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A Study Of Psychological Sense Of Community Within Living-Learning Environments

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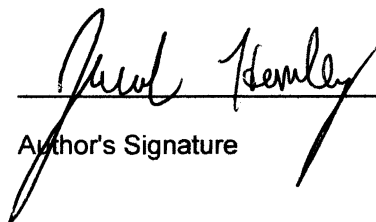
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A Study of Psychological Sense of Community within Living-Learning Environments

(TITLE)

BY

Jacob R. Hanley

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

May 2011

YEAR

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Dedication

I gratefully and wholeheartedly dedicate this work to my parents, Barb and Randy Hanley, who have supported me throughout the entire process. They have continually asked me about my progress and what I was doing to get it done. I feel I am very lucky to have such a supporting family behind me and I will not underestimate that. They were there to talk whenever I needed it, there to ask me questions to keep my mind on my goals, and there to build that motivation back up to continue to work on it. Without my parents, it would have been an even tougher struggle. I am thankful to have them in my life, both being amazingly supportive. I will always be cognizant for the extraordinary role they have played in my life.

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Abstract

The present study measured the level for Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) using the Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) inside various living-learning communities at a medium sized, mid-western public university. It compared the PSOC scores with various demographic characteristics that were measured with the PSOC instrument. Based on responses of 455 participants, there were significant differences between size of living-learning communities and the PSOC levels they demonstrated. There were no significant differences between sex of participants and demonstrated PSOC levels. There were also minor differences between race, age, year, time lived on campus, and time in current residence hall compared with PSOC levels. Finally, significant correlations were found between floor involvement, campus involvement, the ability of the RA to build relationships on the floor, and the overall experience in the current residence hall compared with measured PSOC levels.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to examine Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) within residential living-learning communities (LLCs) at a mid-sized, mid-western, public university. Focus will be placed on comparisons made between the PSOC measurement and characteristics obtained from demographic measurements of each resident in different LLCs. Comparisons between size of the LLCs, sex of the LLCs (all male floor, all female floor, or mixed), ethnicity of the residents, year in school, approximate length of time in the current residence hall, length of time on campus, preference of the current residence hall in which the resident lives, level of involvement on the floor for each resident, level of involvement on campus for each resident, the quality of the relationship that the Resident Assistant builds between members living on the floor, and the overall experience of living in the current residence hall will be compared.

Psychological Sense of Community will be measured using the Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008), a pre-established measuring instrument made up of twenty-four questions that measure an individual's feeling of belonging. Along with that, it measures the feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, along with a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. The SCI-2 breaks down sense of community (SOC)-- psychological sense of community (PSOC) and sense of community (SOC) are terms that are used interchangeably within this area of study—into four subgroups: reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection. These four subgroups,

along with the overall feeling for SOC, will be compared with the demographic measurements obtained from the survey.

Research Questions

When comparing the observed SOC measurements to the demographic measurements recorded from the survey, there are several questions that must be answered. The following questions address the comparisons that will be made from the results of the survey:

Research Question One: What is the relationship between the size of the living-learning community and the overall Sense of Community that the resident demonstrates?

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between the measured demographic variables and their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community?

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between how well the resident rates their involvement and their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community?

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between how well the resident rates their overall experience for living in their current residence hall and their Resident Assistant's performance rating and their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community?

Significance of the Study

Psychological Sense of Community is a concept in community psychology and social psychology that was first introduced by Seymour Sarason in 1974. Once it was introduced, sociologists, social psychologists, and many other professionals began to

theorize about it as well as carry out empirical research on the area. In his highly referenced book, Sarason (1974) proposed that psychological sense of community became the conceptual center for community psychology. Approximately ten years later, psychological sense of community became the main focus for the psychology of community; it was regarded as a central overarching concept for community psychology (Sarason, 1986).

Among the various theories proposed by researchers regarding psychological sense of community, McMillan and Chavis (1986) by far became the most influential as well as the starting point for most of the research in the field. A majority of current research tested McMillan and Chavis's theory in areas such as urban environments, high school settings, certain neighborhoods, and even office settings. The latest study compared the size of universities with the measured level for sense of community.

This study extends the current research into the residence halls of a university. Numerous researchers have proposed the educational potential for residence halls, yet they have not tested the degree to which residents within a living-learning community actually feel like part of that community. This study seeks to test that potential by investigating various factors that could contribute to the development of a sense of community. By surveying residents in varying living-learning communities, new insight could be discovered that relates demographical variables to the development of a sense of community. McMillan and Chavis's (1986) theory is still fairly recent, and more research continues to be done, but none yet has surveyed individuals inside a college environment—more specifically those individuals living within the residence halls. By comparing certain demographics with that of the measured level for sense of community,

key elements may be identified which contribute to and foster the development of a sense of community. With the development of a sense of community comes a variety of learning outcomes that are possible. Within such communities, students would learn self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self worth. Residents would develop patience, tolerance, empathy, responsibility, and interpersonal competence; they maximize peer group influences (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). This study is a significant next step for the research of the theory to be carried farther into the college setting. The results of this study may open new doors for how much of an effect the sense of community might have on college students in their living-learning communities.

Limitations of the Study

The first item for attention is the sample of the study. Through the surveying of 455 students living in the residence halls at a mid-sized, mid-western public university, the results may not be generalized to a larger population since the sample may not be entirely representative of all college students living in residence halls across the United States.

Secondly, the presence of confounding variables must be acknowledged. The variables that are measured using the demographic survey only glimpse into the vast array of measurements that could be recorded regarding students living in residence halls. There are hundreds of other variables that could be measured that may have an effect on the level for sense of community that students demonstrate. Variables such as number of siblings in the family, choice of roommate, how extroverted the resident is, how many friends the resident has on the floor, how the living-learning community is set up, and literally hundreds of other variables that could contribute to the development of a sense of

community.

Definition of Terms

Psychological Sense of Community:

The sense that one is part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one can depend on, and as a result of which, one does not experience sustained feelings of loneliness that impel one to actions or to adopting a style of living masking anxiety and setting the stage for later and more destructive growth (Sarason, 1974). A feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986).

Psychological Sense of Community is not about how many friends one has, how many people one knows, or even the number of loved ones—if they are scattered all over the world, if they are not part of someone's everyday life, and if they are not available to one in a “give and get” way, they can have an affect on one's daily or immediate sense of community.

Living-Learning Community:

Residential learning communities, or living-learning communities, are historically described as groups of individuals who share common values and beliefs and are constantly and actively involved in sharing in each other's experience and learning together from each other. Over time, such communities have become a common practice in the residential communities at institutions of higher education. In its most basic sense, a living-learning community is the floor on which a student lives in their residence hall. They have received this title because students are believed to be learning from each other

by living with each other in such close quarters. Through everyday interaction, life experience, academic experience, college experience, and social and personal experience all merge to create a community in which residents are continually learning from each other over the course of their time together on the same floor.

Summary

The study seeks to extend current research for the concept of psychological sense of community from neighborhoods, offices and high school settings into the living-learning communities of residence halls. The theory behind psychological sense of community arose fairly recently, with much of the research conducted over the last fifteen years. However, there has been very little research conducted within the university setting.

The Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) will be used to measure overall feelings for sense of community for various residents in numerous living-learning communities at a mid-sized, mid-western public university. The demographic and SCI-2 measurements obtained from the survey will be compared to explore the possibility of any correlations that occur. Major research questions addressed explore the possibility of any relationships that might be found when comparing the results from the instrument. Two key limitations to note during the study are the generalizability of the results and that confounding variables inevitably exist that could account for correlations found from the research. The present study expands on past research that has been conducted while moving the theory of psychological sense of community farther into the residential environment of higher education.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Brief Overview

The theme of this research centers on the concept of Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC), a term found in the field of social psychology. The concept itself was first made prevalent by Obst and White in 2005 when they labeled it as the key ingredient to any healthy community. But before we get into the concept and the research behind it, we must first take a brief look at the areas of study building up to what the concept was derived from—sociology and psychology. We will first look briefly at both fields of sociology and psychology independently, then consider them together through the field of social psychology, while finally looking specifically at community and PSOC within the field of social psychology.

Origins of Sociology

It has been said that from the moment we become self-conscious, we are fascinated by the phenomenon of development and growth around us (Chodak, 1973). This has been something that we have been studying for thousands of years, and it has become known as what we call sociology. In its most basic sense, sociology has been labeled as the study of society, human social interaction, and the rules and processes that connect and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of groups, organizations, and associations (Zeitlin, 1981).

The idea for the study of sociology came from the 17th century movement known as the Enlightenment (Boudreau & Newman, 1993). From the Enlightenment there were two main developments that contributed to the rise of sociological thought—the idea of

science and the idea of philosophical humanism. In the 18th and 19th centuries, these two Enlightenment themes were merged into scientific humanism, the idea that rational science is a tool for social improvement (Boudreau & Newman, 1993). The two concerns of rational explanation and social reform would later on become alternate and sometimes competing goals in contemporary sociology (Babbie, 1982).

Auguste Comte, a French philosopher, has generally been given credit for establishing sociology, though he was not the first person to scientifically examine society (Babbie, 1982). What made Comte well known was his belief that society could be the subject of scientific inquiry just like biology, physics, and other recognized physical sciences at that time. He argued that social behavior could be studied and explained logically and rationally and that such explanations could be tested against empirical observations.

Emile Durkheim established formal academic sociology by using positivism as a foundation to practical social research (Gumport, 2007). Durkheim's early case study comparing suicide rates among different religious sects helped distinguish sociology from psychology and philosophy. As he continued to explore the field, he began to look at sociology as the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning. It was not until 1875 when sociology made its way into the United States at Yale as the first college course titled by its name. Today, the field of sociology has expanded greatly to cover a very broad range of material. It continues to be a highly studied area, one where research will continue for quite some time.

Origins of Psychology

We are not just fascinated by what goes on between individuals; we have also

become very intrigued by what goes on inside our heads and the adjoining parts of our bodies, commonly referred to as psychology (Babbie, 1977). Much like sociology, we can trace psychology back to the 17th century. Ancient Greeks, who considered the mind a suitable topic for scholarly study, started raising questions about the make-up and happenings within our mind and body (Feldman, 2011). One of the first ideas of psychology started with British philosopher John Locke, who believed that children were born into the world with minds that were unwritten. As they encountered various experiences throughout their lives, those experiences were added to what they believed about the world and how they viewed themselves and their own functioning. Living their day-to-day lives enabled them to build beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about themselves as well as others.

However, it was not until late in the 19th century when psychology as a scientific discipline was formally recognized. Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig, Germany, established the first experimental laboratory devoted to psychological phenomena (Feldman, 2011). Wundt focused on the study of conscious experience, what he called the building blocks of the mind. He argued that focus should be placed on uncovering fundamental components of the mind like perception, consciousness, thinking, emotions, and other kinds of mental states and activities. From there the study of psychology only broadened, with more research being done that both expanded and added to the various areas previously mentioned.

Social Psychology

What would happen next with time as a catalyst was rather predictable with the two disciplines—areas of each crossed to form an area of study known as social

psychology. Social psychology is more associated with psychology, known as a branch of psychology, but it tends to take key concepts from both fields of sociology and psychology. Around 1921, U.S. Psychologist Gordon Allport—one of the the main founders of social psychology—argued that the purpose of the discipline was to study “how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals was influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings” (1985, p. 3). Allport suggested that group behavior, social perception, leadership, nonverbal behavior, conformity, aggression, and prejudice were some of the many topics to be studied under the discipline. Social psychology employs scientific methods and empirical study to examine social phenomena (Gergen, 2007). It focuses on situations, looking at the impact that social environments and interactions can have on attitudes and behaviors.

Community

One of the main areas of study in social psychology is the concept of community. Community, in its most basic sense, is defined as a group of people living in a particular physical setting (Vernon, 1972). Schroeder and Mable (1994) describes a community as a “small number of people living in the same area and linked by common values, practices, and goals” (p. 166). Other characteristics that have been associated with community descriptions are members having sociocultural characteristics in common, continuous periodic interaction with each other, sharing some type of common beliefs, and considering themselves as a recognizable unit (Sanders, 1966). There has not been a limit to the size of a community.

Further, community members can recognize community boundaries, create social systems of their own that are sub-systems of larger society, and even form manifest

relationships of which community members are aware. Through interaction, community-wide patterns are established which both grow out of the interaction and in turn influence further interaction (Sanders, 1966). Various types of activity and various types of groups tend to concentrate in certain areas of the community, segregation takes place, and further, more in-depth patterns of interaction and awareness are established (Vernon, 1972).

Mann (1978) stated that most people living in a community—in a broad sense—want a place to live, to work, to raise a family, and to have fun. However, through an examination of almost any community—however that community is defined—shows that individuals within that community vary in their preferences in these matters and that they find themselves in quite different circumstances in obtaining their desires. Therefore, the community in which they live or are a part of must provide for their diversity in taste and preferences. Sanders (1966) followed this belief when he argued that the community as a system did not exist in a vacuum. At any given time it was part of and acted upon by complex environmental factors, which together could be called its setting. The factors that he was discussing were ecology, culture, personality, and demography.

In essence, a community has changed, is changing, and will change again. How complete a community is depends on the degree to which its parts are functionally related, the extent to which change in one part brings change in other parts, the sensitivity of the community to the facts and directions of change, and the relationships of change to alignments of power (Sarason, 1974).

Psychological Sense of Community

The idea of the community in itself can be an intriguing yet exhausting area of

study, so we must narrow down the area to an even more specific, yet fascinating subset of the topic of community—psychological sense of community. Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) is defined as the sense that one is part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one can depend on, and as a result of which, one does not experience sustained feelings of loneliness that impel one to actions or to adopting a style of living masking anxiety and setting the stage for later and more destructive growth (Sarason, 1974). A feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986). Psychological sense of community is not about how many friends one has, how many people one knows, or even the number of loved ones—if they are scattered all over the world, if they are not part of someone's everyday life, and if they are not available to one in a “give and get” way, they can have an effect on one's daily or immediate sense of community.

Psychological Sense of Community has recently become a highly familiar term to the social psychology field. As stated by Obst and White (2005), PSOC is the “defining element of any healthy community” (p. 127). Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, and Wandersman (1986) developed the first psychological theory of PSOC, which remains one of the most widely used and accepted concepts. The theory proposes that PSOC consists of four elements: Membership, Influence, Fulfillment of Needs, and Shared Emotional Connection. Membership refers to the feeling of belonging and identification of being part of a collective group from which one derives emotional safety. Influence refers to the need and ability of a group to promote cohesion, and also for members to

feel they have some control and influence within the community. Fulfillment of Needs refers to the degree in which individual group members feel rewarded from the shared connection with the rest of the group. It places importance on common needs, goals, beliefs, and values achieving this feeling. Shared Emotional Connection, the last dimension, places emphasis on the feelings of shared history and identification with the community and the bonds developed over time through positive interaction with other community members. McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggested that these four dimensions work dynamically together to create and maintain an overall sense of community.

The strength of PSOC can be seen in the multitude number of ways in which it is applied in different community psychology topic domains and is related to disparate community structures and processes (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996). More importantly, PSOC has been empirically researched over a wide variety of contexts, including its affects on academic success (Wang, Arboleda, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003), low-income urban neighborhoods (Brodsky, O'Campo, & Aronson, 1999), democratic school climate (Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2006), politically constructed groups (Sonn & Fisher, 1996), community colleges (Murrell & Denzine, 1998), first year college students (DeNeui, 2003; Jacobs & Archie, 2008), student social networks (Dawson, 2008), race differences (Coffman & BeLue, 2009), and even through online courses (Liu, Magjuka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007).

Current research extends the study of PSOC into the college campus by repeatedly examining its affects on other factors related to the college student environment. For some time now, colleges and universities have been widely studied as organizations (Gumport, 2007) and communities (Cruz, 1987). Further, individual

colleges have long been regarded as having a sense of community. For example, Angell (1928) describes one of the most fundamental characteristics of college campuses as the “mental unity” of life on campus (p. 1). He concluded that each student “lives in a particular social situation which gives rise to common interests and problems” which are resolved not through individual interactions, but through group processes (p. 1).

McMillan and Chavis (1986) used “the university” to exemplify how the definitional elements of the sense of community can apply to an actual community.

It is on the college campus where we see the measurement of sense of community weighing heavily on a multitude number of factors with regard to student life on campus. Schroeder (1994) believed that by intentionally designing residence halls as learning communities, many learning outcomes could be achieved. In these communities, students would learn self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self worth. They would foster patience, tolerance, empathy, responsibility, and interpersonal competence while maximizing peer group influences. In other research, Hill (1996) suggested that more emphasis be placed on the development of a sense of community in order to fully maximize the student experience.

McDonald (2002) compiled a collection of institutional narratives discussing community building that were taken from various colleges. When reading through these differing narratives, several themes emerged that pertained to proper community building on a college campus. The main themes included the importance of understanding and communicating the institution's mission, using a common language for the community, being clear that community building requires commitment, caring, and relationship building, aligning the institutional mission with daily practice, and being perceptive to the

individualism/community paradox in U.S. higher education. This book highlighted the work of a previous author, Boyer (1990), who argued six conditions that could be translated into everyday practice: an educationally purposeful place where learning is the focus, an open place where civility is affirmed, a just place where persons are honored and diversity pursued, a disciplined place where group obligations guide behavior, a caring place where individuals are supported/service is encouraged, and a celebrative place where traditions are shared (McDonald, 2002) . Boyer thus imagined educative structures where to learn means to thrive. The main message behind all of the narratives previously mention is the same: community building requires institutional resources that include fiscal resources, human energy, and the alignment of belief and practice.

In another study, Arboleda and Ames (2003) determined various predictors of residence hall involvement, all seemingly centering on the concept of sense of community; the greater the connection residents had to one another, the more likely they were to be involved in residence hall activities. More involvement leads to a better experience, which may in turn lead to higher student retention rates for colleges. Longerbeam, Inkelas, and Brower (2007) suggest that living in a residence hall and establishing a sense of community is one of the “single-strongest influences in the college environment on a range of positive student outcomes” (p. 20). Because students experience multiple psychological senses of community within a community setting (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Loomis, Dockett, & Brodsky, 2004; Puddifoot, 1995), it is pivotal that colleges and universities seek to enhance the sense of community for each student in order to foster student growth (LaNasa, Olson, & Alleman, 2007) and learning (Johnson & Cavins, 1996) in residence halls.

The ACUHO-I (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International) and Educational Benchmarking Incorporated (EBI) Resident Study is a systematic, comprehensive, confidential analysis assessment of residents' perceptions. In a recent study conducted through the collaboration of the two aforementioned groups, a survey of 1430 students at a mid-size, mid-western public university revealed that sense of community was the 5th predictor of overall program effectiveness within the residence halls (2008).

A similar study that examined the development of the sense of community on a college campus is that of Lounsbury and DeNeui (1996). The study determined that students at smaller institutions (measured by enrollment) tended to develop a greater feeling of psychological sense of community than those attending larger institutions. For all colleges surveyed, higher PSOC scores were observed for students attending smaller institutions (enrollments less than 2,000 students as well as between 2,000-9,999 students) compared with larger institutions (enrollments of 10,000-19,999 students as well as greater than 20,000 students).

Also, PSOC for students in the following groups was found to be generally higher than students who were not: fraternity or sorority members, private school undergraduates, students living on campus, out-of-state residents, seniors and females, extroverted students, those attending smaller institutions (less than 10,000), and students with optimal levels of campus participation (DeNeui, 2003; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996). Finally, greater engagement with other campus groups including faculty along with higher levels of persistence may spawn from PSOC developed within a dormitory setting (Berger, 1997).

Therefore, the present study seeks to take previous research a step further and into the residence halls to determine if the size of the living-learning community, along with other demographic variables, have any effect on the measurement for psychological sense of community. Is there a difference in psychological sense of community between students living in large living-learning communities than those living in small living-learning communities? Again, this question becomes pivotal as colleges and universities seek to enhance the experience that students have while living in residence halls, with psychological sense of community weighing heavily on the feelings of connectedness and belonging that the students experience.

Chapter III

Methodology

Design of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) within residential living-learning communities (LLCs) at a mid-sized, mid-western, public university. Focus was placed on comparisons made between the PSOC measurement and characteristics obtained from demographic measurements of each resident in different LLCs.

This non-experimental comparative research design followed the comparative method by administering a survey to all participants, then compared the results across the groups. Different groups were formed based on the demographics that made up the sample that was surveyed.

The first grouping was the size of the living-learning community. LLCs were classified as either small (having 1 to 30 residents living on the floor) or large (having 31 or more residents living on the floor) with the measured PSOC of each group being compared to its size. The size of the LLC (the number of residents living on the floor) was obtained from the director of the building in which the resident resided. This first grouping was used to answer the first proposed research question.

The second grouping was based on the sex (male, female, trans-gender) of the participants. The type of sex the participants recorded was compared to the measured PSOC to note any relationships that occurred. The second grouping was used to answer the second proposed research question. This comparison trend continued across the study, comparing the collected demographic information to the indicated levels of PSOC

for each participant. These comparisons were used to answer the remaining proposed research questions that were laid out earlier. There was no control group since the psychological sense of community was measured across all groups.

Participants

The participants of the study included 455 students living in the residence halls at a mid-size, mid-western, public university. The ideal sample size return to insure relevant data for statistical analysis was 336 assuming a 95% confidence level with a 5% confidence interval (Creative Research Systems, 2010). They were selected by general sampling (a survey sent out through email to all residents living on campus within the residence halls—a population of 2,696 students) and grouped based on the size of the living-learning community as well as an overall grouping by the recorded sex of the participants. Their email addresses were obtained from an administrative request through the Department of Housing at the university. The email list contained no other personal information besides their email addresses.

There were two groups: small living-learning communities, which contained 10 to 30 residents, and large living-learning communities, which contained 31 or more residents. For example, a living-learning community with 55 male residents was grouped in the large male living-learning community category, while a living-learning community with 21 female residents was grouped in the small female living-learning community category. A living-learning community with 23 mixed-sex residents was listed as a small coed living-learning community. This determination was made from the residence hall that each participant selected from the survey as their current residence on campus. The size of the floor within each residence hall was taken from information provided by the

director from that building. Since all of the surveyed buildings contained either small living-learning communities or large living learning communities, participants could be grouped based on the residence hall they listed for where they currently lived. For example, if Participant A listed Residence Hall 1 as their current on-campus residence hall and the information provided by the director of Residence Hall 1 said that all communities in that hall were large living-learning communities, then Participant A was grouped as living in a large living-learning community.

Apart from these two “groupings” of the participants—which helped answer research questions one and two—participants were also grouped based on the answers they provided for the other demographic information requested. This data helped answer the remaining research questions.

The participants were treated with utmost respect by keeping their answers confidential and general with no names being recorded. The participants were administered the survey through an online survey program called Zoomerang. An email with the survey attached was sent out to all residents who lived on campus. The email contained a short description asking for participation in the research (Appendix B). The survey was completely voluntary with participants having the choice for whether or not they wished to take part. Before they were given the survey, they were asked to electronically sign a consent form for conducting the research (Appendix C). The purpose of the consent form was also explained. There was no physical interaction with the participants as all data collection was done through the online survey.

Site

Participants were able to complete the survey in their own room since everything

was done online. They simply received a request to participate in a research study through their email, answered the survey using the Zoomerang survey program, and submitted their answers electronically through the program.

Instrument

One survey consisting of both demographic questions and the PSOC questions was used for the research. The Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) was used for the measurement of psychological sense of community (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008). In past research, the original Sense of Community Index (SCI) was used for this measurement, and although it was concluded to be valid, reliability tended to be inconsistent and generally low (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Glynn, 1981; Obst & White, 2004; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006). The SCI had a true-false response that limited variability and concerned critics. Through revision and re-make, an analysis of the new 24 item Likert scale SCI-2 showed high reliability with strong validity (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008). The instrument was offered free of charge for research purposes and was easily accessible. The instrument was normed and tested with 36 culturally different people in seven different settings from Maryland to Hawaii. It was also revised and used with a larger survey of 1,800 people, proving to be reliable with coefficient alpha scores of .79 to .86. The survey used for this research was a combination of the SCI-2 coupled with specific demographic questions that, again, were compared across groupings. The survey can be found as Appendix A in the Appendixes section.

Data Collection

A one-time data collection with follow-up email reminders occurred for all of the participants who volunteered to take the survey between the dates of March 1, 2011 and

March 29, 2011. An email was sent out to all residents living on-campus in the residence halls asking them to voluntarily participate in a research study about the twelve residence halls on the institution's campus. Two follow-up emails were sent with survey reminders the second and third week after the initial email. A week was lost in between due to Spring Break on the University's campus. The link to the survey was in the email, enabling them to simply click the link to be directed to the survey. Once they clicked the link to the survey, answering the questions took approximately ten minutes for the participants.

The first page of the survey explained how their participation was voluntary and that they could stop at any time. It explained the basis for why the research was being conducted and how it would help the institution as well as any other benefits or limitations that existed. They were then presented with an electronic consent form for which they would agree with the terms and conditions before starting the survey. Their consent was given simply by accepting the terms by clicking to the next page on the survey. Because the survey asked no questions that violated any informational or discriminatory policy, no ethical or legal codes were broken. Participants were given the choice not to take the survey, but encouraged to do so with the intent of helping to gather some information about the college they were attending.

The residents were asked to complete a short online survey to aid with the completion of a research study. If the researcher discussed the study any further, it may have altered the responses that participants gave when answering the questions on the survey. Names were not recorded in the demographic section as enhanced measures for confidentiality. Two, fifty dollar cash gift cards were used as incentives to participate in

the research. The gift cards were distributed to two randomly selected participants who provided their contact information after taking the survey. Participants were asked to reply to the email with their contact information after they completed the survey if they wished to be entered into a drawing for two, fifty dollar cash gift cards. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete, so the time commitment was around fifteen minutes for the explanation portion and the actual survey taking. Once the participants completed the survey, they viewed a page that thanked them for aiding in the study. The survey was sent to a total of 2,696 students with a response rate of 455, roughly 17% of the population.

Treatment of Data

Once the surveys had been collected, the scores from each SCI-2 were totaled (adding the total of the four sub-groups) for all participants according to the SCI-2 scoring method. The scores were then compared across both groups (small and large LLCs) as well as the sexes (male, female, trans-gender) within each group. The other demographic variables that were measured (race, age, year, etc.) were also compared with the total and sub-group scores from the SCI-2.

The data was analyzed using Predictive Analytics Software (PASW), more formally known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The raw data was downloaded, coded, and labeled in an Excel spread sheet and downloaded into PASW. Descriptive statistics were created per comparison, with each providing the mean, variation, and standard deviation. Following descriptive statistics, a test of differences between means was created using a 2-tailed t-test for the sex comparison and a one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) for the remaining demographic measurements

(significance set at $p < .05$). Finally, correlations were used to compare the 24 survey questions with the remaining demographic questions (significance set at $p < .05$) to note any meaningful relationships.

Chapter IV

Results

The data reported below was collected to determine if there were any significant differences in the measured levels of Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) measured by the Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) for all participants surveyed. The PSOC measures were compared to a variety of demographic questions and opinionated questions using descriptive statistics.

Results were reported on the relationship between the size of the living-learning community and the overall Sense of Community that the resident demonstrated, the relationship between the measured demographic variables and their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community, the relationship between how well the resident rated their involvement and their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community, and the relationship between how well the resident rated their overall experience for living in their current residence hall and their Resident Assistant's performance rating to their demonstrated overall level for Sense of Community as well as the measurements for the sub-scales for Sense of Community. A total of 2,696 students were eligible for the current study, all 2,696 were sent the survey, and 455 participated in the study.

Population and Response Rate

Table 1 displays the population and proportion rate of the total number of participants for the current study (n=455) according to participant sex, race, age, year in school, time lived on campus, time lived in current residence hall, preference of current

residence hall, floor involvement, campus involvement, RA relationship building ability, overall experience in residence hall, and community size.

Table 1
Population and Response Rate

	N	Percent
Population	455	
Sex		
Male	144	31.60
Female	309	67.90
Trans-gender	002	00.40
Race		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	005	01.10
Asian/Pacific Islander	007	01.50
Black/African American	051	11.20
Hispanic	015	03.30
White, non-Hispanic	369	81.10
Decline to provide	008	01.80
Age		
18 and younger	084	18.50
19-20	181	39.80
20-22	147	32.30
22 and older	043	09.50
Year in school		
Freshmen	159	34.90
Sophomore	114	25.10
Junior	107	23.50
Senior	073	16.00
Graduate	002	00.40
Time lived on campus		
1 semester	076	16.70
2 semesters	157	34.50
1 year	017	03.70
2 years	109	24.00
3 years	069	15.20
4 years	020	04.40
5 years or longer	007	01.50
Time in current residence hall		
1 semester	091	20.00
2 semesters	212	46.60
1 year	034	07.50
2 years	081	17.80

3 years	030	06.66
4 years	007	01.50
Preference of current residence hall		
1 st choice	365	80.20
2 nd choice	035	07.70
3 rd choice	009	02.20
4 th choice	012	02.60
Randomly assigned	034	07.50
Floor involvement		
Never involved	058	12.70
Rarely involved	120	26.40
Somewhat involved	168	36.90
Very involved	109	24.00
Campus involvement		
Never involved	059	13.00
Rarely involved	115	25.30
Somewhat involved	164	36.60
Very involved	117	25.70
RA relationship building ability		
Very poor	015	03.30
Poor	037	08.10
Fair	076	16.70
Good	104	22.90
Very good	092	20.20
Excellent	131	28.80
Overall residence hall experience		
Very negative	009	02.20
Negative	021	04.60
Neutral	105	23.10
Positive	195	42.90
Very Positive	125	27.50
Community size		
Small	135	29.70
Large	320	70.30

Descriptive Statistics – Demographic Survey and SCI-2 Inventory

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for the Demographic Survey and the Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) based on the 24 question SCI-2 survey and the four subscales: “Reinforcement of Needs” (M=15.43, SD=4.200), “Membership” (M=14.78,

SD=4.131), “Influence” (M=14.78, SD=4.314), and “Shared Emotional Connection” (M=14.54, SD=4.750) and the overall score (M=59.53, SD=16.138). Any translations of the questions from the SCI-2 can be found in Appendix A where the actual questions are listed.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics – Demographic Survey and SCI-2 Inventory

Measures ^a	M	SD	Variance
Sex	1.69	00.473	000.224
Race	4.67	00.840	000.706
Age	2.33	00.883	000.780
Year in school	2.22	01.105	001.220
Time lived on campus	3.06	01.582	002.503
Time in current residence hall	2.49	01.261	001.590
Preference of current residence hall	1.49	01.161	001.347
Floor involvement	2.72	00.968	000.937
Campus involvement	2.75	00.983	000.966
RA relationship building ability	4.35	01.423	002.025
Overall residence hall experience	3.89	00.927	000.858
Community size	1.70	00.457	000.209
Importance of sense of community	4.39	01.165	001.357
SCI-2 Question 1	2.49	00.897	000.805
SCI-2 Question 2	2.38	00.750	000.563
SCI-2 Question 3	2.64	00.755	000.570
SCI-2 Question 4	2.74	00.927	000.859
SCI-2 Question 5	2.58	00.949	000.900
SCI-2 Question 6	2.59	00.815	000.665
SCI-2 Question 7	2.59	00.832	000.692
SCI-2 Question 8	2.95	00.862	000.744
SCI-2 Question 9	2.65	00.912	000.831
SCI-2 Question 10	2.29	00.979	000.958
SCI-2 Question 11	2.29	01.001	001.002
SCI-2 Question 12	2.02	01.006	001.013
SCI-2 Question 13	2.35	00.986	000.972
SCI-2 Question 14	2.45	00.916	000.838
SCI-2 Question 15	2.29	00.962	000.925
SCI-2 Question 16	2.16	00.942	000.887
SCI-2 Question 17	2.67	00.824	000.679
SCI-2 Question 18	2.86	00.903	000.816
SCI-2 Question 19	2.41	01.011	001.022

SCI-2 Question 20	2.54	01.025	001.051
SCI-2 Question 21	2.09	01.012	001.025
SCI-2 Question 22	2.27	00.947	000.896
SCI-2 Question 23	2.55	00.947	000.896
SCI-2 Question 24	2.69	00.809	000.655
Reinforcement of Needs	15.43	04.200	017.642
Membership	14.78	04.131	017.062
Influence	14.78	04.314	018.608
Shared Emotional Connection	14.54	04.750	022.562
Overall	59.53	16.138	260.426

^a
n=455

Relationship between Size of LLCs and SCI-2 Inventory

Table 3 displays results of differences between means using a two-tailed t-test (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing size of the LLCs (small v. large) to the overall PSOC measurement and the four subscales of the PSOC measurement. Small LLCs ($n=135$, $M=64.58$, $SD=16.315$) measured significantly higher than large LLCs ($n=320$, $M=57.40$, $SD=15.604$) for the overall PSOC measurements. Small LLCs also measured significantly higher than large LLCs across all four subscales of the PSOC measurements. Reinforcement of needs (small: $n=135$, $M=16.54$, $SD=4.221$; large: $n=320$, $M=14.96$, $SD=4.108$), Membership (small: $n=135$, $M=16.20$, $SD=4.097$; large: $n=320$, $M=14.18$, $SD=4.002$), Influence (small: $n=135$, $M=16.00$, $SD=4.326$; large: $n=320$, $M=14.27$, $SD=4.210$), and Shared Emotional Connection (small: $n=135$, $M=15.84$, $SD=4.902$; large: $n=320$, $M=13.99$, $SD=4.583$) all ranked significantly higher among small LLCs than large LLCs.

Table 3
Relationship between Size of LLCs and SCI-2 Inventory

	<u>Small^a</u>		<u>Large^b</u>		<u>t</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Overall	64.58	16.315	57.40	15.604	4.424**
Reinforcement of Needs	16.54	04.221	14.96	04.108	3.728**
Membership	16.20	04.097	14.18	04.002	4.880**
Influence	16.00	04.326	14.27	4.210	3.981**
Shared Emotional Connection	15.84	04.902	13.99	04.583	3.838**

^an=135, ^bn=320

**
p < .001.

Relationship between Demographic Variables and SCI-2 Inventory

Table 4 displays results of differences between means using a two-tailed t-test (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of sex to the SCI-2 Inventory. Out of all questions and comparisons made in this particular analysis, the only finding of significance was that of females ($n=309$, $M=2.37$, $SD=0.973$) ranking Question 10 (“This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize”) significantly higher than males ($n=144$, $M=2.11$, $SD=0.976$).

Table 4
Relationship between Sex and SCI-2 Inventory

	<u>Males^a</u>		<u>Females^b</u>		<u>t</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Importance sense of community	04.33	01.116	4.42	1.189	-0.743
SCI-2 Question 1	02.40	00.887	02.53	00.903	-1.490
SCI-2 Question 2	02.36	00.744	02.39	00.756	-0.444

SCI-2 Question 3	02.65	00.762	02.64	00.755	0.109
SCI-2 Question 4	02.74	00.885	02.74	00.950	-0.019
SCI-2 Question 5	02.57	00.921	02.59	00.965	-0.204
SCI-2 Question 6	02.57	00.874	02.60	00.786	-0.356
SCI-2 Question 7	02.67	00.851	02.55	00.819	1.514
SCI-2 Question 8	02.94	00.871	02.94	00.861	-0.086
SCI-2 Question 9	02.68	00.874	02.64	00.925	0.469
SCI-2 Question 10	02.11	00.976	02.37	00.973	-2.590*
SCI-2 Question 11	02.20	00.986	02.32	01.003	-1.214
SCI-2 Question 12	02.05	01.053	02.01	00.987	0.351
SCI-2 Question 13	02.38	01.023	02.34	00.969	0.386
SCI-2 Question 14	02.45	00.952	02.45	00.902	0.052
SCI-2 Question 15	02.29	00.967	02.29	00.961	-0.029
SCI-2 Question 16	02.19	00.955	02.14	00.938	0.581
SCI-2 Question 17	02.65	00.832	02.69	00.823	-0.483
SCI-2 Question 18	02.80	00.897	02.89	00.906	-0.967
SCI-2 Question 19	02.35	01.020	02.44	01.007	-0.911
SCI-2 Question 20	02.49	01.024	02.56	01.029	-0.743
SCI-2 Question 21	02.10	01.022	02.08	01.005	0.228
SCI-2 Question 22	02.18	00.890	02.30	00.973	-1.294
SCI-2 Question 23	02.47	00.945	02.58	00.949	-1.226
SCI-2 Question 24	02.62	00.766	02.72	00.830	-1.268
Reinforcement of Needs	15.28	04.258	15.49	04.189	-0.496
Membership	14.65	04.152	14.83	04.126	-0.429
Influence	14.76	04.297	14.79	04.330	-0.075
Shared Emotional Connection	14.20	04.654	14.69	04.800	-1.024
Overall	58.89	16.089	59.80	16.208	-0.560

^an=144, ^bn=309

* p < .05.

Table 5 displays results of differences between means using a one-way ANOVA (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of race to the SCI-2 Inventory. Significant differences were found between groups for Question 3 (“This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met”), Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved”), and Question 18 (“This community has good leaders”). Question 3 ($df=5$, $MS=1.291$, $F=2.299$), Question 17 ($df=5$, $MS=1.755$, $F=2.631$), and Question 18 ($df=5$, $MS=2.223$, $F=2.779$) all contained varying means in ranking.

Table 5
Relationship between Race and SCI-2 Inventory

Between Groups ^a	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>SS</u>
Importance sense of community	5	0.513	0.375	0.866
SCI-2 Question 1	5	000.619	0.767	0.574
SCI-2 Question 2	5	000.750	1.356	0.240
SCI-2 Question 3	5	001.291	2.299	0.044*
SCI-2 Question 4	5	000.916	1.067	0.378
SCI-2 Question 5	5	001.511	1.691	0.135
SCI-2 Question 6	5	000.762	1.148	0.334
SCI-2 Question 7	5	001.239	1.808	0.110
SCI-2 Question 8	5	001.336	1.812	0.109
SCI-2 Question 9	5	000.761	0.914	0.472
SCI-2 Question 10	5	001.421	1.491	0.191
SCI-2 Question 11	5	000.212	0.209	0.958
SCI-2 Question 12	5	000.429	0.421	0.834
SCI-2 Question 13	5	001.135	1.170	0.323
SCI-2 Question 14	5	001.446	1.739	0.124
SCI-2 Question 15	5	000.465	0.500	0.776
SCI-2 Question 16	5	001.376	1.562	0.170
SCI-2 Question 17	5	001.755	2.631	0.023*
SCI-2 Question 18	5	002.223	2.779	0.017*
SCI-2 Question 19	5	000.410	0.399	0.850
SCI-2 Question 20	5	001.156	1.101	0.359
SCI-2 Question 21	5	000.596	0.579	0.716
SCI-2 Question 22	5	000.653	0.727	0.603
SCI-2 Question 23	5	001.345	1.510	0.185
SCI-2 Question 24	5	000.651	0.994	0.421
Reinforcement of Needs	5	025.375	1.445	0.207
Membership	5	006.126	0.356	0.878
Influence	5	026.644	1.439	0.209
Shared Emotional Connection	5	020.801	0.921	0.467
Overall	5	218.754	0.838	0.523

^an=455, * p < .05.

In order to further explore the three questions that have produced statistically significant results, Table 6 shows each individual race with the mean and standard deviation for each

of the three questions.

Table 6

Relationship between Race and SCI-2 Inventory Question Breakdown

Measures	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
American Indian ^a		
SCI-2 Question 3	1.80	0.837
SCI-2 Question 17	1.60	0.894
SCI-2 Question 18	1.80	0.837
Asian ^b		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.43	0.535
SCI-2 Question 17	2.14	0.378
SCI-2 Question 18	2.43	0.535
African American ^c		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.47	0.703
SCI-2 Question 17	2.65	0.770
SCI-2 Question 18	2.63	0.799
Hispanic ^d		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.87	0.743
SCI-2 Question 17	2.67	0.617
SCI-2 Question 18	3.00	0.535
White ^e		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.67	0.758
SCI-2 Question 17	2.69	0.828
SCI-2 Question 18	2.91	0.920
Decline ^f		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.63	0.744
SCI-2 Question 17	3.00	1.069
SCI-2 Question 18	2.75	1.035

^an=5, ^bn=7, ^cn=51

^dn=15, ^en=369, ^fn=8

Table 7 displays results of differences between means using a one-way ANOVA

(significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of age to the

SCI-2 Inventory. There were no significant differences found.

Table 7
Relationship between Age and SCI-2 Inventory

Between Groups	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>SS</u>
18 and younger ^a				
19-20 ^b				
20-22 ^c				
22 and older ^d				
Importance sense of community	3	00.257	0.189	0.904
SCI-2 Question 1	3	00.056	0.069	0.977
SCI-2 Question 2	3	00.032	0.056	0.983
SCI-2 Question 3	3	00.586	1.029	0.380
SCI-2 Question 4	3	00.344	0.399	0.754
SCI-2 Question 5	3	00.453	0.501	0.682
SCI-2 Question 6	3	00.365	0.548	0.650
SCI-2 Question 7	3	00.479	0.692	0.557
SCI-2 Question 8	3	00.161	0.216	0.886
SCI-2 Question 9	3	00.104	0.125	0.945
SCI-2 Question 10	3	00.439	0.457	0.713
SCI-2 Question 11	3	00.743	0.741	0.528
SCI-2 Question 12	3	00.152	0.149	0.930
SCI-2 Question 13	3	00.789	0.811	0.488
SCI-2 Question 14	3	00.176	0.208	0.891
SCI-2 Question 15	3	00.419	0.451	0.717
SCI-2 Question 16	3	00.059	0.066	0.978
SCI-2 Question 17	3	01.241	1.838	0.139
SCI-2 Question 18	3	00.421	0.515	0.672
SCI-2 Question 19	3	00.804	0.785	0.503
SCI-2 Question 20	3	01.073	1.021	0.383
SCI-2 Question 21	3	00.216	0.210	0.890
SCI-2 Question 22	3	00.241	0.268	0.849
SCI-2 Question 23	3	00.110	0.122	0.947
SCI-2 Question 24	3	00.277	0.422	0.738
Reinforcement of Needs	3	03.156	0.178	0.911
Membership	3	02.511	0.146	0.932
Influence	3	04.215	0.225	0.879
Shared Emotional Connection	3	08.047	0.355	0.785
Overall	3	41.850	0.160	0.923

^an=84, ^bn=181, ^cn=147

^dn=43

Table 8 displays results of differences between means using a one-way ANOVA (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of year in school to the SCI-2 Inventory. Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved”) again proved to produce a significant measurement ($df=4$, $MS=1.756$, $F=2.624$) compared to the other questions in the SCI-2 Instrument.

Table 8
Relationship between Year in School and SCI-2 Inventory

Between Groups	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>SS</u>
Freshmen ^a				
Sophomore ^b				
Junior ^c				
Senior ^d				
Graduate ^e				
Importance sense of community	4	01.536	1.133	0.340
SCI-2 Question 1	4	00.538	0.666	0.616
SCI-2 Question 2	4	00.125	0.220	0.927
SCI-2 Question 3	4	00.763	1.344	0.253
SCI-2 Question 4	4	00.293	0.339	0.852
SCI-2 Question 5	4	00.093	0.102	0.982
SCI-2 Question 6	4	00.017	0.025	0.999
SCI-2 Question 7	4	00.546	0.789	0.533
SCI-2 Question 8	4	00.293	0.392	0.814
SCI-2 Question 9	4	00.110	0.131	0.971
SCI-2 Question 10	4	00.714	0.744	0.562
SCI-2 Question 11	4	01.397	1.399	0.233
SCI-2 Question 12	4	00.644	0.633	0.639
SCI-2 Question 13	4	00.665	0.682	0.605
SCI-2 Question 14	4	00.270	0.320	0.865
SCI-2 Question 15	4	00.600	0.647	0.629
SCI-2 Question 16	4	00.407	0.457	0.767
SCI-2 Question 17	4	01.756	2.624	0.034*
SCI-2 Question 18	4	00.572	0.699	0.593
SCI-2 Question 19	4	00.790	0.772	0.544
SCI-2 Question 20	4	00.800	0.760	0.552
SCI-2 Question 21	4	00.211	0.204	0.936
SCI-2 Question 22	4	00.415	0.461	0.765

SCI-2 Question 23	4	00.889	0.992	0.411
SCI-2 Question 24	4	00.388	0.590	0.670
Reinforcement of Needs	4	04.677	0.263	0.901
Membership	4	06.472	0.377	0.825
Influence	4	11.990	0.642	0.633
Shared Emotional Connection	4	09.149	0.403	0.806
Overall	4	98.787	0.377	0.825

^an=159, ^bn=114, ^cn=107

^dn=73, ^en=2, * p < .05.

In order to further explore the statistically significant results of Question 17, Table 9 shows each individual year in school classification with the mean and standard deviation for Question 17.

Table 9

Relationship between Year in School and SCI-2 Inventory Question 17 Breakdown

Measures	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Freshmen ^a		
SCI-2 Question 17	2.58	0.758
Sophomore ^b		
SCI-2 Question 17	2.59	0.839
Junior ^c		
SCI-2 Question 17	2.84	0.837
Senior ^d		
SCI-2 Question 17	2.78	0.886
Graduate ^e		
SCI-2 Question 17	2.00	0.000

^an=159, ^bn=114, ^cn=107

^dn=73, ^en=2

Table 10 displays results of differences between means using a one-way ANOVA (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of time spent on campus to the SCI-2 Inventory. Question 3 (“This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met”), Question 11 (“I put a lot of time and effort into

being part of this community”), Question 16 (“I have influence over what this community looks like”), and Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved”) produced significant measurements when compared to the SCI-2 Inventory.

Question 3 (df=6, MS=1.533, F=2.754), Question 11 (df=6, MS=2.218, F=2.250),

Question 16 (df=6, MS=1.865, F=2.134), and Question 17 (df=6, MS=1.543, F=2.312)

all produced a statistical measurement below the level set for significance.

Table 10

Relationship between Time Spent on Campus and SCI-2 Inventory

Between Groups	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>SS</u>
1 semester ^a				
2 semesters ^b				
1 year ^c				
2 years ^d				
3 years ^e				
4 years ^f				
5 years or longer ^g				
Importance sense of community	6	000.907	0.665	0.678
SCI-2 Question 1	6	001.111	1.386	0.218
SCI-2 Question 2	6	000.613	1.091	0.367
SCI-2 Question 3	6	001.533	2.754	0.012*
SCI-2 Question 4	6	000.755	0.878	0.511
SCI-2 Question 5	6	000.441	0.487	0.818
SCI-2 Question 6	6	000.158	0.235	0.965
SCI-2 Question 7	6	000.235	0.337	0.917
SCI-2 Question 8	6	001.055	1.426	0.203
SCI-2 Question 9	6	001.604	1.954	0.071
SCI-2 Question 10	6	000.915	0.955	0.455
SCI-2 Question 11	6	002.218	2.250	0.038*
SCI-2 Question 12	6	001.257	1.245	0.282
SCI-2 Question 13	6	001.161	1.198	0.306
SCI-2 Question 14	6	000.595	0.707	0.644
SCI-2 Question 15	6	001.093	1.184	0.314
SCI-2 Question 16	6	001.865	2.134	0.048*
SCI-2 Question 17	6	001.543	2.312	0.033*
SCI-2 Question 18	6	000.957	1.178	0.317
SCI-2 Question 19	6	001.039	1.016	0.414

SCI-2 Question 20	6	000.208	0.195	0.978
SCI-2 Question 21	6	000.685	0.666	0.678
SCI-2 Question 22	6	000.513	0.569	0.755
SCI-2 Question 23	6	001.020	1.411	0.337
SCI-2 Question 24	6	000.604	0.921	0.479
Reinforcement of Needs	6	020.300	1.153	0.331
Membership	6	019.354	1.136	0.340
Influence	6	026.465	1.430	0.201
Shared Emotional Connection	6	012.449	0.549	0.771
Overall	6	278.461	1.070	0.379

^an=76, ^bn=157, ^cn=17

^dn=109, ^en=69, ^fn=20, ^gn=7, * p < .05.

In order to further explore the statistically significant results of Question 3, Question 11, Question 16, and Question 17, Table 11 breaks down the various time frames spent on campus with the mean and standard deviation for each of the four questions.

Table 11

Relationship between Time Spent on Campus and SCI-2 Inventory Question Breakdown

Measures	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1 semester ^a		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.43	0.736
SCI-2 Question 11	2.22	0.903
SCI-2 Question 16	1.99	0.916
SCI-2 Question 17	2.55	0.839
2 semesters ^b		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.57	0.727
SCI-2 Question 11	2.14	0.916
SCI-2 Question 16	2.03	0.796
SCI-2 Question 17	2.59	0.816
1 year ^c		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.76	0.664
SCI-2 Question 11	2.18	0.883
SCI-2 Question 16	2.41	0.795
SCI-2 Question 17	2.65	0.606
2 years ^d		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.75	0.807
SCI-2 Question 11	2.33	1.081

SCI-2 Question 16	2.23	1.006
SCI-2 Question 17	2.65	0.821
3 years ^e		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.80	0.719
SCI-2 Question 11	2.64	1.137
SCI-2 Question 16	2.36	1.111
SCI-2 Question 17	2.99	0.795
4 years ^f		
SCI-2 Question 3	2.60	0.754
SCI-2 Question 11	2.20	0.951
SCI-2 Question 16	2.35	0.875
SCI-2 Question 17	2.80	0.834
5 years or longer ^g		
SCI-2 Question 3	3.14	0.690
SCI-2 Question 11	2.57	0.976
SCI-2 Question 16	2.57	1.397
SCI-2 Question 17	2.71	1.113

^an=76, ^bn=157, ^cn=17
^dn=109, ^en=69, ^fn=20, ^gn=7

Table 12 displays results of differences between means using a one-way ANOVA (significance set at $p < .05$) comparing the measured demographic variable of time spent in current residence hall to the SCI-2 Inventory. Question 9 (“Most community members know me”) and Question 16 (“I have influence over what this community looks like”) produced significant measurements when compared to the SCI-2 Inventory. Question 9 ($df=5$, $MS=3.095$, $F=3.839$) and Question 16 ($df=5$, $MS=2.338$, $F=2.685$) both produced a statistical measurement below the level set for significance.

Table 12
Relationship between Time Spent in Current Residence Hall and SCI-2 Inventory

Between Groups	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>SS</u>
1 semester ^a				
2 semesters ^b				
1 year ^c				
2 years ^d				

3 years ^e				
4 years ^f				
Importance sense of community	5	001.835	1.357	0.239
SCI-2 Question 1	5	001.750	2.201	0.053
SCI-2 Question 2	5	000.807	1.439	0.209
SCI-2 Question 3	5	001.085	1.925	0.089
SCI-2 Question 4	5	000.616	0.715	0.613
SCI-2 Question 5	5	000.678	0.751	0.586
SCI-2 Question 6	5	000.735	1.107	0.356
SCI-2 Question 7	5	000.575	0.829	0.529
SCI-2 Question 8	5	001.526	2.076	0.067
SCI-2 Question 9	5	003.095	3.839	0.002*
SCI-2 Question 10	5	001.004	1.049	0.388
SCI-2 Question 11	5	002.128	2.151	0.058
SCI-2 Question 12	5	001.167	1.154	0.331
SCI-2 Question 13	5	000.936	0.963	0.440
SCI-2 Question 14	5	001.280	1.536	0.177
SCI-2 Question 15	5	001.441	1.566	0.168
SCI-2 Question 16	5	002.338	2.685	0.021*
SCI-2 Question 17	5	000.898	1.328	0.251
SCI-2 Question 18	5	000.499	0.610	0.693
SCI-2 Question 19	5	000.771	0.752	0.585
SCI-2 Question 20	5	000.463	0.438	0.822
SCI-2 Question 21	5	000.484	0.470	0.799
SCI-2 Question 22	5	000.710	0.791	0.557
SCI-2 Question 23	5	000.311	0.345	0.885
SCI-2 Question 24	5	000.155	0.235	0.947
Reinforcement of Needs	5	025.658	1.462	0.201
Membership	5	031.008	1.834	0.105
Influence	5	029.832	1.614	0.155
Shared Emotional Connection	5	008.914	0.392	0.854
Overall	5	335.869	1.294	0.265

^an=91, ^bn=212, ^cn=34

^dn=81, ^en=30, ^fn=7, * p < .05.

In order to further explore the statistically significant results of Question 9 and Question 16, Table 13 breaks down the various time frames spent in the current residence hall with the mean and standard deviation for each of the four questions.

Table 13

*Relationship between Time Spent in Current Residence Hall and SCI-2 Inventory**Question Breakdown*

Measures	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1 semester ^a		
SCI-2 Question 9	2.43	0.909
SCI-2 Question 16	1.98	0.943
2 semesters ^b		
SCI-2 Question 9	2.60	0.873
SCI-2 Question 16	2.09	0.849
1 year ^c		
SCI-2 Question 9	2.94	0.851
SCI-2 Question 16	2.50	1.108
2 years ^d		
SCI-2 Question 9	2.81	0.989
SCI-2 Question 16	2.27	1.013
3 years ^e		
SCI-2 Question 9	3.00	0.830
SCI-2 Question 16	2.47	1.008
4 years ^f		
SCI-2 Question 9	2.14	0.900
SCI-2 Question 16	2.14	1.069

^an=91, ^bn=212, ^cn=34

^dn=81, ^en=30, ^fn=7

Correlation between Resident Involvement and SCI-2

Table 14 displays results of Pearson Correlations which were calculated to establish relationships between SCI-2 and floor and campus involvement scale ratings. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) existed between the overall SCI-2 rating and the floor involvement rating ($r = .63$), between the overall SCI-2 and campus involvement rating ($r = .20$), and across all comparisons made between floor involvement and campus involvement and the four subscales of the SCI-2.

Table 14

Correlation between Resident Involvement and SCI-2 Inventory

Correlation ^a	<i>r</i>
Overall SCI-2 score	
Floor involvement	0.628**
Campus involvement	0.199**
Reinforcement of needs	
Floor involvement	0.524**
Campus involvement	0.145**
Membership	
Floor involvement	0.647**
Campus involvement	0.231**
Influence	
Floor involvement	0.585**
Campus involvement	0.189**
Shared emotional connection	
Floor involvement	0.576**
Campus involvement	0.175**

^an=455, **p < .001

Correlation between Overall Experience and RA Ability and SCI-2

Table 15 displays results of Pearson Correlations which were calculated to establish relationships between SCI-2 and the resident's overall experience in the residence hall as well as their RA's ability to build relationships on the floor. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) existed between the overall SCI-2 rating and the resident's overall experience in the residence hall ($r = .64$), between the overall SCI-2 and the RA's ability to build relationships on the floor ($r = .47$), and across all comparisons made between the resident's overall experience in the residence hall as well as their RA's ability to build relationships on the floor and the four subscales of the SCI-2.

Table 15

Correlation between Overall Experience in Residence Hall and RA's Ability to Build Relationships on the Floor and SCI-2 Inventory

Correlationa	r
Overall SCI-2 score	
Overall experience in residence hall	0.637**
RA's ability to build relationships on the floor	0.473**
Reinforcement of needs	
Overall experience in residence hall	0.662**
RA's ability to build relationships on the floor	0.483**
Membership	
Overall experience in residence hall	0.531**
RA's ability to build relationships on the floor	0.384**
Influence	
Overall experience in residence hall	0.554**
RA's ability to build relationships on the floor	0.450**
Shared emotional connection	
Overall experience in residence hall	0.612**
RA's ability to build relationships on the floor	0.437**

^an=455, **p < .001

Chapter V

Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) within residential living-learning communities (LLCs) at a mid-sized, mid-western, public university. Focus was placed on comparisons made between the PSOC measurement and characteristics obtained from demographic measurements of each resident in different LLCs. Comparisons between size of the LLCs, sex of the LLCs (all male floor, all female floor, or mixed), ethnicity of the residents, year in school, approximate length of time in the current residence hall, length of time on campus, preference of the current residence hall in which the resident lives, level of involvement on the floor for each resident, level of involvement on campus for each resident, the quality of the relationship that the Resident Assistant builds between members living on the floor, and the overall experience of living in the current residence hall were compared using descriptive statistics and mean comparisons across groupings. Emphasis was placed on four subscales of PSOC (reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, shared emotional connection) to note any relationships that occurred.

Psychological Sense of Community was measured using the Sense of Community Index 2 (SIC-2) (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008), a pre-established measuring instrument made up of twenty-four questions that measured an individual's feeling of belonging.

Discussion

Differences between Small LLCs and Large LLCs. Schroeder and Mable (1994) described a community as a “small number of people living in the same area and linked by common values, practices, and goals” (p. 166). The key word in his statement

is small, indicating that in order for these common values, practices, and goals to develop, it becomes easier with a smaller number of individuals. Lounsbury and DeNeui (1996) found that students at smaller institutions (measured by enrollment) tended to develop a greater feeling of psychological sense of community than those attending larger institutions. For all colleges surveyed, higher PSOC scores were observed for students attending smaller institutions (enrollments less than 2,000 students as well as between 2,000-9,999 students) compared with larger institutions (enrollments of 10,000-19,999 students as well as greater than 20,000 students). Also, PSOC scores for students at both private institutions and smaller schools in general were found to be higher than those who were not (DeNeui, 2003; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996).

Results of the present study were consistent with previous research since smaller LLCs produced significantly higher PSOC scores than larger LLCs and measured significantly higher on all four subscales (Reinforcement of Needs, Membership, Influence, Shared Emotional Connection) of the SCI-2 instrument. This means that students living in smaller LLCs tended to feel as though they belonged to and identified with their collective group (or LLC), they helped build cohesion within that group, they had some control and influence within that group, they felt rewarded from their shared connection, and that the bonds they developed over time were all ranked higher than the same feelings of students living in larger LLCs. McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggested that the four dimensions worked dynamically together to create and maintain an overall sense of community. The present study supports this idea, finding that all four subscales along with the overall PSOC scores were significantly higher for students living in smaller LLCs compared with students living in larger ones. The reasoning for this may be that it

is theoretically easier to build a relationship between a smaller number of people than a larger one. The smaller LLCs in the present study contained 1 to 30 residents while larger LLCs contained 31 or more residents, more often reaching the 50 to 60 mark. It makes sense that LLCs with an average of 25 residents would produce larger PSOC scores than LLCs with 60 residents because there are simply much fewer individuals to develop those relationships with.

Differences between Measured Demographic Variables. In terms of sex, previous research suggests that females tend to have a greater feeling of PSOC (DeNeui, 2003; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996) than males, but no other research has been done to support this specifically relating to PSOC measurements. The present study does not support this finding as there were no significant differences between males and females for overall PSOC scores as well as the four subscales of the SCI-2 instrument. The only significant finding related to race was females ranking slightly higher on Question 10 (“This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize”). The reasoning for this is believed to be decoration on the floor or through floor wear such as shirts or other types of clothing with community symbols on them. If females decorated their LLC more often, the significantly higher mean score that females recorded would explain this difference.

In terms of race, significant differences were found between groups for Question 3 (“This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met”), Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved”), and Question 18 (“This community has good leaders”). For Question 3, mean scores were

significantly higher for Hispanics (M=2.87) and Whites (M=2.67) than for other races. What must be noted, however, is the sample size for Hispanics (n=7) compared to Whites (n=369) as that may have a profound impact on the overall mean for the group, which would then impact significance for the measurement. For Question 17, mean scores were significantly higher among Whites (M=2.69), Hispanics (M=2.67), and African Americans (M=2.65) compared to other groups. This may suggest that these groups feel an enhanced ability to solve a problem in a community compared to other races. Finally, Question 18 produced the same results across groups with Hispanics (M=3.00) and Whites (M=2.91) producing a greater mean than other races. This again may suggest that these races feel more positive overall about their community and the leaders that are there compared to other races. Again, it is hard to further explore the area as there has not been much research relating to PSOC measurements and race. Finally, the sample size for each race (found in Table Table 6) would have a profound impact on the mean scores that are used to test for significance.

In terms of age, there were no significant differences found. What must be noted, however, is the grouping for age in the demographic survey. Found in Appendix A, Question 3 lists the ages in overlapping contexts (18 and younger, 19-20, 20-22, 22 and older), meaning someone who was 20 years old could be in either the 19-20 or 20-22 category while someone who was 22 years old could be in either the 20-22 or 22 and older category, which invalidates the data collected for the demographic age comparisons. This can be corrected in the future to ensure valid data is collected for comparison.

In terms of year in school, Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community,

members can get it solved”) produced significant results across the groups. Juniors (M=2.84) produced the highest mean scores for the question, with Seniors (2.78) following closely behind. However, Sophomores (M=2.59) and Freshmen (M=2.58) were not much lower in terms of mean scores. Previous research (DeNeui, 2003; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996) shows that Seniors tended to have higher PSOC scores, but the present study only produced significant results for Question 17, which relate specifically to getting problems solved in the community.

For time on campus, Question 3 (“This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met”), Question 11 (“I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community”), Question 16 (“I have influence over what this community looks like”), and Question 17 (“If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved”) produced significant measurements when compared to the SCI-2 Inventory. Again, what must be understood is the sample size for each category, which is unevenly distributed. Students living on campus for five or more years (n=7, M=3.14) produced the highest mean for Question 3 while students living on campus for only a semester (n=76, M=2.43) produced the lowest. For Question 11, students living on campus for three years produced the highest mean (n=69, M=2.64), while students living on campus for two semesters (n=157, M=2.14) produced the lowest. For Question 16, students living on campus for five or more years (n=7, M=2.57) produced the highest mean while students living on campus for 1 semester (n=76, M=1.99) produced the lowest. Finally, for question 17, students living on campus for three years (n=69, M=2.99) produced the highest mean while students living on campus for one semester (n=76, M=2.55) produced this lowest. These findings must be taken with a grain of salt as they are heavily

impacted by the sample size of each category.

Finally, time in current residence hall produced significant results from Question 9 (“Most community members know me”) and Question 16 (“I have influence over what this community looks like”) produced significant measurements when compared to the SCI-2 Inventory. Question 9 had the highest mean among students living in their current residence hall for three years ($n=30$, $M=3.00$) while the lowest was shown for students living in their current residence hall for four years ($n=7$, $M=2.14$). This may show that students naturally become more well known the longer they live in a particular residence hall, while other students, even though they have lived there longer, may not want to be well known. Question 16 had the highest mean among students who lived in their current residence hall for one year ($n=34$, $M=2.50$) while the lowest was found with students who lived in their current residence hall for 1 semester ($n=91$, $M=1.98$). This seems to make sense as residents who are brand new to a community would tend to feel as though they have little influence over what the community looks like.

Differences between Involvement Levels. Arboleda and Ames (2003) determined various predictors of residence hall involvement, all seemingly centering on the concept of sense of community; the greater the connection residents had to one another, the more likely they were to be involved in residence hall activities. More involvement leads to a better experience, which may in turn lead to higher student retention rates for colleges. Longerbeam, Inkelas, and Brower (2007) suggest that living in a residence hall and establishing a sense of community is one of the “single-strongest influences in the college environment on a range of positive student outcomes” (p. 20). The present study supports these findings with significant correlations that existed

between the overall SCI-2 rating and the floor involvement rating ($r = .63$), between the overall SCI-2 and campus involvement rating ($r = .20$), and across all comparisons made between floor involvement and campus involvement and the four subscales of the SCI-2. In essence, the present study showed that residents who felt a stronger PSOC (both overall and on all four subscales) tended to be both more involved on their floor and around campus. This shows that the sense of community a resident has can perhaps have a profound impact on how involved they are both on the floor and around campus.

Differences between Overall Experience and RA Ability. Previous research links greater sense of community with a better overall residential experience (Schroeder & Mable, 1994), that more emphasis be placed on the development of a sense of community in order to fully maximize the student experience (Hill, 1996), and that relationship building (McDonald, 2002) with the help of the RA was essential for successful community building. Boyer (1990) also stated that a successful community depends heavily on the time and effort that individuals put into it. The present study supports these findings with a statistically significant correlation found between overall PSOC scores, the four subscales, and the rating for a resident's overall experience in their residence hall along with the RA's ability to build community on the floor. In short, there was a statistically significant correlation between how well the resident thought their RA did with community building and their PSOC score and four subscale scores. There was also a statistically significant correlation between residents' overall experience in their residence hall and their overall PSOC score along with the four subscale scores. This means that RAs who work hard to build community among the members on their floor generally help with increasing the overall PSOC level for their residents. Also, their

overall residence hall experience tends to be greater with a greater level for their PSOC measurement.

Recommendations

Student Affairs Practitioners

The following recommendations for student affairs practitioners are based on the present study.

1. Since major emphasis in this study is placed on living-learning community size, it may be very beneficial for colleges and universities to highly consider the size of their LLCs when constructing new residence halls. It seems like many colleges and universities are constructing new residence halls due to higher enrollment numbers, so making sure to strongly consider the size of each LLC (since it has a strong impact on the sense of community that residence feel) is a must in the field. Student affairs practitioners are constantly talking about new ways to build the strong relationships between members in a community, so why not make it easier with a smaller number of them.
2. Another major finding in the study is the effect the RA has on the sense of community on the floor. If the RA ranked high in ability to build relationships on the floor, then residents tended to feel more closely connected on the floor and more involved in the floor. This is a point to consider when RA training comes around at the beginning of each semester. Many training sessions talk about community building, but most perhaps fail to dive deeper into the idea of intentional conversations between the RA and his or her floor mates. It would be greatly beneficial for practitioners to spend considerable time training RAs

on how to have more meaningful, intentional conversations with their residents and how to use those conversations to link their residents together based on commonalities among them. If RAs can be trained more in-depth on how to strengthen the bonds between themselves and their residents, a significantly strong community can develop. There is a skill set that RAs can be trained on for how to effectively reach and bond their residents together, and if practitioners can continue to work on helping them develop that skill set, we would continue to see even stronger communities develop.

3. Another important aspect revealed from the research and supported by hundreds of other studies is how closely floor involvement and campus involvement is related to sense of community. If residents feel more connected on the floor, they are much more likely to be involved on the floor and around campus. It is essential that student affairs practitioners continue to educate their student staff members to work on identifying traits specific to each of their residents to which they can use to connect them to a campus organization, group, committee, or club that fits their interests. If a student loves playing war card games, then we must work to find a group or others around the hall that share this same interest. It is far too often when we have a resident with a particular interest that, because they do not know how, stay disconnected from others that share their interest. We must work together to help identify these particular interests and traits in the students in our residence halls and work to connect them with others who share their interest.

4. The last recommendation for student affairs practitioners is to keep in mind

the essence of what a residence hall experience should provide a student. The overall residence hall experience should provide connections, education outside of the classroom, and learning experiences that are unique, fun, and natural in nature. If we can focus our attention on enhancing the sense of community that a student feels, most of these other experiences will happen naturally. It is our job to make sure residents develop those long lasting connections with individuals they meet and live with for some part of their life. If we can continue to focus on each and every relationship that can be formed in a living-learning community, we lay the ground work for a overwhelmingly strong community.

Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are based on the present study.

1. Smaller living-learning communities demonstrated significantly larger PSOC scores and larger subscale scores than larger living-learning communities.

Future research could repeat the study at a varying degree of colleges or universities to see if the recorded results remain consistent between smaller and larger living-learning communities.

2. The present study touched on a small number of correlations that could be made between PSOC and other measurements (floor size, floor and campus involvement, RA ability to build community, and other demographic measurements). Future research could compare PSOC measurements with more meaningful data (student grades, residence hall satisfactions, relationship

building, etc.) to note any other significant correlations that occur.

3. The focus of the study centered around quantitative data to record PSOC levels. Future research could use qualitative analysis by creating focus groups made up of residents currently living in the residence halls to dive deeper into the reasons why some residents feel more connected than others. Some of the correlated variables (RA ability to build floor relationships, floor involvement level, importance of sense of community) could be explored more using proper questioning techniques with small focus groups.

4. Future research could group minority students into one category as opposed to their respective races to create a larger sample size for minority students in general, which would help validate their mean scores for certain measured areas. For most of the minorities surveyed, their group sample size was very low, which greatly skews their mean scores, in turn affecting the true meaning of their statistically significant scores.

5. Future research could compare students that have canceled their housing contracts with students who have chose to return to the residence halls. This could be a qualitative study that creates focus groups consisting of each category of resident with questions that center directly on reasons why each particular choice was made. This type of study would help dive deeper into the thoughts and opinions for why students leave the residence halls as opposed to why they choose to remain in them.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to examine Psychological Sense of

Community (PSOC) within residential living-learning communities (LLCs) at a mid-sized, mid-western, public university. Focus was placed on comparisons made between the PSOC measurement and characteristics obtained from demographic measurements of each resident in different LLCs. The Sense of Community Index 2 (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008) was used to measure overall PSOC levels as well as four subscales of PSOC: Reinforcement of Needs, Membership, Influence, and Shared Emotional Connection. The overall PSOC score and its four subscale items were compared to sizes of LLCs, various demographic measurements (sex, race, age, time spent in current residence hall, etc.), and several other quantifiable questions. The survey was sent to the entire population of students living on campus in the residence halls using an online surveying site. After all of the data was collected, the results from the survey were compared using a variety of mean comparison statistical procedures to test for significance.

After the results were analyzed it was determined that the size of the LLC had a significant effect on the PSOC levels for students living in that LLC. Also, some statistical differences existed when comparing sex, race, age, year in school, time lived on campus, and time lived in the current residence hall. Also, students that rated their RA as having a good ability to build floor community demonstrated significantly higher PSOC levels. Finally, students who rated themselves as having a good overall residence hall experience also demonstrated higher levels of the PSOC measurement.

Through intentional development of a sense of community in a residence hall, Schroeder (1994) believed that many learning outcomes could be achieved. In communities with a strong sense of community, students would learn self-knowledge,

self-confidence, and self worth. They would foster patience, tolerance, empathy, responsibility, and interpersonal competence while maximizing peer group influences. Hill (1996) suggested that more emphasis be placed on the development of a sense of community in order to fully maximize the student experience. Longerbeam, Inkelas, and Brower (2007) suggest that living in a residence hall and establishing a sense of community is one of the “single-strongest influences in the college environment on a range of positive student outcomes” (p. 20). In today's world, it is pivotal that colleges and universities seek to enhance the sense of community for each student in order to foster student growth (LaNasa, Olson, & Alleman, 2007) and learning (Johnson & Cavins, 1996) in residence halls. Finally, greater engagement with other campus groups including faculty along with higher levels of persistence may spawn from PSOC developed within a dormitory setting (Berger, 1997).

By understanding what factors contribute to a strong sense of community, we can continue to work on enhancing them to enrich the overall experience in the residence hall. Through the improvement of a sense of community, many other areas that are affected by it can improve as well. The residence hall is a place where students come together to learn about themselves and others through constant interaction. If we can help foster that growth by building a strong sense of community, we are helping educate our students in immeasurable ways.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Please take a moment to complete the following survey. All information and answers given will be kept confidential.

Section 1

- 1.) Sex: Male Female Trans-gender
- 2.) Race/Ethnicity: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, non-Hispanic, Hispanic, White, non-Hispanic, I decline to provide the requested information, No Response
- 3.) Age: 18 and younger 19-20 20-22 22 and older
- 4.) Year in school: Freshmen Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate
- 5.) Approximate total length of time you have lived on campus:
1 semester 2 semesters 1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years or longer
- 6.) Approximate length of time you have spent in your current residence hall:
1 semester 2 semesters 1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years or longer
- 7.) When choosing a residence hall in which to live, what preference did the current residence fall:
1st Choice 2nd Choice 3rd Choice 4th Choice Randomly Assigned
- 8.) How involved would you say you are on your floor (programs, hall council, floor activities):
Never Involved Rarely Involved Somewhat Involved Very Involved
- 9.) How involved would you say you are on campus (intramurals/athletics, RSOs, Greek Life, campus activities): Never Involved Rarely Involved Somewhat Involved Very Involved
- 10.) How well would you rate your RA for building a relationship between members living on the floor:
Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
- 11.) How would you rate your overall experience for living in the current residence hall:
Very Negative Negative Neutral Positive Very Positive
- 12.) In which residence hall do you currently reside: Pemberton, Lincoln, Stevenson,

Douglas, Ford, McKinney, Weller, Taylor, Lawson, Thomas, Andrews, Carman

Section 2

The following questions about community refer to the **current residence hall floor on which you reside**.

How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other floor members?

Please select one of the following:

- 1 - Prefer Not to be Part of This Community
- 2 - Not Important at All
- 3 - Not Very Important
- 4 - Somewhat Important
- 5 - Important
- 6 - Very Important

Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please circle one number for each according to the scale.

	Not at All	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
1. I get important needs of mine met because I am part of this community.	1	2	3	4
2. Community members and I value the same things.	1	2	3	4
3. This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met.	1	2	3	4
4. Being a member of this community makes me feel good.	1	2	3	4
5. When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community.	1	2	3	4
6. People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals.	1	2	3	4
7. I can trust people in this community.	1	2	3	4
8. I can recognize most of the	1	2	3	4

members of this community.

	1	2	3	4
	Not at All	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
9. Most community members know me.	1	2	3	4
10. This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize.	1	2	3	4
11. I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community.	1	2	3	4
12. Being a member of this community is a part of my identity.	1	2	3	4
13. Fitting into this community is important to me.	1	2	3	4
14. This community can influence other communities.	1	2	3	4
15. I care about what other community members think of me.	1	2	3	4
16. I have influence over what this community is like.	1	2	3	4
17. If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved.	1	2	3	4
18. This community has good leaders.	1	2	3	4
19. It is very important to me to be a part of this community.	1	2	3	4
20. I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them.	1	2	3	4
21. I expect to be a part of this community for a long time.	1	2	3	4
22. Members of this community have	1	2	3	4

shared important events together, such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters.

	Not at All	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
23. I feel hopeful about the future of this community.	1	2	3	4
24. Members of this community care about each other.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B

Below are the drafts that were used in the emails sent to the participants:

First Email:

Subject Heading: EIU Survey with \$50 Gift Card

Email Draft: The following survey is being conducted by Jacob Hanley, a Graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The survey measures the opinions of students living in the residence halls and takes only about ten minutes to complete. Click the link to access the survey; once completed, please respond to this email with your name and a contact number to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Visa Gift Card. Please take the survey as your opinion is essential to the success of this survey.

Jake Hanley

Graduate Student – Counseling and Student Development

Eastern Illinois University

Second Email:

Subject Heading: EIU Survey with \$50 Gift Card Follow-Up

This is a reminder to complete the survey that is linked in this email. Please read below for the purpose of this reminder:

The following survey is being conducted by Jacob Hanley, a Graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The survey measures the opinions of students living in the residence halls and takes only about ten minutes to complete. Click the link to access the survey; once completed, please respond to this email with your name and a contact number to be

entered into a drawing for a \$50 Visa Gift Card. Please take the survey as your opinion is essential to the success of this survey.

Third Email:

Subject Heading: EIU Survey with \$50 Gift Card Follow-Up

This is a final reminder to complete the survey that is linked in this email. Please read below for the purpose of this reminder:

The following survey is being conducted by Jacob Hanley, a Graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The survey measures the opinions of students living in the residence halls and takes only about ten minutes to complete. Click the link to access the survey; once completed, please respond to this email with your name and a contact number to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Visa Gift Card. Please take the survey as your opinion is essential to the success of this survey.

Appendix C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Psychological Sense of Community

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jacob Hanley under the guidance of Dr. Daniel P. Nadler under the department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you represent the population most suitable from which data can be obtained. Approximately 336 participants will be measured on campus in order to make comparisons across the groups measured. There is no single quality for inclusion or exclusion of the participants in this experiment.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

To measure the Psychological Sense of Community of various residents within the residence halls on campus and to make comparisons between living-learning community size, sex, and other demographic variables for different members of different communities.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to simply take a short survey where general thoughts and opinions will be recorded.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts that result from taking this survey.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Potential benefits that may result from taking this survey include learning more about the overall feelings of your community members with regard to their sense of community and finding trends that may emerge from comparisons made across groups that take the survey.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of not recording the names of anyone who participates.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Jacob Hanley
1867 4th St.
Charleston, IL 61920
(217)-581-2015
jrhanley2@eiu.edu

Dr. Daniel P. Nadler
600 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920
(217)-581-3221
nadler@eiu.edu

• RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

IRB Approval

From: EIU IRB [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2011 9:35 AM
To: 'jrhanley2@eiu.edu'
Cc: Nadler, Daniel P; Siddens, Chery!
Subject: IRB Certification of Exemption - Hanley, #11-038

March 1, 2011

Jacob Hanley
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "A Study of Psychological Sense of Community within Living-Learning Environments" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has reviewed this research protocol and effective 2/28/2011, has certified this protocol as Exempt from Further Review. The protocol has been given the IRB number 11-038. You may proceed with your study.

The classification of dais protocol as Exempt from Further Review is valid only for the research activities and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any proposed changes to this protocol must be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research
and Sponsored
Programs Telephone:
217-581-8576
Fax:217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Thank you for your cooperation, and the best of success with your research.

Robert Chesnut, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 217-581-2125
Email: rwchesnut@eiu.edu