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Developmental variables of undergraduate resident assistants when negotiating conflict with peers.

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DEVELOPMENTAL VARIABLES OF UNDERGRADUATE
RESIDENT ASSISTANTS
WHEN NEGOTIATING CONFLICT WITH PEERS

A Dissertation Presented

by

MICHAEL I. BLOOMFIELD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February, 1992
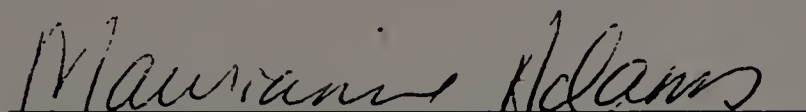
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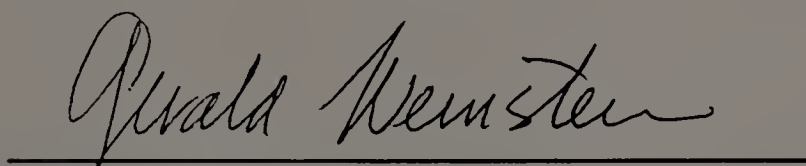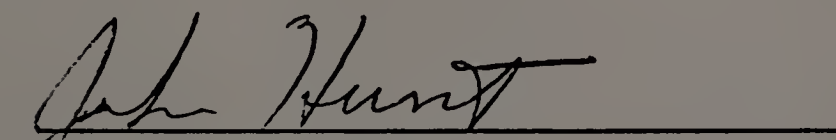
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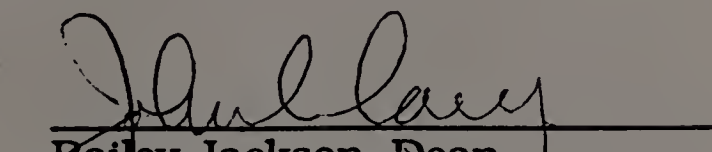

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We learn and we grow through the feedback and support of others. May I mentor others, as these people have pointed the way for me:

♥ Sandra Johnston Whitcomb, coordinator of the Residential Education Alcohol Program (REAP) and former supervisor, who, for me, was first to "wake up and smell the coffee" and question the enforcement role of RAs -- my forever respect;

♥ Anne Miller, coordinator of Residential Education, who opened the doors into the residences for me to conduct the study (and then some);

♥ Lynda Fennessey, whose statistical fortitude let my days be numbered -- I count my blessings;

♥ Al Alshuler, who told me I was a peer in spite of myself, and Kent Poey, who re-affirmed that it is developmentally awkward (to say the least) to be a 40 year old student;

♥ Paul Vasconcellos, who rated the MER above and beyond the call of duty;

♥ John Hunt, whose experience and concrete perspective provided me with added confirmation regarding the RA dilemma;

♥ Jerry Weinstein, who has supported me throughout, from admissions, through continual confidence in my teaching Education of the Self, through the dissertion, and out -- Humanistic Psychological Education is still alive!

♥ Maurianne Adams, my chair, whose clarity and humaneness encouraged the growth of clear writing (still in progress!) non-judgmentally and with compassion -- I now know why your colleagues hold you in high esteem!

♥ Luke and Aila, who love their daddy unconditionally;

♥♥ Katie, my lifelong partner, who was happy for me to begin this, happy for me to end it, and continues to dance with me!

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENTAL VARIABLES OF UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENT
ASSISTANTS WHEN NEGOTIATING CONFLICT WITH PEERS

FEBRUARY, 1992

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Directed by Dr. Maurianne Adams, Chair

The role of the Resident Assistant (RA) has assumed special
prominence during the last thirty years, as theories of student
development have promoted the practice of peer education,
particularly in residence halls. RAs have been given a long list of tasks
and job expectations that can be generally categorized within peer
counseling and policy enforcing functions. Some researchers and
writers in the field of student development and residence hall ecology
have argued that with proper training and supervision, RAs can
adequately fulfill their assigned duties while simultaneously
matriculate, fulfilling their own personal undergraduate academic and
social needs.

This assumption is presently under scrutiny, as information from
cognitive development regarding late adolescent epistemology
questions the readiness of these students to be able to perform
simultaneously in all of their roles. In particular, the role of enforcing
university rules and regulations with many floormates who are also
peers and friends presents RAs with levels of conflict that may stem

from their current cognitive developmental level, thus limiting the ways they negotiate conflict during enforcement activities. The result may be a mis-match of person to task. Some undergraduate RAs may not be ready to carry out their most developmentally challenging task of enforcing campus policy with peers to whom they have ties of support and friendship.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the possibility of certain behavioral trends in the ways RAs negotiate conflict with their peers while enforcing university policy based on their tested cognitive developmental level. By administering two production-type developmental assessments and one preference-type conflict mode inventory, as well as performing individual interviews of selected RAs, I examine possible mis-matches and matches of RAs with their roles, particularly that of policy enforcement with peers.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

From matriculation to graduation students develop and grow socially, intellectually and emotionally; and during these changes, new adaptations and responses to their environment occur. Peer relationships - whether they be roommates, floormates, classmates, friends or lovers - offer a testing ground for the evolving sense of self and sensitivity to others. Both inner and interpersonal conflict emerge as students take on new roles during this stimulating time period. They ask themselves, "Who is in charge of my life and what facts and opinions should I believe?" The backdrop to these questions, the transformation from late adolescence to young adulthood, reflects the developing abilities to accept diversity, cope with stress and ambiguity, and discover new ways of relating interpersonally with peers and to authority figures. These abilities are demonstrated by increasingly effective decision-making, clarified personal values, and awareness of realities different than one's own.

The roles and tasks of the Resident Assistant (RA) are intrinsically tied to the personal growth of undergraduates. Such student maturation parallels the goals of higher education, which include the academic and social development of late adolescent students relative to society's changing priorities and circumstances. To assist this growth process, colleges provide innumerable services to students. Included in these services is a residential educational program based on theoretical principles of student development. These principles, among other things, include peer learning, support and supervision. The role of RAs, as peers to students they serve, is

designed to enhance the living experience of all housing residents, insure order by supporting university regulations, and provide opportunities for personal development for the RAs themselves.

Problem

There may be a problem, however, regarding the expectations placed on the performance of RAs in fulfilling all their tasks. Many studies have discussed 1) RA training to enhance effectiveness (Layne, Layne and Schoch, 1977; Schilling, 1977; Scroggins and Ivey, 1978; Hayes and Burke, 1981; Upcraft, 1982; Winston and Buckner, 1984; Hetherington, Phelps and Oliver, 1989), 2) problems encountered by RAs (Winkelpleck and Domke, 1977; Miller and Smith, 1979; Shipton and Schuh, 1982, 1986; Hetherington and Kerr, 1988), 3) selecting RAs (Biggs, 1971; Conroy, 1978; Habley, 1979; Ostroth, 1981; Ender and Winston, 1984), and 4) beneficial characteristics of RAs [as determined by administrators] (Wyrick and Mitchell, 1971; Shelton and Mathis, 1976; Thomas, 1979; Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986; Williams and Nelson, 1986; Deluga, 1989). These studies suggest that the placement of undergraduates in RA positions presents a set of internal and interpersonal dynamics that are dependent on both the characteristics of the persons assigned and the RA position itself. To understand these dynamics, therefore, we need to understand both the person and the job.

When Kurt Lewin (1936) opened up a new world of examining behavior with his formula [(B)ehavior = (f)unction of a (P)erson (X)interacting with the (E)nvironment], he provided subsequent researchers with a pro-active basis for understanding the growth of

students. This study examines the person (RA), the environment (RA role in the resident halls), and how they interact, by offering a developmental task analysis of RA tasks and the RA as an undergraduate student.

It is the purpose of this study to provide a preliminary analysis of the potential match or mismatch of RAs with certain tasks from a developmental perspective. To provide this developmental task analysis, I address the following questions:

1. What are the specific tasks that RAs perform?
2. What developmental tasks are present during the acting out of the role of enforcer, and are the skills necessary to perform these tasks developmentally linked?
3. If the skills are developmentally linked, are RAs able to adequately perform each of the required tasks, as well as all of the tasks simultaneously?

The developmental dynamics become meaningful when examined through the domain of conflict negotiation. When RAs are in the role of enforcing university policy, conflict may emerge on a number of levels. Based on the reported experiences of RAs (to be discussed in chapter 4), three levels of conflict apparently emerge during the performance of some RA tasks:

1. internal conflict -- where RAs find themselves struggling with choosing between apparently conflicting roles, that of peer counselor or that of peer enforcer;
2. interpersonal conflict -- as an outgrowth of the internal conflict, RAs then struggle to determine which behaviors to initiate while engaged in policy enforcement;
3. metapersonal conflict -- RAs question whether policy enforcement is a personally valid role in which they believe and which they can carry out.

Both the internal and metapersonal conflicts may influence the inter-personal conflict negotiation strategies chosen by each RA. That is,

how RAs behave while enforcing policy (interpersonal) may reflect which role - counselor or enforcer - they feel more comfortable with (internal conflict), and whether they believe enforcement is a personally acceptable role (metapersonal conflict). With this in mind, a fourth question is addressed in this study, namely,

4. How does an RA negotiate conflict with fellow students who may be friends, cohorts, younger or older?

In many cases, as seen in the literature (e.g. Upcraft, 1982; Winston and Buckner, 1984) and in practice, these apparent conflicts are either overlooked or are met with the belief that the training which RAs receive will provide sufficient instruction as to how RAs should handle various situations in the residence halls. Unfortunately, telling someone how to do something does not guarantee they can or will do it (Saidla, 1990). Saidla suggests that the willingness to understand is a separate but equal quality from the capacity to understand, that "competence may not be actualized through performance." It is possible that universities believe that, since RAs are, presumably, willing to perform tasks, therefore, they are ready (developmentally speaking) to perform these tasks. This study questions that assumption.

There is evidence that training alone does not offer a remedy for some issues that come up for RAs when engaged in the performance of their tasks (Ricci, Porterfield and Piper, 1987). Such evidence may be seen, for example, both indirectly, by apparent inconsistencies reported to me by students regarding enforcement procedures, and directly, as reported by RAs themselves (e.g. "How can I write up a friend?"). It is possible that, due to cognitive developmental

considerations, some RAs may not yet be ready to adequately fulfill some task expectations, due to developmental mismatching. This study also addresses such possible developmental discrepancies.

Background

In addressing developmental concerns regarding how late adolescent students relate to each other during conflict, the sociological context of college life should be considered. The very existence of RAs presumes an acceptance of beliefs and values that support the notion of positive peer involvement and relationships within living units which are separate from direct adult supervision. These presumptions are based on a philosophy and set of expectations from administrators who reflect the needs of society as a whole (Aubrey, 1977). The trend away from autocratic control of student behavior and towards facilitative support of student development throughout the 350 years of American colleges and universities has provided the impetus to observe the interpersonal behaviors of students in depth.

During the early religious beginnings of American colleges (Harvard, 1636), and for almost 150 years, the primary concern of college life was the student's relationship to God. Development issues were based on "soul-saving" demands and expectations from rigid ministerial faculty (Chesney, Stamatakos & Stepanovich, 1981). The curriculum stressed traditional religious values that reinforced moral character (Mueller, 1961; Rudolph, 1962; Handlin and Handlin, 1970). Governor Berkeley of Virginia made the statement (1671): "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall

not have these [for a] hundred years; for learning has brought *disobedience*, and heresy, and sects into the world..." (Smith, 1979) (my emphasis). Conflicts between students were seen as moral deterioration, not a developmental progression.

During the next approximately 125 years, colleges were primarily concerned with the student's <u>relationship to society</u>. Education was considered a means of preserving liberty, securing unity, promoting good citizenship and developing the resources of the land and people (Good and Teller, 1973).   President Wayland of Brown University stated (1867) that college was "an intermediate place between the family and society, to prepare the student for entrance upon the practical duties of life" (Handlin and Handlin, 1970, p. 41). Conflict was something to be controlled "to keep students in line" (Upcraft, 1982). Retired military officers, football coaches and elderly housemothers enforced university policy and maintained status quo within residence life. During this time the German university system of research-oriented graduate education narrowed concern for only academic achievement (Hofstater and Metzger, 1955; Cremen, 1961; Good, 1962; Herbst, 1965; Cohen, 1974). The expansion of social activities, e.g. athletics, drama, the Greek system and student publications, grew out of this narrow academic focus, and provided outlets for a student's need for exploration. The conception that an individual's needs are <u>internally driven</u>, and, therefore, to be examined and understood from a psychological perspective, and not suppressed or ignored, had not yet taken hold in mainstream social context.

During the last approximately 75 years, with the influences of Dewey, Freud and other psychologically-based educators and theorists,

concern developed for the student's <u>relationship with self</u>. President Kennedy, in establishing a Commission on National Goals in 1960, stated:

> *The status of the individual must remain our*
> *primary concern.* All our institutions, political, social,
> and economic, must further enhance the dignity of the
> citizen, promote maximum development of his capabilities,
> stimulate their responsible exercise and widen the range
> and effectiveness of opportunities for individual choice
> (Craig, 1962, p.163) (my emphasis).

Further, Arendt (1961) notes that "the waning of traditional authority, the decline of punishment, the virtual disappearance of religious faith and moral self-discipline, and the growth of permissive individualism are underlying processes to changes...." Administrators replaced rules and regulations intended to control students with programs and services intended to promote student development (Upcraft, 1982). The role of staff became one of active educator facilitating personal growth and autonomy. Openness and assertiveness were behavioral expectations. The student became viewed as an individual with the ability to cope within society, while at the same time, to transcend the student's basic needs, in order to achieve high levels of personal growth (Chesney, et. al., 1981). As an educational rationale developed within residence halls, professional residence life staff were hired to supervise the lives of students. The development of peer education and peer counseling during the 1960's established the value of students seeing themselves as active participants in their own lives. Residence halls became arenas for developmental growth, interpersonal skill development and the enhancement of identity and security (Riker, 1980). Conflict between students came to be seen as an issue of developing young adult personalities, and as the outcome of

group dynamics experienced during the transition period from late adolescence to young adulthood.

By the mid 1970's three basic assumptions about residence halls and their potential for educating students were becoming current (Brown, 1974): 1) where students live has impact on their personal and educational development; 2) residence halls can be structured to increase development; and 3) resident hall personnel must be skilled in structuring these environments. Thus, RAs came to be hired for the purpose of providing assistance in the maintenance of resident hall structure which provides an educational and developmental environment. Whether they are able to fulfill this expectation in certain arenas remains to be the question addressed by this study.

Personal Background

As a professional working with traditional age undergraduate students, I began to explore the RA role question in light of developmental issues. Specifically, issues related to policy enforcement among peers evolved out of my work at the University of Massachusetts, facilitating alcohol education classes for students who violate university policies. In a study conducted by my supervisor, Sandra Johnston Miller (1988), which surveyed RAs' observations of floormates' alcohol consumption practices, RA self-behavior with alcohol, and conflicts regarding alcohol policy enforcement, strong evidence became apparent about the difficulty that exists for many RAs in policy enforcement of university alcohol policy. The issues presented confirmed earlier studies (Graff and Bradshaw, 1970; Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986; Hetherington and Kerr, 1988) which

noted how similar RA attitudes and behaviors were to those of their peers.

We began asking the question, "Who's minding the store?" with respect to consistent alcohol policy enforcement. Furthermore, remarks made by RAs during the course of that study strongly suggested that a role conflict does exist, not just around alcohol issues, but around enforcement of policy in general. Apparently, internal, interpersonal and metapersonal conflict surfaced as a consequence of the two general roles assigned to RAs - peer counselor and peer enforcer. Statements such as "How can I write up a friend?"; "First I was just another guy on the floor and now I'm an RA - I think some people resent me for it"; "It's difficult to draw the line between friend and enforcer" represent some of the concerns expressed by RAs who see themselves in the combined roles of friend, peer counselor and enforcer. Responses such as these indicated that the RAs were struggling with a number of personal obstacles to being effective enforcers. Having previously known the residents as a peer and friend, and having to enforce policy with friends, were common themes. It was obvious that most of the RAs had difficulty with the internal conflict of being both a friend (counselor) and an administrator (rule enforcer). Likewise, they were placed in positions of enforcement responsibility which often conflicted with their own established norms (in this case, drinking behavior), as well as with their motivation or ability to do this job (Miller, Whitcomb, & Bloomfield, 1989), reflecting interpersonal and metapersonal conflict.

From this recent survey it was postulated that the conflicts RAs experienced were possibly due to one or both of 1) role incompatibility

of counselor and enforcer and 2) cognitive and moral development variables based on stage of growth. There have been many clearly stated views regarding the counselor-enforcer role dilemma (Wrenn, 1951; Omer, 1955; Rogers, 1961; Williamson, 1961; Delworth, Sherwood & Cassaburri, 1974; Hayes, 1974; Kipp, 1979; ACPA, 1981; Blimling and Miltenberger, 1981; Upcraft, 1982; AACD, 1988; Kitchener, 1988; Dadez, 1989). Some of these views specifically denounce any crossing of the two roles (e.g. Rogers, 1961; Kitchener, 1988). Others believe that the problem stemming from expecting both roles from RAs is overrated (e.g. Upcraft, 1982). Still others combine the two roles into one, called "disciplinary counseling" (Gometz and Parker, 1970). The diversity of opinion suggests at least two possibilities: a) that the idea of role incompatibility as a conflict of two classes of actions is controversial and is therefore not to be underestimated, and b) whether an RA can or cannot (or should or should not) perform both roles may be dependent on the stage of the individual's development, not the group as a whole. These possibilities guide the direction of the study presented.

Definition of Terms

1. Student Development

As Rodgers (1990) has stated, student development "comprises... the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capacities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education." While this may operationally define the concept of student development, it represents only a starting point

in understanding its theoretical, philosophical and programmatic usage.

Theories of student development, as described in chapter two, grew out of late adolescent and adult humanistic psychological research and theory. Psychosocial, cognitive developmental and campus (social) ecology schools of thought provided the framework from which investigators developed the idea that college students experience progressively more complex tasks in the transition from adolescence to young adulthood and utilize more abstract reasoning abilities to make meaning out of their experiences over time. Thus, student development can be understood as the growth of late adolescent college students in their intellectual, social and psychological capabilities.

Philosophically, student development represents a body of thought governed by humanistic principles that attempt to understand how each *whole* individual interacts in the environment in her/his own unique way. Students came to be viewed as individuals with creative potential, not simply a body to be controlled and tolerated until graduation.

This philosophy led to a new order of student services provided by campus administrators to facilitate the development of students. Student development has come to represent an orientation on campus that provides many opportunities for self-exploration and learning outside of the classroom and especially in the residence halls.

2. Cognitive Development

Cognitive development, according to Piaget and his followers, demonstrates "the genesis of structures that emerge out of the interaction of the human cognitive organism with its environment" (Wartofsky, 1983). Knowledge is a "constructive enterprise" in which one plays an active role in building organized mental structures (Mandler, 1983). The school of thought followed by successors of Piaget is characterized by an organismic position, holding that humans inherently pursue an ideal end state of development. Through interactions with the world, one constructs knowledge. Individuals are seen as organized wholes, developing through a series of qualitatively distinct stages using a dynamic process of absorbing new information (assimilation) and altering internal organization in response to this information (accomodation). Originally, the stages were seen as invariant and universal, that is, they proceed in a regular order, in a linear fashion without regression to earlier stages (Rebok, 1987). However, this is increasingly being questioned, due to 1) a lack of account for situational influences and 2) the possibility of value premises (Steenbarger, 1991).

A Piagetian cognitive developmentalist studies the structural properties of human thought common to all subjects at the same level of development (Kitchener, 1986). Other approaches exist in the study of cognitive development. Behavioristic theories see growth as a continuous and passive experience, where individuals react to external forces, rather than actively constructing experience. Life-span contextual theories see cognitive growth as multi-directional; that is, one may move forward and back, cognitively speaking, depending on

specific situations, without a fixed end-state to development. In large part, the decision to employ the Piagetian definition of cognitive development in this study is based on the wealth of well-defined theory that uses cognitive development as a basis for understanding how college students think. The major theorists chosen for this study, notably Robert Kegan, William Perry, et. al., are researchers in the Piagetian tradition who have studied adolescence and young adulthood extensively, and provide significant schemata to examine the college student population. While they have come out of a Piagetian tradition, they do not claim universality as originally promoted; rather, they are domain-specific in their application of cognitive development theory.

3. Conflict

Conflict, "to strike together", is a condition in which the concerns of two or more people appear to be incompatible (Thomas, 1979). It involves a struggle between people over a number of possible reasons -- values (ways of life...); status, power, resources (Kriedler, 1984) and data (misinforma-tion); relationships (emotions, stereotypes...); interests (differing procedures, content...); structure (unequal control, time...)[Coser, 1967; Deutsch, 1973; Moore, 1986]. There may be an "unequal exchange" between a dyad (Rank and LeCroy, 1983) where any of these causes appear to favor one over another.

Conflict is intrinsic to relationships. It exists at all levels of personal and social interaction. It is natural and inevitable and can be viewed as an assumed and expected part of all systems (Eshleman, 1981). Positively assessed conflict prevents stagnation, stimulates

interest and curiosity, provides a medium for problem-solving and acts as the root of personal and social change (Deutsch, 1973). Living independently, students undergo enumerable opportunities for conflict with a diverse group of peers with different backgrounds and orientations. Learning how to manage or resolve conflict, as opposed to viewing it as negative or disruptive, can strengthen relationships and make them more meaningful (Rank and LeCroy, 1983).

However, most late adolescents do not have adequately developed conflict management skills, and stress develops during the process of negotiating conflict effectively. Deutsch (1973) attempts to describe a set of psycho-social dynamics which accounts for interpersonal variables that individuals must face:

1. each person responds to another in terms of his/her perceptions and cognitions of the other; these may or may not correspond to the other's actualities;

2. being cognizant of the other's capacity for awareness, one is influenced by his/her own expectations concerning the other's actions, as well as by their perceptions of the other's conduct. These expectations may or may not be accurate;

3. decision making within the individual can entail a struggle among different interests and values. *Internal structure and internal process are characteristic of all social units* (my emphasis);

4. social interaction takes place in a social environment; therefore, to understand a particular conflict involves understanding the broader social context in which conflict occurs (Deutsch, 1973).

5) social interaction exposes one to new models of behavior; therefore, a person in conflict with another is shaped by the experience. There is evidence that an individual experiencing conflict with another, [as in peer conflict situations], is learning more complex ways of interrelating.

Conflict may appear both intrapersonally and intragroup, as well as interpersonally and intergroup. Hale (1987) notes four underlying bases from which conflict emerges:

1. Internal factors -- personality, cultural, character or "ethos of a people (Kriesberg, 1982).

2. Relationships between categories of people -- those with and without power, with and without resources, incompatible beliefs.

3. Social systems -- institutionalization and integration: rules for managing fights and disputes, as well as degree of inter-dependence between groups.

4. Generic theory of conflict -- "...an adisciplinary study that cuts across all disciplines: a synthesis, a holistic approach to a problem area" (Burton and Sandole, 1986).

This framework outlines the intrapsychic, interpersonal and social contexts from which conflict emerges. The "characteristic internal structure and process" noted above, perhaps similar to Kegan's (1982) "emergent cognitive competencies," relates the experience of conflict with cognitive abilities and will be the basis for examining cognitive development theory in this study.

4. Resident Assistant (RA)

Resident Assistants are undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst who are hired by the university to provide peer counseling to the students living in residence halls, and to perform varied administrative tasks, including policy enforcement, under the supervision of the resident director (RD) of their particular residence hall. A more detailed description of RA tasks and issues follows in chapter 2.

Outline of Dissertation

This study examines any relationships between cognitive developmental levels of a small sample of Resident Assistants (RAs) and the self-reported ways these RAs negotiate conflict when performing their enforcement duties with peers. Chapter 2 examines the roles and tasks of RAs in the residence halls and places those roles within the context of selected models of student development. I use the theories of William Perry, Lawrence Kohlberg, Robert Kegan, Robert Selman, and Harvey, Hunt and Schroder, in order to provide the frameworks in analyzing the roles of RAs. These theories allow me to develop hypotheses regarding potential matching and mismatching of expected tasks with stage of development. This analysis takes the form of a charting by stage, to postulate whether one could expect RAs to perform different tasks depending on a particular cognitive level.

Similarly, a projection is offered, based on both the developmental and conflict modes literature, to hypothesize the kinds of conflict negotiation strategies which might appear at different stages of development.

Chapter 3 decribes the methodology of the study.

Chapter 4 reports on the results of the study, analyzing the data for patterns that may exist relative to conflict negotiation behaviors associated with each cognitive level of development.

Chapter 5 discusses the results in light of developmental theory and application to student development and residence hall life.

Value of the Study

This study examines the cognitive developmental aspects of the RA role, and speculates whether in certain arenas, there may be a mis-match of person with task. By utilizing a social-cognitive analysis of undergraduate Resident Assistants' tasks and roles, I am speculating on potential matching and mis-matching between role expectations, self-perceived behavior and cognitive development variables.

One of the ways that I present such speculation is in the form of charts that hypothesize how RAs might fulfill or not fulfill their role expectations. Each chart presented represents a cognitive developmentalist's schema in conjunction with possible matches and mismatches regarding how RAs perform aspects of their job.

Resident Assistants find themselves managing their personal lives, as they grow out of adolescence into young adulthood, while simultaneously performing the roles expected of them by their position. RA responses in some studies describing difficulties they experience in their jobs have revealed their confusion regarding how they should relate to their peers while in certain conflict situations (Miller, Whitcomb and Bloomfield, 1989). An understanding of possible sources of such confusion could aid the RA supervisor in training and assisting RAs with respect to individual readiness and needs. Similarly, a greater understanding of some of the developmental issues late adolescent RAs experience would offer administrators an important perspective regarding the real potential and limitations of assigning certain tasks to RAs at certain developmental levels. Furthermore, it may be possible that knowledge of developmental issues might serve to help create individualized

conflict negotiation strategies. Clearly, the diverse opinions nationwide regarding which roles are and are not appropriate for undergraduate RAs warrant deeper investigation (Stanford, 1988).

This study offers a new method of exploring the relationship between cognitive developmental level, the roles RAs perform, and the ways conflict is negotiated. While these relationships have been explored only minimally in the literature, the methodology employed in this study is unique. This study uses methodology which includes the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (MODE), a written, preference-type assessment tool that has not been presented in the previous research on cognitive development. Based on the description of the research that created the MODE (see chapter 4), this tool can be useful in obtaining specific information regarding how one negotiates conflict. As can be seen in chapter 4, the Results of the Study, some parallels are observed of RAs in what they say in interviews they do in specific conflict situations (policy enforcement) and what their MODE test scores reveal. Thus, this research not only explores a particular relationship, that of cognitive development with how RAs perform specific roles, but also explores the use of a methodology created specifically to examine this relationship.

This study presents also a new way of examining the roles of RAs, by employing both psychosocial and cognitive development models in conjunction with each other. Parallels between the two domains are drawn, each supporting the other regarding late adolescent college student needs and motivations.

By examining the literature, I explore the possibility of threshold; namely, is there a point prior to which no amount of

training will make up for a developmental unreadiness to perform certain tasks that evoke conflict? Kegan, for example, in his discussions of subject-object relationships, suggests that at any given stage of development, individuals can be so immersed or "embedded" within their present experience, that they are the experience, as opposed to having an experience. In his interpersonal, stage 3, for example, it is difficult to separate one's own reality from the reality of another. Until the ability to separate clearly occurs, it may be difficult for an RA to differentiate between his or her own needs and the requirements of a particular situation (e.g. writing up a student for a policy violation). Chapter 2 explores the developmental aspect of threshold with more detailed examination of Kegan and other developmental theorists.

To be considered, too, is the question whether there are modes of conflict behavior that parallel different developmental thresholds. Through uses of assessment instruments and interview, I explore whether patterns of conflict behavior manifest at different developmental stages. These patterns or trends, if they exist, could provide highly useful information regarding what can be expected of different RAs in carrying out certain tasks.

In the microcosm of residence halls, when one examines the roles of RAs and their developmental levels, the opportunity to study role appropriateness relative to stage of development arises. This examination may determine whether the developmental needs of individual students are being met, which, then, will affect the larger institutional needs.

Scope and Limitations

Cognitive development theory is only one measure useful in examining college students. It is a highly relevant one though, as I am investigating potential match and mis-match categories based on how RAs <u>make meaning</u> of their experiences -- conflict during rule-enforcement in particular. If we know an individual's set of reference points regarding how they perceive or "frame" an incident, we may understand more of what motivates their behavior. Thus, by measuring subjects' cognitive developmental level, we can have a baseline understanding of "where they are coming from" at a certain point in time.

RAs, by definition of their role as policy enforcer, often find themselves in conflict with their peers and, therefore, can provide clear examples of such situations. While RAs are a sub-group of the general student population, they are not a special group significantly different from their peers (Adams and Zhou, 1991). The RAs in this study are traditional age undergraduate students who have chosen (and were hired) to be RAs in student housing. They are enrolled in a large northeastern state university whose population includes predominantly white, middle-class students. They were born in the years between 1965 and 1972 (age range of 19-26). While demographically, they are similar to the undergraduate population at-large, their assigned roles, particularly policy enforcement duties, offer a way to study some developmental issues in a limited, focused manner.

As will be stated clearly in chapters 3 and 4, the sample size used in this study is extremely small, and results of test scores cannot have statistical significance. As an exploratory study using tools that

have not been used together before, this research's aim was to look for tendencies, not one-to-one correspondence, as well as test the use of these previously unmatched instruments in a research design. The literature up to the present confirms that it is an inappropriate simplification to match a conflict style of behavior to a single stage. As previous research and common sense informs us, many sorts of behaviors can be observed at each level of development. In fact, it will be seen by the results of the study (chapters 4 and 5), the interview procedure appears to be the methodology of choice for this kind of research. Much more testing of the use of the MODE on a larger scale is necessary to determine meaningful relationships. Chapter 5 examines further these limits.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Development and RA Roles and Tasks

RAs are expected to confront students on their floors when a violation occurs within the Code of Student Conduct. This duty to enforce regulations presents these students with conflict situations both internally and interpersonally. Questions related to these conflict situations are:

1. How RAs negotiate conflict with fellow students who may be friends, cohorts, younger or older?

2. What developmental issues are present during the task of enforcement, and are the skills necessary to perform the tasks developmentally linked?

To address these questions, this section of the study examines briefly the historical, theoretical, philosophical and programmatic context in which RAs are expected to perform their roles in the residence halls. Likewise, it offers a speculative analysis as to the potentials and limitations of the performance of RA tasks with regard to selected literature on cognitive development theory.

Emergence of the RA Role

The existence of the Resident Assistant role as explored in this study is a late 20th century phenomenon. The duties of RAs early in this century appear to have consisted simply of disciplinary activities lead by older authoritarian figures (Powell, Plyler, Dickson & McClellan, 1969). In the residence halls the relationship between

student and staff changed significantly by the 1960's (Winston, Ullon & Werring, 1984). During this period of transformation researchers realized that effective support of students could be provided by peers in many areas of college life (Habley, 1979; Riker, 1965; Scroggins and Ivey, 1978; Brown, 1972; Greenwood, 1981). It has been reported (Brown and Zunker, 1966) that up to 90% of programs in resident halls are run by students, and by the mid 1980's, research revealed that approximately three quarters of all student affairs divisions in higher education provided student staffed programs (Ender, 1984). Upcraft (1982) suggests that this is due to reasons of cost effectiveness, but studies have shown that in some situations, students respond significantly quicker with higher receptivity to peers as compared to older, professional staff (Zunker and Brown, 1966). Rapport can be more easily established between RAs and peer students on the floor, and in many situations, the amount of training needed for various responsibilities (e.g. providing information and offering referrals) is somewhat less than for professional staff development. Is it possible that the reasons for higher receptivity to peers, mentioned above, may include certain developmental variables that increase the likelihood of such rapport? The existence of such variables is discussed below.

Theory and Philosophy

The 1950's was the transition period at which time theoretical understanding of student development began to emerge (Aubrey, 1977). Counseling and psychotherapy grew in a humanistic climate and human development concepts were beginning to be applied to the

growth process of students. Colleges and universities saw the role of student services expand from controlling behavior to teaching students to become "active agents in shaping their environment" (Hurst and Jacobson, 1985). Student development theory promoted the quest for the "healthy personality," replacing the earlier principle of suppressing undesirable behavior (Greenwood, 1980). Student development came to be "the application of the principles and methods of human development in the college setting" (Crookston, 1983). As a holistic philosophy, it represents a concern for the development of the whole student (Rodgers, 1990). Qualities such as openness, acceptance, spontaneity and ability to be intimate were the new goals for student affairs, different from the pragmatic orientation of earlier times (Greenwood, 1980; Cross, 1976). Theorists such as Rogers, Maslow and Perls provided the humanistic psychological theory to promote these qualities, and academia applied such concepts to student services in general, and, specifically to residential life. Blimling and Miltenberger (1981), DeCoster and Mable (1980), Miller and Prince (1976), Delworth, Sherwood and Casaburri (1974), and Greenleaf (1974), among many others, began defining student development as a proactive application of psychological theory.

Programmatic Development

Many writers have delineated the roles expected of RAs since the rise of theories of student development occurred (Powell, Plyler, Dickson & McClellan, 1969; DeCoster and Mable, 1974; Greenleaf, 1974; Delworth, Sherwood & Cassaburri, 1974; Greenwood, 1980; Blimling and Miltenberger, 1981; Upcraft, 1982, 1985; D'Andrea and

Salovey, 1983). Generally speaking, most of the descriptions of RA role expectations came out of humanistic psychological models of growth and development. Riker and DeCoster (1971), for example, used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to outline the purpose and functions of personnel within residence halls. Five levels are described: levels 1 & 2 are for physical facilities requirements; level 3 is for administrative functions such as policy creation and enforcement; levels 4 & 5 designate interpersonal challenges that support higher productivity, competency and well being. At the University of Massachusetts, the RA training manual (c. 1972) breaks down roles into:

	I.	helping to establish a healthy residence hall environment
	II.	administrative details, such as housekeeping
Levels	III.	helping to provide control
	IV.	hall government programs
	V.	assisting individual student needs

These five levels roughly match Riker and DeCoster's outline in response to the belief that addressing the needs of a student body from a developmental perspective will promote optimum growth. Within these general categories exist a multitude of possible duties an RA may perform. Table 1 presents a list of typical assignments a Resident Assistant may encounter.

RAs hold a comprehensive role in residential life. Typically, they are expected to provide personal assistance to students, facilitate programming, make appropriate referrals, enforce rules and maintain a safe environment (Delworth, Sherwood & Cassaburri, 1974; Upcraft, 1982; Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986). Nearly all student issues and problems are within the RA domain. They are expected to fulfill the goals of student development by creating floor environments conducive

Table 1

Typical Job Expectations of Resident Assistants

1. <u>Helping to establish a healthy residence hall environment:</u> a. create respect for rights and freedoms b. communicate well with residents c. tolerate different life styles d. encourage an atmosphere for studying	An RA is: a person too! a person who is available when needed. a person who understands people. a person who takes an interest in others.
2. <u>Administrative details:</u> a. prepare reports b. assist with room checks c. communicate with resident director d. maintain liaison with housekeeping	an information bank. must like the work to be effective. a sign-put-er-upper. a friend. father and mother. a policeperson.
3. <u>Helping to provide control:</u> a. adhere to rules and regulations of university b. assist students in knowing what is expected c. encourage student accountability d. report violations consistently e. confront students with violations	human. an example for others. someone who picks me up when I'm down. a good listener. under pressure from many sides. does cleanup after events. a good person.
4. <u>Hall government programs:</u> a. assist students to be involved b. offer creative activities and suggestions to floor c. encourages student responsibility to participate	a facilitator, organizer and initiator. an available source of referral service. a responsible, open-minded individual. ready to initiate or hinder change. one who puts up with the bullshit.
5. <u>Assisting individual student needs:</u> a. aware of each students strengths and weaknesses b. assist social isolates c. provide good listening and counseling skills d. assist students in academic related needs e. be a referral source	and wishes many times he/she never was. one who does a lot -- but never enough. one who knows frustration. one who learns about peoples' games. being in a position to learn about yourself and meet all types of people.

(From Greenleaf, 1967; UMass, c. 1972)

(From John M. Heath, California State University - Sacramento)

to individual growth and academic success (Blimling and Miltenberger, 1981; Miller, Whitcomb & Bloomfield, 1989). They are asked "to play the role of parent, big brother or sister, counselor, disciplinarian, and a myriad of other roles" (Boyer, 1987, p. 200).

The potential benefits to students who become R.A.s help one understand why some choose this role. Patterson (1981) sees the motivation to be a Resident Assistant related to leadership development. Benefits described are 1) an opportunity to provide input and change in the campus community, 2) competence building in areas that lead to heightened self-image, 3) contact with key administrators that may lead to future opportunities/ referrals, 4) work experience that furthers career goals, and 5) eventual job placement or graduate school admittance. These motivating factors, it would appear, are directly aligned with the principles of student development, namely, the actualizating of human potential (Graff and Bradshaw, 1970; Riker and DeCoster, 1971). Patterson suggests, simply, that why a student becomes an R.A. is consistent with what is expected of an R.A. Thus, criteria for selecting students to become Resident Assistants is, at present, based upon specific qualities that promote student development; and, jointly, the role of Resident Assistant supplies the experiences to promote personal growth.

Studies regarding R.A. characteristics emphasize warmth, empathy, assertiveness, sociability, sensitivity, extrovertion and the desire to help as important assets to promote growth among peers (Biggs, 1971; Wyrick and Mitchell, 1971; DeCoster and Mable, 1974; Shelton and Mathis, 1976; Schneider, 1977; Thomas, 1979; Hayes and Burke, 1981; Ostroth, 1981; Deluga, 1989) . Overall, R.A.s, according

to Blimling and Miltenberger (1981), are chosen on the basis of their human relations skills, which includes the ability to accept people with different values or backgrounds and the ability to cope with stress and ambiguity (Greenleaf, 1974, Delworth, Sherwood & Cassaburi, 1974; Upcraft, 1982; Winston, Ullom & Werring, 1984).

Yet investigators such as Miller and Smith (1979) have observed that RAs may have difficulties in fulfilling all of these roles simultaneously. For example, it may be that RAs are expected to address all the student concerns that emerge in a residence hall due to their "front line" position, whereas a developmental task analysis related to RA developmental level might indicate a mis-match for performing each or all of the peer counseling and enforcement tasks assigned. The purpose of this section is to illuminate the central roles of counseling and enforcement for RAs, and to examine these roles in light of their stages of development and their threshold of readiness to perform these roles.

The Counseling and Enforcing Roles

In examining the tasks generally expected of Resident Assistants, two key roles can be inferred from the detailed lists. These are the peer counselor and the peer enforcer (of university policy and rules). Quite often, peer counseling tends to require tasks that evoke empathy and connection, whereas enforcement often creates separation between RA and peer. Neither role is necessarily easier or harder than the other, as the developmental task analysis offered in this chapter demonstrates.

Much has been written on the success peers have in a paraprofessional counseling role (Zunker, 1975). Blimling and Miltenberger (1981) note that the peer counselor is a helper and a good, skilled listener and facilitator. They see the counseling encounter as an art of helping other students "cope with an emotion, a personal problem, stress, or a crisis, by assisting them in their decision-making and helping them to return to an improved emotional state" (p. 82).

As peer counselors, Resident Assistants perform specific jobs which do not go deep into professional counseling arenas, but which are broad in the ways they can assist other students. Problems with roommates, classes, scheduling and substance use as well as the roles of providing social and educational programs are examples (Upcraft, 1982). In a twelve-year study assessing the problems RAs most typically encounter, Schuh, Shipton and Edman (1986) summarize the major issues as roommate conflicts, alcohol use, academic problems and student self-reliance.

Three conditions which were thought to be necessary for successful counseling was offered by Rogers (1961): empathic understanding, congruency, and positive regard. Newton (1974), along with D'Andrea and Salovey (1983), applied this conception to the RA role, thus providing guidelines for RAs performing the peer counseling function. With these conditions in mind, we may address the questions proposed at the beginning of this chapter: Are these skills developmentally linked, and, if so, can RAs adequately demonstrate these skills? Are the conditions mentioned above, i.e. empathy, congruency and positive regard, stage related? Many

theorists, e.g. Heck and Davis (1973), Benack (1984) and Benack and Basseches (1988), suggest that they are.

The second key position or role RAs play is that of policy enforcer. RAs are expected to communicate the concerns of staff and administration and are counted upon to reflect university policies to students accurately (Powell, Plyler, Dickson & McClellan, 1969). This includes adhering to university rules, encouraging student accountability, and confronting and reporting violations by students consistently and efficiently. Upcraft (1982) states that "the fundamental cause of RA ineffectiveness in the discipline role is their inability to handle the authority role of the position." One could infer that this so-called inability may refer to a developmental lack of readiness to assume an authority role with peers. He does not, however, investigate this inability or lack of readiness. In spite of his lack of justification, researchers such as Berkowitz and Perkins (1986) and Miller, Whitcomb and Bloomfield (1989) as well as my own observations over the past four years confirm Upcraft's statement. As suggested by Deluga (1989) and Habley (1979), this disparity between expectations and performance may be attributed to a lack of certain skills that are developmentally based. An examination of developmental issues may add to the understanding of this role discrepancy.

Developmental Issues - Transition to Adulthood

The resolution of adolescence, summed up by Coons (1974), includes the need for 1) attainment of separation and independence from parents, 2) establishment of sexual identity, 3) commitment to

work, 4) development of a personal moral value system, 5) capacity for lasting relationships, and 6) a return to the parents in a new relationship based upon "relative equality." Kegan and Lahey (1984) note that the first adult system is the "product of outgrowing a childhood system founded on the hard-won ability to regulate one's impulses to make plans, fulfill goals, and meet needs." The transition from adolescence to adulthood is seen as a fluid boundary where the teenager wants to assume adult prerogatives, yet his/her independence and identity is not secure enough for her/him to function as an adult. Vacillation exists between being responsible and altruistic on the one hand, and self-centered and autonomous on the other. A defensiveness may exist against authorities as an expression of the incomplete separation from parents, thus rebelliousness may become manifest before actual independence develops (Winder, 1974).

As a leading figure in the study of identity, Erikson (1956, 1959) saw the work of late adolescence both as an internal process of relating to oneself and the world, and also as an external process of choosing social roles in the world (Hood, Riahinejad and White, 1986). His understanding of growth established the psycho-social polarity of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1968) as a dominant force in the personal work of pre-adults. Conflicts regarding identity issues may intensify, according to Erikson, as changes occur in personal values, life styles, career plans and relationships during the four years of college. Erikson (1958) warns of the possibility that the search for identity could end in one "so diffuse as to obliterate any coherent sense of self" (Gilligan, 1981). He sees the possibility of a "totalistic" self-concept characterized by arbitrary, rigid, and absolute boundaries

(Rebok, 1987). Coons (1974) parallels this understanding of the psychological risks during this period, by stating that the late adolescent may experience a "time of crisis, which so often overtaxes the integrative capacity of the individual and results in adaptive failure, ego deformation, defensive maneuvers and severe psychopathology" (p. 5).

Investigators of the transforming identity of the college student offer similar observations. Nickerson and Harrington (1968) state (to RAs): "If you are a typical student, you will spend much of your time on the inner quest for identity...who wonder over and over if [you] have the personality, the mental capability, the perservance, the assertiveness to get [yourself] where [you] want to go" (pp. 34-35). Morgan and Davis (1981), Furr and Gannoway (1982) and Richmond and Lemons (1985) describe behaviorally this self-questioning process by investigating a phenomenon called "sophomore slump" - a term used to label a transition period of confusion and uncertainty attributed to students around 19 and 20 years old. Apathy and/or depression can arise, multiple changes in majors are common, transferring to other schools is considered, emotional turmoil in relationships increases and immersion in non-academic activities, ie. drug use and "partying" climaxes (Lehmann, 1968; Richmond and Lemons, 1985). Chickering (1969) notes that from the third semester through to the sixth semester, students are least likely to initiate things themselves, discover new options, confront problems, exhibit persistance, and experience a strong sense of self. He states that this is often a time of lowered motivation, a confused sense of purpose, a lack of personal stability and minimal involvement with the

needs of others except to fulfill self-interest. Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) see many students at a level of development that makes it difficult to cope with the multiple alternatives presented by a college community. It is at this time period during the four years of college that most RAs are hired.

Following Erikson's lead, Chickering (1969) identified the process of <u>establishing identity</u> as the central theme of his seven vector schema for the college age years. His attempt at combining theory with practice was not fully developed (Widick, Parker and Knefelkamp, 1978; Winston, 1981; White and Hood, 1989). Straub and Rodgers (1986) noted, for example, that Developing Interpersonal Relationships came before Developing Autonomy for women in their study of Chickering's stages and women's development. Despite this question of sequence raised by careful gender analysis, Chickering's description of the psycho-social tasks of undergraduates does provide a more concrete understanding of the identity formation process than Erikson's generalized stages. In other words, Chickering's seven vectors provide real specificity for understanding identity development that Erikson left too vague for empirical research.

Chickering's seven stages or vectors are:

<u>VECTOR</u>

1. Developing competence: the inner confidence and judgement in handling and mastering a range of tasks;

2. Managing emotions: integrating feelings to allow flexibility, control and expression;

3. Developing autonomy: a decreased need for reassurance from others, set and reach goals, discover connectedness/ interdependence withothers;

4. Establishing identity: knowing the difference between who one is and who one would like to be;

5. Freeing interpersonal   increasing tolerance and acceptance of relationships: individual differences and ability for mature/intimate relationships;

6. Developing purpose: defining and clarifying direction and goals;

7. Developing integrity: personalizing values and establishing congruency between beliefs and behavior.

 For example, the "freeing interpersonal relationships" vector may be demonstrated by a student's ability or inability to successfully deal with the break up of a romance. "Developing autonomy" may be observed as one's ability to choose behavior different from the peer group's norm, as in deciding whether or not to go out drinking with floormates. [In later writings, Chickering and Thomas (1984) suggest a change from developing autonomy to developing interdependence, in light of Gilligan's work.] "Managing emotions" might be demonstrated by a student's capacity to express feelings in an appropriate, non-abusive manner.

Chickering placed the development of identity at the center of his vector schema. The central position of the identity vector represents a pivot point in the transitional period out of adolescence and into young adulthood. He states that one should have developed somewhat through the first vectors before "Establishing Identity"

occurs and the subsequent vectors can be realized (Thomas and Chickering, 1984).

Other recent research, referred to below, suggests that the link between Chickering's psycho-social stages and cognitive stages of development may be stronger than previously realized. As Straub and Rodgers' study, above, suggest, there is a hierarchy implied regarding the Chickering vectors, that one vector comes before or after another in a linear manner. This theme of linearity, the basic assumption built into cognitive development theory, may provide insight into how students (and RAs specifically) may be developmentally matched (or mis-matched) to certain tasks based on their stage of identity and cognitive development.

In an attempt to utilize Chickering's model of college student identity development in a longitudinal study, Hood, Riahinejad and White (1986) demonstrate the progression of growth of ego identity using the Erwin Identity Scale (EIS) (Erwin and Delworth, 1980; Erwin and Schmidt, 1982), which measures the vector of identity. They found that the sophomore through senior years, in particular, are instrumental in furthering the growth of identity. In a similar longitudinal study examining the growth of identity over four years of college, Erwin and Kelly (1985) measured changes in confidence as a reflection of identity development and student growth. They confirm that identity development progresses through the college years in the direction of greater confidence and self-assurance, two sub-scales of the EIS and Chickering's vector. White and Hood (1989) suggest that this progression requires more abstract and complex self-conceptualizaton - a basic premise of cognitive development theories.

Mines (1982), too, recognizes the relationship between identity development in college and cognitive development, stating,

> ...For example, in Chickering's vector of freeing of interpersonal relationships...in order to increase one's tolerance to diversity, it is reasonable to assume the individual must experience a shift in cognitive complexity....The assessment of cognitive stage change...is one aspect of assessing a developmental task (pp. 83-84).

Given the close relationship between the development of identity and the growth of cognitive complexity, the next section examines in more depth the assessment of cognitive stage change.

Summary

Blimling and Miltenberger (1984) cite the peer group in residences as the single most influential agent of change of identity for all undergraduates who live there. Chickering (1974) identifies three dimensions of such influences: 1) the development of close friendships, 2) the establishment of a subculture identity based on make-up of hall residents, and 3) the learning of how one's behavior impacts on others, thereby providing feedback for future behavior changes.

RAs, like most undergraduates, are in the position of being immersed within the group, influenced by their peers, while also needing to maintain separation from the group, being influenced by the authority of adults. In their dual role as both students and Resident Assistants, these particular undergraduates must balance their lives between an academic and social existence as undergraduates and the peer counseling and enforcing tasks assigned to them in their job -- a peer/authority role juxtiposition. These

balances are attempted during a time in these individuals' lives when a dynamic and possibly volatile identity transformation process has begun. Erikson's stage *identity vs. role confusion* may be amplified for RAs -- how it is resolved is not well-defined nor simple. How RAs make meaning of their changing inner world juxtaposed with their expected job performance is complicated and filled with possible pitfalls.

At this point, an examination of theories presented by some cognitive developmentalists, theorists who address this idea of "meaning-making," may help to understand how late adolescent RAs think and understand their varied roles, which have been described by various psycho-social theorists such as Erikson and Chickering. How RAs negotiate their tasks may be then understood as motivated by a set of attitudes and values that are related, possibly dependent, on the cognitive development of each individual.

Cognitive Development: From Concrete to Abstract Thinking

Piaget stated that conceptualization of intellectual development as "a progression of qualitatively different thought patterns" formed the basis for the cognitive development perspective (Baxter Magolda, 1989). As a genetic epistemologist, he believed in "philosophical biology," that life is a process that evolves. This involves stages of development which proceed according to relatively fixed laws moving in a specific direction towards greater adaptation, equilibrium and freedom (Kitchener, 1986). His studies and observations resulted in the description of a series of increasingly complex stages through which children and adolescents moved. These studies did not include

late adolescents, but he speculates (1972) on the possibility of "cognitive structures" common for ages 15-20, marking "the beginning of professional specialization...and the construction of life program corresponding to the aptitudes of the individual" (p. 11). Piaget's contributions to the understanding of the development of thought, nevertheless, is considered to be the foundation for subsequent 20th century cognitive structuralists.

Through the principles of assimilation and accommodation - the processes of absorbing new information and adapting one's understanding - one increases conceptual range and complexity. An individual develops as s/he obtains a particular degree of equilibrium of new information with current understanding, by using these principles. The developmental process, as understood by Piaget, reflects seven thought processes that are both psychological and epistemological -- that is, they illustrate how one makes meaning of the world. These principles are:

1. Decentration, whereby one becomes less egocentric, thus enabling to distinguish self from other;

2. Objectivity and rationality, whereby one's initial unqualified trust in perception of external behaviors is followed by rational thought and inquiry;

3. Internalization, whereby external behavior becomes represented internally with concepts and images;

4. Irreversibility to reversibility, which reflects the change from unidirectionality in time of perception (of external behaviors) to the multidirectional capability of thought;

5. The "grasp of consciousness," whereby one becomes aware of self and internal mental life through frustration and conflict;

6. Temporal displacement, representing the re-learning one encounters as a new thought structure replaces an earlier one, passing into a new stage of consciousness;

7. Reflective abstraction, whereby operations are abstracted from an earlier stage and projected onto a late and higher stage, restructuring thought into a new whole. (pp. 22-25)

Piaget understood conflict to be a significant source of motivation for growth, as incongruent or discrepant information provided "fuel" for absorbing and adapting into one's thinking new experiences and beliefs. "Only by means of friction against other minds, by means of exchange and opposition does thought come to be conscious of its own aims and tendencies..." (Piaget, 1959, p. 11). Thus, the "grasp of consciousness," the expanding awareness of inner life, develops through interaction, dissonance and resolution with the world.

The theme of "friction" or dissonance to which Piaget refers, which enables cognitive growth to occur during conflict, appears in the literature across a variety of domains. For example, in examining moral development, Kohlberg (in Hersh, 1979) concluded that moral change is...

> ...most likely to occur when discussions succeed in arousing cognitive conflict among participants. When a participant is exposed to other views based on moral reasoning higher than his own, he may become unsure of the adequacy of his original position and begin to consider the merits of other positions. He does not then simply switch positions; rather, he begins the process of restructuring his own way of reasoning about moral issues (p. 108).

Exposure to "more adequate patterns of reasoning" (i.e. social interaction with other levels of development) results in cognitive disequilibrium. When trying to assimilate new information, the

individual may have to alter the present structure of thinking to accommodate greater complexity. Eventually, development to the next higher stage of reasoning occurs (pp. 138-139).

In a similar vein to Kohlberg, Turiel (1969) postulated that stage transition occurs as the result of "conflict-induced disequilibrium" which begins in one stage and moves one to the next. That which causes such disequilibrium is only generally described as cognitively different types of communication (Sullivan, et. al., 1970). A more precise, though still incomplete, formulation of the role of dissonance is provided by Baxter-Magolda (1989), who states that one will maintain "stable cognitive structures" until conflict experiences create dissonance which, in turn, "prompts adjustment to more complex structures."

Developmental progress may not occur in only one direction. Negative or regressive effects have been observed in individuals undergoing "cognitive disequilibrium." In his theory of cognitive dissonance, Festinger (1957) stated that it is psychologically objectionable to have inner conflict among one's beliefs or values. A person will seek to reduce inconsistency if it develops or will prevent it from occurring. Thus, the existence of conflict will motivate an individual to reduce such dissonance, by engaging in cognitive or behavioral changes (Glass, 1964). Psychologically, people may distort reality to maintain consistency between beliefs and actions. In an extreme form, the pressure for self-consistency may manifest "intolerance for ambiguity, an oversimplified black-white view of the world, and an inclination toward rigid, dogmatic positions" (Baxter

Magolda, 1989, p. 38). If one feels afraid, the world may appear threatening; angry, the world seems hostile. One may tend to perceive the world equally consistent -- if someone (b) disagrees with you (a), then that person (b) will agree with another person (c) who disagrees with you (a) (if b≠a and c≠a, then b=c). For example, a student has been in a fight with her boyfriend. She sees her girlfriend speaking amiably with him. The student, therefore, believes that her girlfriend has taken "his side," is in agreement with him, and is therefore antagonistic to herself (if a≠b and c=b, then a≠c).

Developmental theorists describe such a black-white position as an early step in a progression from concrete, "either-or" thinking towards abstract, "both-and" conceptualization. In the descriptions of specific cognitive theories that follow, this progression from concrete to abstract thinking is delineated in detail as transformations in how one makes meaning of her/his world. All of the theorists examined, Perry, Baxter Magolda, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Kegan, Selman, Harvey, Hunt and Schroder, provide clearly defined schema describing stages of growth in the intellectual, moral and interpersonal domains. It is one objective of this study to hypothesize from these schema possible matches and mismatches between the stage of development of RAs and their assigned tasks. The following examinations provide such hypotheses.

William Perry

One of the dominant modern stage theorists who offers a schema describing how students make meaning of their world is William Perry (1970). He has provided an elaborate formulation of

Piaget's work for late adolescence with a fourteen-year study using unstructured interviewing of college students (Perry, 1977; Widick, 1977). At the end of each year he asked students "what stood out for you in your experience of the past year?" With the massive data collected, Perry and colleagues found consistent themes that broke down into four stages in which nine substages or positions describe intellectual development. These stages represent qualitatively different ways of making meaning and increase in complexity from limited concrete conceptualizations to more flexible abstract thought structures. Movement through the stages/positions is motivated by the need to adjust one's way of making sense of new experiences which conflict with what is familiar, i.e. cognitive dissonance. As in Piaget's dynamic, this movement is facilitated by accommodation and assimilation of the new experience(s) by an individual over time in the direction of greater abstract reasoning. His cognitive schema illustrates progressive epistemological thinking that moves from cognitively concrete to cognitively abstract modes of interpretation.

Ricci, Porterfield and Piper (1987) provide an approach that employs Perry's developmental stages, to understand the period of late adolescence and Resident Assistants. Upon examining Perry's stages (dualism--positions 1 & 2, multiplicity--positions 3 & 4, and relativism--position 5 & 6), Ricci, Porterfield and Piper suggest the possibility of predicting specific behaviors and their likely ramifications within the RA/peer interaction. Table 2 shows the stages and positions of Perry's theory and a hypothetical match and mismatch of RA roles expectations with developmental level. Although students may be found at most levels of the models, there appears to

Table 2

Comparing Perry's Developmental Stage Sequence with the
 Roles of R.A.s

Stage	Cognitive/Ethical Development	R.A. Role	
		Match	Mismatch
Dualist-			
Position 1	Authorities have the right answers.	referral/information sources	minimal role-taking ability:
Position 2	Some authorities are right - the rest are wrong	counselor/enforcer to some others in dualist stage	difficulty in assuming another's perspective
Multiplist-			
Position 3	Temporary existence of different opinions	peer identification in counseling role	resistant to policy enforcement:
Position 4	Everyone has right to own opinion - no one is wrong	less judgemental peer support	rules are just another opinion
Relativist-			
Position 5	Authorities are expert consultants - peers have legitimate knowledge	able to see viewpoint of others in peer counseling	difficulty in choosing viewpoint from which to act:
Position 6	No one can say who is right - beginning of self-determination	can understand needs of administration as well as peers	lack of commitment to certain values

be agreement that positions 2-4 are the most common in the Perry schema (Perry, 1970; Knefelkamp, 1982; Baxter Magolda and Porterfield, 1985; Welfel and Davison, 1986; Ricci, Porterfield and Piper, 1987). Adams and Zhou (1990) report in their study comparing cognitive developmental characteristics of undergraduates in general and RAs specifically, enrolled in a course on social diversity, that the majority of their participants scored Perry position 3 (early multiplicity) when tested using Baxter Magolda's Measurement of Epistomological Reflection (MER) [examined in Chapters 3 and 4]. Their further study (1991) verified these students' stage of development (position 3) as well as the lack of difference between undergraduates as a whole and RAs as sub-group, with respect to tested cognitive level.

Dualism may be described as "the schema with those simplistic forms in which a person construes his/her world in unqualified polar terms of absolute right-wrong, good-bad. There is a lack of any alternative or vantage point from which a person may observe it" (Perry, 1970; Domholdt and Preusz, 1987). The dualist tends to see the world in absolute terms, accepting one truth only, focused on authority figures for answers, and intolerant of diversity or conflicting opinions.

Ricci, Porterfield and Piper suggest that R.A.s at this stage prefer "cookbook" types of directions and operate best within highly structured, concrete situations. Their source of truth is authority figures. These RAs would apparently do well as referral sources or providers of information and directions. In the capacity of peer counselor, however, one questions whether a dualist could respect the

personal viewpoint of a peer, if it contradicted the views of him/herself or authorities. Perhaps some peer counseling may occur with a student also at the dualist stage and having the same opinions as the RA. Similarly, a Resident Assistant at this stage may enforce policy inappropriately by becoming aggressively overbearing ("I'm right, you're wrong!"). He/she may not have the sensitivity to comprehend the probable varying perspectives of the students involved. Ricci, Porterfield and Piper do suggest that these RAs should be placed in fewer situations where reliance on peers is necessary for gaining information. It is possible that their recommendations would greatly limit the roles in which these RAs are assigned, thus minimizing the counselor and enforcer functions.

For students at the *multiplistic* stage (where many sophomores and juniors find themselves), uncertainty is now unavoidable. The role of authorities is questioned, and, therefore, all viewpoints are valid. Multiplicity represents "a structure in which uncertainty and complexity are...seen as realities in their own right " (Perry, 1970; Domholdt and Preusz, 1987). Students' world views are diversifying, and authorities, as providers of absolute answers, are resisted. Morgan and Davis (1981) note that sophomores tend to express their dissatisfaction of their college more than most other students, which parallels the multiplist's challenging of authority. It is at this stage that students may also challenge policy and procedures because "right" and absolute answers no longer exist. The opinions of peers become important, perhaps at least equal to, if not more than, university administration.

In spite of the pitfalls that multiplicity and the middle college years present, multiplist RAs may be good peer counselors; they are identified with their peers. They are able to join with other students, both out of the need for affiliation and in reaction to their resistance to authorities as "the final word." This identification provides a context for empathy and role-taking to develop. Here, students begin seeing themselves as valid sources of assistance; therefore, peers may offer essential contact that authorities once provided. RAs become more than information resources; rather, they begin to be effective emotional supports through trying times.

As peer enforcers, however, the questioning of university policy may compromise their role. If students are now validating their own viewpoints, then policy becomes just another opinion as to how one should conduct him/herself. Ricci, Porterfield and Piper suggest that RAs at this stage be allowed to question "organizational realities" and try out alternatives that they value. For the peer enforcement role, which assumes adherence to regulations, this may not be realistic. Additionally, and important to note, the majority of RAs hired are in their sophomore and junior years, the time period in college where many researchers, as noted earlier, suggest that a significant identity transformation process is happening.

In offering a "plurality of contexts, Relativism, the third stage, provides the grounds for detachment and for objectivity...it is a radical and powerful departure" (Perry, 1970; Domholdt and Preusz, 1987). In Perry's schema, the relativist represents a cognitively advanced stage, where one sees knowledge as contextual, decision-making is based on both internal and external values and realities, and

authorities play the role of an expert or consultant, but are not absolute. They view peers as having legitimate knowledge. Students at this stage are more able to synthesize and integrate divergent experiences. There is a recognition of responsibility for choices. Resident Assistants can more effectively negotiate their roles of peer counselor and peer enforcer than their counterparts in earlier stages. However, although they are now able to assume another's perspective, relativists can run into a problem of decision-making. With more than one acceptable perspective to view, the ability to choose one to put into action falters. A fear surfaces -- the fear of missing out on other options if <u>one</u> choice is made. Likewise, one fears a loss of <u>appreciation</u> for other perspectives if one is finally chosen. A relativist RA could discover him/herself unable to act assertively, for fear of misrepresenting one or more parties involved. What is missing are specific values from which they may take a stand. Perry sees this as a process of making commitments, developing in his final stage, *commitment in relativism* (positions 7, 8, & 9). These positions focus on the development of commitment to one's choices. Its actualization, however, does not appear to emerge in most students until much later after RAs have moved on in school and/or in life. Figure 1 illustrates the thinking processes of each position.

The culmination of the relativist stage seems to reflect Nickerson and Harrington's (1968) assertion that RAs should be those who trust, accept and know themselves well - that they handle ambiguity and can integrate a wide spectrum of viewpoints. This level of development however, may not often be encountered among RAs, who are drawn mostly from the sophomore and junior years.

Position 1	Authorities know, and if we work hard, read every word, and learn Right Answers, all will be well.
Transition	But what about those Others I hear about? And different opinions? And Uncertainties? Some of our own Authorities disagrees with each other or don't seem to know, and some give us problems instead of Answers.
Position 2	True Authorities must be Right, the others are frauds. We remain Right. Others must be different and Wrong. Good Authorities give us problems so we can learn to find the Right Answer by our own independent thought.
Transition	But even Good Authorities admit they don't know all the answers *yet!*
Position 3	Then some uncertainties and different opinions are real and legitimate *temporarily*, even for Authorities. They're working on them to get to the Truth.
Transition	But there are *so many* things they don't know the Answers to! And they won't for a long time.
Position 4a	Where Authorities don't know the Right Answers, everyone has a right to his own opinion; no one is wrong!
Transition (*and /or*)	But some of my friends ask me to support my opinions with facts and reasons.
Transition	Then what right have They to grade us? About what?
Position 4b	In certain courses Authorities are not asking for the Right Answer; They want us to *think* about things in a certain way, *supporting* opinion with data. That's what they grade us on.
Transition	But this "way" seems to *work* in most courses, and even outside them.
Position 5	Then all thinking must be like this, even for Them. Everything is relative but not equally valid. You have to understand how each context works. Theories are not Truth but metaphors to interpret data with. You have to think about your thinking.
Transition	But if everything is relative, am I relative too: How can I know I'm making the Right Choice?
Position 6	I see I'm going to have to make my own decisions in an uncertain world with no others to tell me I'm Right.
Transition	I'm lost if I don't. When I decide on my career (or marriage or values) everything will straighten out.
Position 7	Well, I've made my first Commitment!
Transition	Why didn't that settle everything?
Position 8	I've made several commitments. I've got to balance them - how many, how deep? How certain, how tentative?
Transition	Things are getting contradictory. I can't make logical senses out of life's dilemmas.
Position 9	This is how life will be. I must be wholehearted while tentative, fight for my values yet respect others, believe my deepest values right yet be ready to learn. I see that I shall be retracing this whole journey over and over - but, I hope, more wisely.

Figure 1

Schema of Cognitive and Ethical Development

Perry, W. (1981).

Lawrence Kohlberg

Further support for the developmental basis of these skills expected of RAs is seen in the works of Lawrence Kohlberg. Known mainly for his study of moral judgment and reasoning, he considered the concept of role-taking, whereby one takes the point of view of another, to anticipate behavior (Thomas, Murrell & Chickering, 1982). It is this concept that is now explored.

The ability to take the role of another and to predict the other's behavior is not always notable in interpersonal conflict:

> Given the fact that the ability to place oneself in the other's shoes is notoriously underemployed and underdeveloped in most people, and also given that this ability is impaired by stress and inadequate information, it is to be expected that certain typical biases will emerge in the perceptions of actions during conflict.... [That is,] there is a bias toward perceiving one's own behavior toward the other as being more benevolent and more legitimate than the other's behavior toward oneself (Deutsch, 1973, p. 354).

Late adolescents, and RAs specifically, are faced with the need for such role perspective daily. The developmental stages Kohlberg has mapped out reflect, among other things, their interactions with peers and the ability to take another's perspective (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969; Gilligan, 1981; Thomas, Murrell & Chickering, 1982). This ability, as has been suggested earlier, is a highly relevant skill for RAs to use in the peer counseling and peer enforcement roles. As will be seen below, this skill appears to have a developmental basis, which would, therefore, influence certain RA-peer encounters.

Kohlberg applied cognitive developmental theory to the study of how and why moral judgements are made. His theory attempts to describe "justice-reasoning," how people reason about what they

should do when faced with a moral dilemma (Rodgers, 1989). He was concerned with the structures of meaning in moral thought -- decision-making, problem solving, social perspective and the underlying logic in making moral choices (Smith, 1978). RAs may find themselves having to make difficult choices regarding their interactions with peers, especially if what is expected of them conflicts with their own belief system (meta-personal conflict). The following describes Kohlberg's developmental stages and hypothetical matches and mis-matches regarding the RA roles.

Three general levels are described in which lie six specific stages. Whereas "preconventional judgment" (level 1) is egocentric, deriving moral constructs from individual needs, "conventional judgement" (level 2) is based on shared moral values that sustain relationships and groups (Gilligan, 1981). Finally, "post-conventional or principled judgement" (level 3) constructs universal moral principles that go beyond specific group standards. Table 3 illustrates each of the six stages and compares them to the roles of Resident Assistants.

Individuals at the *Naive Moral Realism* stage (1) assume absolute categories of right and wrong. The only perspective believed to exist is the one held by the self. In the realm of transgressions by others, punishment is automatically administered based on the power of authorities. A student at this stage may find him/herself dogmatically defending his/her position, as there are no other viewpoints to consider. An RA may do well in roles requiring the relating of factual information, such as providing campus referrals or quoting rules and regulations. S/he may be limited in the ability to offer judgement-free

Table 3

Comparing Kohlberg's Developmental Stage Sequence with the
     Roles of RAs

Stage	Cognitive/Moral Development	RA Role Match	Mismatch
Preconventional Stage 1 - Naive Moral Realism	Absolute right and wrong - only one perspective	can provide facts & referrals; automatic punishments	biased, opinion-ated counseling
Stage 2 - Individualism	Bargaining to negotiate conflict of interest and views	may support peers that are cooperative	inconsistent policy enforcement
Conventional Stage 3 - Interpersonal	Live up to expectations of others - need of acceptance	peer identification in counseling role	difficulty in separating personal issues; compromise policy for acceptance
Stage 4 - Social System Codes of Conduct	Maintenance of institu-tion a priority	more uniform rule enforcement	individual issues superceded by need to uphold rules
Principled Stage 5 - Human Rights	Individual rights valued over social contracts; obligation to law as it supports individual welfare	good, facilitative counseling - balance needs of institution with individual	may bend rules if that are judged to interfere with individual rights
Stage 6 - Universal Ethical Principles	Commitment to personal moral viewpoint; dignity and equality for all	in total support of individual; minimum role-taking ability	social regulations subservient to individual moral perspective

counseling to peers, as contradictory viewpoints have no place. Rationale: "I'm just following orders."

Stage 2, *Individualism*, is concerned with concrete individual needs. The self-interests of two people is recognized as possibly creating conflict. Individuals are interested in maximizing one's desires while minimizing any negative consequences. There are no fixed or absolute norms as in stage 1, therefore, needs are met by striking mutual exchange agreements. Rules are followed only when it is in one's immediate interest. RAs at this stage interrelate with peers on the basis of bargaining -- "if you take that beer back into your room and close the door, I will look the other way [therefore, I won't risk hostility from you and you won't risk consequences from me]." Some basic counseling may occur, especially if the RA ends up feeling like s/he is doing their job well (prestige) and the peer receives some measure of support (affirmation). Rationale: "Let's make a deal."

At the conventional level, the morality of *interpersonally shared norms* (stage 3) emerges. There is the need to be a good person in one's own eyes and those of others. Individuals strive to live up to what is expected by others. Justice is focused on being a good, loyal group member, thus providing a sense of belonging. There is an awareness that shared feelings and agreement take precedence over individual interest, especially if feelings of acceptance are generated. A Resident Assistant will emerge as a "good" peer counselor, someone considering the perspective of his/her fellow student, perhaps over the needs of authorities. Enforcement duties, therefore, are compromised in the need to save face and insure acceptance by peers

who may choose to break rules and regulations. Rationale: "The Golden Rule."

Codes and procedures of a social system (stage 4) represents a time when priority is placed on maintaining the institution and avoiding a breakdown of the system. Norms are concerned with promoting social cooperation and avoiding disorder and disagreement. RAs may fulfill the actual duties to which they have agreed, while balancing individual action with the society's/ institution's standards. They weigh interpersonal agreements against institutional needs. Counseling is concerned with how one may best serve the institution. Enforcement strategies may be characterized by the rationale: "If everyone did it, then..."

The post-conventional or principled level begins in stage 5, the morality of *human rights and social welfare.* The perspective of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social contracts asserts itself. One maintains a sense of obligation to law as it serves the welfare of all and protects all people's rights. There is an awareness of the diversity of opinions and values, and rules are relative to each group, except in the case of life and liberty, which are absolute. Resident Assistants at this stage would act as supportive, facilitative counselors, upholding the rights of each student. As enforcers they would, as a rule, uphold existing rules in the interest of impartiality and in agreement to the social contract. They may question some rules as they interfere with the perceived rights of an individual. Rationale: "The greatest good for the greatest number."

Stage 6, *Universal Ethical Principles*, address an individual's moral viewpoint and his/her commitment to it. When laws violate

one's principles, the principle is followed. Persons are treated with care and respect, which may sometimes override "the good of society." Dignity and equality are values that determine equal consideration of all points of view and the claims of every person affected by a situation. Procedures insure fairness, impartiality, and maximum role-taking. It is not likely that an RA would be at this stage, given the level of maturity and responsibility someone at this point is able to assume. One becomes the "judge and jury" -- not within the roles of a Resident Assistant.

Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) observed in the overall developmental schema of college years an apparent retreat from growth occurring during the critical RA age range of sophomores and juniors. A "moral upheaval" takes place, perhaps similar to Coons' and Erikson's time of crisis. Upon re-analysis of Kohlberg's data, Gilligan, in using the Perry stages, saw a transition, whereby "in the face of individual difference and cultural heterogeneity, non-arbitrary or objective moral judgement was impossible and that, therefore, one 'should' do whatever one thinks is right" (Gilligan, 1981, p. 144). She saw this phenomenon as moral relativism, which Kohlberg and Kramer initially believed to show that the college sophomore was the exception to the cognitive developmental rule that change is forward and sequential. They surmised that the form these behaviors demonstrate may appear as a regression. Other researchers, however, supported the idea that forward development, not regression, was, in fact, occurring. Turiel (1972), anticipating Gilligan's interpretation of Kohlberg's data, believed that in the apparent conceptualization that "one should do whatever one thinks is right," there is a casting-off of

externally-based conventional morality, to aid in the search for "moral truths" that an individual could personally accept. Thus, moral relativism "offered a protection that guaranteed this search, legitimizing it on intellectual grounds and disarming those whose interference otherwise might precipitate a mature commitment to values that could not yet be endorsed as one's own" (Gilligan, 1981, p. 146). Kohlberg and Kramer came to see that the movement of relativism was forward, as students attempt to learn to deal with "relativity among options."

Generally, Resident Assistants find themselves in Kohlberg stages 2, 3 and 4 which parallel Perry's positions 2, 3, and 4 (Thomas, Murrell and Chickering, 1982; Adams and Zhou, 1990). The basis for this comparison of Perry to Kohlberg may be understood by examining the domain of student identity development - how one understands the self in the context of growth. Identity development is concerned with intellectual, emotional, moral, physical and social dimensions of student life (Brown, 1980). The growth of identity reflects changing value systems by which a student develops principles, rules, ideals and behavior patterns (Thomas, et al.). Similarly, Perry's schema traces the evolution in students' thinking about their relationship to values and the meaning of life and responsibilities (King, 1978). This concept of developing values parallels Kohlberg's understanding of the cognitive/moral development of values (Thomas, et. al.). Thomas correlates Perry and Kohlberg stages (see Table 4), not to show equivalency among the positions or stages, but to emphasize the linkage between intellectual and moral development, as part of a

Table 4

Comparison of Perry and Kohlberg's Developmental Stage Models

Perry	**Kohlberg**
Position 1 Dualism - Authorities have right answers	Stage 1 Fear of punishment by authority
Position 2 Dualism - Some authorities are right. Others are wrong.	Stage 2 Bargaining with authority to gain reward, avoid punishment
Position 3 Multiplicity - Temporary existence of different opinions	Stage 3 Seeking good relations and approval from peers
Position 4 Multiplicity - Anyone has a right to his/her opinions	Stage 4 Obedience to law and order in society
Positions 5 & 6 Relativism - Peers have legitimate knowledge, as well as authorities	Stage 5 Concern with individual rights and legal contracts
Positions 7, 8, & 9 Commitment in Relativism - Self-determination	Stage 6 Concern with consistent ethical principles

(From Thomas, Murrell & Chickering, 1982)

student's developing identity, by virtue of the common aspect of value development.

The parallels suggested in Table 4 do not mean a necessary one-to-one correspondence between the two stage theories, but, rather, to illustrate common themes in cognitive development. In general, post-Piagetian cognitive developmentalists see a progression from polar, concrete thinking patterns to integrated, abstract thought processes. In this sense, both Perry and Kohlberg offer schema that progress similarly, demonstrating the tendencies of individuals to exhibit increasingly complex ways of integrating information. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the stage similarities suggested between Perry and Kohlberg are based on the commonality seen in most cognitive development theories, that of movement from differentiated, polar thinking towards more abstract integration of thought.

It is believed that a student's moral development will occur "by virtue of the student's positive response to the presentation of ongoing opportunities for assuming significant roles and responsibilities, behavioral and verbal challenges to currently held values, and discussions regarding decisions" (Thomas, Murrell and Chickering, 1982, p. 8). Nineteen and twenty year olds appointed to student staff positions, e.g. RAs, may actually be stimulated to change their own value systems as a result of confronting the diverse behaviors and values of their peers. An RA, in confronting a peer for an alcohol policy violation, for example, may be forced to question or justify his/her own illicit use (Miller, Whitcomb & Bloomfield, 1989). The personal "crisis" they might experience may encourage an eventual shift in value system, e.g. "maintaining interpersonal stability" (stage 2)

to "the good of the resident hall/school" (stage 3). Thus, cognitive growth of RAs can occur by the act of engaging others in counseling and enforce-ment duties. If this is so, then the act of policy enforcement by RAs is instructive for the RAs themselves as it may be for the violators. Other researchers, such as Kegan and Selman, to follow, examine the benefits and pitfalls of such mutuality of interaction and learning.

Robert Kegan: Evolution of Meaning

Erikson speaks of the "maintenance of an inter-solidarity with a group's ideals and identity" as formative in late adolescent identity development (Hood, Rinhinejad and White, 1986). Such inter-solidarity has its possible pitfalls, as will be seen below in Kegan's model of development. There are times that there may be an equal pull for an individual identity separate from the group. How do the simultaneous needs for group identification and for separation affect how RAs will interact with their peers while performing their tasks? This section hypothesizes possible outcomes.

In describing "the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness" (p. 108), Kegan (1982), as a post-Piagetian, views the self-concept as a result of "continual and gradual growth based not only on social circumstances, but also on the *emergent cognitive competencies...*" (my emphasis) (Dusek and Flaherty, 1981). What is often termed ego development, he refers to as the evolution of meaning. Kegan believes, as Erikson did, in a person's "capacity to unify his experience and his action in an adaptive manner (Kegan, p. vii). He views each of Piaget's stages, the original building blocks for

his cognitive theory, as the result of a given subject-object balance - the relationship achieved between perceptions of self and perceptions of the world (Caple, 1987). Kegan sees a process of movement described by the "motion of differentiation (or emergence from embeddedness) and reintegration (relation to, rather than embeddedness in, the world)" (Kegan, p. 39). Here, embeddedness refers to the individual's inability to distinguish between perceptions of self and the world; differentiation is the process of seeing the world as separate from self, thus, relating to it rather than being embedded in it.

Emphasis is placed on the process of balancing. As development occurs, rebalancing results from perceptions moving from subject to object; one then sees the old self as a part of the world and the new self as the world. A "structural crisis" occurs, leading an individual to experience that "something is fundamentally wrong about the way one is being in the world" (p. 41). What was once experienced as the self (subject) becomes identified as a separate part (object); a new subject(ive) experience emerges. What was "the whole" becomes "part of the new whole" (Kegan and Lahey, 1984). Resolution happens when a new organization of the world emerges through assimilation and repeated and varied encounters in the course of one's life.

Of the six stages delineated by Kegan - incorporative (0), impulsive (1), imperial (2), interpersonal (3), institutional (4), and interindividual (5) - stage 3/ interpersonal represents a common set of experiences during late-adolescence and young adulthood. Here, "the self becomes conversational" (pp. 95-96). *Intra*personally, there are a plurality of voices. The strength of this stage lies in the ability to

see beyond the perspective that others exist solely to meet one's personal needs and desires (as in stage 2 - imperial). However, there is an absence of self that recognizes "the interpersonal definition of reality." In other words, one's concerns are embedded within "us-ness;" there is no "I have my needs, you have yours, so how do we interrelate with our similarities and differences?" Stage 3 ambivalences come out of the sense that different realities "are me." This may be likened to Perry's multiplistic stage, where all opinions are valid, one belief or action is neither better nor worse than the next. Relationships are characterized by the view that "you are the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create context out of which I define and know myself and the world" (p. 100). The loss of a relationship means the loss of self. One might call this an Eriksonian pre-identity stage, a stage Kegan suggests was a missing link in Erikson's transition from "industry" to "identity." Kegan (1982, pp. 86-87) states the possibility of an Erikson-type stage called "affiliation vs. abandonment" which would address the period of "connection, inclusion, and highly invested mutuality" common to interpersonal embeddedness. It is with this stage that the "high investment of us-ness" is experienced.

The loss of balance for a student entering college comprises the loss of home in the familial sense, and the absence of feeling at home in the world. Depending on an individual's development, s/he may feel excited by the change towards adulthood or loneliness/abandonment and refuse to care for oneself. Students are learning to reconstruct the relationship between self and other. During this stage, a development occurs from a kind of fusion with other, where self-

identity is bound to the perceptions of others, into the discovery of the answer to "who's in charge? How am I defined?" During the course of this transition, students are faced with the possibility of leaving behind those who once supported them - old friends and family. This leaving behind, in a psychological sense, risks the pain of loss and the possibility of rejection, difficult at best for an embedded interpersonal individual. This can be immobilizing and depressing. Motivation to work and/or interact with others drops. There is no pleasure in academic success because fulfillment and value is derived from the pleasure of feeling connected and supported, not necessarily from achievement. This strongly echos Chickering's and Erikson's observations mentioned earlier regarding the pitfalls of the sophomore-junior transition period.

For Resident Assistants embedded within the interpersonal stage, the role of enforcer would require them to exercise power, authority and control,

> ...something that he or she is unprepared for, developmentally. Exercising power requires a boundary between the leader and the follower; being a leader demands that one be clear about what the self, *independent of others*, wants and expects of the other. Because the Interpersonal's self-definitions, purposes and pre-occupying concerns are essentially *co*-defined, *co*-determined, and *co*-experienced, there is no self independent of the context of other people (Kegan and Lahey, p. 207).

In one instance, an embedded RA won't willingly choose to do anything which threatens his or her "psychologic." Limits will not be set or enforced, as the risk of loss appears too great. Likewise, an individual may observe a peer's behavior as a reflection of himself. The interview-based aspect of this research provided responses in which

during a confrontation between two floormates, one (an RA) said to the other, "Look at the position you are putting me in! How could you do that to me?". An unexpected confirmation of this conflict has been provided quite recently in The Collegian, the daily newspaper of the University of Massachusetts. On December 6, 1991, an article questioning campus alcohol policy regulations reports that "...enforcement of [alcohol] regulations places an unfair burden on RAs. Policies of this nature can create an 'us versus them' attitude of residents toward RAs." I shall discuss this dilemma in conjuction with these interviews in chapter 4 below.

As a peer counselor, however, an interpersonally defined RA exhibits strong identification with peers. Particularly with other stage 3 floormates, an RA could co-create supportive, nurturing relationships which, for some, might aid their transition through alienated periods of the college years. Both the RA and his/her peer would be mutually supportive, thus providing an interpersonally safe environment.

The risks, here, might appear if a peer should develop beyond the need for inclusion of stage 3 into the need for distinctness of stage 4 (see below). At this point, the RA may experience the loss of self previously described, which results from an apparent loss of other. Similarly, if a peer should begin expressing values different than those of the RA, the co-defined purposes established at the interpersonal stage could disintegrate. The results of this change could result in self-doubt and withdrawal. Often, this crisis may evoke the transition to the next developmental stage, institutional, which favors separateness.

We can observe the growth of a student who enters the interpersonal stage, acts within it, and leaves embeddedness for progress into a new evolutionary truce in stage 4 (institutional).

Evolution out of stage 3 towards stage 4
>...is the story of gradually separating internalized points of view from their original sources in others and making the self itself a coherent system for their generation and correlation. When that has happened, e.g., we stop making others responsible for our own feelings, and experience it as a kind of violation when others make us responsible for theirs" (Lahey, et. al, 1983, p. 51).

Ignelzi (1986) and Lahey, et. al. (1983) refer to a series of substages in the move between the stages. These substages suggested the growing influence of the stage 4 need for distinctness and the lessening pull of the need for inclusion in "us-ness." Research responses included a slightly more business-like approach by some RAs when confronting peers - a more straightforward, non-judgmental form of communication. Table 5 illustrates this growth.

Kegan's inclusion/distinctness dynamic can be used to describe the tension students experience between being accepted by their peer group and asserting their individuality. Two forces operate: one pulls the student toward peer inclusion within the social structure of the floor, and the other motivates the student to act according to an urge to stand alone, "be oneself," and assert her or his personal authority.

We may speculate as to this schema's application to the roles of Resident Assistants. In the peer counseling role, inclusion needs might allow for the ability to appropriately affiliate with peers, and/or it may denote an inability to separate ones issues from those of another. In the peer enforcer position, desire for inclusion may elicit

Table 5

Kegan's Interpersonal Stage (3) and the Roles of RAs

Transition from Imperial Stage 2 - need for distinctness

- "needs, interests and wishes"

↓

Expects trustworthiness

↓

Interpersonal Stage 3 - need for inclusion

Pro	Con
- collaborative self-sacrifice	- potential for loss of self
- identification with peers	- lack of power, control,
- common sense of purpose	authority
- supportive, nurturing	- lack of boundaries
- motivated to help and connect	- dependent on
- shares subjective experience	approval from others
(feelings) with others	

↓

Expects personal accountability

↓

Transition to Institutional Stage 4 - need for distinctness

- "self-authorship and personal autonomy"

trust from other students with respect to disciplinary problems, or inclusion needs may prevent appropriate action taken, for fear of rejection and negativity.

Similarly, the need for distinctness in an RA may aid in the role of peer counselor as it allows the RA to separate self from others' issues, or such need for distinctness may prevent adequate development of mutual identification and trust. In the peer enforcement role, distinctness might facilitate important disciplinary action, or it may induce hostility from others, if there is a lack of connection and failure on the part of peers to perceive the RA as "on their side." Table 6 illustrates some pros and cons resulting from inclusion and distinctness needs in the peer counselor and enforcement roles.

Table 6

Relating Kegan's Inclusion/Distinctness Dynamic With Peer
   Counseling and Peer Enforcement Roles of Resident Assistants

	Peer Counselor		Peer Enforcer	
	Pro	**Con**	**Pro**	**Con**
Inclusion	RAs identi-fied with peers	Lack of separa-tion of issues	RA is "on their side"	RAs fear of rejection and ostracism
	Pro	**Con**	**Pro**	**Con**
Distinctness	RAs can separate self from others' issues	Peers may not identify with RA	RA can imple-ment disciplin-ary action with less emotional risk	Peers lack trust; hostility evoked

Note: the pro of inclusion can be the con of distinctness.

Harvey, Hunt and Schroder: Integrative Complexity

In their benchmark publication, Harvey, Hunt and Schroder (1961) describe conceptual evolvement in terms of increasing effectiveness of adaptability to change. They investigated the nature and development of "categorical schema" with which individuals evaluate in-coming information for a variety of content areas (Knefelkamp and Slepitza, 1976). This exploration focused on "subject-object ties" and the variations in the kinds of conceptual "linkages" between individuals and their world. These conceptual linkages or systems are presumed to be developmental; that is, progress from earlier stages to later stages is defined in terms of complexity and diversity. The measure Harvey, Hunt and Schroder have used to determine such development has been in terms of degrees of concreteness and abstractness, the former representing a more fixed relationship between "input and output," while the latter exhibits multiple alternatives from which to choose. The continuum of concrete to abstract thinking reflects degrees of integrative complexity, and it is assumed that this cognitive development is measured by an increasing availability of alternative concepts or schemata for coping with the world. As will be demonstrated below, direct analogies to aforementioned schema, e.g. Perry's, are evident.

Concreteness and abstractness represent attributes of how one relates to experience. The differences of these orientations can be thought of as the degree to which one:

    a. differentiates between the outer and inner worlds;

    b. assumes a mental set willfully and consciously;

    c. accounts for one's acts to self or to others and verbalizes the act;

    d. shifts reflectively from one aspect of a situation to another;

    e. simultaneously holds in mind various aspects of an experience;

    f. grasps the essential of a given whole, analyzes it and synthesizes it;

    g. abstracts common properties and forms hierarchic concepts;

    h. plans ahead ideationally. (pp. 24-34)

Greater concreteness tends to be accompanied by absolute or stereotypic thinking, the "oughtness" of rules, projection of one's beliefs as worldly fact, and reliance on authority figures as sources of truth and power. An example of this was observed by Russell and Sandilands (1973), when they examined correlations to conceptual complexity. They found lower scoring undergraduates, that is, those who demonstrated more concrete thinking as measured by Hunt's Paragraph Completion Test (discussed below), to show a preference for externally given structures, when tested for educational, religious and political orientations. The concrete subjects tended to choose prescribed dogma and defined behavioral expectations.

These cognitive properties have been observed in other domains. The Scales of Complexity were developed by Driver and Streufert (1967) to measure cognitive complexity along the concrete to abstract continuum. Low or high scores on 6 variables -- 1) general complexity, 2) hierarchic complexity, 3) flexible complexity, 4) differentiation, 5) flexibility, and 6) openness -- determine the degree to which an individual can freely process information. These six variables represent degrees of rule-making capability, number of dimensions available for classifying stimuli presented, and overall

cognitive organization. General characteristics of behavior exhibited by a more concrete individual would be black-white thinking, minimizing of conflict, dependence on external conditions, and absoluteness of rules of integration (Schroder, Driver and Streufert, 1967).

In the domain of career development, Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) describe nine areas of qualitative change that serve as similar benchmarks of growth in conceptual level. These are:

1. Semantic structure (degree of absolutes in expression)
2. Self processing (introspection)
3. Analysis
4. Openness to alternative perspectives
5. Ability to assume responsibility
6. Ability to take on new roles
7. Locus of control
8. Synthesis
9. Ability to take risks with self

Although not entirely linear, these nine variables are progressive, in that the higher numbered items reflect greater amounts of abstract thinking, while more expression of the lower numbered variables would demonstrate greater concrete thought.

Comparing to Perry's schema to mark the stages of cognitive growth, Knefelkamp and Slepitza note that students will exhibit "more integrated understanding of the interrelationship between personal identity, values and the entire career life planning process..." (p. 54), while demonstrating the higher numbered qualities.

Further comparison of Perry with Harvey, Hunt and Schroder's concrete-abstract continuum has been expounded. Meyer (1977), exploring the religion domain, states that in the early positions of dualism, religious beliefs are "unconsidered, dogmatic, and attributable

to the teachings of authority" (p. 47). He analyzed religious content as an attribute of intellectual development. Using both Perry's schema and Harvey, Hunt and Schroder's conceptual system, Meyer measured freshmen and senior levels of cognitive development and administered Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) based on Kohlberg's moral judgment domain. Not only was change measured from freshmen to senior years in the direction of greater abstract conceptualization, but those scoring lower in conceptual level showed greater reliance on external religious structure. This is consistent with the other developmentalists who have understood reliance on external authority or structure as representative of lower stage, concrete thinking.

Styles of negotiating conflict, another domain, have been shown to reflect degrees of integrative complexity, that is, cognitive development. Schroder and Crano (1965, in Schroder, Driver and Streufert, 1967 and Schroder and Suedfeld, 1971) measured how subjects handled conflict in the form of discrepant communications. Outcomes included 1) changing attitudes toward or away from the communication; 2) becoming increasingly favorable or unfavorable toward the source of the message, or 3) distorting the message so that it is either more similar or more dissimilar to one's position. Results showed that the more concrete persons used consistent processes which "pulled" in the same conflict reduction direction more than the more abstract persons; and conversely, the more complex or abstract an individual was in their information processing, the lower the tendency to reduce uncertainty or conflict. In other words, the more cognitively developed (abstract) an individual becomes, the greater is their ability to handle conflict.

In a similar vein, Rotter and O'Connell (1982) observed high positive correlation between cognitive complexity and tolerance for ambiguity with their study exploring the relationships among cognitive complexity, tolerance for ambiguity and sex-role orientation. Using Schroder and Streufert's (1962) original measure of cognitive complexity (the origin of the Paragraph Completion Test) and tests for ambiguity tolerance and sex-role identification, they further demonstrated the more abstract ability to handle uncertainty, synthesize multiple variables, and integrate ideas into new forms of thought.

Consistency among researchers examining the concrete-abstract continuum appears evident. Qualities demonstrating more concrete and more abstract conceptual levels are observable in a variety of domains. In later stages of development, for example, an individual is capable of perceiving and examining multiple perspectives and, ultimately, synthesize various viewpoints into a greater whole. In lower stages of more concrete thinking, one tends to perceive experience as "either-or", creating polarities.

When individuals are in conflict, the degree to which one allows the conflict to transpire and integrate discrepant information demonstrates the cognitive stage present. However, the picture may still be incomplete. Saidla (1990) asked in her study, "What is the relationship betwen cognitive development and the dyadic-level variable interpersonal understanding (as in conflict situations)?" In attempting to relate interpersonal understanding, relationship rapport and cognitive development of college roommates, she found that cognitive development, apparently, was not related to the other

variables. Her study found no relationship, and she hypothesized that, perhaps, they may be two entirely unrelated domains, i.e. interpersonal and intellectual. Selman, below, suggests that, regarding interpersonal conflict, there may be, in fact, two domains of cognitive development occurring simultaneously, one internal and one interpersonal.

Robert Selman: Interpersonal Conflict

Robert Selman's work focuses on the joint roles of emotional and cognitive functioning in a child's social development. His study includes examining the ways children handle interpersonal conflict with peers. While he typically studies children and young adolescents, nevertheless, his interest in the developmental aspects of peer conflict negotiation offers relevant insight to this study.

Selman states that "developmental maturity involves the ability to differentiate and coordinate the disequilibrium in feeling and cognition, both within the self and between the self and the other" (1986, p. 93). He suggests a way to classify interpersonal negotiation strategies "simultaneously according to both hierarchical levels and interpersonal orientation." He has addressed this issue with a two-factor developmental model for understanding interpersonal negotiation. One factor attends to developmental qualities of the cognitive, emotional and motivational components that make up a particular negotiation or conflict strategy. This speaks to the individual cognitive developmental perspective of each participant. The second factor relates to actions that change the self and/or other's behaviors during the conflict, moving from polar positions (either-or) towards more developed, integrated perspectives. Interpersonal

negotiation strategies are defined as the methods for dealing with both self and other to pursue goals in an interpersonal context.

Selman identifies two conditions that define an interpersonal negotiation, or conflict, situation. First, he speaks of one or more individuals in a state of <u>internal disequilibrium</u>, felt because an individual(s) has a wish that may not be satisfied by the other. Second, <u>interpersonal disequilibrium</u> arises when the attempt of one or more individuals to return to a state of inner balance (equilibrium) has an impact on the other. Combined, these two conditions illustrate Selman's two-factor model, which includes inner cognitive and emotional elements and interpersonal actions that change self and/or other.

A distinction exists between the two factors, where the <u>capacity</u> to coordinate perspectives of thought or emotions (which he calls competence and could be understood as cognitive development) is separate from the <u>use</u> of "perspective coordination in actual conduct" (i.e. performance). In other words, as Saidla (1990) has suggested,

> [Researchers] need to think about how their study
> participants might behave in real-life relationships,
> in which willingness to understand is as important
> as capacity. In other words, the competence may
> not be actualized through performance... (p. 305)

It is possible, according to Selman, that the elements which make up a negotiation strategy -- the internal cognitive, emotional and motivational components and the interpersonal self-other transforming behaviors -- "may not necessarily be synchronous....The level of differentiation and coordination of perspectives may not be applied and used evenly at all times in all realms of conduct..." (p. 124).

In other words, an individual may be operating at one stage of development in the inner domain and another stage of development in the interpersonal domain. For example, someone may be at Selman's stage 3 cognitive development, where they are capable of negotiating collaboratively, while at the same time, be at his stage 1 interpersonally, where they might withdraw their desires to meet the needs of another. Figure 2 illustrates the parallel paths of both domains.

An examination of Selman's developmental schema may shed light on this domain discrepancy. Herein lies important implications regarding the abilities of RAs to perform certain tasks.

Selman delineates 5 levels of development along both domains, 0 representing the most concrete perspectives and 4 demonstrating the most cognitively and interpersonally advanced position. At level 0, attributed to toddler/preschool, no clear differentiation between the social perspective of self and other exists. There is no distinction between "me and you." In early childhood, level 1, the child understands that another person has subjective experience distinct from self. At level 2, middle childhood, one is able to perceive that the other person can comprehend subjective experiences distinct from self. In early adolescence, stage 3, both self and other can mutually hold psychological points of view simultaneously. Finally, step 4 - late adolescence and adulthood, there is "a general integrated social viewpoint that transcends individual perspective and involves a mutual understanding of deeper psychic processes within and between persons" (p. 100). In other words, not only can self and other grasp more than one viewpoint, as in stage 3, but they can engage in

Level 4

Simultaneous/Mutual Transformation

↑
|

Level 3

MutualStrategies that use both self-
and shared-reflection to
collaboratively change both
Self's and Other's wishes in
pursuit of mutual goals

↑
|

Level 2

Self-Reflective/Reciprocal

Strategies that
consciously use psych-
ological influence to
change Other's mind

Strategies that consciously
use psychological compliance
to value Self's wishes only
secondarily to Other's

↑
|
↓

↑
|

↑
|
↓

Level 1

Differentiated/Subjective

Strategies that use
willful one-way orders
to control Other for Self's
way

Strategies that use "will-less"
submission to wishes of
Other

↑
|
↓

↑

↑
|
↓

Level 0

Undifferentiated/Egocentric

Strategies that use
unreflective,impulsive
force to get Self's goals

Strategies that use
unreflective impulsive
withdrawal or obedience
to protect Self

Interpersonal Negotiation Strategies in the Other-Transforming Orientation	Levels of Inner Competence (Cognitive Development Stages)	Interpersonal Negotiation Strategies in the Self-Transforming Orientation

Figure 2

Developmental (Inner) and Interpersonal Strategies --
    Two-Factor Model

(From Selman and Demarez, 1986, p. 103)

simultaneous and mutual transforming experiences together. Selman notes that, although he assigns certain age ranges where each stage is dominant, at any age, strategies from lower stages may be evident for a particular situation. Thus, a late adolescent may exhibit behaviors from any lower stage, if they are either <u>optimal or adaptive</u> (p. 126).

Selman notes specifically the qualities of level 4, late adolescence, that speak to Saidla's concern for dyadic levels of understanding. He says:

> ...it may be that at level 4, when the issue of negotiation is interpersonal intimacy, equilibrated transformation... is simultaneously and mutually carried out on the conduct of individuals *negotiating together*, rather than being carried out within one person's consideration before implementing a negotiation strategy [a level 3 operation](p.119). [My italics]

Here, the term equilibrated transformation refers to a situation where negotiation strategies are balanced with respect to actions directed toward the self and/or other's concerns.

Parallel understanding of interpersonal negotiation may possibly be seen in Gilligan's study of women's moral development. In her study of meaning-making in women, Gilligan (1981, 1982) develops the theme of connectedness as a distinctly different transformation of moral judgment from the original schema by Kohlberg, described earlier. She speaks of conflicting responsibilities reflecting caring and connectedness rather than competing rights, which demonstrate a style of separation and judgment. She sees conflict resolution requiring a <u>contexual</u> mode of thinking which is not formal or abstract, as Kohlberg perceived. Gilligan, with Wiggins (1988) makes a more subtle distinction between care and connectedness, or "co-feeling,"

and empathy. "Co-feeling," she writes, "depends on the ability to participate in another's feelings, signifying an attitude of engagement rather than an attitude of judgment or observation. To feel with a person any emotion means in essence to be with that person rather than stand apart and look at the other" [as in empathy] (p. 122).

Similarities appear between Gilligan's definition of empathy and Selman's stage 3, and between co-feeling and Selman's stage 4. Empathy, as defined above by Gilligan as a standing apart and looking at the other, can be compared to the "equilibrated transformation" that takes place within an individual but separate from another, as described by Selman's stage 3 interpersonal negotiation strategy. The experience of knowing another person's reality takes place as a separate event from the other's experience. Co-feeling, as a participation with another, is an engagement rather than a standing apart. Similarly, one notes the "conduct of individuals negotiating together" in Selman's stage 4, a simultaneous mutuality of feeling and behavior. Stage 4 and co-feeling both represent a coming together of two realities, where self and other experience, change, are experienced and are changed.

We may assume that college students would have cognitive development in the range of levels 2-4, based on Selman's projection into late adolescence. This would be consistent with the other theorists' schema presented earlier. However, regarding interpersonal negotiation strategies, any of the levels are possible. In figure 2, it can be seen that the arrows up the middle, representing the path of growth for cognitive development, are one directional. This reflects cognitive development theory which assumes that individuals grow

through linear stages, moving forward but not in reverse. The arrows along both sides of the chart, which show the path of interpersonal strategies, are two-directional. Individuals can choose behaviors at any level regardless of current cognitive development stage.

Resident Assistants have various interpersonal options when they are negotiating conflict with their peers. While an RA may be a stage 3 or 4 cognitively, they may exhibit, say, stage 1 behavior interpersonally. For example, it is possible that an RA may have the capacity to collaborate with a peer and alter desires to pursue a mutual goal (stage 3 development). However, when confronting a floormate for a policy violation, the RA may submit to the willful dominance of that person (stage 1 - self-transforming behavior). They might have the capability of mutually transforming goals, but are not ready or do not choose to engage in collaborative efforts. In another instance, an RA may try to engage a peer in mutual dialogue regarding the violation of a policy (stage 3/4) where a direct order is being called for (stage 1 - other transforming orientation).

Selman implies that there are both psychodynamic and situational (adaptive and optimal) reasons why certain interpersonal negotiation strategies are used. Rest (1986) also offers a multi-factor model to tentatively respond to this issue of correlation between behavior and psychological motivation in the moral development domain. He offers a four-component schema to organize understanding of motivation and action when one "behaves morally." He states that an individual performs at least four processes to behave in a particular situation:

1. Makes an interpretation regarding possible actions and how each affected person would be affected by each possible action;
2. Makes a judgement about which action is "most" morally right;
3. Places a higher priority on moral values over other personal values;
4. Perseveres through personal (inner) obstacles to uphold choice.

Rest observes that an individual may be stronger or weaker in demonstrating each component; that is, for example, one may well be able to choose a morally right action but unable to follow through with the action. A parallel can be drawn between the multi-dimensional aspect of this model and Selman's two-factor schema. Having one strength or ability does not guarantee high levels of ability in all areas.

While the reasons why one chooses certain actions go beyond the scope of this study, the variables suggest that certain behavioral choices an RA makes may match or mismatch the task requirement of the moment. Selman's two factor model suggests that knowing the cognitive development of an individual alone may not tell us what behaviors will actually occur in a given situation. Rest's four-component model reveals the independence of each decision-making function from each other. Given the weight of evidence to the contrary, i.e., the unpredictability of aligning inner motivation with external behavior, this study has looked for any relationships that may arise in conflict situations which might support the observation of patterns between competency (cognitive development) and performance. It is possible that within specific domains, in this case, conflict negotiation, some trends may occur that may not exist in other arenas of human behavior.

While the cognitive development literature does not describe specific behaviors in a predictive manner, it does offer an understanding of how individuals are motivated. I have suggested hypothetical matches and mismatches of RA tasks to developmental level based on an understanding of each theorist's epistomological schema. One more hypothetical charting using stages of development can be described here, one that employs specific ways in which conflict is negotiated. Thomas' (1976) describes five styles or modes of conflict negotiation strategies that individuals may use in specific conflict situations. These modes are described in detail in chapters 3 and 4. He derives these five modes, called competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accomodation, based on degrees of assertion and cooperation that one incorporates within their behavior during conflict. He further employs the notion that the desire to satisfy one's own concerns and/or another's concerns influence the way in which one will negotiate conflict. While there is no evidence in the cognitive development literature of specific uses of styles of behavior, we can hypothesis possible behaviors based on epistomology.

As stated earlier (p. 56), Kohlberg believes that the ability to take the role of another, to perceive and understand someone else's perspective is the result of cognitive development. His conventional stages mark the beginning of this skill. Perry, too, describes the stage of multiplicity as a beginning to acknowledge a multitude of viewpoints other than one's own. This ability may influence the degree to which an individual may take interest in the concerns of others and to which he/she will cooperate with another during a conflict situation. Hypothetically, one might see higher levels of cooperation and interest

in other viewpoints as cognitive development increases. Perhaps more accurately, the <u>ability</u> to cooperate and comprehend the viewpoint of another may reflect higher cognitive levels. As Selman and Saidla suggest above, one's readiness or ability to act in a certain manner may not be reflected in one's willingness to act that way. Selman and Saidla's assertions notwithstanding, hypothetical relationships between cognitive development and styles of conflict behaviors may be described by these general trends:

    1. As cognitive development increases, behaviors that include role-taking and cooperation will increase. According to Thomas, these behaviors are described as collaboration, compromise and accomodation; and

    2. Lower cognitive levels may be characterized by Thomas' competitive and avoidant behaviors, which involve low levels of cooperation and more self-interest to the exclusion of others.

These statements are quite speculative, based on the information offered by cognitive developmental theorists. Common sense and research precedent suggest that all of the conflict styles can be observable at most stages of development. As will be seen in the Results of the Study, chapter 4, the above speculations are disproved in the research, thus confirming the belief that theory cannot predict specific behaviors. However, in suggesting possible trends of behavior which parallel cognitive behavior, we have the opportunity to explore problem areas that RAs may encounter during the performance of their task.

Summary

The evolution of the roles of Resident Assistants can be seen as sociological in form and psychological in function. These roles have

changed as the values of our culture have shifted - from paternalistic, moralistic control of behavior to peer-oriented facilitation of growth. From colonial times to the present, colleges have undergone periods of development not unlike the stages of growth of individuals. "Theories of cognitive and psychological development," says Kurfiss (n.d.), "trace paths from simplicity and absolutism to complexity and relativism, from concreteness to abstractness, and from external to internal regulations of behavior" (p. 1). She further states that the progression reflects our society's "idealization of... individual responsibility (internal or self-regulation), critical analysis (abstractness and complexity; differentiation of ideas), and tolerance (relativity of values)." The nature of college life has changed from an absolutism to relativism, similar to the cognitive development of individuals. This is the psycho-sociological equivalent of "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," where, on the one hand, the growth of the individual reflects the growth of society, and, too, the evolution of society and its culture responds to changing personal values.

The present day student development model asserts the importance and success of peers counseling and teaching each other within the academic and residential communities on campus. The benefits of this system have been economical to the university and educational to the students both in the advisor and advisee roles. The cost of this arrangement can arise as seen in a degree of ineffectiveness and counter-productivity between mis-matched RA and students, based on developmental readiness to perform the assigned roles. Many researchers already cited have described methods of selecting, training and supervising Resident Assistants, to maximize

effectiveness; yet, as Berkowitz and Perkins point out..."the acquisition of knowledge rarely translates into positive behavioral change..."(Sherwood, 1987, pp. x, 70).

Upon surveying the literature of the roles of residence assistants, late adolescent identity development and cognitive development theories, very little study has occurred regarding the capabilities and expectations of RAs from a developmental perspective. While speculation as to possible match and/or mismatch of RAs with tasks in this chapter has been hypothetical, it represents a mode of inquiry which calls for a potentially massive amount of future research.

The following description of the methodology of this study attempts to address the central question proposed at the beginning of this chapter: Is there a relationship between who RAs are (developmentally) and how they carry out the tasks they are expected to do? Specifically, is the enforcement of policy a developmental phenomenon for RAs?

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Design Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship, if any, between the ways late adolescent Resident Assistants (RAs) make meaning of their experience of enforcing university policy with their peers and the methods of conflict negotiation which emerge during the performance of their duties. From this, it may be determined whether assigned tasks match or mis-match different RAs. To determine the existence of a relationship between the cognitive developmental level of RAs and methods or styles of conflict negotiation, this study sought to discover patterns of behavior that may emerge at each stage of development, as expressed by the self-reporting of RAs when enforcing policy with their peers.

This is an exploratory study. I am not looking for causation, to prove that certain kinds of thinking produce certain kinds of behaviors. Rather, as an exploratory study, this research examined possible relationships between the cognitive development of these late adolescents and the perception and range of responses self-identified by RAs while in conflict situations, resulting from the task of enforcement. It is an inquiry as to whether these relationships are developmental in their emergence.

RAs can be considered a subgroup of college students in general, not a unique group particularly different from their peers (Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986; Adams and Zhou, 1991). The decision to focus this study on RAs was based on the role they play as enforcers of

university policy. As RAs, they are expected to confront students on their floors when a violation occurs within the Code of Student Conduct. This duty to enforce regulations presents these students with conflict situations both internally and interpersonally. How does an RA negotiate conflict with a fellow student with whom they may be friends, cohorts, or are younger or older? What developmental issues arise during the task of enforcement?

Early in this study, I described three levels of conflict that can emerge during an enforcement situation between RAs and their peers: internal, interpersonal and metapersonal conflict. Issues that may arise for RAs may be seen as:

1. the conflict of deciding between the two roles of peer counselor or peer enforcer (internal);

2. the conflict between enforcement of established rules and regulations and the maintenance of positive peer relations (interpersonal); and

3. the conflict between the duty to perform the task (of enforcement) and personal belief in the rules and procedures to be followed (metapersonal).

The dilemmas faced by RAs are complex, due to the nature of the individuals and of the job. The inquiry presented here focused particularly on the interpersonal conflict as an outcome of students at specific developmental levels performing certain tasks. That is, data elicited from the sample of RAs, particularly as observed in the results of the MODE and the interviews, demonstrated the conflict these students have in both being a rule enforcer and friend to their floormates.

To undertake this inquiry of developmental issues in policy enforcement, I utilized a two-way examination of how this group of students thinks and acts when in a particular conflict situation:

1. A determination of each RA's stage of cognitive development, using validated assessment instruments, and

2. A determination of each RAs self-reported style of conflict negotiation, using both a written instrument and personal interview.

This method established an analysis of each individual's conceptual level, her/his "meaning-making" ability, together with his/her perspectives and reactions to conflict, a baseline of characteristic behaviors regarding conflict situations, and the gathering of specific experiences and feelings from each participant.

Subjects

The sample consisted of Resident Assistants living in university housing at the University of Massachusetts. They are enrolled in a large northeastern state university (>25,000) whose population includes predominately white, middle-class students. The students in this study were born in the years between 1965 and 1972. These are undergraduate students - sophomores, juniors and seniors - between the ages of 19 and 26, who were engaged by the housing office to perform the tasks previously described in chapter 2, in exchange for relatively modest monetary compensation, but, presumably, valuable leadership experience, mentioned earlier in this study.

Out of a total of 339 RAs employed by the university during the Spring of 1990, 35 RAs (10.3%) volunteered for this study and were ultimately provided with test instruments. These 35 consisted of RAs

from four different resident halls or housing complexes, and were tested in group format, one resident group at a time, at four scheduled meeting times. The four groups consisted of 15, 4, 8 and 8 RAs respectively, with a total of 20 males (57%) and 15 females (43%). There were 18 seniors (51.4%), 10 juniors (28.6%) and 7 sophomores (20%). The range of number of semesters RAs served was one to six, with two and three semesters most common.

Procedure

During the spring of 1990, I obtained permission to study Resident Assistants through the Department of Housing Services at UMass/Amherst. A letter was sent to the entire group of Resident Assistants on campus (n=339) to ask for willing students to participate in the study. They were told in the letter who I was and the nature of this study (see figure 6, appendix). During this same time period, the Assistant Director of Residential Education sent a memo to the RA supervisors, the Resident Directors (RDs), describing this study and requesting their support of my work (see figure 7, appendix). Further support was elicited by the Assistant Director at a RD staff meeting where the memo was read.

It was important that my study be perceived by the RAs as being supported by their RDs, to help insure an adequate degree of participation. The RDs whom I called agreed to my attendance at a regularly scheduled RA meeting in their residence halls, where I presented the project and answered questions. My request for RAs continued into the following Fall, 1990 and Spring, 1991, as the study initially began late in the semester and students were more difficult to

come by. A mutually convenient time was established for each group of RAs, to conduct the first part of the study, that of administering the instruments. The participants were informed of the nature and details of the study both at the initial information meeting and at the time of the testing. They were told that they could expect to attend a one hour (approximate) session at which time they would complete three written inventories - two essay type production tests and one preference type instrument. They were assured that their participation would be confidential and no record of names would remain on materials used for the study. They could request the results of their own test scores after the study is completed. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. Release forms were signed by them at the time of testing, thus providing written permission by each RA to participate in the study (see figure 8, appendix).

For the first group, I administered the shortest test first (the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode (MODE) preference instrument @ 3-5 minutes to complete), then the Paragraph Completion Test (PCT) @ 12 minutes exactly, and finally, the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER) @ approximately 45+ minutes. This order turned out to be disadvantageous, as students were tiring in the middle of completing the MER, and were non-verbally expressing their impatience to be done. I decided to reverse the order of the tests for the subsequent groups, providing the quickest and easiest test (the MODE) last. This allowed for better sustaining of energy during the course of the test administration. In chapter 5, I will discuss the testing pitfalls of administering multiple tests to college students at one sitting.

After collecting all the test instruments of the four groups, I assigned a number code to each student, so scoring could be done anonymously (I inadvertently left names on one copy of the MER that was given to one of the two raters, which he graciously converted to code himself). The two trained raters scored the MER, while I scored the PCT and the MODE.

Out of the 35 RAs tested, 15 RAs (4% of total RA population on campus) were subsequently interviewed within six weeks of the original test administration, based on their scores from the developmental inventory, the PCT.

In the following section, I will describe in more detail the rationale for the instruments used and the basis and procedure for the interview.

Instruments

In choosing to examine developmental variables for RAs, relevant to the focus of this study, I have had to respond to the question: What is the best way to test cognitive development? In my examination of the literature, three methods appear to be the most accepted: the oral interview, the written essay or short answer production-type written instrument, and the written preference-type test, requiring some sort of multiple choice. While this study employs all three forms in its design, only production instruments are used to measure development. The other forms are used for different purposes, to be discussed later.

Developmental Assessment Instruments

Chapter 2 offered a small sample of the stage theorists who have developed schema to illustrate individual cognitive development among college students. William Perry's work in intellectual development through the college years provides one of the most acknowledged theories in college study development. Various assessment instruments have been created based on his fourteen year study mentioned earlier (Mines, 1882). Among these instruments are those that represent each of the three test forms: interview, production and preference. A brief examination of some of the assessments available will demonstrate the rationale for the choice of instruments used in this study.

The Reflective Judgment Interview (RJI), developed by Kitchener and King (1978, 1981), is partially based on Perry (1970) and Harvey, Hunt and Schroder (1961). It postulates the process of increasingly complex sets of assumptions of late adolescents and their relationship to the way they defend their beliefs This seven stage model shows a progression from concrete to abstract thinking, focusing on changes in how one interprets their experience. Even though it follows Perry's semi-structured interview format, it is not precisely a Perry measure, in that reflective judgment stages are more complex than Perry's four stage model (Mines, 1982). Kitchener and King employed "ill-structured" problems for which there are no right answers or expected responses.

Researchers such as Schmidt (1985) and Welfel and Davison (1986) have used the RJI to describe the progressive development of intellectual reasoning in college students in parallel 4-year studies.

Results have demonstrated the use of the RJI as a measure of the growing ability of college students to make more sophisticated (i.e. complex or abstract) decisions and judgments over time.

The RJI is an interview format assessment which is administered individually and takes about 1 hour to complete. Four dilemmas are presented one at a time, and the subject responds to standard probe questions for each dilemma. The responses are taped and transcribed for blind rating by certified raters.

King and Kitchener's measure is expensive in terms of training, administration and rating costs (Mines, 1982). It could be argued, however, that in spite of the costs, the interview format may best determine developmental level, as it produces the richest source of data, similar to Perry's original work. Mentkowski, Moeser and Strait (1983) argue that open-ended interviewing allows for more spontaneity and time for refinement of responses. They suggest that the "face-to-face" technique supports, in particular, the assessment of the upper levels which require greater reflection.

However, they also state that an essay-type production instrument would work well for lower positions, as it pulls for less complex, more concrete thinking. They acknowledge that such an assessment tool could even be preferable to interviews in that "it corresponds to a primary performance mode through which students communicate their thinking and through which [others] assess a student's reasoning skills" (p. 31). Perry himself mentions (1981) that a "more focused stimulus" can be a legitimate measurement form, provided basic developmental patterns of interest have been established.

As stated earlier, researchers agree that most college students are found to be in the lower positions 1-5 (positions 6-9 are generally considered to reflect degrees of commitment in relativity and are usually not observed until young adulthood is more established). Mentkowski, et. al. do conclude that the production type essay form of assessment may be quite valid for the stages of development of this study's population. They state that either the interview or written instrument can be used profitably in assessment of, particularly, the lower stages (1983).

A written production type instrument well-known for its assessment of the early Perry stages for college students is the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) by Knefelkamp and Widick (1974, 1975). It measures cognitive stage development in three domains - decision-making, careers and classroom learning - and is rated independently by two trained raters. It is used with college aged students, requiring 15 minutes of writing for each of the three domains.

The MID offers the possibility for production type responses that are varied and full, which respond specifically to Perry's schema. Possible drawbacks to its use may be its limit to the three domains mentioned (in contrast to, say, the Measurement of Epistemological Reflection (MER), below, which interrelates six domains); and to the requirements of the scoring system, which necessitates training and more than one rater.

Measurement of Epistemological Reflection (MER)

Baxter Magolda (1982, 1985 with Porterfield; 1984, 1988, 1989) attempted to translate Perry's research into valid assessment techniques to determine the developmental stage of college students. She, with Porterfield, developed the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER), which is directly based on Perry's stages of cognitive development, measuring Perry positions one through five, the range of development generally ascribed to college students. The MER reflects Perry's cognitive schema, illustrating progressive epistemological thinking that moves from concrete to abstract modes of meaning-making of experience.

As a standardized paper and pencil instrument, the MER elicits data in six domains through the use of questions pertaining to educational decision-making, the role of the learner, peers, role of the instructor, evaluation of learning, and the nature of knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 1989). Each series of questions focus respondents' thinking and elicit justification for the perspectives expressed, i.e. their current epistemological reasoning. The resulting responses are coded by expert raters using a scoring manual for each domain.

Reliability of the MER has been supported by interrater agreement and interrater reliability results, using trained and certified raters, with 68% agreement during the initial trials and .81 during succeeding studies. In seven cross-sectional studies testing the validity of the MER, .93 correlation with extensive direct interviews (as in Perry's original work) arose (Baxter Magolda, 1987). The MER was originally designed to measure Perry positions one through five (Baxter Magolda, 1988), which is the range expected in college (Perry,

1970; Baxter Magolda and Porterfield, 1985; Ricci, Porterfield and Piper, 1987). The rating manual has been empirically validated using data from both genders and contains reasoning structures relevant both to Perry's positions and Belenky, et. al. (1986) (Baxter Magolda, 1987, 1988) regarding gender differences. A total score is derived from the average of the domain scores. Trained raters are used to obtain the score, using a coding manual.

Of particular note is Baxter Magolda's research comparing the results of semi-structured interviewing procedures versus MER data. By comparing the results of both techniques over three years and nine separate testing periods, it was determined that the MER and direct interviews both measured developmental change similarly from year to year, and interviewing data did not add anything new to the MER findings (Baxter Magolda, 1987b, 1989).

While the MER is a good choice to use a specifically Perry-based assessment, a drawback to using this instrument is similar to that of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID). Scoring requires the use of a coding manual employed by two trained and certified raters. Under ordinary circumstances, this might prove to be a difficult barrier, if raters were not available. However, my decision to use the MER was aided in this case by the fact that two raters were immediately identified as my own adviser and a colleague, both who were willing to participate in this study. This practical consideration as well as the theoretical appropriateness of the instrument to the task made the MER well-matched to the study.

In this examination of developmental instruments, preference type assessment tools also need to be addressed. A developmental

preference instrument may be multiple choice, forced choice, Likert scale or other objective instrument use to confirm the stage of development of the subject (Mines, 1982). Examples of such tools are Ryan's (1984) seven item objective instrument, Erwin's (1983) 101 item Scale of Intellectual Development (SID) and Moore's (1987) Learning Environment Preference Test (LEP). The use of these preference instruments, while easy to complete and score, have not been developed to a point of reliably measuring cognitive development (Stonewater, Stonewater and Hadley, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1989), nor will they provide illustrative responses of how students make meaning of their experiences, as do interviews and production instruments. These two limitations provided reason to exclude preference type instruments in this study.

During my search for appropriate developmental assessment tools, I discovered an instrument that measured cognitive development level using the domain of conflict and conflict resolution. The Paragraph Completion Test (PCT) specifically accounts for how one handles conflict from a developmental perspective. The following description amplifies my decision to utilize this assessment tool.

Paragraph Completion Test

The Paragraph Completion Test (PCT) is a semi-projective method to acquire thought samples which are scored according to how a person thinks. The PCT provides the opportunity to respond to more open-ended questions around conflict, thus peer-related responses have a more likely chance of surfacing. Schroder, Driver and Streufert (1967) report a high degree of success using the PCT,

developed by Schroder and Streufert (1962) and standardized by Hunt, Butler, Noy and Rosse (1977). The PCT is a measure designed to assess Harvey, Hunt and Schroder's (1961) construct of conceptual level through the completion of six sentence stems yielding a single conceptual level (CL) score. Subjects are asked to write three or four sentences to complete various sentence stems (e.g. "When I am criticized..."). Results indicated the level of cognitive structure that generated the particular response. Referents indicating more concrete responses included: 1) overgeneralization, 2) absoluteness, 3) inability to generate conflict or diversity, 4) inability to view a situation from another person's point of view, 5) inability to offer alternative perceptions or outcomes, 6) tendency to seek structure, avoid delay (p. 26). The converse of these responses indicated levels of abstractness. Sentence stems that produced the highest construct validity were classified as a) those that imply the presence of alternatives, uncertainty, or absence of structure ("When I am in doubt..."; "Confusion..."); b) those that imply external standards ("Rules..."; "Parents..."); and c) those that imply interpersonal conflict ("When I am criticized..."; "When others criticize me it usually means..."). Schroder, Driver and Streufert note that these items represent the presentation of "discrepancy, uncertainty, control, or constraint," and engage individuals in some form of resolution discovery. Resolution responses, they discovered, were the most effective way of providing construct-relevant indicators.

Six topics, described above, were introduced by the following instructions:

"On the following pages you will be asked to give your ideas about several topics. Try to write at least three sentences on each topic. There are no right or wrong answers so give your own ideas and opinions about each topic. Indicate the way you <u>really</u> feel about each topic, not the way others feel or the way you think you should feel. You will have two minutes for each page."

The topics obtain a sample of how participants handle conflict, rules, authority relations and uncertainty. Each person's score is obtained by assigning a score from 0-3 to each of the six responses and then combining the separate scores into a total. Besides the numerical scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, half scores of .5, 1.5, and 2.5 are also assigned, designating transition points between stages. Figure 3 offers general characteristics of each score.

The participants have 2 minutes for the completion of each incomplete sentence. The instrument is scored by a trained rater using a rating system which employs a 4-point scale on the CL dimension. As in other cognitive development assessments, emphasis is on how respondents think, not what they think. The highest three responses are averaged to classify the student into a particular developmental group.

Construct validation of the PCT has been obtained in extensive studies (Claunch, 1964; Vannoy, 1965; Olson, 1970; Schroder and Suedfeld, 1971; Gardiner and Schroder, 1972; Currin, 1973; Chan, 1975). The PCT has been shown to have moderately positive relationships with

Score 0:   Impulsivity, negative or aggressive reactions; self-centered and resists being ruled or controlled by others; or defensive, withdrawing, blaming others.

Score 1:   Polarized thinking (good-bad, right-wrong), sensitive to authority figures, concern with correct behavior.

Score 2:   Open to other's ideas but doesn't integrate alternatives into decision-making; need for independence, growing tolerance of uncertainty, ambiguity and differences of opinion.

Score 3:   Weighs alternatives, shows concern for own and other's ideas and feelings and for consequences of decisions; will not compromise values to please others. Accepts responsibility for consequences of decisions.

Figure 3

Paragraph Completion Test Scoring Schema

Kohlberg's (1969) Moral Maturity Scale (0.34), Loevinger's (1970) Scale of Ego Development (0.23) and a Scholastic Aptitude Test (0.27) (Hunt, 1971). There is no data to my knowledge regarding correlation to Perry and the MER.

Vannoy (1965) investigated cognitive complexity, providing subjects with a battery of instruments specifically designed to measure concreteness and abstractness. He found the scores on the PCT, one of the instruments used, to be particularly adapted to assessing conceptual structures in regard to interpersonal stimuli, e.g. conflict situations. Similarly, Schroder and Suedfeld (1971) report a number of construct validity studies for the PCT in measuring the structural properties of conflict and uncertainty in the interpersonal arena.

An early study by Claunch (1964) investigated the extent to which "conceptual complexity" (Harvey and Schroder, 1963; Schroder, Driver & Streufert, 1964) contributes to performance on both concrete and abstract conceptual tasks. This study delineated specific, quantifiable differences in the way conceptually simple (concrete) and conceptually complex (abstract) subjects generated contrasts and integrations of two theories presented for evaluation in the experiment. Claunch used an objective test for measuring degree of concreteness, and as essay-type examination requiring the use of alternative, flexible conceptual rules in the generation of contrasts, comparisons and integrations of different points of view (for abstractness). He discovered that the more concrete subjects would generate polarized contrasts of the two theories presented (similar to Perry's dualism), and the more abstract subjects would provide qualified contrasts and integrative comparisons, <u>combining</u> the

discussion of the two theories in the examinations (as in Perry's multiplicity to relativity). Claunch confirmed the general hypotheses that cognitive development 1) evolves in the direction of concreteness to abstractness, 2) it is a function of how one both differentiates and integrates relevant situations, and 3) that the progressive development from the more concrete to more abstract conceptual system passes through stages of varying time spans (Harvey, 1963).

Succeeding studies have used and validated the use of the PCT in the assessment of conceptual levels and behavioral descriptions (Carr, 1965; Cross, 1966; Cross, 1970; Halverson, 1970; Gardiner and Schroder, 1972; McLachlan, 1972; Noy and Hunt, 1972; McLaughlin and Hunt, 1973). Olson (1970) used the PCT to determine whether cognitive levels could be used to efficiently place interns in different learning environments, based on concrete to abstract reasoning ability. Similarly, Currin (1973) and Chan (1975) used the PCT in conjunction with the relationship between conceptual level and the success of students in education programs. The use of such testing in intern placement has clear ramifications for hiring and training of Resident Assistants, which will be discussed later.

The third instrument used in this study, the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (MODE), is a preference type, forced choice written assessment of what styles or modes of behavior an individual tends to employ during conflict situations. The data from this instrument complements information derived from the interview, discussed below, in that it reveals what the RAs do during conflict, not why they do it (as in how they make meaning of the conflict experience). Thus, the use of this preference type instrument fulfills

one of the study's goals, that of identifying the range of responses RAs self-report when in conflict.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (MODE)

In the previous discussion of Selman's schema in chapter 2, the concept of interpersonal negotiation strategies was introduced. Blake and Mouton (1964) also conceptualized a model which categorizes behaviors and attitudes based on the degree one is concerned with self and/or with others. They assert that to the extent one is more concerned with satisfying either one's own concerns and needs or another's concerns and needs, different types of conflict negotiation behavior will be produced. Thomas (1976) further mapped out this model and labelled five orientations to represent how one expresses themselves while in conflict, based on degrees of self and other concerns. Figure 4 illustrates this conflict handling model.

This model describes how one responds behaviorally when engaged in conflict. These are competition, compromise, avoidance, accommodation and collaboration. Each orientation represents a style or set of behaviors and attitudes that can be observed and measured. Competition represents "a desire to win one's own concern at the other's expense, namely to dominate" (p. 901). It reflects the "win-lose" scenario, where one is primarily and assertively after their own gain at the expense of another. Accommodation focuses on appeasement or satisfying the other's concerns without attending to one's own. These behaviors are directed towards making primarily the other person happy. Compromise represents a preference for "moderate and incomplete satisfaction, a splitting the difference"

assertive   **Competitive**   **Collaborative**

(domination)   (integrative)

Desire to Satisfy Self's Concerns

Sharing

(compromise)

unassertive   **Avoidant**   **Accomodative**

(Neglect)   (appeasement)

uncooperative   <-------------------------->   cooperative

Desire to Satisfy Other's Concerns
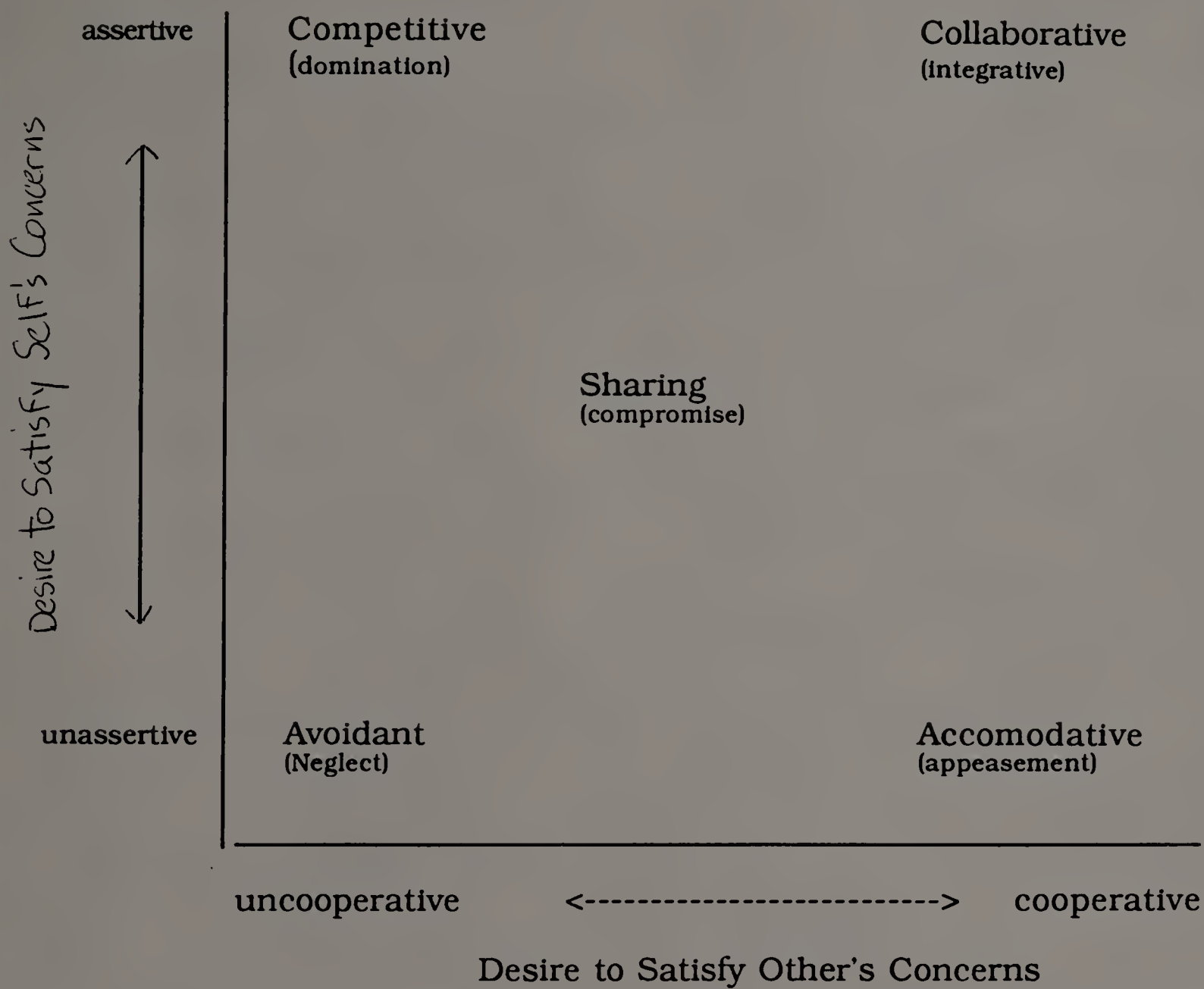
Figure 4

<u>Thomas' (1976) five-way conflict behavior orientations</u>

approach where both parties gain something but not everything. Avoidance reflects a withdrawal, isolation, indifference or evasion of addressing self and others' concerns. There is a relative lack of assertion in obtaining results for either parties - an apparent passivity. Collaboration reflects a desire to fully satisfy the concerns of both parties. It shows full participation in integrating the needs of both parties - the "win-win" scenario - where mutually beneficial agreements are reached.

The measurement of these conflict orientations can be obtained using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (MODE), a forced choice preference test. Developed by Kilmann and Thomas (1977, 1983), subjects choose an "A" or "B" response on 30 sets of conflict related situations. Scores on each of the five conflict-handling modes are derived by adding the number of times statements representing that mode are selected over other statements. Each mode is paired with each other mode three times, therefore scores range from 0 to 12.

Test-retest reliabilities are moderately high and consistent across the modes, .64 average. Concurrent test validity with other instruments measuring conflict handling modes has shown significant correlation (up to .80) (Thomas and Kilmann, 1978). Use of the MODE instrument has been extensive (Xicom, 1990) and application to undergraduate students has revealed the following mean scores over the five modes: competing, 4.90; collaboration, 5.73; compromising, 6.62; avoiding 7.36; accommodating, 5.68 (based on 0 - 12 score range). Differences between males and females have been reported not significant for three modes (collaborating, avoiding and

accommodating) and significant for competing and compromising (at the .05 and .01 level, respectively) (Kilmann and Thomas, 1977).

Interview

At the completion of the cognitive level assessment phase of the study, selected participants were asked to engage in a 20 minute individual interview with the researcher. As mentioned earlier, this group of RAs was chosen on the basis of balancing gender and deriving an equal distribution of cognitive levels from the PCT. In conjunction to obtaining test scores, verbal samples of actual conflict situations were requested for the purpose of reporting themes or trends (Carey, 1991) regarding what the participant actually felt, thought and did during a conflict. They were asked questions that pull for how they perceived themselves during a particular incident. These questions were based on the work of Thomas (1976) who describes two models by which conflict may be represented: the process and structural orientation. Each focus on a separate set of aspects of the conflict experience and are complimentary. When combined, these models provide a basis for diagnostic questions that uncover the nature of a particular interaction, the "what and how" of conflict behavior (See Table 3, Appendix).

The Thomas process model describes internal dynamics of conflict episodes. With appropriate questions, one can identify the events in a situation and trace the effect of each event upon succeeding events (p. 892). With this approach one may then choose to intervene directly (if desired) into the flow of events and alter the course. The process model evokes questions such as:

What are the perceived losses or threats?
Is each party aware of the other's concerns?
What assumptions are being made?
What are possible short and long-term results of this conflict?

The structural model focuses on underlying conditions that shape the events occurring within conflict. One tries to identify the limits, pressures and constraints of each party. This model is used to specify the effects of these conditions upon behavior, e.g. how peer pressure influences one's decision-making. Questions using the structural model are framed as:

a. What is at stake for each party?
b. What is the general make-up of each (their pre-disposition)?
c. Are there other neutral (or non-neutral) people involved that may effect behavior?
d. How formal or informal is the conflict situation?

Thomas' two-pronged approach in investigating the parameters of situational conflicts provides a structure for asking relevant questions. The list of questions created for this study attempts to uncover the process and structure of conflict situations presented by the student subjects. They represent a way of understanding how individuals manage conflict, not necessarily resolve it.

Data Analysis

The scores for both developmental inventories were determined by the use of rating manuals specifically designed for each instrument. The MER requires the scoring to be done by two trained raters who can cross check their results. Two certified raters were identified at UMass/Amherst and agreed to participate in this study. The PCT was scored by myself, who has trained in the scoring technique.

This study was aimed at examining possible behavioral themes that may be present at different developmental levels. By employing the set of questions based on Thomas' model, I have attempted to pull for responses that reflect how RAs see themselves in conflict, specifically when enforcing policies, and with respect to the five conflict modes described above. Information derived from both the interviews and conflict test instrument compared with the measured developmental levels were intended to provide insight regarding the consideration of whether relationship patterns do exist. From an identification of patterns, one may infer matches or mismatches relative to the roles RAs are expected to carry out based on their developmental capabilities.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to discover any relationships or trends between the cognitive developmental level of a small sample of Resident Assistants (RAs) and the self-reported ways these RAs negotiate conflict when performing their enforcement duties with peers. To this end, this study design employed two production-type developmental assessment instruments for determining cognitive developmental level and a preference-type conflict negotiation measure, followed by an interview to assess RA self-reported style of conflict negotiation. As mentioned in chapter 3, these instruments were chosen based on their relevancy and applicability to both the cognitive development of college students and the specific domain of conflict negotiation.

This chapter includes four sections which describe:

1. the demographics of this study sample, with a comparison to the overall RA population on campus;

2,3,4. the results of each of the instruments completed by the RAs. An analysis of this data to determine meaning or importance is also included; and

5. an analysis of themes presented in the interviews and their relationship to the instrument scores.

Demographics

During the spring of 1990 at the University of Massachusetts, there were 339 RAs employed within the residence halls. Table 7 illustrates this population according to gender and college class. These numbers are presented for comparison purposes, and, due to the smallness of sample, are not designed to imply statistical significance.

Table 7 - RA Population on Campus						
	Men		**Women**		**Total**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Seniors	43	13	70	21	113	34
Juniors	54	16	80	24	134	40
Sophomores	42	12	45	13	87	25
Freshmen	2	.5	3	.8	5	1
Total	141	42	198	58	339	100

Table 8 illustrates the sample of RAs participating in this study:

Table 8 - RA Population in Study						
	Men		**Women**		**Total**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Seniors	11	31	7	20	18	51
Juniors	6	17	4	11.5	10	28.5
Sophomores	3	9	4	11.5	7	20.5
Total	20	57	15	43	35	100

Table 9 compares the demographics of the total population of RAs (P)

with the sample in this study (S) (Tables 3 and 4 combined):

Table 9 - Combined RA Populations (all numbers in percentages)						
	Men		**Women**		**Total**	
	P	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**
Seniors	13	31	21	20	34	51
Juniors	16	17	24	11.5	40	28.5
Sophomores	12	9	13	11.5	25	20.5
Total	41	57	58	43	100	100

(P includes freshmen)

The total number of the overall RA population (P) conforms to earlier predictions that juniors and sophomores make up about two-thirds of the RAs hired (Miller, Whitcomb, and Bloomfield, 1989). However, notable differences are observable in the total seniors and juniors in the study sample (S). There were more seniors and less juniors, resulting in a 50-50 ratio of seniors to juniors/sophomores. There was a greater number of senior men in the sample and a notable decrease in the number of junior women participating in this study. Thus, whereas, in the general population of RAs on campus, the ratio of total P men to women is 2:3, the ratio of the sample (S) of men to women in this study is 3:2.

Before further analysis of the data is to continue, I must draw attention to sample size. The total number of RAs tested and interviewed in this study is extremely small (n=35 tested and n=15 interviewed). Any statistical significance placed on results presented herein is highly suspect, due to such small numbers. The data offered in this study may suggest areas for further study or may hint at possible trends or tendencies, but there is no intention to posit statistical significance to the data. Rather, it is hoped that this exploratory research will present one model or "window" through which other researchers may investigate developmental phenomena of college students in conflict situations. With this cautionary note stated, other possible explanations for the difference between the study sample and general population are now given:

1. The RAs who volunteered for the study came from four separate areas on campus. As there are approximately 40 undergraduate residence halls at the University of Massachusetts, the small number representing this study would not necessarily provide a typical cross-campus percentage of men and women RAs. Thus, to match the study sample with overall population, RAs from a large number of residence halls would need to be tested. A larger scale study beyond the scope of this exploratory research might better provide such consistency.

2. Differences between the sample and general population of RAs may also relate to possible developmental and psycho-social changes in students. The higher number of seniors participating in the study may reflect a certain "maturity" with which they approach learning and participation in the academic process (Chickering, 1969). Many students have related to me during my work on campus that the first few years of college are for "blowing off steam," and that by the time they become seniors, they have a greater appreciation for their responsibilities. In the study sample, the ages of the RAs range from 19 to 26, providing an overall higher age mean than the traditional age of college students. This, too, may speak to a certain maturity of the outlook of these students, and, possibly, a greater willingness to participate in the study.

3. In one of the four residences representing this study, only 4 RAs actually attended the testing session. This was about one-third the number in the hall. It appeared that most of the other RAs, some of whom were women, had conflicting priorities or other unaccounted-for reasons for not attending the testing session. Better planning on

both the investigator's part and the RAs own scheduling would increase the likelihood of a more representational sample.

    4. The number of semesters RAs have been employed in their positions appears to not explain the sample differences. Table 10 illustrates how many students from each class have been RAs for different length of times:

Table 10 - Semesters as RA		
number semesters as an RA	Men	Women
3-6	4 Sen., 2 Jun.	5 Sen.
2	4 Sen., 3 Jun., 2 Soph.	2 Sen., 4 Jun., 2 Soph.
1	3 Sen., 1 Jun., 1 Soph.	2 Soph.
Total:	11 Sen., 6 Jun., 3 Soph.	7 Sen., 4 Jun., 4 Soph.

Given the small total sample, there appears to be no notable differences in the number of men and women RAs of 2 or more semesters experience. The difference between numbers of men and women at the first semester RA level may be due, simply, to the low numbers overall in the sample.

The Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER)

    The MER tests for cognitive developmental level across six domains, providing one final score that reflects the Perry scale. While the range of Perry positions is from 1 through 5 (dualism through relativism, with 6 through 9 representing positions of commitment within relativism), college students most commonly are found to be in positions 2 through 4 (Adams and Zhou, 1991). In the study sample,

the mean of the usable scores (31 out of 35) was 3.01, thus conforming to predicted norms for college students. The following table (11) illustrates each RAs MER score from the study sample, including their age, gender, class and number of semesters as RA:

Table 11 - MER Results

Code #	Age	Gender	Class	# Sem. as RA	MER Score
1	26	F	Senior	5	2.33
2	22	F	Senior	4	3.00
3	21	M	Senior	5	3.50
4	21	M	Senior	2	3.00
5	21	M	Senior	2	2.83
6	21	M	Junior	1	3.00
7	21	M	Junior	4	3.17
8	20	M	Junior	2	3.33
9	20	F	Junior	2	3.33
10	20	M	Junior	2	2.50
11	22	F	Junior	2	3.00
12	21	M	Junior	3	3.00
13	23	F	Senior	2	3.00
14	22	F	Senior (5th yr)	3	3.00
15	20	F	Junior	2	3.67
16	22	M	Senior	2	3.33
17	24	M	Senior	2	3.33
18	20	M	Sophomore	1	3.00

Table 11 (continued)

Code #	Age	Gender	Class	# Sem. as RA	MER Score
19	21	M	Senior	2	3.17
20	24	F	Sophomore	1	2.20
21	21	M	Junior	2	3.00
22	22	F	Senior	6	2.75
23	20	M	Sophomore	2	2.33
24	21	M	Senior	1	3.00
25	21	M	Senior	5	3.67
26	20	F	Junior	2	2.83
27	21	F	Senior	4	3.17
28	20	F	Sophomore	2	3.17
29	22	M	Senior	4	2.80
30	20	M	Sophomore	2	3.00
31,32	Not Used				
33	22	F	Senior	2	2.83
34,35	Not Used				

Average: 3.01

By class, the MER scores averaged:

Seniors: 3.04   Juniors: 3.08   Sophomores: 2.74

By class and gender, the MER scores averaged:

Senior F	Senior M	Junior F	Junior M	Soph F	Soph M
2.87	3.18	3.21	3.00	2.69	2.78

By semesters, the MER scores averaged:

6 = 2.75   4 = 3.04   2 = 3.04

5 = 3.17   3 = 3.00   1 = 2.80

Analysis of the MER scores

In this study sample, there appeared to be virtually no difference in scores between seniors and juniors, but an increase from the sophomore to junior class for both genders. It is possible that this evidence of developmental change from sophomore to junior year may reflect the transition that has been referred to in Chapter 2 as coming out of "sophomore slump." Developmentally, this is the period of time Perry designates as the beginning of moving out of the polarities expressed in dualism and into the diverse realities of multiplicity. Likewise, Kohlberg recognized this time as one of "upheaval," where self-interest begins to transform into a growing concern for the needs of others. While the actual data is far from conclusive, the shift in scores from sophomore to junior years may illustrate the observed occurrence of development transition that both Perry and Kohlberg have described.

The overall increase in the sample's scores over the college years is consistent with previous data predicting a one-half to one whole step increase through the four years of college (Kitchener, 1982). However, it is noted that while there is an increase in scores from junior men to senior men, there is a decrease for women from junior to senior years. A likely explanation for this would be that the sample of junior and senior women is so small (4 and 7, respectively), an accurate gauge of conceptual level for this population is virtually impossible. In spite of the small sample, however, the MER scores appear to be closely related to Baxter Magolda's (1990) recent study exploring gender differences in cognitive development. She found

sophomore women in her study to have a mean MER score of 2.71, as compared to 2.69 here. Similarly, her sophomore men scored 2.94 compared to 2.78 in this study. For the junior class, her women scored 2.84 to this study's 3.21 and her men averaged 3.02 to 3.00 of this study's junior men. Perhaps, overall, the most reliable analysis of these results would be the consistency with which college students score at approximately Perry position 3.

<div align="center">Paragraph Completion Test</div>

The PCT provides the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions around conflict, thus peer-related responses have a likely chance of surfacing. The rater obtains a numerical score from each of six completed sentence stems, from which a final score is obtained by averaging the three highest scores. Table 12 illustrates each PCT score obtained from the subjects along with the demographic data and MER scores which were shown above:

<div align="center">**Table 12** - PCT Results</div>

Code #	Age	Gender	Class	# Sem. as RA	MER	PCT
1	26	F	Senior	5	2.33	1.33
2	22	F	Senior	4	3.00	2.67
3	21	M	Senior	5	3.50	2.83
4	21	M	Senior	2	3.00	2.17
5	21	M	Senior	2	2.83	2.33
6	21	M	Junior	1	3.00	2.50
7	21	M	Junior	4	3.17	2.50
8	20	M	Junior	2	3.33	2.33

Table 12 (continued)

Code #	Age	Gender	Class	# Sem. as RA	MER	PCT
9	20	F	Junior	2	3.33	2.67
10	20	M	Junior	2	2.50	1.17
11	22	F	Junior	2	3.00	2.33
12	21	M	Junior	3	3.00	2.67
13	23	F	Senior	2	3.00	2.50
14	22	F	Senior (5)	3	3.00	2.67
15	20	F	Junior	2	3.67	3.00
16	22	M	Senior	2	3.33	2.50
17	24	M	Senior	2	3.33	2.50
18	20	M	Sophomore	1	3.00	2.50
19	21	M	Senior	2	3.17	2.33
20	24	F	Sophomore	1	2.20	1.33
21	21	M	Junior	2	3.00	1.83
22	22	F	Senior	6	2.75	1.33
23	20	M	Sophomore	2	2.33	1.83
24	21	M	Senior	1	3.00	2.00
25	21	M	Senior	5	3.67	2.83
26	20	F	Junior	2	2.83	1.50
27	21	F	Senior	4	3.17	1.83
28	20	F	Sophomore	2	3.17	2.00
29	22	M	Senior	4	2.80	1.17
30	20	M	Sophomore	2	3.00	2.50

Table 12 (continued)

31,32	Not Used					
33	22	F	Senior	2	2.83	2.17
34,35	Not Used					

Average 3.01   2.19

The mean PCT score of ten earlier studies of conceptual level of college students (Hunt, Butler, Noy and Rosser, 1977) was 1.89. While that average score is slightly lower than the 2.19 found in this study, it approximates a stage 2 description (below). Explanations for the higher score in this study may include, again, the smallness of the sample group as well as rater inexperience in scoring technique. The similarities of the scores, that is, their stage 2 correlation, serves to provide some reliability to the data.

The description of stage 2 (which the average score of 2.19 most closely represents) of the PCT is as follows:

> Open to other's ideas but doesn't integrate alternatives into decision-making; need for independence, growing tolerance of uncertainty, ambiguity and differences of opinion (Hunt, Butler, Noy and Rosse, 1977). Initial freedom from authoritarian control of ideas (Harvey, Hunt and Schroder, 1961).

The description of position 3 (which the average score of 3.01 most closely represents) of the Perry schema for the MER is as follows:

> Some uncertainties and different opinions are real and legitimate *temporarily*. The role of authorities is questioned and all viewpoints are valid. Uncertainty and complexity are realities in their own right (Perry, 1970). The original dichotomy of right and wrong is replace with a dichotomy of known and unknown (Baxter Magolda, 1990).

The scores of these two production instruments are consistent with the expected developmental range for college students. The PCT and the MER scores have a Pearson correlation coefficient of .76, thus

demonstrating a fairly high degree of consistency in measuring conceptual level. Based upon a comparison of the descriptions of stage 2 PCT and Position 3 MER, there appears to be a consistent form of epistemology as measured by the instruments. These two measures of conceptual complexity are in basic agreement regarding the study sample's conceptual level.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (MODE)

The scoring of the MODE was performed blind, that is, I was unaware of which students said what during the interviews when I rated the MODE. Similarly, when I analyzed the interview transcriptions for themes, I was unaware of which students scored what on the MODE. This helped to create an unbiased analysis of the transcriptions.

This "Management of Differences Exercise" (MODE) (Kilmann and Thomas, 1977) is a preference-type instrument which classifies interpersonal conflict-handling using five modes of behavior: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating. This schema is based upon two separate dimensions of 1) attempting to satisfy one's own concerns (assertion) and 2) attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns (cooperation). Thus, competing is assertive and uncooperative, collaborating is assertive and cooperative; avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative, accommodating is unassertive and cooperative, and compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperation. Figure 4 on page 105 graphically illustrates these dimensions.

Table 13 illustrates the mean scores, by gender and college class, of the MODE instrument given to this study sample (S). Scores range from 0-12 as described in chapter 3.

Table 13 - Mean Scores of MODE					
	Competition	Collaboration	Compromise	Avoiding	Accommodation
Senior F	2.71	6.00	8.86	6.71	5.71
Senior M	6.09	5.55	7.00	6.55	4.82
Junior F	8.50	4.25	5.00	6.25	6.00
Junior M	6.67	4.17	7.00	6.67	5.67
Soph. F	2.00	7.75	8.75	5.75	5.75
Soph. M	4.00	9.67	7.67	4.00	5.00

There are marked differences between some of the scores that are most likely accounted for by the small numbers of students in each category. The change from a 2.00 for sophomore females in competition to 8.50 for junior females and down to 2.71 for senior females (all in competition mode) can be explained by the too small sampling available.

Table 14 attempts to remedy this by simply averaging the scores solely in gender, and then comparing these total mean scores (S) to those derived by Thomas and Kilmann (1977) for their nine study group samples of undergraduates (T-K):

Table 14 - Mean Scores of MODE by Gender				
Mode		(S)		(T-K)
	M	F	(Combined)	(Combined)
competing	5.95	4.07	5.14	4.90
collaborating	5.75	6.00	5.86	5.73
compromising	7.05	7.80	7.37	6.62
avoiding	6.20	6.33	6.26	7.36
accommodating	5.05	5.80	5.37	5.68

These scores show an overall small difference between scores based on the 0-12 range. Thomas and Kilmann (1977) have stated that the differences in their scores by gender were significant for the modes of competing and compromising and insignificant for the remaining three modes. In this study sample, competing and compromising as well as accommodating appear to have the greatest variation between genders, while collaborating and avoiding are more closely matched. The combined totals for both studies are close in score for competing, collaborating and accommodating, with differences apparent in the compromising and avoiding modes. In actuality, however, the greatest difference in these scores amounts to 1.1 score measure (in avoiding mode), which, according to Thomas and Kilmann (1974), reflects an approximately 5 percentile shift in the population. Given the small numbers of this study sample, this difference may be within a predictable range of variation.

By comparing the MODE scores to the developmental instruments, we may see if any patterns emerge regarding conceptual

level and modes of conflict-handling behavior. Table 15 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients of the five conflict modes compared to the MER and PCT, as well as to age, gender, college class, and semesters as RA:

	Competition	Collaboration	Compromise	Avoiding	Accommodation
Table 15 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the MODE with Variables					
Age	-.4271	.0904	.0859	.3512	.0653
Gender	-.2772	.0708	.1223	.0383	.2398
Class	-.0192	-.2328	-.0600	.2503	.0344
# RA	.1419	-.1880	-.0299	-.0430	.0068
MER	.2623	-.2766	-.2445	.1756	-.1047
PCT	.1857	-.0148	-.3668	.1724	-.1489

With a .76 correlation between the MER and PCT (see p. 105), it is no surprise that their correlations with the five conflict modes basically agree in direction and strength. Most notably, it appears that as developmental scores increase, competition and avoidance tends to increase (.26 and .18 respectively, compared with MER) and collaborating, compromising and accommodating tend to decrease to a modest degree (-.28, -.24, -.10, respectively). These tendencies suggest that the higher the RA has scored on the developmental instruments, the greater the likelihood they will employ competitive (assertive and non-cooperative) behavior and/or avoiding (non-assertive and non-cooperative) behavior. Furthermore, the correlations between age and the MER and PCT are -.36 and -.25 respectively, meaning that the cognitive development of the sample students dropped as the age increased.

Common experience as well as theoretical understanding of higher cognitive levels suggest that we would expect a greater degree of cooperation, perhaps in the form of role-taking ability and the ability to assimilate diverse viewpoints, the more cognitively advanced an individual and, generally, the older the individual. The data presented here suggest that in this sample of RAs, the reverse is true, as competition and avoidance (both non-cooperative conflict negotiation styles) are used more than collaboration, compromise and accommodation, the higher the age of the student. In the discussion below regarding statements made during the interviews, some possible explanations for these results will be expressed.

To further explore the relationship between the modes of conflict strategies and how students identified themselves in terms of these modes, Table 16 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the five modes of conflict as scored by the study sample:

Table 16 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients within the MODE				
	Competition	Collaboration	Compromise	Avoidance	Accommodation
Competition	1.000	-.0394	-.5863	-.5250	-.3268
Collaboration	-.0394	1.000	.0383	-.6164	-.5078
Compromise	-.5863	.0383	1.000	-.0071	-.2345
Avoidance	-.5250	-.6164	-.0071	1.000	.4723
Accommodation	-.3268	-.5078	-.2345	.4723	1.000

Predictably, there is a fairly strong negative correlation between modes

incorporating assertion with modes that do not have assertion as a dominant quality, e.g. competition and collaboration (assertion) with avoidance and accommodation (non-assertion). Students who tend to employ the former, tend not to engage in the latter forms of conflict negotiation (and visa-versa). The moderately strong positive correlation between avoidance and accommodation (.47) illustrates the behavioral tendency to avoid conflict and keep the peace (verified below in the interviews). Perhaps of particular interest is the near zero correlation (-.04) between competition and collaboration. This suggests that some students may exhibit a near-equal propensity to exercise either or both of these modes during a conflict situation. In fact, as seen in Table 13 below, a few RAs had scored highest in both the competition and collaborative modes. Both require assertion with the latter also incorporating cooperation.

Summary

As a preference-type, forced choice instrument, the MODE allows individuals to examine the styles of negotiation strategies that they tend to employ during conflict situations. Based on the two dimensions of assertion and cooperation, five styles or modes are determined - competition, collaboration, compromise, avoiding and accomodation. While the mean scores of all five styles were similar, differences appeared when compared against the MER and PCT instrument scores. A tendency has been observed that the higher the RA has scored on a developmental instrument, the more likely they will employ competitive or avoiding behavior during interpersonal conflict, although extreme caution must be placed on these results, as

the sample size was so small. In light of this disclaimer, in the next section, that of examining interview data, speculation is offered regarding this unexpected occurrence of pre-dominant competing and avoiding modes and their relationship to cognitive development.

Interviews

Out of the 35 RAs originally given the assessment instruments to complete, 15 were interviewed to acquire more in-depth information regarding self-perceptions of conflict negotiation strategies used. These 15 RAs were selected on the basis of their developmental scores, their gender and their availability to be interviewed. A balanced sample was attempted, reflecting lower, middle and upper scores on the developmental assessment (PCT) and a reflection of the male-female ratio of RAs on campus. As the range of developmental scores was relatively narrow (an approximate differential of 1/2 - 1 stage), and the stage range reflected a transitional developmental progression, that is, dualism into multiplicity on the Perry schema, distinction between lower, middle and upper scores was very vague, if impossible. However, as the data shows, some interesting information emerged.

In Table 17, the dominant MODE(s) score of the RAs who were chosen to be interviewed, is presented below. Students are designated by code number.

Table 17 - <u>Students used for Interview (by Code #)</u>
(Dominant MODE indicates highest conflict mode(s) scored)

Code #	Age	Gender	Class	# Sem. as RA	MER	PCT	Dominant MODE
2	22	F	Senior	4	3.00	2.67	compr/avoid
3	21	M	Senior	5	3.50	2.83	compe/collab.
5	21	M	Senior	2	2.83	2.33	compe/collab.
9	20	F	Junior	2	3.33	2.67	competition
10	20	M	Junior	2	2.50	1.17	compromise
11	22	F	Junior	2	3.00	2.33	compr/avoid
13	23	F	Senior	2	3.00	2.50	accom/avoid
14	22	F	Senior (5th yr)	3	3.00	2.67	collab/compr.
15	20	F	Junior	2	3.67	3.00	compe/avoid
16	22	M	Senior	2	3.33	2.50	avoiding
23	20	M	Sophomore	2	2.33	1.83	collab/compr.
24	21	M	Senior	1	3.00	2.00	compromising
26	20	F	Junior	2	2.83	1.50	compe/accom.
27	21	F	Senior	4	3.17	1.83	compromising
33	22	F	Senior	2	2.83	2.17	compr/avoid
			Mean:		**3.02**	**2.26**	
			(Mean of original group:		3.01	2.19)	

The mean scores of the MER and PCT for the interviewed sample of RAs (n=15) are very close to the mean scores of the original sample of this study (n=35). I have used this similarity to verify that the sub-sample used to be interviewed is not significantly different than the overall sample in developmental level as tested. As noted earlier,

gender differences regarding MODE scores appear to be insignificant, given the small overall sample. Regarding the data taken from the MODE scores, the only trend noted is the slight tendency for these RAs to employ competitive or avoidant modes of conflict negotiation strategies in the late dualist, early multiplist cognitive positions. The data derived from the following interview profiles amplifies the meaning of this small tendency.

Interview Data

Data collected from the students during the interviews revealed a high degree of consistency when compared to their MODE scores. Key statements made by students were noted by myself thematically based on Thomas' utilization of the two dimensions called degree of assertion and degree of cooperation (see page 105) as well as the actual words stated which describe their self-perception during conflict situations.

The following is a presentation of student profiles taken from the interviews, which attempt to illustrate some thought processes behind their conflict neogtiation behavior choices. While some of the profiles may be brief, they are meant to summarize an overall developmental and behavioral picture as tested and self-described by the RAs themselves.

Interview Profiles

1. Student #2 scored 10 (on a scale of 0 to 12) on the MODE for both avoidance and compromise - her highest scores. During the interview she stated, "I avoid conflict because I'm afraid of judgments."

I need to take [others] personality into account when confronting, but I am unsure of what others are feeling." Her self perception is consistent with a high degree of avoidance scored on the MODE. Her equally high compromise score may be understood by a further comment, "I used to go by the rules only." Thus, she apparently defines her RA experience as dualistic early on, then, at the time of this study, developed uncertainty and an openness to the reality of others (multiplicity) without the ability to comprehend these other realities (a Perry stage 3 epistemology). Her 3.00 score on the MER verifies this stage designation. She is, perhaps, more willing to compromise, knowing there is more to enforcement than "rules only," but not ready yet to fully act (high avoiding, fear of judgment). This is consistent with Saidla's (1990) assertion stated here at the beginning of chapter 1 (p. 4), that competency may not be demonstrated by performance, and, too, Selman's two factor understanding of cognitive development and interpersonal behavior. In other words, this student may be aware of alternatives (cognitively), but not ready to act accordingly (interpersonally).

This student's fear of judgment, and, therefore, avoidance behavior may be understood using Kegan's pre-identity stage hypothesis mentioned earlier (Chapter 2, p. 55). He considers the possibility of a stage called "affiliation vs. abandonment" in association with his stage 3 - interpersonal, to describe the need for inclusion within the group or the relationship and the fear of loss and aloneness. In Kegan's spiral model of cognitive development, one moves from the need for inclusion to the need for distinctness and back again to inclusion, and it is this need for inclusion that marks the interpersonal

and the urge for affiliation. As will be observed below, many of the student responses coupled with their MODE scores reflect the overall need for affiliation and inclusion with their peers in the residence halls.

2. In another example, student #5 scored high on competition (11) and collaboration (8). He states that he is assertive and loses his temper easily. He also expressed his difficulty in understanding another's viewpoint and needs to be more open-minded, feeling insecure about his assertiveness and the reactions of others. His developmental scores were 2.83 (MER) and 2.33 (PCT). One might interpret these self-observations and developmental scores as an early transitional period of beginning to acknowledge the reality of other points of view, while still wanting to dominate a situation with his own opinions. It is possible that this student is entering a time of multiplicity and becoming both aware of and concerned with the views of others, as evidenced by a relatively high score on collaboration. It is also possible that, as a senior, this student has become collaborative (assertive and cooperative) and these modalities may not be directly related to the slightly lower developmental scores. Longitudinal testing may better determine this correspondence.

3. A 20 year old junior woman, #26, scored 8 on accommodation and 7 on competition, her highest scores. She states she acts manipulatively but does not feel assertive. Most important for her is peace-keeping and wanting to be liked by her peers. She states that she is willing to be an authority and can be confronting, but questions her role as a leader, not wanting to antagonize when

enforcing. She scored 2.83 (MER) and 1.50 (PCT), revealing a more concrete cognitive orientation.

4. Some apparent contradictions developed between MODE scores and statements made in interviews. Sophomore student #23, age 20, scored high (10) in collaboration and low (4) in competition, yet he shared statements which he made to student alcohol violators such as "What are you, an asshole? You guys are all fucked up, you're stupid, so pour out your drinks!" He stated that he does not believe in writing up violators because "it makes RAs look bad and causes a loss of effectiveness in other situations." He stated he does not like to be identified as an authority yet his assertive actions would suggest otherwise. He scored 2.83 (MER) and 1.83 (PCT), suggesting a late dualistic/early multiplistic stage, and although he acts assertively, he does not want to risk rejection by writing the violator up and acting like a police authority. His belief that this will make him more effective elsewhere suggests the need for affiliation in the Kegan interpersonal sense of not risking loss of connection and identification with peers. He has conflict with his role as enforcer and friend/counselor and negotiates interpersonal conflict by foregoing an obligation (writing up violations) to preserve his peer relations.

5. Student #16, a 22 year old senior scored a high 12 in avoidance and 8 in accommodation. He stated that he does not feel supported or validated by his friends. He needs to keep the peace and feels he must "swallow pride" to do so. He scored 3.33 (MER) and 2.50 (PCT), relatively higher scores in the sample.

6. Student #9, a 20 year old junior, scored high (11) on competition and had relatively high developmental scores for the

group (3.33 MER, 2.67 PCT). Her statements, however, reveal an avoidance of the risk of rejection -- "avoiding conflict is most important to me." She wants to make everyone happy and "doesn't want to be seen as cold." Her high competition score does not justify with her statements. The desire to accommodate others, to make them happy, reflected by non-assertion and cooperation is opposite competition (assertive and non-cooperative). It may be possible that the MODE score revealed wishful behavior as opposed to the interview remarks, which may be more reality-based. This possible dichotomy may reflect the argument against written instruments in favor of semi-structured interviews, as related in chapter 3.

Discussion

In almost all the interview samples, remarks suggesting the need for affiliation and fear of interpersonal loss or abandonment is evident. Remarks such as "peace-making is a priority over truth-telling," "I feel guilty in asserting myself, because it risks friendships," "smooth relationships are most important," "I fear judgments and avoid conflict for that reason," "I don't want to be resented," "I sacrifice my own needs to avoid conflict," "I don't want to start a war by confronting," (and more) illustrate the priority held by most of these students to maintain acceptance within their peer group. While relationship between developmental scores and MODE appear relatively low (table 11), thus limiting presumption as to predictability of behavior, student self-perception of why they chose their conflict negotiation styles is quite consistent with the need, as expressed by Kegan, to maintain inclusion and connection with peers at all cost. It is possible

that the MER, the PCT and MODE scores do not address the actual conditions and experience of these students as accurately as Kegan's descriptions of subject-object balance (chapter 2) and the self-reported experiences of RAs during interviews. It is also possible that the range of MER and PCT scores was small enough to not offer a true picture of tendencies in behavior as one moves cognitively up the developmental schema. That is, the range of MER scores of this sample (2.20 - 3.67) may not be broad enough to show trends or patterns of behavior at different stages.

As stated earlier, these results contradict general beliefs that higher levels of cooperation comes with higher levels of cognitive development. At least two explanations from a developmental perspective are possible. The first consists of a projection of Kegan's schema to other stages. His stage 2-imperial and stage 4-institutional, which come before and after the interpersonal, are both indicated by the urge for distinctness as opposed to the inclusion characteristic of stage 3. It is possible that either these students are still partially embedded in Kegan stage 2, thus needing to assert their opinions as an expression of individuality, and/or, similarly, they are entering Kegan stage 4 and are exercising personal authority. Based on their MER and PCT scores, it is unlikely they are entering stage 4 (assuming a correlation between schema, which has not been demonstrated nor proven), and more likely that some are still acting from a stage 2 "psychologic."

While the study sample was too small to determine a clear tendency, a second explanation may be postulated involving the observations that Kohlberg, Gilligan, Turiel and others offered

regarding moral "regression." A possibility open to further research for why the developmental assessment scores decreased as age rose may be due to the behavior patterns these researchers observed in students entering multiplicity, as mentioned in chapter 2. The moral regression or relativism hypothesis formulated by Gilligan (see chapter 2, p. 61) suggests that students at this stage are trying to make sense of the amount and variety of different realities of which they have become aware, and are redefining the role of authority to include self and peers. Perhaps the correlation of higher developmental assessment with competition, which involves assertion without cooperation on Thomas' schema, represents an attempt by these multiplistic students to redefine the reality of who they are in relation to their peers. Analogously, the higher occurrence of avoidance in conflict negotiation situations at the higher developmental assessment may reflect the awareness and sensitivity of students learning to acknowledge the realities of others without risking loss of connection, which is a main motivation at this stage.

Summary

A composite picture of these students based on the collected data might be this: they are in late dualistic/early multiplistic cognitive development. They are only beginning to be aware and acknowledge viewpoints other their own. They have a strong need for peer affiliation and do not want to risk rejection. They want to express their viewpoints (and some may do so assertively) but fear abandonment by their friends. They experience confusion about their role identity as enforcer and friend and confusion about what is correct

to do in conflict situations. They have difficulty integrating the views of others and have fear of overly asserting their own views and risk rejection.

This generalization is, admittedly, biased in the direction of the problems many RAs may be facing when placed in enforcement situations with their peers. I have not explored the positive peer relations that are found in other arenas of the RA position. The need for affiliation, for connection with floormates, friends and other peers has been stated throughout this study. This quality of connectedness may create good supportive relations between RAs and their floormates, as the tables in chapter 2 suggest. This study, however, has focused on the conflict negotiation strategies found in policy enforcement situations.

The overall impression which the interviews create offers much stronger implications than the questionable test results, which are too small to offer hard data. The RA responses given in interviews do suggest a difficulty in clearly fulfilling the enforcment role. There appears to be a strong tendency to moderate or alter enforcement task behaviors so as not to risk peer rejection. Role conflict was acknowledged by these RAs, and they have observed themselves questioning their willingness to perform the policy enforcement duties. Chapter 5 follows up on this dilemma.

CHAPTER 5

OBSERVATIONS, OVERVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH

> "...I consider the two greatest yearnings in
> human experience [to be] the yearning to be
> included, to be a part of, close to, joined with,
> to be held, admitted, accompanied, [and] the
> yearning to be independent or autonomous, to
> experience one's distinctiveness, the self-
> chosenness of one's direction, one's individual
> integrity."
>   Robert Kegan (1981), *The Evolving Self*, p. 107

Campus residence halls have been acknowledged by virtually all theorists and researchers on college life to be a significant influence on the personal growth of students. Due to this impact, much attention has been placed on physical and programmatic requirements that enhance student learning and social development. Over the past thirty years, theories of student development have emerged which prompt the increase of a professional residence life staff, whose prominent role is to promote "residence education," that is, the intellectual and emotional growth of students. Much of this takes place within the residence halls in an attempt to integrate the learning within the total college experience.

Among the services central to this residence educational program is the paraprofessional live-in staff known as the Residence Assistants (RAs), whose job it is to provide counseling and advising, referrals, social recreation, policy enforcement and general safety supervision. On most American college campuses, RAs provide the "front-line" day-to-day counseling and enforcing services. While they do receive some training and supervision regarding their varied task

expectations, they are undergraduate students themselves, and, therefore, are also quite involved with their own personal development as well.

I have questioned early in chapter 1 whether some RAs may not yet be ready to adequately fulfill some task expectations, especially policy enforcement, because of developmental mismatching. This idea is supported by the realization that an individual experiencing the same developmental challenges as the people s/he serves may experience difficulty providing certain services, i.e. enforcement. There are professionals who believe that RAs have the least training and authority to perform the most difficult jobs within the residence halls (Ignelzi, 1986). In reality, however, using undergraduate students to provide such services is the most economical way for a college or university to offer 24-hour in-house staff availability. Also, researchers, as stated in chapter 2, have shown that students may relate more easily to peers than older authorities in some counseling situations.

Much of the literature on student development and the roles of RAs tends not to discriminate between the primary task expectations of counseling and enforcement. Rather, many write about the kinds of training and supervision that RAs need to perform all their tasks. This study has raised the question whether the performance of some of these tasks may be more dependent on developmental readiness than on training. In order to investigate the possibility of certain behavioral trends that reflect such readiness in the ways Resident Assistants (RAs) negotiate conflict with their peers while enforcing university policies, I examined possible mis-matches and matches of task to

subject, i.e., whether RAs are suited to perform certain tasks, especially policy enforcement.

This study has addressed the efficacy of assigning one important role to the RA, that of enforcing university policies within the residence halls. I have suggested that when examining the cognitive developmental reality of these late adolescents, we bring up the important question of whether these students are ready to adequately engage in conflict with their peers while serving as an authority figure and enforcing residence hall policies. A growing number of administrators are also questioning this expectation. (Stanford, 1988; Ignelzi, 1991).

Early in this study, I proposed the existence of inner, interpersonal and metapersonal conflicts that RAs may experience when confronted with situations where they must play an authority role to their friends and floormates. The responses by RAs interviewed for this study confirmed the conflicts and difficulty that many RAs have in fulfilling the enforcement role while maintaining positive friendships with their peers. The desire for affiliation and connection to peers seems to be threatened by the administrative expectation that RAs act in an authoritative role while enforcing university rules and regulations. Many RAs expressed confusion and distaste for their enforcement position. They feared they would lose their friendships that, as many student development writers have noted, are developmentally important and psycho-emotionally vital. The theorists reviewed here have underscored the critical time period of traditional-aged undergraduates, where the need for connection to

peers and the growing receptivity to alternate peer viewpoints dominate the undergraduate college experience.

This apparent role conflict between peer and RA, between friend and authority figure, cannot be dismissed easily. It is possible that Kegan's suggestion of the polarity called affiliation versus abandonment, mentioned in Chapter 4, plays heavily in this conflict between the friend/enforcer roles. In the following interview excerpt (Ignelzi, 1986), we see an abstraction and summation of such a conflict. During this interview, the researcher is asking an RA to elaborate on the role conflicts experienced, which is subsequently framed within the stage 3 (Kegan) epistemology:

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE TWO ROLES [friend vs. authority figure]?

As an RA you just kind of need to be a little bit removed; you are kind of like the supervisor. You can't be the supervisor which is kind of the boss and everybody's best friend. I don't know if this makes any sense; it's hard to describe.

CAN YOU THINK OF A SITUATION WHERE THIS DUAL ROLE BECAME A PROBLEM FOR YOU?

I don't know. Well, I can remember my first alcohol violation, and it was like "Oh God, what am I supposed to do?" You know, I really like these people, but there are beer cans sitting all over their room! And you know, I have to say something and I was really nervous about doing that. It turned out that they weren't drinking, and then they were subsequently declared innocent. But that was the first incident where they realized that I was going to turn them in if I had to. It made me realize that I had to do it; I couldn't ignore it. Even if they were friends, I still had to. If I'd been a real friend I wouldn't have done it, you know what I mean, but because I was an RA I had to do it.

WAS THAT HARD FOR YOU?

Yeah , it really was!

WHAT WAS HARDEST ABOUT THAT?

Because they couldn't believe that I would do it (laughs). I was kind of surprised because even though I know I can't expect them to follow policies like the alcohol policy to the letter, I guess I thought they kind of would. Anyway, they were just stunned. Nobody would talk to me for three days after that.

THEY WERE ANGRY?

I think just stunned that I would actually turn them in because that was the first real incident on my floor. It was about a month after school started. They just couldn't believe that I would do that because I had been like a friend to everyone.

HOW DID THEIR REACTION MAKE YOU FEEL?

I felt like nobody liked me. That's when I really counted on the support of the other RAs and my Head Resident because they really did kind of understand. And my Head Resident had been an RA too so that really helped because she said this isn't so bad, just listen to these situations. And she said, you know, it will blow over and everything is going to be ok. And it was, but the two girls involved avoided me like the plague, and it was really hard too, because they thought that I was judging them and saying I know you were drinking and you are bad for drinking.

The responses of this RA duplicate the concerns that most of the RAs inteviewed for this study have expressed. On the one hand, RAs feel obligated to write up violations while confronting the students involved with a policy infraction. Simultaneously, RAs see themselves as friends who would betray their friendship if they were to do their job. The need for inclusion within the peer social system creates conflict that can result in fear of abandonment responses out of the potential loss of peer affiliation. The RA in the interview above, as many of the RAs in this study, is pulled both in the direction of doing what is expected - the enforcement role - and in the direction of

maintaining friendly peer relations. In a typical stage 3 (Kegan's interpersonal) fashion, there appears to be an inability to stand apart from the two roles and take a perspective on them. The RA experiences a difficulty in performing both roles, as one seems to negate the other while both are expected.

The data derived from the MER and MODE scores suggests this notion of role conflict. As the developmental scores obtained show the RAs in a late dualistic orientation (Perry position 3), we can assume that the more concrete polar thinking is occurring. This "either-or" thought structure is seen behaviorally, as RAs feel they can be either authority figures or friends, but cannot negotiate both roles easily. They feel that whichever role they choose, they will experience either affiliation with their peers or abandonment by them. There is little tolerance for ambiguity in their relationships. Likewise, the dominance of competition and avoidance suggests the difficulty to integrate roles, a higher-order epistemological skill. Behaviorally, these students find themselves either asserting their wills without cooperating with the reality of others (competition) or, as suggested in the above interview, they want to withdraw their will to keep the peace (avoidance) [both, incidentally, Selman stage 1 interpersonal negotiation strategies - more below]. Many appear to be only partially successfully satisfying, at best, the demands of each role.

We can also interrelate these observations with Selman's two-dimensional schema of cognitive development and interpersonal negotiation strategies. As stated in chapter 3, Selman asserts that an individual may be at one stage developmentally, but demonstrate interpersonal behaviors at a different stage. From this study's data,

RAs who scored higher on the MER or PCT tended to negotiate conflict by either withdrawing their desires to meet the needs of another (avoidance) or willfully assert themselves to satisfy their own needs (competition), both of which are stage 1 levels in Selman's interpersonal schema. These results support Selman and Saidla's assertions that there is a difference between inner, cognitive developement and interpersonal negotiation strategies. That is, in this sample, students with higher MER/PCT scores did not necessarily self-report (through the MODE and interviews) interpersonal actions that Selman would categorize as higher level behaviors.

This study has not shown a one-to-one correspondence between cognitive development and actual types of conflict negotiation behavioral strategies, although strong tendencies such as avoidance and the need for inclusion have been suggested. Although we are unable to predict with accuracy how RAs would behave specifically, given their assessed cognitive development, the information presented does speak to certain conflicts that may motivate RAs to act one way or another. The sample size of this study, as mentioned, was too small to be statistically significant, and the variables which determine behavior are to numerous to be limited by a developmental test score.

However, a plausible and important observation has been made. Many RAs appear to be struggling seriously with the conflict they experience in satisfying both external and internal demands regarding their roles and their psycho-developmental needs. That is, they seem to have an internal conflict regarding the expectation they face in being a rule-enforcing authority figure with their friends while also needing to maintain friendly, nurturing peer relations. They also

experience <u>interpersonal</u> conflict, as they struggle with how they should behave with peers when performing enforcement duties. Since the need to maintain satisfactory peer relations is developmentally dominant, RAs have a <u>metapersonal</u> conflict, where they question whether the enforcement role is something they feel they can legitimately carry out. The sampling of tests and interviews, while small, suggest both the cognitive conflict of balancing these roles simultaneously (the either-or polarity) and the behavioral conflict of performing both roles of counselor/friend and enforcer/authority figure.

Further research into both the cognitive development of these students as well as the roles expected of RAs to perform may assist in discovering optimum matching of roles to undergraduate RAs. Some possible directions that future investigation could be:

1. Replicate this study using a much larger sample of RAs, to ascertain more subtle shifts in cognitive abilities (perhaps using an objective, preference-type measure of development to assist rating simplicity);

2. Employ Kegan's stage theory and his subject-object interview (Kegan, et. al., 1983 - refer to chapter 2 here) to pull out more subtlety in the differences in how RAs understand their role conflict with regard to the need for inclusion and affiliation;
    a. Whereas Kegan (1982) only mentioned the affiliation-abandonment polarity in a footnote, a deeper exploration of this would be justified.

3. Explore further the idea of readiness and willingness as Selman and Saidla both have suggested.
    a. What are other variables that may prevent the willingness for RAs to perform certain tasks - are they developmentally related?;
    b. Is Kegan's concept of the need for affiliation and fear of abandonment related to Selman's stages of interpersonal negotiation strategies?

4. In examining optimal and functional levels of performance, is there a significant difference between them that would affect residence hall ecology?

    a. Can a determintaion of threshold be made regarding when functional performance drops below residence hall requirements?

5. Perform validation and correlation studies on the use of the MODE with cognitive developmental assessment instruments;

6. What are university and college options and alternatives to the potentially conflicting roles presented to RAs?

    a. Is policy enforcement still reasonable to expect from an undergraduate?

This study, as an exploratory investigation into the relationship between college student cognitive development and conflict behaviors, offers support for the examination of multiple domains of development, to understand the motivation and actions of RAs while performing their assigned duties, in particular their most challenging role of policy enforcer. While the test results only suggest behaviors that may interfere with the efficient performance of policy enforcement, the interview data strongly indicates that clear, consistent enforcement behaviors are not common in the residence halls, regardless of training offered to RAs. While undergraduate peers may be well-matched in some situations, such as peer counseling and information referrals, the role of policy enforcer remains a questionable expectation to place on these late adolescent paraprofessionals.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE

"The purpose of this study, in which I have asked you to participate, is to explore how RAs perceive themselves while enforcing university policy with their friends, floormates or peers. I am interested in discovering whether you feel there are patterns in how you negotiate conflict with peers when enforcing university rules. This interview will assist my inquiry, by adding to the data already collected from you.

Would you tell me something about a time when you found yourself enforcing policy with someone you consider a peer (like a floormate, friend...)?"

1. What was going on?
   Who was involved?
   What was your relationship to this person?

2. How did the interaction begin (if you started it, was that easy or difficult to do)?

3. How did you react to the other person?

4. What were you feeling at the beginning of the conflict?

5. What did you think about the other person, i.e.. your judgements and opinions?

6. Did your opinion change by the end of the incident? If yes, why do you think this happened?

7. What was most important to you when you entered the situation (e.g., to follow the rules, to defend yourself, to get back at someone, to justify your actions, to get something from the other)?

8. Did something change during the conflict so that something else became more important?

9. What was easy to do or say?

10. What was most difficult to do or say. Why was this difficult?

11. Was there anything you wish you had done or said after it was over, but felt you could not at the time? What stopped you from doing or saying it?

12. Were you confused by anything (i.e.. not knowing the "right" thing to say, having mixed emotions, frustrated by the situation...)?

13. Is there anything you wish you could do when you are in this kind of a situation but it seems too difficult right now?

14. What would help you do or say what you find to be difficult, when you are in this kind of conflict with a peer?

"Tell me about another time when you were in conflict with a peer while enforcing university policy..."

APPENDIX B - LETTER TO RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

March 21, 1990

Dear Resident Assistant:

My name is Michael Bloomfield and I am a doctoral student in the process of writing my dissertation on conflict negotiation among undergraduates. I am also the facilitator for the Residential Education Alcohol Program (REAP) of Housing Services.

This letter comes to you as part of my search for RAs to participate in my study. I am examining "developmental variables" regarding the way undergraduates, RAs in particular, negotiate conflict with peers. A significant reason why I am asking RAs to be part of this study involves your role as policy enforcers for the university. When you find yourself writing up a student on your floor, there are probably times when you experience conflict between yourself and the other student(s). Thus, your job provides opportunities that would assist my research in conflict negotiation strategies.

Your participation would involve a 45 minute to one hour group session with fellow RAs in your resident hall, where you would complete written assessment instruments that measure cognitive development and styles of conflict negotiation. This is confidential - your name will never remain on any written material and only I and your RD will know who, in fact, volunteered. If you should choose to participate then later change your mind, you are entirely free to withdraw without any consequences. When this session is over, you may request the results of your assessments after they have been scored.

A second part to my study involves selecting a smaller group from the RAs who participated in the above session. Members from this smaller group would be interviewed individually by myself for about 20-30 minutes, so I may obtain more "in-depth" information regarding your experiences. This, again, is strictly voluntary and confidential.

I hope to complete these interviews by late Spring, therefore I would appreciate an early response to my search, if possible. Call me at 545-0137 for any questions or to volunteer. Your RD is aware of this project, if you would like to ask her or him for more information.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Michael Bloomfield
REAP - JQA 5th Floor
545-0137

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