journals are not graded on content, and preferably, not graded at all (Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997).

**Online Journals, Weblogs, & Blogs**

According to Chesney & Seong (2007), “Weblogs or blogs are online journals which document anything that their writers, who are known as bloggers, want to. Typically bloggers write about their opinions, experiences and personal details of their lives…A large number of blog hosting sites exist such as mydeardiary.com, mydiary.org, blogger.com and blogit.com, which allow anyone to publish a blog...Reading these, it is clear that many bloggers are perfectly comfortable revealing their most personal thoughts and experiences to the world” (p.1).

In her 2006 book *Blog Rules*, Nancy Flynn states: “Unlike the web, which facilitates the one-way consumption of information, a blog is interactive, featuring the blogger’s article, or post, and often encouraging comments from readers who are interested in weighing in on a topic to keep the online dialogue going” (p. 8). According to Rebecca Blood in her book *The Weblog Handbook* (2002), “Online journals are analogous to paper journals, with the sole difference that they are published for the world to see. Online journalers may keep a record of events, explore their inner world, or do any of the things that journalers have traditionally done with pen and paper” (p. 7).

In its infancy in the mid to late 1990s, blogging was an activity that some authors engaged in to help digest the vast information available online, cataloging a particular author’s favorite online websites and pointing readers to those internet locations (Blood, 2002). In its current form however, blogging is more often used as a means of personal reflection than as a way to catalog the internet (Blood, 2002). According to Blood (2002), “[Today’s] bloggers see their weblogs less as filters [of internet content] and more as platforms for directed self-expression” (p.22). Cameron Barrett (1999) shares, “Weblogs…are designed for an audience. They have a voice…They are an interactive extension of who you are” (p.30).

According to a 2006 Pew Internet & America Life Project survey “about 12 million Americans keep a blog [and] about 57 million American Adults read blogs” (Lenhart & Fox, 2006, p. i). Blogging, therefore, is not unique to the Resident Assistant (RA) position.

Lenhart and Fox (2006) also found that the subject matter of individual blogs can vary widely but, “when asked to choose one main topic 37% of bloggers cite ‘my life and experiences’ as the primary topic of their blog [with] politics and government [running] a very distant second with 11% of bloggers citing those issues…as the main subject of their blog”
According to Lenhart and Fox (2006) most online journal and blog authors “use their blogs as personal journals” (Lenhart & Fox, 2006 ii). Dr. Kara Dawson writes, “Most people with successful blogs are deeply committed to posting, for personal reasons, such as a passion for their subject, the satisfaction of reaching a wide audience, or the ego boost associated with having others find their narratives important enough to read” (Dawson, 2007). While the terms blog, weblog and online journal are used interchangeably in the literature, the term online journal will be used for the purpose of this research.

Expressive Writing

The act of writing one’s thoughts and feelings about emotional or traumatic events has been the subject of several research studies by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas at Austin. Pennebaker reports that, “through language individuals are able to organize, structure, and ultimately assimilate both their emotional experiences and the events that may have provoked the emotions” (1995, p. 5). In Pennebaker’s writing model, study participants are brought into a laboratory setting and placed in a treatment or control group. The treatment group is directed to write for a specific period of time about the most traumatic event in their lives sometimes over the course of several days. The control group is asked to write about “non-emotional topics” during the same period of time over the course of several days. Through this writing paradigm, Pennebaker has demonstrated that “students who write about emotional topics show improvement in grades in the months following the study” (1997, p.162) and “university staff members who write about emotional topics are subsequently absent from their work at lower rates than control participants” ( p.162).

Pennebaker has demonstrated significant health benefits associated with writing about emotional or traumatic events. According to Pennebaker, “writing…about emotional experiences, relative to writing about superficial control topics, has been found to be associated with significant drops in physician visits from before to after writing among relatively healthy samples” (1997, p.162). One study completed with participants who had recently lost their jobs found that those assigned to the treatment condition encouraged “to write about their deepest thoughts and feelings surrounding the layoff and how their lives, both personal and professional had been affected” (Spera, Buhrfield, & Pennebaker, 1994) were more successful in achieving full time employment in less time than those in the control group (Spera, Buhrfield, & Pennebaker, 1994).

Pennebaker’s writing paradigm has traditionally been studied with classic paper and pencil application within a strictly controlled laboratory setting following similar protocols to those described above. Bryan E. Sheese, Erin L. Brown, and William G. Graziano (2004) recently applied Pennebaker’s writing paradigm in an online setting through the use of email. In this study 582 undergraduate students were asked to write emails of 500 words in accordance with the guidelines given to the subject group to which they were assigned including a treatment group asked to write about a traumatic experience daily for 3 days, a treatment group asked to write about a traumatic event weekly for 3 weeks and a control group who was asked to write about nontraumatic events for 3 days. The study found that “e-mail based treatment was effective in improving health outcomes” (Sheese, Brown, & Graziano 2004, p. 462) and that “participants in the treatment conditions were more likely [than those assigned to the control group] to believe that the experiment had a positive, long lasting effect on them; and that their experience had been valuable” (Sheese, Brown, & Graziano,, 2004, p. 462). This study seems to indicate that the health benefits associated with the Pennebaker writing paradigm do translate in the online environment where email is concerned. Attempts to identify research studies of the Pennebaker
writing paradigm in the online journal environment were unsuccessful. According to Sheese et al. (2004), “[This study]…shows that the Pennebaker disclosure paradigm may be particularly well suited for Internet-based applications” (Sheese, Brown & Graziano, 2004, p. 464).

Online Communication

Use of technology, including online communication, is very much the norm in academe today. Much of the available literature about online communication among college students addresses the frequency of use of various forms of immediate electronic communication including email and instant messaging. According to Steve Jones, Mary Madden, Lisa N. Clarke, Sabryna Cornish, Margaret Gonzales, Camille Johnson, Jessica N. Lawson, Smret Smith, Sarah Hendrica Bickerton, Megan Hansen, Guenther Lengauer, Luciana Oliveria, Wendy Prindle, & James Pyfer (2002), “College students are heavy users of the internet compared to the general population. Use of the internet is part of a college students’ daily routine, in part because they have grown up with computers. It is integrated into their daily communication habits and has become a technology as ordinary as the telephone or television” (p. 2). “Young people exhibit an increasing comfort level in their use of email, instant messaging, online chat, and live voice over the internet as their primary modes of communication” (Steele, 2002, p. 1).

Interestingly, it would seem from the literature that email is viewed by current college students as a journal-writing alternative of the 21st century. As stated previously, some authors have indicated that students who are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings with a professor directly through a course related journal tend to ask more questions through the forum of the journal than they would if they only had the in class setting available to pose their questions (Staton, 1980; Cummings, 2001). In their study, Jones et al. (2002) found, “Almost half of college students agree that email enables them to express ideas to a professor that they would not have expressed in class” (p. 3). Furthermore, Jones et al. (2002) determined that college students use email communications with professors “to find out a grade from an instructor…contact other students in some of their classes…[and to] report absences” (p. 3). Internet use affects how students retrieve information for their courses and assignments as well with “nearly three-quarters (73%) of college students [saying] they use the Internet more than the library…for information searching” (Jones et al, 2002, p. 3).

Research available regarding online communication often focuses on the degree to which online communication is anonymous and devoid of non-verbal cues to clarify the true meaning of a sender’s message (Jaffe, Lee, Huang, & Oshagan, 1995; Chester & Gwynne, 1998). Some have argued that, in an environment devoid of social cues, people engaged in online communications and interactions tend to be less inhibited in the information that they share and the manner in which they choose to share it (Chester & Gwynne, 1998). According to Baker (1998) romantic relationships that begin through the internet and online communication tend to be based on characteristics other than the superficial. Baker (1998) reports that “men in particular may have an easier time revealing thoughts and feelings of self-disclosure in writing” (pg. 3). Through her research, Baker observed that people tend to be brought together in the online environment as a result of common interests rather than through physical attraction as the online environment does not allow for physical contact between writers (Baker, 1998). Subjects in other studies have revealed that the internet provided them a medium to meet and connect with a person they do not believe they would have met, or would have otherwise spoken to, had the online environment not been available (Chester & Gwynne, 1998). According to Jones et al (2002), “About on one in five (20%) college students said that they had formed a relationship online before meeting someone in person” (p. 16).
College students are clearly comfortable with the internet having grown up with it for much of their lives (Jones et al, 2002). Jones et al (2002) reported that “three-quarters (74%) of college students use the internet four or more hours per week, while about one-fifth (19%) use it 12 or more hours per week” (p. 6). College students also use the internet for a wider range of activities when compared to all other Internet users. Students often engage in file sharing activities, and downloading and listening to music online (Jones et al, 2002). Finally, “College internet users are heavier users of instant messaging and online chat than those in the overall online population. While about half of all internet users have sent instant messages, nearly three quarters of college internet users have done so, and college internet users are twice as likely to use instant messaging on any given day compared to the average Internet user” (Jones et al, 2002, p. 7).

While the available body of literature pertaining to online communication structures and protocols has grown significantly over the course of the past decade, this researcher was unable to locate any research regarding the use of online journaling and/or those who select this medium to record their thoughts, feelings, and experiences – hence the need for this particular proposed research initiative.

**Online Communication and Depression**

Some research has been conducted on the relationship between the regular or frequent use of the internet and levels of depression though research in this area is limited and reports conflicting results. Kraut, Lundmark, Patterson, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay, and Scherlis (1998), described the so called “Internet Paradox” whereby they argue that the internet, which was created to increase communication and bring people together, has in essence brought increased feelings of loneliness and isolation to those who surf the world wide web. Through path analysis of 169 subjects, relatively new to the internet, over a two year period, Kraut et al. (1998) reported a causal link between internet use and depression. According to the researchers, “the direction of causation is more likely to run from use of the internet to declines in social involvement and psychological well being, rather than the reverse” (pg. 16). Though Kraut and his colleagues (1998) did find that the most common use of the internet for their relatively inexperienced subjects was for the retrieval and sending of e-mail, the subjects still demonstrated increased levels of depression.

A subsequent study by LaRose, Eastin, and Gregg (2001) took issue with some of the findings of the earlier Kraut et al (1998) work. Using path analysis with a sample size of 171 college students, Larose, et al. (2001) demonstrated that more frequent use of the internet, increased the user’s confidence in their ability to use the internet successfully, so called “self-efficacy,” and decreased the degree to which the user became frustrated because of his/her own shortcomings in the use of internet technology. The more someone used the internet, the more confident he or she became in the associated skills, and the less depression he/she experienced. Furthermore, LaRose et al. (2001) found that “as internet use increased so did e-mail sent to known associates, which increased social support, and in turn decreased depression. In other words, internet use decreased depression through the use of electronic mail to obtain social support” (p. 11).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design of Study

The design of this dissertation research utilized a quantitative methodology in order to determine what, if any, differences exist between the situational stress and job satisfaction levels of RAs who keep online journals and those who do not. Data were collected through a causal-comparative research design with the methodology described in more detail below.

Research Questions

The research questions for this research initiative were:

1. Are there differences in situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
2. Are there differences in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
3. Are there differences based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
4. Are there differences based on semesters/quarters employed as an RA in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?
5. For RAs who keep online journals, are there differences in job satisfaction and situational stress factors based on a) the frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA?

Causal – Comparative Method

This study examined how the responses of one group (resident assistants who participate in online journaling) differ from those of another group (resident assistants who do not engage in online journal writing) on two specific measures (one of situational stress experienced by RAs and one of job satisfaction by RAs). The only manner in which cause and effect can be established, (i.e. determining for example that increased situational stress and job dissatisfaction causes RAs to write in online journals or that online journaling reduces situational stress and increases job satisfaction for RAs) is through the experimental method or the quasi-experimental, causal-comparative method.

The level of control required to conduct a study using the experimental method was simply not realistic to achieve within the scope of this research plan. In order to compare (hence the word comparative in causal-comparative) the performance of one mutually exclusive group (resident assistants who participate in online journaling) to another mutually exclusive group (resident assistants who do not participate in online journaling) on two sets of criteria (situational stress and job satisfaction), and determine the effect of online journaling on the situational stress and job satisfaction of resident assistants, the causal-comparative method of research was the most logical and appropriate selection.

Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI)

The instrument used in this research is The Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI). It was developed through the dissertation research of Greg Dickson in 1975. The RASI consists of a 50-item inventory that assesses levels of RA stress based on different situations and circumstances that RAs often experience on the job. The full inventory and score sheet appears
in Appendix C. Particular areas of the inventory are divided into the following factors: Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development. RAs were asked to rate the degree to which scenarios within these factor areas are stressful in the routine performance of this job. The six (6) factors are defined briefly below and more completely in Appendix F:

**Emotional Resiliency:** This factor measures stress levels in situations where an RA’s expectations of an event, co-workers (e.g. fellow staff members, supervisors, etc.) or residents are not met. Stress is experienced because a co-worker and/or resident(s) fails to do something the RA was expecting them to do or when “the feeling of being let down or alone exists when one of these persons reneges on a commitment or simply fails to support the RA” (Onofrietti, 2000, p. 62). Items on the RASI that apply to this factor include situations and circumstances where the RA has expectations of support from various entities including residents and supervisors that fail to be realized.

**Facilitative Leadership:** According to Dickson, “This factor is characterized by interactions with groups of residents. The situations occasionally include activities and community development functions, but more often involve intense circumstances of a threatening nature” (p. 64-65). In Facilitative Leadership factor scenarios the RA is dealing with stresses related to the effective management of larger groups of residents (as opposed to individual residents as is the case in Confrontive Skills scenarios), in crisis management situations. Stress is experienced because the RA is trying to manage the situation according to training and protocol while protecting others from harm and/or other negative consequences.

**Counseling Skills:** “This factor is characterized by abilities of perception, articulation, and persuasion in situations where sensitivity and mediation predominate” (p. 65). Stress from situations of this nature arises from concern that the RA will say something that exacerbates rather than calms the already charged situation. RAs generally want to be most helpful in these situations rather than say anything that might be seen as further hurtful for the students(s) involved.

**Environmental Adjustment:** Stress of this nature is generally associated with circumstances where personal needs, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes must be curbed or modified because the person is in the RA role and expected to behave in ways that they would not necessarily have chosen for themselves had they not been RAs.

**Confrontive Skills:** This factor measures stress levels in situations where the RA is required to enforce policies with individual residents who may not respond positively to the interaction or confrontation.

**Values Development:** This factor measures stress levels in situations where the RA experiences difficulty determining an appropriate course of action when multiple alternative approaches exist to address a particular circumstance. Stress is experienced because of equally plausible alternatives and ambiguous training or expectations regarding the preferred method of resolution for such issues. It may be difficult for the RA to determine if action in the given situation is appropriate or not. There may also be concern that action will be met with undesirable consequences either for the RA or another person which can serve to increase the level of stress experienced by the RA in that situation.
Reliability of the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI)

To assess the internal consistency reliability of the RASI, Dickson (1975) used a modified version of the Kuder-Richardson 20 resulting in an estimate for the entire test of .92 (p. 83). Spearman-Brown reliability measures for each of the factors were as follows: Emotional Resiliency - .87, Facilitative Leadership - .79, Counseling Skills - .77, Environmental Adjustment - .89, Confrontive Skills - .87, and Values Development - .90. Formal permission was secured from RASI developer Greg Dickson for use of this measure in this study in exchange for a copy of the approved proposal once it is defended and the completed fifth chapter at the conclusion of the study.

Modifications of the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI) for the Purposes of This Research

For the purpose of this study, the language of several items on the RASI was modified to reflect current day speech and increase participant understanding of the items. All items were modified with the expressed permission of RASI developer, Greg Dickson. The changes were not expected to affect the reliability of the instrument or the items it was designed to measure. The following is a list of the original language of the items and the modifications used with this research:

- Item 2. Original: Sponsoring a party which turns out to be a dud.
  For this research initiative: Sponsoring a program which turns out to be a disappointment.

- Item 14. Original: Relating to directors who are in their position primarily for the tangible benefits rather that because they enjoy assisting students in their development.
  For this research initiative: Relating to supervisors who are in their position primarily for the tangible benefits rather than because they enjoy assisting students in their development.

- Item 18. Original: Handling my own feelings toward other resident assistants who assume to be the group leaders by "playing up" to the directors.
  For this research initiative: Handling my own feelings toward other resident assistants who assume to be the group leaders by "playing up" to the supervisors.

- Item 29. Original: Intervening with residents who are involved with hard drugs.
  For this research initiative: Intervening with residents who are involved with illegal drugs.

- Item 33: Original: Resolving the feeling with regard to a director's favoritism towards other resident assistants.
  For this research initiative: Resolving the feeling with regard to a supervisor's favoritism towards other resident assistants.
Item 34. Original: Working with directors who do not properly evaluate and appreciate my efforts.

For this research initiative: Working with supervisors who do not properly evaluate and appreciate my efforts.

Item 39: Original: Confronting a director regarding a situation I feel he has mishandled.

For this research initiative: Confronting a supervisor regarding a situation I feel he/she has mishandled.

Item 42. Original: Working with directors who are generally incompetent in administering the hall and fail to meet my personal needs and expectations.

For this research initiative: working with supervisors who are generally incompetent in administering the hall and fail to meet my personal needs and expectations.

**Job Satisfaction**

Deluga and Winters (1991) studied job satisfaction among Resident Assistants as one of the dependent variables in their study. For this quantitative measure, the authors selected the “Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank [which] uses four items assessing the extent to which respondents (a) like their job, (b) feel satisfied with their job, (c) consider changing jobs, and (d) like their job in comparison to other people (RAs). For each item the respondent [selects] one of seven alternatives ranging, for example, from *I hate it* (1) to *I love it* (7). The Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank questions are contained in Appendix D. The alpha coefficient estimate for this instrument [is] .79” (Deluga & Winters, 1991, p. 548).

According to the *Comprehensive Handbook of Psychological Assessment*, the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank “is the earliest and…most used measure in job satisfaction surveys because it is brief, easy to understand, and easy to administer. Hoppock believed that only level of job satisfaction could be measured, that each individual had her or his idiosyncratic way of determining what job facets to consider and how to weigh these facets. Therefore, only general (unspecific) questions were useful in determining level of job satisfaction. The JSB’s main advantage is its brevity – it takes seconds to complete and thus can easily be included in longer survey questionnaires [and] its language is at a level that is very easy to understand. Its main disadvantage is that only the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is obtained, not the source(s) of satisfaction or dissatisfaction” (p. 479). Given that this measure has been used successfully with the RA population through Deluga and Winters’s work, it was selected as the measure of job satisfaction for this research initiative.

Only one item of the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank was modified in this research. The pronoun “her” was included along with “his” in an effort to use more inclusive language in the following item:

Check ONE of the following to show how you think you compare with other people:

1. No one likes his job better that I like mine.
2. I like my job much better than most people like theirs.
3. I like my job better than most people like theirs.
4. I like my job about as well as most people like theirs.
5. I dislike my job more than most people dislike theirs.
6. I dislike my job much more than most people dislike theirs.
7. No one dislikes his job more than I dislike mine.

This change was not expected to have any impact on the reliability and validity of the instrument.

**Open Ended Questions**

Five open ended response items (Appendix A) appeared at the end of the survey instrument and were answered only by those participants identifying themselves as online journal keepers. The questions were designed to provide additional insight into RA motivation to update and maintain online journals, the content that RAs include in their journals, the degree to which experiences encountered in the execution of their RA responsibilities appear in their online journal entries and the types of responses that their online journal receives and from whom. By including these open ended response items, it was hoped that more insight would be gained into what purpose the online journal serves in the life of the RA and to what extent the practice of online journaling was an outlet or coping mechanism for stresses associated with the RA position.

**Design of the Electronic Survey**

The survey associated with was administered electronically through the [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) website. The informed consent letter appeared as the first page of the survey, followed by the 50-item RASI, 4-item Hoppock, demographic information and open ended questions. The survey was designed with the following characteristics:

1. Respondents were required to answer to all questions. Those attempting to skip questions were prompted to answer before being allowed to continue.
2. Respondents had the ability to edit their answers until they finished the survey. Once the survey was completed and submitted, respondents were not permitted to return to their survey instrument.
3. Only one response per computer was permitted in an effort to control bias.
4. Respondent IP addresses were captured in the data to further control for duplicate responses.

**Participants in Research Study**

The subjects included male and female RAs currently employed in colleges and universities in the United States of America. Since the goal of this research was to compare the situational stress and job satisfaction of RAs who keep online journals and those who do not, two mutually exclusive and independent groups were required. A research sample of 100 subjects was planned for the RAs who currently keep online journals and was the comparison group in this study. A second group of 100 subjects was targeted for RAs who do not currently keep online journals and served as the control group in this study. These groups were seen as mutually exclusive. Subjects were placed in one group or the other based on whether they self-identified as online journal keepers or not.

**Strategies to Secure Adequate Participation**

In March of 2008, the survey instruments were activated via [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The researcher sent out an email correspondence containing an electronic link to the survey instruments to the Directors and Associate Directors of the major residence life and housing programs in the country to encourage their departments to have their RA staffs access and respond to the survey instruments. Subjects were also recruited through a partnership with the owner of [www.residentassistant.com](http://www.residentassistant.com) who initiated contact with potential subjects by sending the electronic link to the survey instruments to the members of two (2) email listservs that he
maintains of RAs across the nation and encouraging RA participation. The owner also sent the
electronic survey links to the RA Facebook Group called “You look tired – you must be an RA”
which had over 5000 registered members encouraging the registered members of the group to
complete the survey instruments.

Finally, the researcher partnered with the Director of Housing at a major institution in the
Southeastern region of the US who forwarded the electronic survey links to the other Directors
of Housing around the nation encouraging them to ask their RAs to complete the survey
instruments. Additionally, the survey links were emailed to the director of the United States
regional affiliates of the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International
encouraging them to forward the survey links to the colleges and universities in their respective
region for RA participation.

**Participant Incentives**

In an effort to encourage participation, the researcher gave away one Apple ITouch MP3
player to one participant, selected at random, who completed the survey questions. At the end of
the survey, the final question asked participants who wanted to be entered into a drawing for a
free Apple ITouch MP3 player to enter their email address in a text box. At the conclusion of the
study, this researcher randomly selected one participant to win the Apple ITouch MP3 player and
notified the winner via the email address provided by the participant at the time that their survey
answers are submitted. The researcher then determined where the winner wanted to have his
Apple ITouch MP3 player sent.

**Procedures**

The data for this research initiative was collected in the spring semester of 2008. This
timing was suggested because this research plan endeavored to determine whether there is a
relationship between RA situational stress and job satisfaction levels and the practice of online
journaling. RAs therefore must have had some length of service and experience with the RA
position before they could determine and/or accurately reflect upon their level of job satisfaction
and/or stress as a result of their job responsibilities. This research initiative was conducted with
a national sample of respondents through partnership with the residentassistant.com website and
housing professionals throughout the United States.

A link to the electronic survey was included within the body of an informed consent
letter. The informed consent letter appeared again as page 1 of the electronic survey instrument
on www.surveymonkey.com (Appendix B). Completion of the survey served as confirmation of
the subject’s consent to participate. Following the reading of the letter of consent, the
participant clicked on the electronic link to the survey and proceeded through the 50 item RASI
instrument, followed by the 4 item Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank, concluding with the
demographic questions. If the participant identified himself/herself as an online journal keeper, 5
open ended questions appeared on the survey for their completion. Consent was assumed when a
subject submitted the completed electronic survey for inclusion in the data collection and
analysis. Students were placed in one of the two subject groups (Group 1: resident assistants
who currently keep online journals, and Group 2: resident assistants who do not currently keep
online journals) based on their self-identification as a member of one group or the other from
information learned through their individual answers to the demographic questions.

**Demographics**

The online survey instrument invited participants to provide demographic data including
whether the participant was an RA, whether the participant kept an online journal, the frequency
of entries made in online journals, number of semesters employed in the RA position, specific
characteristics of the campus (2 year, 4 year, public, private, religiously affiliated), country where campus was located, gender, race, age and year in school of the subject. See Appendix E for a complete list of the demographic questions.

**Method of Analysis**

The SPSS program was used to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics were presented including means for each of the 6 situational stress factors and each of the 2 groups (i.e. RA online journal keepers and RA non-journalers). In an effort to minimize bias, the null hypothesis was tested rather than the directional hypothesis. The null hypothesis for this study stated that there is no difference in job satisfaction and situational stress factors between resident assistants who keep online journals and those who do not. The null hypothesis was rejected if, and only if, the statistical analysis of the data indicated significance at the p = .05 level for the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

   Because the goal was to compare the scores of two independent groups (RAs online journalers and RA non-journalers) on one variable (situational stress factors), the two-sample t-test was the most appropriate statistical test to use to attempt to answer this question. The RASI divided RA situational stress into 6 unique factors. These factors were separate entities. A participant’s score on each of the six factors could not be averaged into one single situational stress score. Each score for the various factors (Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Confrontive Skills, etc.) had to be treated as an independent measure of situational stress. Therefore six separate t-tests had to be performed to accurately assess the data collected (i.e. one t-test for the scores on Facilitative Leadership, one t-test for the scores on Counseling Skills, etc.).

2. Are there differences in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

   As stated previously, the goal was to compare the scores of two independent groups (RAs online journalers and RA non-journalers) on one variable (job satisfaction), the two-sample t-test was the most appropriate statistical test to use to attempt to answer this question. Because job satisfaction was one score, only one two-sample t-test had to be performed on this data to determine if the results were significant at the p=.05 level.

3. Are there differences based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

   This question included demographic variables with more than one level. In other words, gender had three levels (male, female, transgender), race had 6 levels (Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American/Black, Hispanic, Caucasian, Native American, and other), and age had four levels (Less than 18, 18-19, 20-21, 22 or above). Since these variables had more than one level, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the most appropriate method to analyze the data. Given that two independent groups were studied, the two-way ANOVA was the appropriate choice to use in answering this question. For the situational stress variable, six two-way ANOVAs were performed (one for the data in each of the six factors identified by the RASI) for each of the three demographic variables (gender, race and age). For the job satisfaction only one two-way ANOVA was performed since the job satisfaction variable is a single score measure.
4. Are there differences based on semesters/quarters employed as an RA in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

This question was also answered with six two-way ANOVAs, one for each of the six situational stress factors, and one two-way ANOVA for the job satisfaction variable since the number of semesters/quarters employed variable has 4 levels (less than 2 semesters/3 quarters, 2 – 4 semesters/3 – 6 quarters, 5 – 6 semesters/7 – 9 quarters, or more than 6 semesters/9 quarters) and there were two independent groups (RA journalers and non journalers).

5. For RAs who keep online journals, are there differences in job satisfaction and situational stress factors based on a) the frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA?

This question was fundamentally different from the others because what was of interest was comparing scores within a single sample or group, in this case, RA journal keepers. Therefore, to determine within group differences in job satisfaction, if any, based on frequency of entries (5a), which was a continuous variable, a single 1-way ANCOVA was performed. To determine within group differences, if any, on situational stress factors based on frequency of entries, six one-way ANCOVAs were performed and compared at the p=.05 level. A similar protocol was followed to determine within group differences job satisfaction and situational stress factors based on number of semesters/quarters employed as an RA (5c) and demographic variables of age, race and gender (5b) as each have multiple levels, 4, 6, and 3 respectively.

**Chapter Summary**

This research initiative endeavored to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in RA situational stress factors and job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not. A quantitative research design resulted in the electronic administration of the 50-item RASI measure, the four item Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank, and a schedule of demographic questions. Five open ended questions were administered only to those RAs identifying as online journal keepers. Participants included RAs employed at colleges and universities across the United States who received electronic links to the survey instruments via email. 100 subjects were desired for each group (journal keepers and non-journal keepers). Results were analyzed through the use of t-tests, ANOVAs, and ANCOVAs in order to answer the five core research questions for this study. In an effort to minimize bias, the null hypothesis was tested rather than the directional hypothesis. The null hypothesis for this study stated that there is no difference in job satisfaction and situational stress factors between resident assistants who keep online journals and those who do not. The null hypothesis was rejected if, and only if, the statistical analysis of the data indicated significance at the p = .05 level.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This research study was conducted to explore online journal keeping as an indicator of RA situational stress and job satisfaction. Data was collected and analyzed in accordance with the research plan described in the methodology section detailed in Chapter 3. The findings presented in this chapter include a summary of the general characteristics of the entire sample and a description of those participants who were identified as online journal keepers in this study. The pertinent data and findings for each research question appear in tables and narrative discussion followed by the results of the open ended questions from those self-identifying as online journal keepers. Descriptions of the statistical analysis conducted for the RASI and Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank are also included in the discussion of the results in this chapter.

Background for Survey Research

On March 17, 2008 an email containing the “dear colleague” letter (see Appendix B) and the electronic survey link was sent out to all of the members of the Florida Housing Officers (FHO) listserv, the housing directors of the public flagship institutions in the Southeast region of the United States, and the Presidents of the 9 United States-based regional affiliates of the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I). The email asked recipients to send the electronic survey link to the RAs in their organizations and to forward the email to any colleagues within their state or region so that they could do the same. A follow up email was sent to the same group approximately 1 week later to again encourage forwarding of the electronic survey links to RAs and professionals at their own institutions and those at other institutions in their region.

The surveymonkey.com website recorded the number of people who accessed the survey by opening the survey and clicking the “next” button at the bottom of the first page. According to surveymonkey.com, the electronic survey was accessed by 1,051 participants during the 11 day data collection period. The survey was closed on March 28, 2008.

The researcher received several emails from individual RAs wishing to participate in the study after the survey had closed. Many of these would-be participants were from schools in Ohio indicating that it may have taken some time for the link to reach schools in this area.

Research Sample Characteristics

Of the 1,051 participants accessing the survey, 812 subjects completed it resulting in a completion rate of 77.3%. This access and completion rate far exceeded the expected returns when the survey was launched. Fourteen (14) of those responding indicated that they were not RAs and were discarded. Seven hundred ninety (790) surveys yielded usable responses for inclusion in the analysis and results section.

Survey respondents were predominantly non-journal keeping (82.29%), female (65.6%), Caucasian (77.59%), juniors (36.71%), 20 – 21 years of age (65.82%). The majority of non-journal keeping RAs were employed at public, 4-year institutions (75.95%) for 2 – 4 semesters/3 – 6 quarters (50.9%). These characteristics are similar to those found by a survey conducted in 2007 by ACUHO-I in a national study of RAs. In that study it was found that women tend to be drawn to the position in greater numbers than men and that many institutions do not permit students to apply for the RA position until they have completed a full year of enrollment, and/or lived in an on campus residence hall, for some period of time. Therefore one would expect to find upper class students in these positions rather than first year students.
Three (3) respondents self-identified as transgendered. It was uncertain how many participants would identify as transgendered for this study as the terms used for gender identity beyond male and female can include many different words and terms. The term transgender was utilized because that was the term used by the 2007 ACUHO-I Student Staff survey instrument as well. Had additional options been available including an “other” choice selection it is possible that the number of respondents identifying as something other than male, female or transgender would have been higher.

One (1) respondent reported that they were less than 18 years of age and 5 reported that they were in their freshman year of school. These were somewhat unexpected findings as most RA positions require a student to be of sophomore status or higher and most students within those class years are over 18. Ten (10) respondents identified as graduate students. This was not a surprising finding since residence halls housing graduate students often seek graduate students to serve in RA roles in those halls believing that graduate student RAs are more familiar with the unique needs of graduate student residents.

A majority of respondents were from 4-year institutions. This was not surprising since the vast majority of institutions to which the initial email containing the electronic survey links was sent (including institutions affiliated with the regional organizations of ACUHO-I, the flagship institutions in the Southeast region of the United States, and those maintaining FHO membership) were 4-year institutions. Five (5) respondents reported they were enrolled at two-year, public institutions. None of the subjects reported attending a two year private institution. Most two year private institutions are proprietary schools that serve a particular regional or local constituency and generally do not provide on campus housing as a service to students, so this was not an unexpected result.

Respondents were predominantly from institutions in the United States (787) with three (3) respondents indicating they were from institutions in Canada. Given that the email containing the electronic survey links was sent to institutions in the US, and the US-based ACUHO-I affiliates, it was expected that the majority of RAs responding would be from institutions within the United States. Seventy-nine (79) subjects reported attending religiously affiliated institutions. A full report of sample characteristics appears below in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 18 Years Old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 19 Years Old</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 21 Years Old</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Years Old or Older</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2 Semesters/ 3 Quarters</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 Semesters/3 - 6 Quarters</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 Semesters/7 - 9 Quarters</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 Semesters/9 Quarters</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Journaling Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Keeper</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Journal Keeper</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Year, Public</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Year, Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year, Public</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year, Private</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of a more precise data analysis, the 3 subjects that identified themselves as being transgender, the one subject identified as being less than 18 years of age, and the one subject identified as being Native American were excluded because of an inability to accurately calculate statistical analyses for such small samples in those categories. With those five subjects removed for the reasons stated above, formal data analysis was conducted on the resulting sample of 785 subjects including 139 journal keepers and 646 non journal keepers.
Characteristics of Journal Keepers

At the outset of this research initiative it was hoped that 100 RA journal keepers would be captured among the participants responding to the survey. The actual number of journal keepers who responded to the survey (139) exceeded the target number of 100.

The findings indicate that the RAs maintaining online journals had served in the position for one year (two semesters/three quarters) to two years (four semesters/six quarters) suggesting that they were more familiar with the day-to-day life and demands of the RA position than someone who was still within their first year of employment in the role. 76.3% of the journal keeping group identified as female which was a larger percentage than the female representation of 65.6% in the sample overall. A slightly higher percentage (10.1%) of respondents in the journal keeping group identified as African-American than the percentage reflected for the sample as a whole (8.1%). According to Lenhart & Fox, 2006, “Bloggers are less likely than internet users to be white” (p. 2). The majority of those maintaining journals (56.2%) indicated doing so either daily, weekly or bi-weekly indicating that journal keeping is often a frequent activity for those who do it. The results from this sample indicate that the practice of journaling is more common for those in the upper level class years with juniors, seniors and graduate students accounting for 72.6% of the journal keeping group. For a complete description of the journal keeping group see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Characteristics of Journal Keepers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>N = 139</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 19 Years old</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 21 Years Old</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Years Old or Older</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Characteristics of Journal Keepers (continued)

**Participant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Employment</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2 Semesters/3 Quarters</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 Semesters/3 - 6 Quarters</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 Semesters/7 - 9 Quarters</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 Semesters/9 Quarters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Entries</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Times per Week</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once per Week</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every Two Weeks</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once per Month</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Descriptors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public, 2 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public, 4 year</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, 4 year</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary Findings on Situational Stress Factors**

The Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI) was used to measure RA situational stress levels within the 6 situational stress factors of Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development. Following the raw data download from [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), individual participant RASI scores were calculated for each of the 6 situational stress factors based on the RASI score sheet protocol (see Appendix C) in preparation for the statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics for each of the six (6) situational stress factors and job satisfaction for the total sample of 785 respondents appears in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary Statistics for the 6 RASI Factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum Statistic</th>
<th>Maximum Statistic</th>
<th>Mean Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Deviation Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resiliency</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>4.6300</td>
<td>2.858548</td>
<td>.7191734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative Leadership</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>2.7863</td>
<td>.72253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Skills</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>4.6670</td>
<td>2.658065</td>
<td>.6343418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Adjustment</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.7425</td>
<td>.74515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontive Skills</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.7138</td>
<td>.64938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Development</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.8854</td>
<td>.67735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual items on the RASI were scored as follows: 1 – least, 2 – some, 3 – moderate, 4 – much, 5 – most. According to the data in Table 3, mean scores for the 6 situational stress factors fell between the “some” and “moderate” (coded as 3 during data analysis) levels with means ranging from a low of 2.66 for Counseling Skills to a high of 2.89 for Values Development. The Counseling Skills factor resulted in the lowest mean score for situational stress. This finding is consistent with Dickson’s previous work which indicated that the Counseling Skills factor is often scored the lowest because those drawn to the RA position generally feel relatively proficient and confident in their abilities to deal with others in circumstances where counseling skills might be required (Dickson, 1975).

The Values Development factor had the highest mean score (2.89) in this study. According to Dickson (1975), “[Values Development] is characterized by internal or external conflicts arising from situations where personal values and priorities interact with the values and priorities of residents, staff, or the system…situations in this factor are more often precipitated by encounters with individuals, and require a decision by the RA on an issue that is ‘gray,’ at least to [the RA]” (p. 66-67). Since the Values Development factor measures RA stress in situations of RA role ambiguity these findings indicate that when RAs experience circumstances where their role or responsibilities are unclear, stress is experienced.

Summary Findings on Job Satisfaction

Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank was used to measure the degree to which RAs were satisfied with their employment in the Resident Assistant role. Hoppock scores were tabulated by adding together the numerical scores for each answer of the four item measure. Each answer was coded with 1 representing the item indicating the lowest degree of job satisfaction to 7 representing the highest degree of job satisfaction for that question. Questions one and three on the Hoppock were scored 1 – 7 (“I hate it” – “I like it”, “I would quit this job if I could get anything else to do” – “I would not exchange my job for any other”) while questions two and four were scored in reverse order from 7 – 1 (“All of the time” – “Never”, “No one likes his/her job better than I like mine,” – “No one dislikes his/her job more than I dislike mine”) given the way the answers were listed in the question. The resulting sum of the scores from each of the 4 items was the total job satisfaction score for the subject. The Hoppock and corresponding answer options appear in their entirety in Appendix D.

Table 4 contains the overall findings for RA job satisfaction as measured by the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Summary Statistics for Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean for job satisfaction for the total sample of 785 was 20.17. The lowest possible score for the 4-item Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank is 4 though none of the 785 participants scored that low in this study. Given that the possible range of potential Hoppock scores run from 4 – 28, a mean of 16 would be anticipated. The sample scored above that number with a mean of 20.17 indicating that they were more satisfied than not with the RA position as a whole.
The first question of the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank is, “how well [do] you like your job.” Figure 1 represents the percentage of responses in each of the 7 answer categories.

![Figure 2: Percentage of Sample Indicating Degree to Which They Like Their Job](image)

According to the results in Figure 2, 80.76% of the sample selected the 3 most satisfied answer options including “I like it,” (30.66%), “I am enthusiastic about it,” (27.77%) or “I love it,” (22.93%).

Figure 3 demonstrates the responses for the second Hoppock item which asks, “how much of the time [RAs] feel satisfied with the job.”

![Figure 3: Percentage of Sample Indicating Degree to Which They are Satisfied with Their Job](image)

According to the findings in Figure 3, 73.37% of the sample answered with the 3 most satisfied answer options including, “a good deal of the time,” (26.62%), “most of the time,” (43.18%), or “all of the time” (3.57%).
Figure 4 details the findings for the third question of the Hoppock which asked, “which [answer option] best tells how you feel about changing your job.”

The most frequently selected answer (41.15%) was “I am not eager to change my job, but I would do so if I could get a better job” indicating that RAs were not actively looking for alternative employment options but might entertain the thought of leaving the RA position if they were confronted with an opportunity that they saw as “better” for them. For those who might be tempted to look for something “better”, finding a job with many of the perks that are often characteristic of the RA position may prove quite challenging if not impossible. According to Onofrietti (2000), “In addition to monetary compensation, RAs are also given other special accommodations or privileges that can be seen as valuable to a regular college student. Included among other benefits may be free single room, free meal plan, ability to move back to campus early, special registration times, and special parking privileges. Once given these privileges, students may find them difficult to relinquish” (p. 113).

The percentage of answers in each category of the fourth item of the Hoppock, “Check ONE of the following to show how you think you compare with other people” are detailed in Figure 5 below.
RA Job Satisfaction Compared to the Perceived Job Satisfaction of Others

The majority (57.71%) of the RAs in the sample indicated that “[they] like [their] job better than most people like theirs” (32.74%), “like [their] job much better than most people like theirs” (23.06%) or “no one likes his/her job better that I like mine” (1.9%). The single most popular answer for this question was “I like my job about as well as most people like theirs” with 35.16% of the sample selecting this option.

These data pertaining to the individual breakdown of answers to the 4 item Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank further demonstrate that the vast majority of the 785 subjects were satisfied overall with the RA role overall.

Results Pertaining to Research Questions (RQ1 - 5)

The five research questions, and pertinent findings related to each, are discussed below along with appropriate tables to assist in the clarity and overall presentation of the data.

RQ1: Are there differences in situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

Because the goal of this question is to compare the scores of two independent groups (RA online journalers and RA non-journalers) on one variable (situational stress factors), the two-sample (or independent sample) t-test is the most appropriate statistical test to answer this question. Given that the RASI divides RA situational stress into 6 unique factors, and that each of these factors is a separate entity, a participant’s score on each of the six factors cannot be averaged into one single situational stress score. Each score for the various factors (Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Confrontive Skills, etc.) must be treated as an independent measure of situational stress. Therefore, six separate t-tests were performed to analyze the data collected (i.e. one t-test for the scores on Facilitative Leadership, one t-test for the scores on Counseling Skills, etc.). The means and standard deviations for each of the 6 situational stress factors and job satisfaction for the 785 subjects included in the data analysis appear in Table 5 divided by those who keep online journals and those who do not.
Table 5: Summary statistics for RASI scores for Journalers and Non-journalers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Keep Online</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resiliency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.92635</td>
<td>.7885908</td>
<td>.066874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.84354</td>
<td>.7031342</td>
<td>.027644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative Leadership</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.8646</td>
<td>.74801</td>
<td>.06345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.7694</td>
<td>.71640</td>
<td>.02819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Skills</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.72783</td>
<td>.678245</td>
<td>.057527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.64305</td>
<td>.624027</td>
<td>.024552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Adjustment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.8824</td>
<td>.78662</td>
<td>.06672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.7124</td>
<td>.73307</td>
<td>.02884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontive Skills</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.7697</td>
<td>.64797</td>
<td>.05496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.7018</td>
<td>.64956</td>
<td>.02556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.9751</td>
<td>.72754</td>
<td>.06171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2.8661</td>
<td>.66507</td>
<td>.02617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 5, Journalers in the sample had a higher mean score on each of 6 situational stress factors than Non-journalers with the mean score for Values Development being the highest for both Journal keepers (2.98) and Non-Journal keepers (2.87) and Counseling Skills having the lowest mean score for both Journalers and Non-journalers. Independent sample t-tests conducted to compare Journalers and Non-journalers on each of the 6 situational stress factors resulted in statistically significant differences between the means of the two groups in only one case – Environmental Adjustment. The findings of the independent t-tests are detailed below in Table 6 with statistically significant findings resulting from a p < 0.05.
Table 6. Independent samples t-test results of Journalers vs. Non-journalers for the 6 RASI factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resiliency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>3.407</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>1.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.146</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>188.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative Leadership</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.670</td>
<td>1.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.371</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>196.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>1.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.942</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>1.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.355</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>191.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Adjustment</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.480</td>
<td>2.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>2.340</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>192.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>1.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontive Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.889</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>1.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.626</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>190.768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*indicates a statistically significant finding

In order to determine statistical significance of the findings, the results of the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances must be reviewed to determine if equal variances can be assumed or not. Because the resulting scores in the Levene’s test column (F) are not statistically significant at the p <0.05 level in each of the 6 RASI factor findings, it can be assumed that the variances between the groups (Journalers and Non-journalers) are indeed equal. The t results for equal variances assumed therefore must be reviewed to determine statistical significance at the p < 0.05 level. Given equal variances assumed, no statistically significant differences were found between Journalers and Non-journalers on emotional resiliency (p-value = 0.217), facilitative leadership (p-value = 0.159), counseling skills (p-value = 0.153), confrontive skills (p-value = 0.263) and values development (p-value = 0.085) since each of the p-values for these factors was not determined to be statistically significant at p < 0.05.

Review of the Levene’s test of Equality of Variance for the environmental adjustment as detailed in Table 6 indicates an F-value = 0.499 meaning that equal variances can be assumed on this factor. Further review of the p-value of the independent t-test on this factor indicates a p-value = 0.015 which is statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level. It can therefore be concluded that RAs who keep online journals indicated increased levels of situational stress resulting from environmental adjustment than RAs who do not keep online journals. There were no other statistically significant differences between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not on the 5 other situational stress factors.
RQ2: Are there differences in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

As stated previously, the goal of this question is to compare the scores of two independent groups (RAs online Journalers and RA Non-journalers) on one variable (job satisfaction). The two-sample t-test is the most appropriate statistical test to use to attempt to answer this question. Because job satisfaction is one score, only one two-sample t-test was performed on this data to determine if the results were statistically significant at the p=.05 level.

The mean score for journal keepers on job satisfaction was 19.78 with a standard deviation of 4.58 while the mean score for non journal keepers 20.25 with a standard deviation of 4.20. Independent sample t-test results on job satisfaction scores between journal keepers and non journal keepers appear in table 7 below.

Table 7. Independent samples t-test results of job satisfaction for Journalers vs. Non-journalers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of Variances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>2.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review of the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances demonstrates that the F-value for job satisfaction is not statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level confirming that equal variances can be assumed for the analysis. Given equal variances assumed, the difference between the means of journal keepers and non journal keepers on job satisfaction was not statistically significant (p = 0.243) according to the t-test results detailed in Table 7. Therefore there is no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not.

RQ3: Are there differences based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

RA Situational Stress

Since the question includes demographic variables with more than one level including gender with two levels (male and female - the third level of transgender was not included in the analysis due to an insufficient sample size), race with five levels (Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American/Black, Hispanic, and Caucasian, - the sixth level of Native American was not included in the analysis due to insufficient sample size), and age with 3 levels (18-19, 20-21, and 22 or above – the fourth level of < 18 years of age was not included in the analysis due to insufficient sample size), the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is the most appropriate method to analyze the data.
Given that two independent groups will be studied, the two-way ANOVA is the appropriate choice to use in answering this question. For the situational stress variable, six two-way ANOVAs were performed (one for the data in each of the six factors identified by the RASI) for each of the three demographic variables (gender, race and age). Each of the six ANOVAs performed included each one of the independent variables (age, race, gender and journaling status) in order to assist in the control of confounding variable interactions. By including all of the independent variables the possibility of making Type 1 errors (rejecting the null hypothesis when it is in fact true) in the analysis of the data may be reduced. The findings of the ANOVA calculations for each of the six situational stress factors and job satisfaction appear in Table 8 below.

Table 8: ANOVA Results for RASI Factors for Journalers versus Non-Journalers Based on Interactions of Demographics Variables (Age, Race, & Gender) and Journal Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Resiliency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>0.357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.775</td>
<td>0.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitative Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.075</td>
<td>0.044*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.694</td>
<td>0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.282</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Adjustment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.124</td>
<td>0.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confrontive Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.503</td>
<td>0.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in the results detailed in Table 8, no statistically significant differences were found between journal keepers and non journalers based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender for Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, and Environmental Adjustment. Findings were statistically significant between journal keepers and non journal keepers for the variable of race for the situational stress factors of Counseling Skills (p-value = 0.002), Confrontive Skills (p-value = 0.008), and Values Development (p-value = 0.014). This result means that there was a statistically significant difference between different race groups with respect to the Counseling Skills, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development for individuals that do and do not keep an online journal. Specifically, post hoc analysis on the three situational stress factors showing a statistically significant interaction between journaling and race indicated that African-American/Black journal keepers scored higher in situational stress associated with Counseling Skills (p-value < 0.001), Confrontive Skills (p-value = 0.004) and Values Development (p-value = 0.004) than African-American/Black non-journal keepers.

There were statistically significant findings for gender for the Facilitative Leadership factor (p-value = 0.044). On this factor, women scored higher than men on situational stress associated with Facilitative Leadership regardless of journal keeping status. The overall means for men and women on facilitative leadership appear in Table 9 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to ANOVA findings detailed in Table 9, the differences between the male and female mean is statistically significant (p-value = 0.044) at the p < 0.05 level for the Facilitative Leadership factor.

**Job Satisfaction**

For the job satisfaction variable only one two-way ANOVA was performed since the job satisfaction variable is a single score measure. The ANOVA on job satisfaction included each one of the independent variables (age, race, gender and journaling status) in order to assist in the control of confounding variable interactions. By including all of the independent variables the possibility of making Type 1 errors (rejecting the null hypothesis when it is in fact true) in the
analysis of the data may be reduced. The findings of the ANOVA calculations for each of the six situational stress factors and job satisfaction appear in Table 10 below.

Table 10: ANOVA Results for Job Satisfaction for Journalers versus Non-Journalers Based on Interactions of Demographics Variables (Age, Race, & Gender) and Journal Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.542</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>0.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*R Squared = .024 (Adjusted R Squared = .005)
* indicates statistically significant finding

According to the findings detailed in Table 10, no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction were found between journal keepers and Non-journalers based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender. Therefore these findings indicate that there is no difference in job satisfaction of Journalers versus Non-journalers based on the demographic variables of age, race, and/or gender.

Age (p-value = 0.029) was determined to have a statistically significant result overall with regard to job satisfaction. Post hoc analysis on this finding determined that regardless of journaling status, participants in the 20 – 21 year old category indicated a higher level of job satisfaction than those identifying as being 22 years of age or older.

RQ4: Are there differences based on semesters/quarters employed as an RA in job satisfaction and/or situational stress factors between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not?

RA Situational Stress

Six (6) two-way ANOVAs were calculated to address the RA situational stress portion of this research question. Each variable (journaling status, length of employment, and the interaction between the two) was included in each ANOVA model. No statistically significant differences resulted between Journalers and Non-journalers based on length of employment for any of the 6 situational stress factors including Emotional Resiliency (p-value = 0.568), Facilitative Leadership (p-value = 0.354), Counseling Skills (p-value = 0.988), Environmental Adjustment (p-value = 0.912), Confrontive Skills (0.502), and Values Development (0.926). From these findings it can be concluded that no statistically significant differences were demonstrated in situational stress factors based on semesters/quarters employed between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not. A complete listing of ANOVA interactions between journaling status and length of employment by each situational stress factor appears below in Table 11.
Table 11: ANOVA Results for Situational Stress Factors Based on Interactions of Length of Employment and Journal Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Resiliency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>0.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .008 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = .000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitative Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.087</td>
<td>0.354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .013 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = .004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .005 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = -.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Adjustment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .013 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = .004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confrontive Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .011 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = .002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .007 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = -.002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RA Job Satisfaction**

One (1) two-way ANOVA was calculated to address the RA job satisfaction portion of this research question. Each variable (journaling status, length of employment, and the interaction between the two) was included in the ANOVA model. No statistically significant differences resulted between Journalers and Non-journalers based on length of employment for job satisfaction (p-value = 0.784). From these findings it can be concluded that no statistically significant differences were demonstrated in job satisfaction based on semesters/quarters employed between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not. The ANOVA interactions between journaling status, length of employment and job satisfaction appear below in Table 12.

Table 12: ANOVA Results for Job Satisfaction Based on Interactions of Length of Employment and Journal Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling and Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>R Squared</em> = .007 (Adjusted <em>R Squared</em> = -.002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ5: For RAs who keep online journals, are there differences in job satisfaction and situational stress factors based on a) frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA?

**RA Situational Stress**

This analysis involves only those who identified as journal keepers and the inclusion of a continuous variable – frequency of entries. Given that a continuous variable is a part of this analysis, the ANCOVA is the appropriate test to use to assess the data with regard to this research question. A complete detailing of the ANCOVA findings associated with the 6 situational stress factors is included in Table 13.

Table 13: ANCOVA Results for Online Journal Keepers, Situational Stress Factors, and Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Factor</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Resiliency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>0.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared = .050</strong> (Adjusted R Squared = -.032)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitative Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.236</td>
<td>0.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.187</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared = .062</strong> (Adjusted R Squared = -.019)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.097</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>0.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.006</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared = .071</strong> (Adjusted R Squared = -.009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Adjustment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Squared = .030</strong> (Adjusted R Squared = -.054)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13: ANCOVA Results for Online Journal Keepers, Situational Stress Factors, and Demographic Variables (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confrontive Skills</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td>0.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>0.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>0.272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .071 (Adjusted R Squared = -.009)

Values Development

| Frequency of Entries | 1 | 0.37  | 0.544          |
| Length of Employment | 3 | 0.386 | 0.776          |
| Gender | 1 | 0.755 | 0.387          |
| Age | 2 | 0.708 | 0.495          |
| Race | 4 | 1.34 | 0.259          |

R Squared = .064 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

According to the data presented in the table above, none of the independent variables (including frequency of entries, length of employment, gender, age, or race) had a statistically significant impact on any of the six situational stress scores (including Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills and Values Development) of RAs identifying as online journal keepers in this study. Therefore, the findings in this study identified no statistically significant differences in the situational stress factors of RA online journal keepers based on a) frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA.

RA Job Satisfaction

According to the data presented in the Table 14 below, none of the independent variables (including frequency of entries, length of employment, gender, age, or race) had a statistically significant impact on the job satisfaction scores of RAs identifying as online journal keepers in this study. Therefore, the findings in this study identified no statistically significant differences in the job satisfaction of RA online journal keepers based on a) frequency of entries, b) demographic variables (age, race, and gender), and c) semesters/quarters employed as an RA.
Table 14: ANCOVA Results for Online Journal Keepers, Job Satisfaction, and Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value (sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Entries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.419</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .064 (Adjusted R Squared = -.017)

Summary and Analysis of Open Ended Questions

Participants identifying as online journal keepers were asked to complete 5 open-ended questions in an effort to gain a better understanding of their motivations for keeping an online journal, whether the journal serves as a method to relieve stress faced in their job as an RA, and to learn more about who responds to their journal entries. The open ended questions were included in the study to help to clarify why journal keepers maintain their journals and what purposes those journals serve for them in their role as an RA.

The open ended questions were designed to illicit answers to provide further color, richness and depth to the numerical data of the RASI and Hoppock data in order to develop a more complete understanding of the practice of online journaling among RAs. The open ended questions were the only questions on the survey that did not require an answer. Therefore, not all of those identifying as online journal keepers chose to provide answers to the open ended questions. Additionally, some chose to answer some questions and not others. (For a complete listing of the open ended questions and participant answers contact the author).

Open ended question data was analyzed by reviewing the participants’ answers and searching out common themes that emerged from the data and that related to themes and constructs reflected in the literature. The process closely mirrored that of the constant comparative method of qualitative data analysis described by Merriam (1998) as follows, “the researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances” (p. 159). The data from the open ended questions was reviewed by the researcher for the emergence of similar words, themes, and concepts. Those words, themes and concepts became tentative categories into which each of the data items were sorted by cutting and pasting individual participant data entries into the appropriate categories.

This technique, called “cutting and pasting”, has been described by Ryan and Bernard (2008) as follows,

We first read through the text and identify quotes that seem somehow important. We cut out each quote (making sure to maintain some of the context in which it occurred) and paste the material on small index cards. On the back of each card, we then write down the quote’s reference—who said it and where it appeared in the text. Then we lay out the quotes randomly on a big table and sort them into piles of similar quotes. Then we name each pile. These are the themes. This can be done with tag and search software, but we find that nothing beats the ability to manually sort and group the cards” (Electronic
Retrieval, 4/23/08). (A summary of the cutting and pasting process completed for this research in which individual participant data points were sorted by category or theme is available from the author.)

For the first question, (What motivates you to write about an event in your online journal?) seven themes emerged including boredom, an event or occurrence causing a significant life impact (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), a desire to share information with others (Barrett, 1999; Flynn, 2006; Dawson, 2007), stress or emotional circumstances (Pennebaker, 1997), politics/academics/current events/pop culture (Blood, 2002), and no specific motivator. The boredom category was a theme that emerged from a review of participant responses but does not have a specific literature based reference. The number of answers falling into each of these categories is reflected in table 15 below.

Table 15: Motivators to Write in the Online Journal/Blog/Weblog

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boredom</th>
<th>Significant Life Impact</th>
<th>Share Information with Others</th>
<th>Stress and Emotional Circumstances</th>
<th>Personal Growth &amp; Reflection</th>
<th>Politics, Academics, Current Events, Pop Culture</th>
<th>No Specific Motivator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Responses</td>
<td>18 Responses</td>
<td>30 Responses</td>
<td>56 Responses</td>
<td>15 Responses</td>
<td>7 Responses</td>
<td>3 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 15, stress and emotional circumstances were the most frequently identified motivators for journal writing (56 responses) followed by a desire by the writer to share information with others (30 responses).

Online journal keepers were asked, “To what extent are the topics that you write about in your online journal related to your work as an RA?” If a respondent indicated any connection between the content of their online journal and their work as an RA, efforts were made to categorize the response based on its illustration of or relationship to the six factors identified in the RASI (Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development) based on the definitions of the factors as provided previously and in Appendix F. Responses that did indicate a connection between online journal content and the RA job appear below in Table 16.

Table 16: Responses by RASI Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Responses</td>
<td>1 Response</td>
<td>2 Responses</td>
<td>23 Responses</td>
<td>5 Responses</td>
<td>5 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results in Table 16, of the 44 total responses indicating a connection between the RA job and the content of the online journal, the most frequently referenced content was attributed to the Environmental Adjustment factor of the RASI with 23 responses in that
factor. Other respondents clarified that their online journal content was often generated by events outside of the RA job including content that reflects life in general, content that makes little or no mention of the RA position at any time, responses that indicated that the author’s entries in their journal are limited due to policy/confidentiality concerns as a result of being an RA, stress broadly defined but unable to be placed into one of the RASI factors, and responses that did not otherwise fit into any aforementioned category. The responses that apply to these categories are reflected in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Other Categories of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Pertaining to Life In General</th>
<th>Little No Mention of the RA Position</th>
<th>Entries Limited by Policy/Confidentiality</th>
<th>Stress Broadly Defined</th>
<th>Not Otherwise Specified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Responses</td>
<td>28 Responses</td>
<td>19 Responses</td>
<td>6 Responses</td>
<td>10 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 17 above, 28 respondents indicated making little or no mention of their RA job at any time in their online journal followed by 19 respondents who qualified their answer to this item by offering that concerns about breaching resident or staff confidentiality and/or violating RA employment policy were a reason why the RA position does not serve as content for their online journal.

Respondents were asked, “To what extent does your online journal serve the purpose of helping you cope with the experiences and stresses you face in your role as an RA?” A review of the respondent answers revealed the following themes, none/little, RA job related stress reduction (Pennebaker, 1997), life stress reduction other than the RA job (Pennebaker, 1997), personal reflection and experiential review not stress reduction (Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997; Blood, 2002), communication with others (Barrett, 1999; Flynn, 2006; Dawson, 2007), policy/sensitivity/confidentiality, and RA job related stress relief sought from sources other than the online journal. The results are detailed below in Table 18.

Table 18: Degree to which the online journal is a source of stress reduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little/None</th>
<th>RA Job Related Stress Reduction</th>
<th>Life Stress Reduction Other than RA Job</th>
<th>Personal Reflection &amp; Experiential Review Not Stress Reduction</th>
<th>Communication with Others</th>
<th>Policy/ Sensitivity/ Confidentiality</th>
<th>RA Job Stress Relief Sought from Sources Other than Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48 Responses</td>
<td>40 Responses</td>
<td>10 Responses</td>
<td>11 Responses</td>
<td>10 Responses</td>
<td>4 Responses</td>
<td>9 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As detailed above, 48 respondents indicated that their online journal does not serve as a source of relief for stresses experienced within the context of the RA role, while 40 participants did use it as an outlet for RA job related stress. Eleven (11) respondents indicated that their journal served as a way to chronicle their own growth and development and as a way to help them remember situations that have occurred in their past. Nine (9) respondents indicated that they do not use their online journals to manage RA job related stress but that they seek out others to help them manage it including supervisors and other staff members who will likely relate to their concerns and challenges.

In an effort to understand the nature of the relationships that online journalers have with those who respond to particular journal entries, online journal keepers were asked, “Who comments on the entries you post in your online journal? Are they people that you know or not? Please explain.” Based on a review of the responses, the following themes emerged from the data as categories for their further description, people that were known to the author in real life, a combination of people who were known and unknown to the author, people that were unknown to the author, people known to the author only online. Two other categories also emerged including one to account for journals that were not accessible to others and a category entitled other for responses that did not seem to fit any other category. A record of the responses attributed to each category is depicted in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Results of the Relationships between Journal Commentators and Journal Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Known to the Author</th>
<th>Combination of People Known and not Known by the Author</th>
<th>People Unknown to the Author</th>
<th>People Known to the Author Online Only</th>
<th>Journal Not Accessible to Others for Comment</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85 Responses</td>
<td>8 Responses</td>
<td>3 Responses</td>
<td>6 Responses</td>
<td>15 Responses</td>
<td>15 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the data presented in Table 19, the majority (85) of those who respond to the online journalers in this study were people with whom the author was familiar in real life. Several journal authors (15) indicated that their journals were set with privacy blocks on them so that they were not accessible by others. Six (6) online journal writers indicated that they did not know the people who responded to their online journal and three (3) indicated that the people that respond to their online journal are individuals that they know from online interactions on the internet but have not met in real life. Eight (8) participants indicated that those who respond to their online journals are both people known to them and others who are not known to them personally. Fifteen (15) of the responses given did not fit into one of these categories and are captured in the grouping named “other”.

The last of the open ended questions asked the participant the following, “Can you recall a posting in response to your online journal that was particularly important or significant to you? If so, why was it important?” According to the responses, it appears that some respondents misinterpreted the spirit or intent of this question. The question intended to ask respondents to share a response that they received to their journal that was particularly important to them. In other words, something that someone had written to the author in response to the author’s posting. Several of the participants who chose to answer this question seemed to do so by
including a posting that they themselves had shared that was particularly meaningful to them. The number of responses to this question in each category appears below in Table 20.

Table 20: Recollection of Meaningful Responses by Journalers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do Not Recall A Specific Entry of Meaning</th>
<th>Recall and Share Meaningful Responses Received</th>
<th>Misunderstood Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61 Responses</td>
<td>36 Responses</td>
<td>32 Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table demonstrates that 61 respondents reported being unable to recall a comment that was particularly meaningful to them. Thirty-six (36) participants shared a response that was meaningful to them that they received from someone else. The answers of thirty-two (32) subjects seemed to indicate that they misunderstood the question, in many cases sharing an entry that they made personally in their journal that was particularly meaningful for them rather than sharing a comment that they received from someone else to an entry that they made in their online journal.

At the conclusion of the data collection period the iPod Touch was awarded to one participant via random draw. The iPod Touch was purchased online from www.amazon.com and sent to the winning participant. The winning participant confirmed receipt of the Ipod in an email message to the researcher dated 4/4/08. Seven hundred forty-one respondents entered the drawing for the iPod Touch giveaway.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships, if any, between the practice of online journaling and reported levels of situational stress and job satisfaction/dissatisfaction among contemporary resident assistants (RAs). The practice of online journal writing by RAs and the relationship between on-line journaling and job related stress and satisfaction have important implications for the quality of services that RAs are able to provide for their residents. Additionally, the possible relationship between on-line journaling and RA job related stress and satisfaction may have important implications for student affairs practitioners charged with training and supervising RAs and understanding and addressing their unique emotional needs.

This research study analyzed 785 responses from RAs including 139 from RAs identifying as online journal keepers and 646 from RAs who were not online journal keepers. The Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank was used to measure self-reported levels of job satisfaction among the RAs who participated in this study. The Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI) was used to measure RA situational stress based on self reported levels of stress on the 6 situational stress factors of the RASI including Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development. The premise of the RASI is that RAs experience varying levels of stress based on the different experiences that they have within the job as well as differing roles such as counselor, program presenter, policy enforcer, role model, etc. The 6 situational stress factors of the RASI provided the lenses through which RA stress levels were observed and understood in this study.

In this chapter, the findings pertaining to the research questions on RA situational stress and job satisfaction are discussed, and their implications examined, especially as they relate to professional staff charged with the selection, development, support, and evaluation of RAs. Suggestions for replication of this research and additional topics for future research are also provided.

Summary of Findings

RA Situational Stress Factors

A statistically significant result was determined for the Environmental Adjustment factor of the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI) indicating that online journal keepers reported higher levels of situational stress resulting from environmental adjustment than did non-journal keepers. Environmental Adjustment, however, was the only one of the six situational stress factors for which a statistically significant difference was determined. According to Dickson (1975), “[The Environmental Adjustment] factor is characterized by the ability to adjust to new roles and relationships in which personal needs and styles must be modified in order to accommodate the needs and expectations of the residents and staff” (p. 65-66). The following 6 job circumstances are included in the Environmental Adjustment factor:

“Item 6: containing my own feelings for ethical or professional reasons when personally I would like to express them

Item 14: relating to supervisors who are in their position primarily for the tangible benefits rather than because they enjoy assisting students in their development.

Item 22: adjusting to irregular sleeping patterns or insufficient amounts of sleep.
Item 30: living with continual social contacts and the consequent lack of privacy.

Item 38: living with the insensitivities existent in being a minority person as a resident assistant.

Item 46: developing my own identity as a resident versus resident assistant; that is performing the various roles of counselor, administrator, recreation leader, social facilitator, disciplinarian, friend, and being my own person.” (RASI, 1975)

The Environmental Adjustment factor measures RA situational stress that results from having to be flexible in modifying and adjusting personal lifestyle preferences (including sleep and privacy) to meet the expectations of the RA role, working with supervisors whose motives seem insincere, and having to repress the expression of feelings because of a belief that such feelings are incompatible with the RA position. The Environmental Adjustment factor also assesses stress associated with RA role ambiguity as RAs struggle to “develop [their] own identity as a resident versus resident assistant; that is performing the various roles of counselor, administrator, recreation leader, social facilitator, disciplinarian, friend and [be their] own person” (RASI, 1975).

The statistically significant finding on the Environmental Adjustment factor suggests that journal keepers experience more stress than do non-journal keepers in circumstances where personal lifestyle adjustments must be made and habits altered or modified to meet the constraints of the position. This finding also indicates that adjusting to the supervisory relationship may be more stressful for RA online journal keepers than their non-journaling colleagues. Additionally, circumstances of RA role ambiguity, where RAs are trying to establish their own personal identity while simultaneously fulfilling the multitude of responsibilities associated with the RA role may be more stress producing for the online journal keeping RA than the non-journaling RA. Of concern with regard to this finding are the conclusions of Fuerher and McGonagle (1988), that

When [RAs] are called on…to discipline or settle interpersonal conflicts with their peers, the confusion between friend and professional roles may become severe. [RAs] may find a need to stifle their personal patterns of social behavior, their values, and their friendships with fellow residents to complete successfully their resident assistant duties. With repeated stress of this kind, burnout may result (p. 249).

In reviewing the responses to the open ended questions, several references were made to stress associated with issues of Environmental Adjustment by those RAs who identified as online journal keepers. The open ended question responses provided a richness and depth of understanding to the statistically significant findings on this factor that would not otherwise be available through analysis of the numerical findings alone. It was clear from the open ended responses that the position of RA often requires RAs to modify their behavior and schedule in such ways that the RA position becomes second in importance only to their academic commitments. RAs are frequently not able to set their own hours for sleep, study, and other organizational or co-curricular pursuits as they would like in order to meet the needs of residents and perform job related responsibilities including duty rounds, bulletin boards, and educational programs. According to the journal keepers, conflict over issues of Environmental Adjustment is frequently the focus of on-line journal entries:
“Sometimes I will write about the hours I've had to commit in a particular week.”

“I write about how my job is so time consuming.”

“[I write about] the lack of sleep…caused by the job.”

“I make [a] few entries due to the fact that my RA job takes up so much time that I rarely have time to do things for myself.”

“I wanted to study abroad one summer but couldn't because of Housing’s policy on training. Because the two events conflicted [with] each other, I was not allowed to study abroad and keep my job.”

The Environmental Adjustment factor also incorporates situational stress associated with working with, and for, supervisors who do not appear to put the needs of residents and RAs first in the execution of their supervisory role. Additionally, supervisors who fail to clearly communicate their goals and expectations to staff may increase RA role ambiguity and subsequently increase RA situational stress associated with Environmental Adjustment since role ambiguity is included in the factor. This type of conflict was referenced frequently as a topic of journal entries according to the journal keepers:

“[I write about] my crazyass [Area Coordinator] who does not give RAs clear objectives or clear outlines of consequences.”

“I have tried not to compare the two hall directors for whom I have worked, but my second hall director R.A. has not performed her job as well as I have liked; it is no longer pleasant for me to work in the same dorm with the way she runs her staff.”

“I've written about how I feel unfairly treated by my boss at Housing. I was told that I was stepping over my bounds as an R.A. and that I needed to worry less as an R.A.”

“[I write] when I have something to say about a situation but can’t talk to anyone about it, including a supervisor, for fear they will talk about me as soon as I leave the room.”

Based on these open ended question responses, it is apparent that individuals employed in supervisory positions to provide support and guidance to RAs may themselves be a source of the stress that RAs confront in their adjustment to job roles and responsibilities. Certainly conflicts and misunderstandings of expectations between employer and employee are not uncommon circumstances in any work environment. Such conflicts may be particularly pronounced in work environments, like those in the residence hall setting, where both RAs and supervisors often live and work in the same building or area. Furthermore, supervisors who fail to communicate their
expectations of RAs clearly to RA staff members may decrease an RA’s understanding of what he/she is supposed to do in the role. This can contribute to RA role ambiguity resulting in higher levels of Environmental Adjustment stress for the RA as a result.

Demographic Variables and Situational Stress
Statistically significant findings were found between race and journal keeping for the situational stress factors of Counseling Skills, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development. The finding indicates that African-American journal keepers scored higher on these three situational stress factors than did African-American non-journal keepers. A total of 64 participants identified as African-American. Of those 64, 14 identified as journal keepers and 50 identified as non-journal keepers. While this finding is intriguing, the sample, particularly in the journal keeping category, is too small to draw any significant conclusions without further study of this issue. The sample did not specifically target RAs of color or RAs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

In this study, regardless of journal keeping status, there was a statistically significant difference on the gender variable for RA situational stress associated with Facilitative Leadership. Specifically, female RAs overall scored higher than male RAs on situational stress associated with Facilitative Leadership regardless of journal keeping status. The Facilitative Leadership factor includes stress resulting from instances where RAs must provide direction and guidance to large groups of people, often in a crisis situation. Female RAs may feel less confident than their male counterparts in confronting the behavior of their peers in situations where large groups of residents are being managed. According to Dickson (1981) this may be particularly true if the female RA is working in a coed hall since, “men residents are less responsive to leadership efforts by RAs, which increases RA stress” (p. 365).

RA Job Satisfaction
The results from this study found no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction between RAs who keep online journals and those who do not. The quantitative data indicated that RAs in this study were generally very satisfied with the RA position which was an encouraging finding indeed. However, some of the answers provided by the online journal keeping RAs in the open ended question section revealed considerable student dissatisfaction with their job circumstances:

“I…complain a lot about how bureaucratic and ridiculous this job can be, and how much I really dislike housing and residence life.”

“I had a situation where the Res Life Department mistakenly put a letter of warning in my file and it took me almost an entire semester to resolve the situation and it upset me that they were falsely accusing me of things that did not happen.”

“I have written a rather lengthy post about my grudges to my RA position. I added a few positive comments, but not many. It was a good way for me to get my feelings down, and be able to revisit them. It’s the perfect explanation of what I dislike about my job, so it’s like my primary source if anyone ever asks how I feel about being an RA. And, since I generated the commentary out into the internet for anyone to see, there’s always a sliver of hope that another RA will somehow find it, read it, and understand exactly what I’m saying!”
It is possible that the construct of job satisfaction is more complex than could be captured in this research effort. The RA job satisfaction variable likely incorporates experiences, both positive and negative, that an RA has had in the role over a period of time. While it is clear that RA online journal keepers may have negative experiences in the RA role, and may comment on those experiences in their online journal entries, it does not appear, from the numerical data, that the job satisfaction levels of online journal keeping RAs is impacted significantly by those experiences. In formulating their self-reported level of job satisfaction, RAs may take into consideration the totality of experiences they have had in the role, both positive and negative, and determine an overall job satisfaction level as a result of that more longitudinal consideration. While this explanation may seem somewhat speculative, it is shared in an effort to clarify that the job satisfaction construct may be more complicated than that which was assessed in this study.

The lack of significant differences in RA job satisfaction between online journal keepers and non-journal keepers is also somewhat surprising based on the statistically significant differences identified in situational stress associated with the environmental adjustment factor. As stated previously, the Environmental Adjustment factor incorporates stress associated with role ambiguity. According to the findings of Deluga and Winters (1990), “higher levels of job ambiguity and conflict [were] associated with less job satisfaction” (p. 235). While there was a statistically significant finding indicating higher levels of stress associated with Environmental Adjustment for RAs who were online journal keepers than their non journal keeping counterparts, there was not a statistically significant finding on job satisfaction for RA journal keepers versus non journal keepers. Since role ambiguity is only one portion of the Environmental Adjustment factor, the RASI may not provide an appropriately valid and reliable measure of RA role ambiguity alone. This may explain why this research initiative was not able to replicate the findings of Deluga and Winters (1990) with regard to the variable of job satisfaction.

**Demographic Variables and Job Satisfaction**

No statistically significant differences in job satisfaction were found between journal keepers and non-journalers based on the demographic variables of age, race, and gender. Age was determined to have a statistically significant result overall with regard to job satisfaction regardless of journaling status however. Post hoc analysis on this finding determined that regardless of journaling status, participants in the 20 – 21 year old category indicated a higher level of job satisfaction than those identifying as being 22 years of age or older. RAs between the ages of 20 – 21 may be assumed to be in the junior year of school and be more focused on both their academic pursuits and co-curricular/employment involvements including the RA position than younger RAs. Additionally, the greater experience and maturity that often come with age may make the job of being an RA easier for older students. RAs over the age of 22 may also be more serious about preparing for graduate school or becoming graduate students themselves. Thus, responsibilities associated with being an RA can create more time pressure for RAs over the age of 22.

**Open Ended Questions**

Some of the most interesting revelations of this research came from the responses to the open ended questions at the end of the survey. These responses helped to clarify and add depth of understanding to the issues of RA situational stress and job satisfaction that were not otherwise available solely through the analysis of the numerical data. The open ended question data also helped to shed more light on the reasons why journalers write in their online journals,
what motivates them to do so, and what journalers report gaining from the experience of Writing in their online journals.

**Frequency of Use by Journal Keepers**

In reviewing the frequency of entry data, 60.4% of the journal keepers reported making entries on daily, weekly, or bi-weekly basis. Based on this finding, most journal keepers seem committed to keeping the information in their journal up to date on a regular basis.

**Why Journal Keepers Write**

Emergent themes from the open ended question data closely mirrored themes from the literature about journal keeping activities. Journal authors indicated that their motivation to write came from boredom, an event or occurrence causing a significant life impact (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), a desire to share information with others (Barrett, 1999; Flynn, 2006; Dawson, 2007), stress or emotional circumstances (Pennebaker, 1997), politics/academics/current events/pop culture (Blood, 2002), and no specific motivator. One journal keeper summed up his/her motivation to write as follows:

”[I write] when I have time, inspiration strikes, I feel like getting something off my chest, or have something to share, something others would be interested in- not my daily life.”

The online journal provides a communications vehicle for broadcasting a message to a number of different constituents simultaneously without having to send individual electronic messages to each person or make separate phone calls. It is a way of saving time by bringing everyone up to date through a single communication:

”I usually write to let my friends back at home know what's going on with my life here. Concerts I've seen, boys I'm dating, etc.”

”[My journal gives me] the ability to express myself so my friends can understand how much I'm changing this far away from home. Also experiences I went though that are much less than normal.”

”I like that I can just write about stuff that's happened to me and my friends can see what's going on my life without me having to sit down with each one and go over it...it's also a way to get my thoughts in order.”

”When something exciting, funny, or upsetting happens in my life and I want to share it with others. Sometimes I write in my journal just to keep my friends who live far away up-to-date with the happenings in my life.”

According to the open ended question data, the most often cited reason for writing in the online journal was as a way to manage stress or emotional circumstances. Specific entries dealing with issues of this nature included the following:

”When I am upset/depressed about something, writing about it helps me to let it out since I don’t like burdening others with my problems.”
“[I write in my journal] When I am going through a particularly difficult time and have trouble verbally talking to someone about it.”

“[I write in times of] Emotional distress [or when I feel there is] something that I feel [needs] venting.”

“I use [my online journal] as a stress reliever.”

“Whenever I have something to get off my chest, and I do not want to talk to anybody…I write.”

“[I write in my online journal] If there is something that I need to express that comes from an irrational place and I just need to get it out.”

“If I am under a lot of stress [writing in my online journal] is a good way to relax.”

It is clear from these entries that many of online journal keepers in this study felt that the journal provided them an outlet for feelings that they preferred not to share directly with another person.

What is particularly interesting is that some of these journal entries are private, (i.e. not accessible by anyone but the writer himself/herself), and other journal entries are available for anyone to read on the web. One journaler shared the following insight into his/her anonymous postings and the purpose such postings serve for his/her:

“I'm part of a site where I'm completely anonymous. No one knows who I am, what I do, and where I'm from, so it gives me a chance to vent and "talk" through things that I'm struggling with.”

While the author may keep his/her identity private or disguised behind a non-descript screen name, the information that the journal keeper is reluctant to share directly with anyone is, at the same time, in the electronic public domain for everyone to see. This action may seem like a contradiction. However, the anonymity provided by the internet and other electronic media for RA journal keepers allows them to feel that they can share their thoughts and feelings without those thoughts and feelings being able to be definitively connected with them as authors.

The online journal appears also to serve the purpose of helping the RA journal keeper to better understand their thoughts and feelings by expressing them in writing onto the paper/screen.

“Writing [in my journal] helps me to sort out my feelings.”

“[Writing in my online journal] helps me to organize my thoughts and get feedback about situations in my life.”

“[I write as a result of] my need to reach out, not to others, but to myself. My blog is private but it is therapeutic to see the words I have inside me up on the screen.”
The online journal also appears to serve as a place for the RA journal writer to gain some self-awareness and perspective on their emotions and feelings by expressing their thoughts and feelings in a public space. The act of doing so helps the journal keeper to “organize [their] thoughts” more effectively and serves a “therapeutic” purpose to understanding or “sorting out” their feelings through the act of writing. Additionally, the online journal permits and even encourages comments, suggestions, and feedback from other online journal readers.

Some of the most insightful entries in the motivation category came from the RA online journal authors who used their journal as a way to measure and/or chronicle their growth and development in college. Some examples of this include:

“I [write] because I started [keeping my online journal] as a freshman and next year I’m going to be a senior. I want to [see] my transformation.”

“I like to go back and read my old entries and remember quotes and situations I otherwise would not.”

“[I write in my online journal about] something that is memorable that I want to write down so that I can look back at how I felt and what my mind was thinking [about] at the time it happened.”

“I am motivated [to write in my online journal] by moments that are meaningful in my process of learning to be a better student and person and when something really strikes me as an important life lesson.”

Confidentiality and Job Security

Many RA online journal authors indicated that they do not write in their online journals about situations that occur within the scope of their responsibilities due to their commitment to maintaining confidentiality in their roles. It is clear that they take the role of protecting sensitive information very seriously. Several responses indicated that the RAs consider their commitment to confidentiality when they prepare entries in their journals.

“I’m very cautious about the information I post online because I have had negative experiences with people that I wished hadn’t [seen] what I’ve written online. Since most of my business as an RA deals with confidential matters, I don't write anything online at all.”

"There are NO topics related to the RA position because of privacy I don't put my frustrations about the job or my residents online for everyone to see...that is unethical."

“I don’t talk about my job [in my online journal] because of confidentiality- someone could find out and report it.”

"Because of confidentiality I usually only write about the programs [that] I do or the positive aspects of my resident assistant job."
Many colleges and universities have begun to introduce policy and expectation statements clarifying RA use of online journaling and social networking sites. It is clear from some of the items shared by the RA online journal keepers in this study that those policies do appear to be working to clarify the parameters of what can/cannot be shared online since RAs do consider those policies before/when constructing journal entries. When asked how often their entries concerned issues experienced on the job, some of the responses included the following:

"Only occasionally. We aren’t allowed to talk about incidents, so I usually vent about needing to talk about something and not being able to discuss it. Or I am incredibly vague about it like "Oh, it’s just another night in my hall" or "I hate stupid people."

"[My entries are] not at all related [to my work as an RA] - I’ve been warned that could impact my position."

"None of [my online journal entries] are related to my work [as an RA]. My boss it way too much of a tight ass. I would be worried [that] I would get in trouble for breaking confidentiality."

"[My entries have] very little [to do with my work as an RA]. I make it a point not to write about my job in case others come across it. Also, it's a violation of policy to talk about something dealing with a resident."

"There was a time when a fellow RA showed my community director something I wrote and I had to have a "talk" about it [with the community director]. I haven't stopped writing though."

**Online Journaling and RA Job Related Stress**

Many of the RA online journal keepers responding to the open ended questions indicated that their online journals do serve effectively as an outlet for stress they experience on the job. Examples of responses illustrating this theme included:

"Well I write all the things I am feeling and things I want to do in the journal and some of the things help relieve my stress and helps me keep my job."

"My journal gives me a place to vent my frustrations and excitements without having to call my mom. It is one of my main sources of relief when I am very upset with my floor."

"[Writing in my online journal] lets me get my stress and aggravation out without scaring or upsetting the residents or anyone else."

"My first year [as an RA, writing in my online journal] really helped me cope, because my staff was very stressful and not helpful at all, so I needed my journal to talk over the things that happened, because I didn't have an avenue to do in real life."
“[Writing in my online journal] helps [relieve RA job related stress] to a degree because it gives me a place to vent my frustrations; I don't have very many outlets to go with the rest of my staff.”

“The online journal is very helpful for me. I recently had to deal with a resident/friend/just quit her job as an RA who had a nervous breakdown in front of me. She was hearing voices. I wrote about how I felt about that experience because I was with her all evening until the next afternoon. It really has helped me process the different crises that have happened to me on the job.”

“[My online journal is] a great outlet [for my RA job related stress] and it helps me to process bad things that happen (my supervisor and suicidal residents) and also share good news (how much I love my the RAs on my staff).”

The open ended answers indicated that for many RAs journaling does provide them an important outlet for expressing frustrations, stresses and concerns.

Who Responds to Online Journal Entries and What Makes Responses Meaningful?

The majority of those responding to the open ended questions indicated that most of those who comment on entries in their online journals are individuals whom the RA online journal authors know in real life and not just contacts in cyberspace. It is clear though that part of the motivation for RAs to share information through the online journal is to see what kind of responses their entries, and ultimately the author, receives from readers of the online journal. The following insights were shared by several RA online journal authors:

“I think when anyone comments on something you write, it is meaningful, because at that point the person is telling you that you have it the worst or best at that moment in time, or that what you said meant something to them. It is becoming intimate for a single moment in time knowing that what you wrote was read and thought about, The only reason one writes in an online journal is so that other's might read it and respond to it in some manner. Otherwise you would write in a paper journal and [keep] it to yourself.”

“A simple ""Cool! I've never thought of that!"" is very encouraging to me. When I have really thought about something and taken time to write about it, it is a great feeling to know that someone else has taken their own time to read and appreciate it.”

Online journals are powerful mediums to connect RAs to other people who comment on their posts and, in doing so, serve as a significant source of support and encouragement for the RA online journal author. Several examples include:

“[In response to one of my entries] my dad told me that he was proud of me. Also my friends will leave positive comments that will reassure me that I do have a support system.”

“I posted a [online journal entry] about how excited I was about following my personal dream about becoming a photographer and I had a lot of people tell me that they knew I could do it and were proud of me for doing what I love.”
“When something happened at home and I didn’t want to tell anyone at school, I posted in my [online journal] with a friends filter so only the ones closest to me could read it. Their responses made me feel better. It was important because I usually avoid overly sensitive entries, and I was putting myself out there writing about what I did.”

“I remember that the first time I was going home for the summer, I didn’t want to. I wrote about how I’m not sure where my home is. Is it at school or back at the place I used to call home. My friend commented on my post saying that it is something that we are all going through. That maybe during the next four years we don’t really belong anywhere. Our home is just a house the stores our stuff during the school year. That school is our home that we have to leave during the summer. It just made a lot of sense to me.”

According to RA online journal authors, in their own words shared through the open ended questions, online journals do serve the purpose of helping them to vent feelings, both positive and negative about the RA job, home, family and life in general. While the quantitative data associated with this study showed no significant differences in RA situational stress levels except for those associated with the Environmental Adjustment factor, and no significant differences in job satisfaction between journalers and non-journalers, the responses to the open ended questions do clearly indicate that when journalers are stressed, the online journal helps them to cope with their feelings. Entries are shared in the hopes that someone connected to the RA either in real life, or less frequently connected to them only in cyberspace, will comment on the entry and provide words of wisdom or encouragement in response. The open ended data suggests that online journals are powerful sources of connection for the writers and help RAs who keep them to sort through their feelings and experiences and gain an objective understanding of those feelings and experiences through the act of writing their thoughts out on the screen.

**Conclusions**

As stated in Chapter 1, the sample used in this research was an electronic convenience sample rather than a random sample of RAs nationwide. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized. The researcher relied on professional contacts and relationships to reach RAs in as many places as possible. RAs at institutions who are not members of the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) or one of its regional affiliates or organizations were not afforded an opportunity to participate in this research.

The findings of this research do not indicate that RAs who keep online journals should be discouraged from doing so while they are employed because of the factors of situational stress or job satisfaction. Likewise, the results do not indicate that RAs who do not keep online journals should be encouraged to do journaling as a significant outlet for situational stress experienced on the job or as a way to enhance their overall job satisfaction level. The results do suggest that it may be worthwhile for supervisors to know which RAs keep online journals so that supervisors can check in with those RAs about concerns related to environmental adjustment to the job. By doing so, supervisors may be able to more directly assist RAs with some of the frustrations and problems they share in their online journals.

There is concern that, given the suggestion to identify online journal keeping RAs, such RAs may feel stigmatized, targeted, or scrutinized by supervisors because they are online journal
keepers. This recommendation is not offered with the expectation that it will be used by supervisors as a way to single out any person or group. Although the data from this study indicate that RAs who keep journals may experience stress associated with environmental adjustment to the position to a greater degree than their non-journal keeping RA peers, the data do not suggest that the online journal keeping RA will fail to successfully transition to the role. It also does not mean that the online journal keeper should be asked how they are coping with the issues of transition in an overbearing or intrusive manner by supervisors. It simply suggests that supervisors may want to exercise sensitivity and caution as they observe and support RAs with their transition to the requirements and expectations of the RA position. If supervisors notice that an RA who is also an online journal author seems to be having more developmental challenges related to the transitions associated with the RA position, the supervisor may choose to be more intentional with efforts to support and understand the concerns the RA online journal author is experiencing. The supervisor may then choose to assist the online journal keeping RA to generate alternatives to help that RA manage any resulting stress he/she may be feeling as a result of the process of role adjustment.

A potential downside of the use of online journaling in the RA role is that journal keeping may become a major outlet for RA frustrations or concerns about the job and supervisors may never hear directly about these concerns. Take for example the following circumstance shared in the open ended question responses of one of the journal keepers in this study:

“I finally got up enough courage to write down publicly how un-happy I was in my current situation as an RA, and how I planned on getting my life back by moving [out of the hall] and finally getting the opportunity to do things that college students are suppose to do like travel, play in a band, and go out on dates, rather than always having to spend your free time catching up on work, doing programs, or giving up your weekends to be on duty and be woken up three times in the middle of the night because people are being drunk and loud in your building.”

If the RA author of this statement manages the problem as a result of online journal writing he/she may be less compelled to share his/her frustrations directly with the supervisor. This is particularly troubling since the supervisor may be in the best position to help resolve the issue altogether, or to assist in identifying alternative approaches to address the concern if the supervisor was made aware of the existence of the issue early on. Perhaps there is a way for this RA to participate in the various activities that he/she lists above and maintain his/her employment as an RA. However, if this RA only wrote about these frustrations in his/her online journal and never spoke directly with his/her supervisor about these issues, the supervisor may not have had the opportunity to brainstorm and problem solve with this RA to see how the RA’s needs and interests could be more effectively met while still fulfilling the expectations of the role. Supervisors who regularly invite face-to-face, open and honest conversations with their online journal keeping supervisees about issues of success and challenge in the RA role will help to minimize the likelihood that the journal will serve to mask the existence of problems or issues and allow the RA and supervisor to plan together better ways to proceed to reduce situational stress experienced on the job.

RAs identifying as online journal keepers in this study did seem to suggest anecdotally that the online journal allows them to get their thoughts out of their heads and onto the computer screen and that that process, in and of itself, felt like a useful one for them. Therefore,
supervisors of RAs should be clear about their expectations regarding how RAs can share information in an online format, like a journal, so that the RA has clear guidelines about appropriate levels of sharing that do not otherwise violate their free speech rights. With the frequency of use of electronic communication mediums among college students in general, and RAs in particular, further research is needed to continue to explore and understand the practice of online journaling and use of other online networking and communication forums and products by RAs.

**Recommendations for the Field of Professional Practice**

Since this research has identified a higher level of situational stress associated with environmental adjustment for RAs who keep online journals, it may be important to identify RAs who keep online journals early on in the employment process. Such efforts should not be intrusive and could be included as a regular question on an introductory form often used to learn nicknames of incoming staff, t-shirt sizes, email addresses, cell phone numbers, etc. which are common at the start of the RA employment period as a way for staff members to get to know one another better. Since issues of environmental adjustment may be particularly pervasive at the start of an RA’s employment, knowing which RAs keep online journals may help supervisors to identify those RAs who may be coping with the initial adjustments to the position. By being aware of RAs who are keeping online journals, supervisors and others may be more inclined to follow up with those students to see how they are managing the process of adjustment to their new role as an RA and their resulting job responsibilities.

It is important to note that the recommendation in terms of identifying RA online journal keepers is to do so only after the hiring process is complete, not during the initial screening of candidates for the role. This research has not determined that RAs who keep online journals are in any way unfit for the responsibilities of the RA position. The findings do indicate that adjustments in lifestyle and personal habits required in making the transition from student to resident assistant may be more stress provoking for students/RAs who keep online journals than those that do not. To exclude students from participation in the RA role solely based on whether or not they keep an online journal would be an inappropriate extrapolation or interpretation of these findings. Therefore it is suggested that the process of identification of online journal keepers occur after the RA has completed all formal hiring procedures for the position and not prior to being selected in the first place.

Given that the Environmental Adjustment factor incorporates stress associated with issues of role ambiguity, professionals charged with the recruitment of students to the RA role are encouraged to be as clear as possible from the outset about the job requirements and expectations associated with the role. Websites, written material, and informational meetings including input, testimonials, and live panel discussions with students currently serving in the role of RA will insure that the job is described accurately to those considering applying for the position. Opportunities for potential candidates to interact directly with RAs currently serving in the role for question and answer sessions will insure that candidates enter the selection process with a greater understanding of the lifestyle changes necessary to be successful in the position. The clearer students are about the roles and responsibilities of being an RA the better equipped he/she will be to decide whether or not to apply for the position.

Professionals charged with training RAs in preparation for their job are encouraged to be clear about departmental goals, objectives and expectations where role responsibilities are concerned. Training workshops on the various responsibilities of the role including crisis management skills, helping skills, program planning and execution, ethical decision making,
campus referral resources, and policy and procedures are critical to helping RAs learn what is expected of them from those in supervisory roles or RAs who have served in the role previously themselves. Written manuals and websites that contain concise descriptions of rules, policies, and procedures are essential to clarifying what is expected of RAs in foreseeable circumstances of responsibility. Role played scenarios in which new RAs enter individual rooms to address situations and circumstances being performed by returning RAs help those new to the role practice what they have learned through their reading of manuals and attendance at training workshops. These unique and valuable immersive capstone training experiences help RAs to understand the role better and learn by doing with their RA peers before entering the floor environment and dealing with the real life situations presented by residents. Certainly not every training program can train RAs for every possible situation they will face in the job. The more the training initiatives can clarify expectations however, the less “gray area” RAs will have to decipher themselves resulting in the less role ambiguity for RAs on the job.

Such training recommendations are helpful for use with any student coming into the RA role for the first time. However, since RAs who are online journal keepers had higher level of stress associated with environmental adjustment, and the environmental adjustment factor includes stress associated with role ambiguity, these types of training initiatives may prove of specific assistance to RAs who keep online journals. It is important to stress that such training initiatives should be attended by all RAs and not just targeted toward those who keep online journals. If role ambiguity can be kept at a minimum through well executed and clear training programs, RA online journal keepers may benefit in reduced levels of stress associated with role ambiguity and Environmental Adjustment factors.

Professionals charged with creating policies pertaining to the use of journals by RAs (including online journals, social networking sites, chat rooms, instant messenger, etc.) should ensure that these policies are consistent with the rights of first amendment free speech. RAs who experience disciplinary action because of an online journal entry may have grounds for a lawsuit on the basis of denial of first amendment freedom of speech rights. Careful tailoring of language in such policies, including review and input from institutional general counsel, is essential to insure that policy is consistent with the legal provisions of free speech.

RAs may experience stress associated with environmental adjustment when they feel that the expectations of the RA role do not permit them to do things that they might otherwise do if not constrained by the expectations of their leadership role. RA supervisors should periodically consult with RAs who keep online journals about constraints they may be feeling. Such consultation will help to bring the concerns of the online journal keeping RA into the immediate attention of the supervisor rather than just having those stresses and frustrations vented in an online journal. Such efforts may serve to reduce RA burnout and increase the retention of experienced RAs.

Supervisors of female RAs who are preparing to or have recently had an opportunity to work with large groups of residents in programming events, crisis situations or other such duties should check in with their female RAs in one-on-one supervision meetings to ascertain if those experiences were stressful for them. If stress was experienced, or if the RA is experiencing stress associated with managing large groups of peers as they prepare for the event, the supervisor should work with the RA to develop effective strategies and plans to proactively address the stress producing issues and equip the RA to feel more confident as they face such situations in their role in the future.
Supervisors of RAs over the age of 22 are encouraged to learn the unique circumstances surrounding their RAs who are 22 years of age and older and what attracted them to the RA position in the first place. By taking time to explore what drew the RA to the role initially, supervisors can more effectively work with that RA to attempt to identify ways for that RA to stay engaged in the role for the duration of their employment in order to help with their overall job satisfaction with the position.

Supervisors of RAs, and those responsible for hiring and evaluating those who directly supervise RAs, may wish to engage in an evaluation process that solicits direct RA feedback about RA perception of the supervisor’s job performance. Such feedback should be solicited from RAs through an anonymous reporting system so RAs may feel free to share their thoughts without concern for retribution from the supervisor. It is unclear from data associated with this research whether the RAs who indicated using their online journal as a venting source for their frustration with the supervisor or department have ever voiced their frustrations or concerns to their supervisor directly. If they have not taken the time to do so, their supervisor may have no way of knowing that those in their charge are frustrated and/or dissatisfied with their approach or job performance. If RA online journal keepers had the opportunity to share their frustrations, concerns, and overall impressions of their supervisor’s performance in an anonymous format with their supervisors it may give them a forum to provide this information so the problems could be identified, addressed and eradicated rather than only sharing them in the online journal which may not be read by anyone in a position to correct the problems. By including RA feedback as part of the formal process for professional staff evaluation, the supervisor can get a more accurate and complete picture of his/her performance from those with whom he/she works most closely and can create an action plan to best meet the needs of those in his/her charge.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research would be enhanced by a research plan that included a random sampling of RAs at ACUHO-I affiliated institutions to increase the generalizability of the research findings.

In order to gain a better understanding of the findings regarding differences between African-American journal keepers and non-journal keepers on RA situational stress variables, a controlled study of the RA situational stress levels of journal keepers and non-journal keepers at institutions with sizable enrollments of African-American students should be conducted to determine if these findings can be replicated and appropriate conclusions drawn. Additionally, including a question about whether the institution the respondent attends is a historically black college or university (HBCU) in the demographic inquiries may be an important piece to add in future questionnaire protocols in this area.

This research failed to include a question about whether the journal keeper had been journaling online prior to becoming an RA or if they only began keeping their online journal after becoming an RA. This may be an important question for inclusion in future research initiatives.

At the outset of this research initiative, significant discussion surrounded the issue of the use of focus groups of journal keeping RAs to more thoroughly explore and understand their motivations to write in their journals and the purpose the journal serves in their lives. In the interest of time, open ended questions were selected for use in this research initiative rather than focus groups. Focus groups conducted with online journal keeping RAs remains an unexplored but intriguing research opportunity for another researcher to pursue.
This research study elected to ask qualitative questions in an open ended format at the end of the survey. Future researchers may want to incorporate open-ended questions throughout the survey in order to limit potential bias associated with the placement of such questions at the end of the survey.

The literature review for this study did not include a thorough review of the therapeutic literature. Future research endeavors may wish to include a more complete review of journaling activities in the therapeutic arena to determine if there may be information there that might show greater efficacy of on-line journaling for RAs.

The issue of role ambiguity continues to be one of interest in the study of RAs. Much of the existing research on RAs is old and the findings may not be as relevant or applicable to RAs of today. With the increase of the number of students coming to college with significant mental health concerns, learning challenges, financial constraints, etc. the RA job may be even more complex and demanding than it has been in the past. Continued research on the effects of role ambiguity to the modern day RA position is necessary and encouraged.

The findings of this research effort are inconclusive on the issue of perceived personal privacy with online journals. It appears from the open ended question responses that most RA online journal authors believe that only those who know them are reading and responding to their journals. Since it seems that one of the goals of online journaling is to gain responses from others, do RAs view their online journals as private or public documents? This question was beyond the scope of this research but would be an interesting one for future research efforts in this area.

One question left unanswered by this research study is the following: Is the practice of online journal keeping therapeutic for RAs? If online journal keeping is therapeutic for RAs, does online journaling tend to lower situational stress factor scores and job satisfaction scores for RAs? If we look at one of the first tables in chapter 4 that covers all of the RASI factor scores for journalers and non-journalers, journalers actually score higher in every factor. Those differences however are not statistically significant. What if the online journal keeping RA was not permitted to write in his/her journal for a period of time as part of a research initiative? Is the use of online journaling therapeutic for RAs who engage in this activity? Would the differences in situational stress and job satisfaction actually increase to statistically significant differences indicating that for some RAs the online journal really is key to mitigating situational stress and job dissatisfaction? Further research is needed to explore these remaining questions in more depth.

The role of the contemporary RA is a challenging and complicated one. RAs are expected to serve the myriad needs of their residents while simultaneously maintaining an exceptional grade point average and meeting their own personal needs as well. While the RA position can be highly satisfying and rewarding, it is not surprising that those employed as RAs do find the position a stressful one at times due to the competing priorities associated with work responsibilities, academic commitments, and personal needs and desires. It is hoped that the lessons learned from this study will be useful in increasing the effectiveness and performance of students in these critical leadership roles in the residence halls. Furthermore, it is hoped that the information discovered through this research will help those responsible for the recruitment, selection, and supervision of RAs to be more effective and intentional in their efforts to support these crucial student leaders in the years to come.
APPENDIX A: OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

1. What motivates you to write about an event in your online journal?

2. To what extent are the topics that you write about in your online journal related to your work as an RA? Give an example.

3. To what extent does your online journal serve the purpose of helping you cope with the experiences and stresses you face in your role as an RA?

4. Who comments on the entries you post in your online journal? Are they people that you know or not? Please explain.

5. Can you recall a posting in response to your online journal that you was particularly important or significant to you? If so, why was it important?
APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF CONSENT

Dear Prospective Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate under the direction of Dr. Jon Dalton in the College of Education at Florida State University. I am conducting a quantitative research study to gain an understanding of the practice of online journal writing, and its effects on the situational stress and job satisfaction of resident assistants.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve your willingness to complete a series of demographic questions (year in school, age, gender, number of years in the RA position, type of institution you attend (public/private, 4yr/2yr), whether or not you currently keep an online journal, etc.) and two survey instruments – one pertaining to RA stress and the other to job satisfaction. If you are an online journal keeper, five open ended questions also appear for your response. I anticipate the total time commitment for your participation not to exceed 20 minutes. At the end of the survey questions is an opportunity to enter a drawing for a free ITouch!

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The questionnaires associated with this study are anonymous. The results of the study may be published but your name will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (850) 528-0767 or via e-mail at aframe08@gmail.com or Dr. Jon Dalton at (850) 644-6777 or via e-mail at jdalton@admin.fsu.edu. Completion of the questionnaire will be considered your consent to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than Adrienne Frame or Dr. Jon Dalton, you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at jjcopper@fsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Otto Frame
Doctoral Student in Higher Education
College of Education
Florida State University
Dear Colleague:

I am a doctoral candidate under the direction of Dr. Jon Dalton in the College of Education at Florida State University. I am conducting a quantitative research study to gain an understanding of the practice of on-line journal writing, and its effects on the situational stress and job satisfaction of resident assistants.

I am requesting the participation of the Resident Assistants in your department in the completion of an online survey. Participants will be asked to complete a series of demographic questions (year in school, age, gender, number of years in the RA position, type of institution (public/private, 4yr/2yr), whether or not they currently keep an online journal, etc.) and two survey instruments – one pertaining to RA stress and the other to job satisfaction. If the participant is an online journal keeper, five open ended questions also appear for their response. I anticipate the total time commitment for each participant not to exceed 20 minutes. At the end of the survey questions is an opportunity to enter a drawing for a free iTouch! I would greatly appreciate it if you could encourage your RAs to copy and paste the following link into their web browsers to access the survey instrument (www.surveymonkey.com link).

Participation in this study is voluntary. If an RA chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The questionnaires associated with this study are anonymous. The results of the study may be published but individual participant names will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (850) 528-0767 or via e-mail at aframe08@gmail.com or Dr. Jon Dalton at (850) 644-6777 or via e-mail at jdalton@admin.fsu.edu. An RA’s completion of the questionnaire will be considered individual consent to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than Adrienne Frame or Dr. Jon Dalton, you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at jjcopper@fsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Otto Frame
Associate Director for Residence Life
Doctoral Student in Higher Education
College of Education
Florida State University
RESIDENT ASSISTANT STRESS INVENTORY

INSTRUCTIONS

This is a self-report rating scale to identify the type and degree of feelings generally experienced by resident assistants. The feelings are a response to a variety of stress situations typically encountered in the residence hall. Some situations are experienced infrequently with more intense feelings, while others are experienced frequently with less intense feelings. Your task is to identify the level of feelings experienced in a given stress situation. If you have never experienced a given situation, imagine the amount of stress you would feel under such circumstances. If you have experienced a given situation, imagine the amount of stress you would feel when facing the experience again.

Each item is accompanied by a rating scale from 1-5 which indicates the amount of stress you feel in such situations. The scale is weighted according to the following description:

INTENSITY SCALE

1 – Least
2 – Some
3 – Moderate
4 – Much
5 – Most

Stress is generally defined as “intense feeling” and includes a variety of internal responses to external situations; such as uncomfortableness, irritation, anger, anxiety, etc. After thinking about the situation described, circle the number which most appropriately expresses your generalized response to each item. Precede each item with the phrase: “I FEEL A DEGREE OF STRESS WHEN …”
“I FEEL A DEGREE OF STRESS WHEN …”

(1) 1 2 3 4 5 conducting floor meetings for the purpose of resolving floor problems such as late hour disruptions or wide-spread personal hassles.

(2) 1 2 3 4 5 Sponsoring a program which turns out to be a disappointment.

(3) 1 2 3 4 5 executing my responsibilities under large-scale emergencies such as in fire or bomb-threat situations.

(4) 1 2 3 4 5 assisting residents in interpersonal conflicts when one or more is lying to me.

(5) 1 2 3 4 5 challenged by residents for enforcing an unpopular residence hall policy with which I personally agree.

(6) 1 2 3 4 5 containing my own feelings for ethical or professional reasons when personally I wish to express them.

(7) 1 2 3 4 5 joining a staff as a new resident assistant with respect to feeling accepted by the group.

(8) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting residents who are involved in spreading damaging rumors.

(9) 1 2 3 4 5 resolving personality conflicts with other resident assistants.

(10) 1 2 3 4 5 performing clean-up duties due to the irresponsibility of residents.

(11) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with residents whose physical behavior is endangering other residents.

(12) 1 2 3 4 5 handling residents whose drinking behavior is disturbing to other residents.

(13) 1 2 3 4 5 working with other resident assistants who do not appreciate or support my efforts.

(14) 1 2 3 4 5 relating to supervisors who are in their position primarily for the tangible benefits rather than because they enjoy assisting students in their development.

(15) 1 2 3 4 5 failing to help another staff member grow personally and professionally by neglecting to communicate with him on an issue that may be very sensitive.
“I FEEL A DEGREE OF STRESS WHEN …”

(16) 1 2 3 4 5 responding to resident reaction due to my own mishandling of a floor situation.

(17) 1 2 3 4 5 assisting residents who are struggling with major philosophical values while discovering the purpose and meaning of their life.

(18) 1 2 3 4 5 handling my own feelings toward other resident assistants who assume to be the group leaders by “playing up” to the supervisors.

(19) 1 2 3 4 5 exercising crowd control behaviors under tense situations.

(20) 1 2 3 4 5 working with residents or staff who are emotionally over-sensitive.

(21) 1 2 3 4 5 advising students whose religious zeal is annoying to other residents.

(22) 1 2 3 4 5 adjusting to irregular sleeping patterns or insufficient amounts of sleep.

(23) 1 2 3 4 5 expected to attend in-service training sessions which appear to have little meaning for me.

(24) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting other resident assistants whose inconsistency or irresponsible behavior is causing problems with residents on my floor.

(25) 1 2 3 4 5 faced with the problem of resolving roommate differences which threaten the harmony of the room.

(26) 1 2 3 4 5 experiencing a lack of support or response from residents when their support had previously been indicated as forthcoming.

(27) 1 2 3 4 5 attempting to accomplish objectives and ideals for the floor which the residents themselves don’t realize are important.

(28) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with residents whose attitude or behavior threatens the harmony of the floor.

(29) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with residents who are involved with illegal drugs.

(30) 1 2 3 4 5 living with continual social contacts and the consequent lack of privacy.

(31) 1 2 3 4 5 faced with denying a resident request when I would personally like to grant it.
“I FEEL A DEGREE OF STRESS WHEN …”

(32) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with non-residents whose behavior disregards the rights of the residents or the policies of the school.

(33) 1 2 3 4 5 resolving the feeling with regard to supervisor favoritism towards other resident assistants.

(34) 1 2 3 4 5 working with supervisors who do not properly evaluate and appreciate my efforts.

(35) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting a small group of residents whose behavior is at odds with school policy or the rights of others.

(36) 1 2 3 4 5 responding to residents who question my lack of availability.

(37) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with residents whose disruptive behavior disregards the rights of others.

(38) 1 2 3 4 5 living with the insensitivities existent in being a minority person as a resident assistant.

(39) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting a supervisor regarding a situation I feel he has mishandles.

(40) 1 2 3 4 5 enforcing hall or school policies with which I personally disagree.

(41) 1 2 3 4 5 responding to residents who feel I am exclusive in my friendships with some residents and tend to avoid contact with others.

(42) 1 2 3 4 5 working with supervisors who are generally incompetent in administering the Hall and fail to meet my personal needs and expectations.

(43) 1 2 3 4 5 intervening with residents whose verbal behavior is disruptive and threatening to other residents.

(44) 1 2 3 4 5 taking action then receiving a negative response from residents.

(45) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting one or several persons on any issue in the presence of a group of bystanders.

(46) 1 2 3 4 5 developing my own identity as a resident versus resident assistant; that is, performing the various roles of counselor, administrator, recreation leader, social facilitator, disciplinarian, friend, and being my own person.

(47) 1 2 3 4 5 helping residents whose behavior is depressive and emotionally self-abusive But who resist overtures of assistance.
“I FEEL A DEGREE OF STRESS WHEN ...”

(48) 1 2 3 4 5 living with residents who do not accept my own personality or style of leadership.

(49) 1 2 3 4 5 confronting residents having pets that are enjoyed by others but whose Presence is a violation of housing rules.

(50) 1 2 3 4 5 finding out that residents are talking negatively about me behind my back.
**RESIDENT ASSISTANT STRESS INVENTORY**

**Score Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name _________________________________</th>
<th>Date ______________________</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Place the stress level score (1-5) for each item in the space following the number of that item. Then add the item scores together for each factor and divide by the number of items in the factor. This figure is the Factor Score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor I—Emotional Resiliency</th>
<th>Factor IV—Environmental Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Item 6</td>
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<td>_________ /8= Factor Score</td>
<td>_________ /6= Factor Score</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor II—Facilitative Leadership</th>
<th>Factor V—Confrontive Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>Item 5</td>
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<td>_________ /6= Factor Score</td>
<td>_________ /12= Factor Score</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor III—Counseling Skills</th>
<th>Factor VI—Values Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>Item 7</td>
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<td>_________ /12= Factor Score</td>
<td>_________ /6= Factor Score</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: HOPPOCK JOB SATISFACTION BLANK

Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank  (Hoppock, 1935, p. 243):

Choose the ONE of the following statements which best tells how well you like your job.

8. I hate it.
9. I dislike it.
10. I don’t like it
11. I am indifferent to it.
12. I like it.
13. I am enthusiastic about it.

Choose ONE of the following to show how much of the time you feel satisfied with your job:
15. All of the time.
16. Most of the time.
17. A good deal of the time.
18. About half of the time.
19. Occasionally.
20. Seldom.

Check the ONE of the following which best tells how you feel about changing your job:

22. I would quit this job at once if I could get anything else to do.
23. I would take almost any other job in which I could earn as much as I am earning now.
24. I would like to change both my job and my occupation.
25. I would like to exchange my present job for another job in the same line of work.
26. I am not eager to change my job, but I would do so if I could get a better job.
27. I cannot think of any jobs for which I would exchange mine.
28. I would not exchange my job for any other.

Check ONE of the following to show how you think you compare with other people:

29. No one likes his/her job better that I like mine.
30. I like my job much better than most people like theirs.
31. I like my job better than most people like theirs.
32. I like my job about as well as most people like theirs.
33. I dislike my job more than most people dislike theirs
34. I dislike my job much more than most people dislike theirs.
35. No one dislikes his/her job more than I dislike mine.
**APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

Demographic Questions

1. Are you a Resident Assistant (RA)? Click yes/no in response to this question. Those answering in the negative will ultimately be discarded.

2. Do you currently keep an online journal/weblog/blog through an online journaling site other than Facebook? Once again the respondent will be asked to click a yes/no answer.

   2a. If you do currently keep an online journal/weblog/blog through a web-based journaling site other than Facebook, how frequently do you make entries into your online journal/weblog/blog?

      a. daily
      b. several times a week
      c. once a week
      d. once every two weeks
      e. once a month

3. How many semesters/quarters have you been employed as an RA?

   a. Less than 2 semesters/3 quarters
   b. 2 – 4 semesters/3 – 6 quarters
   c. 5 – 6 semesters/7 – 9 quarters
   d. More than 6 semesters/9 quarters
4. Check the item that describes the campus where you work as an RA.
   a. 2 year, public
   b. 2 year, private
   c. 4 year, public
   d. 4 year, private

5. Is your school a religiously affiliated institution? Yes/No

6. In what country is your institution located? Write In

7. Are you Male, Female, Transgender? (Choose One)

8. Your racial affiliation is: Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American/Black, Hispanic, Caucasian, Native American, Other (Choose one).

9. Your year in school is: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate Student

10. Your age is:
   a. Less than 18 years of age
   b. 18 – 19 years of age
   c. 20 – 21 years of age
   d. 22 years of age or more
APPENDIX F: DEFINITION OF RASI SITUATIONAL STRESS FACTORS

The RASI was originally developed in 1975 by Greg Dickson as part of his dissertation research. Dickson currently serves as an Associate Faculty member teaching in the undergraduate Human Services program at the University of Phoenix and as the Operations Manager and course facilitator for New Beginnings Educational Programs, Inc. (www.newbeginningschico.com) working with male batterers and domestic violence offenders. Below is a compilation of the complete definitions of the six situational stress factors of the RASI.

Emotional Resiliency: This factor measures stress levels in situations where an RA’s expectations of an event, co-workers (e.g. fellow staff members, supervisors, etc.) or residents are not met. Stress is experienced because a co-worker and/or resident(s) fails to do something the RA was expecting them to do or when “the feeling of being let down or alone exists when one of these persons reneges on a commitment or simply fails to support the RA” (Onofrietti, 2000, p. 62). According to Dickson (1975), “This factor is characterized by interactions among persons in primary relationships, such as, with staff or floor residents where the behaviors are usually non-supportive. These relationships are generally those in which interactions occur more-or-less on a daily basis. Emotional resiliency refers to the ability to bounce back when the rug has been pulled out from under you so to speak. There are eight items in this factor: numbers 2, 10, 18, 26, 34, 42, 48, and 50.” (p. 64). Items on the RASI that apply to this factor include situations and circumstances where the RA has expectations of support from various entities including residents and supervisors that fail to be realized.
Facilitative Leadership: “This factor is characterized by interactions with groups of residents. The situations occasionally include activities and community development functions, but more often involve intense circumstances of a threatening nature…There are six items in this factor: number 3, 11, 19, 27, 35, and 43” (p. 64-65). This factor seems to be similar to the Confrontive Skills factor described below. The crucial difference is that the RA in Facilitative Leadership factor scenarios is dealing with stresses related to the effective management of larger groups of residents, as opposed to individual residents, in crisis management situations or situations where multiple entities are either involved or at risk. Stress is experienced because the RA is trying to manage the situation according to training and protocol while protecting others from harm and/or other negative consequences.

Counseling Skills: “This factor is characterized by abilities of perception, articulation, and persuasion in situations where sensitivity and mediation predominate” (p. 65). Stress from situations of this nature arises from concern that the RA will say something that exacerbates rather than calms the already charged situation. RAs generally want to be most helpful in these situations rather than say anything that might be seen as further hurtful for the students(s) involved. According to Dickson (1975), “This factor has shown to be the least stressful, probably for several reasons: (1) Most of these situations come to the RA in the form of a request to become involved rather than initiated by the RA; as such, it is less threatening. (2) Few RAs see themselves as insensitive, unperceptive, inarticulate, or unpersuasive. Whether this latter condition reflects insight or self-delusion, it is often precisely for the belief that he has these qualities that the RA applied for the position in the first place. There are twelve items in this factor: numbers 1, 4, 9, 12, 17, 20, 25, 28, 33, 36, 41, and 44” (p. 65).
**Environmental Adjustment:** According to Dickson (1975), “This factor is characterized by the ability to adjust to new roles and relationships in which personal needs and styles must be modified in order to accommodate the needs and expectations of the residents and staff…There are six items in this factor: numbers 6, 14, 22, 30, 38, and 46” (p. 65-66). Stress of this nature is generally associated with circumstances where personal needs, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes must be curbed or modified because the person is in the RA role and expected to behave in ways that they would not necessarily have chosen for themselves had they not been RAs.

**Confrontive Skills:** This factor measures stress levels in situations where the RA is required to enforce policies with individual residents who may not respond positively to the interaction or confrontation. According to Dickson (1975), “This factor is characterized by intense situations of an individual nature where the authority of the resident assistant may be an underlying factor. Whether intended or not, the RA communiqué is often perceived as a threat; consequently, a reaction by the person(s) [being confronted] is not unusual. At this point the combination of personal skill and authority becomes crucial. There is some similarity between this factor and Factor IV: Facilitative Leadership. With the exception of the more positive, community development functions in Factor II (i.e. leading out at floor meetings, etc.) both factors include a negative, confrontive type response by the RA. In this aspect, the difference between the factors may be more in magnitude and size of group than of type per se. There are twelve items in this factor: numbers 5, 8, 13, 16, 21, 24, 29, 32, 37, 40, 45, and 49” (p. 66).
Values Development: This factor measures stress levels in situations where the RA experiences difficulty determining an appropriate course of action when multiple alternative approaches exist to address a particular circumstance. Stress is experienced because of equally plausible alternatives and ambiguous training or expectations regarding the preferred method of resolution for such issues. According to Dickson (1975), “This factor is characterized by internal or external conflicts arising from situations where personal values and priorities interact with the values and priorities of residents, staff, or the system. There is some similarity between this factor and Factor IV (Environmental Adjustment) in that values development usually requires interaction with the environment, and sometimes adjustment or change accordingly. However, situations in this factor are more often precipitated by encounters with individuals, and require a decision by the RA on an issue that is ‘gray,’ at least to [the RA]. There are six items in this factor: numbers 7, 15, 23, 31, 39, and 47” (p. 66-67). Stress is experienced because it may be difficult for the RA to determine if action in the given situation is appropriate or not. There may also be concern that action will be met with undesirable consequences either for the RA or another person which can serve to increase the level of stress experienced by the RA in that situation.
APPENDIX G: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Human Subjects Permission from the Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/15/2008

To: Adrienne Frame
Address: 2619 South Hannon Hill Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32309
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair
Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Online Journals as Indicators of Situational Stress and Job Satisfaction in Resident Assistants

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 2/12/2009 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.
By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations. This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Jon Dalton, Chair
HSC No. 2008.997
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Adrienne Otto Frame was born in Boston, MA on November 23, 1968. She attended the Brookwood School in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA for her elementary education and The Pingree School in South Hamilton, MA for her secondary school years. During her junior year of college Adrienne attended Harvard University as a participant in the Visiting Undergraduate program at Harvard University. She received a B.A. in Psychology from Denison University in 1990.

Adrienne completed her M.Ed. in Counseling at the University of New Hampshire in 1992 and began her career in Student Affairs as an Area Coordinator at Colby-Sawyer College in New London, NH that same year. After 3 years at Colby-Sawyer, Adrienne went on to serve as Residence Coordinator for Mahoney Residential College at the University of Miami in Miami, FL in 1995. She joined the staff at The Florida State University in January of 2000 as Assistant Director for Residence Life. Adrienne was promoted to Associate Director for Residence Life at The Florida State University in June of 2005 and remains in that role as of this writing.

Adrienne married Jim Frame in February of 1999 and began her doctoral coursework in June of 2001. She defended her dissertation on December 3, 2008. She worked full time and had 2 children (Madison Elizabeth and Tyler James) during the course of her degree completion.