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Identifying Inviolable Behavioral Norms of Campus Housing and Residence Life Professionals

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Housing and residence life (HRL) administrators who lack knowledge about accepted professional behaviors risk violating normative boundaries, likely jeopardizing themselves or their clients (e.g., students, parents, colleagues). The purpose of this survey study was to understand if a normative structure exists for the administrative role performance of HRL professionals. Findings revealed six inviolable norms, some of which differ by personal and professional characteristics of HRL professionals. The authors offer recommendations to guide practice and research.

Leaders in the housing and residence life (HRL) profession recognize the importance of establishing and communicating professional standards, as evidenced by myriad documents outlining expected professional behaviors. For example, adopted by the Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I) Executive Board in 1984 and updated for the seventh time in 2014, the ACUHO-I Standards & Ethical Principles for College & University Housing Professionals contains voluntary standards and guidelines for the purpose "of improving the quality of the post-secondary student experience, and the professional management of student housing programs" (p. 2).

Although such professional standards are important statements of ethical principles, informal rules serve as more important mechanisms of social control than formal rules (Freidson, 1975). Informal rules may take the form of norms comprising normative structures to guide professional behaviors. Normative structures provide an organized set of values that governs behaviors for group members (Merton, 1968). Such structures offer guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate professional behaviors. Braxton (2010) identified three characteristics of the work of postsecondary institutions that provide a rationale for normative structures. First, norms provide structure in a

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work environment that has high degrees of autonomy or ambiguity in professional role performance on a campus. Second, norms reflect important values held by those who work at an institution. Third, colleges are client-serving organizations (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978), and norms provide moral boundaries for individuals to make decisions that serve the needs and protect the welfare of clients (pp. 243–244). Clients include students as individuals and as groups, prospective students, faculty, administrators, and donors.

The attitudes of professionals reflect norms held by the group members (Merton, 1968). An important mechanism of social control is the perception of peers and their determination of what behaviors depart from established role expectations of professionals in the field (Merton, 1968). One way to detect normative structures is to identify behaviors that group members deem unacceptable and serious enough to warrant sanctions (Braxton & Bayer, 1999; Braxton, Proper, & Bayer, 2011; Durkheim, 1995 [1912]). Such norm violations signal moral boundaries, classified as either inviolable or admonitory norms. Norms that communicate the highest level of importance by group members should be upheld and are considered inviolable. Transgressions of inviolable norms require severe sanctions; admonitory norms reflect inappropriate behaviors that draw lesser consequences (Braxton & Bayer, 1999).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand if there is a normative structure for administrative role performance of housing and residence life professionals (HRLPs). The authors sought to learn what behaviors these administrators perceive are unacceptable in the HRL profession. Knowledge of such a normative structure is important because of the ambiguity HRLPs experience in the performance of their day-to-day activities and the autonomy with which they function.

Norms provide a definitive structure for HRLP professionals, and to influence the professional conduct of HRLP professionals, this structure needs to be understood, starting with proscribed norms. Results of this study may reveal a tacit understanding of professional norms to new HRL staff and could inform a formal code of conduct for HRL professionals. Staff members who lack knowledge about accepted professional behaviors risk violating normative boundaries, likely jeopardizing themselves or their clients. Further, the results of this study may inform HRLPs about the actual (not the assumed) norms of the role-performance of its members. Results might also illuminate other student affairs functional areas with high levels of student contact.

Statement of the Problem

Research conducted on the normative structures of professional groups in the postsecondary context includes presidents (Fleming, 2010), academic deans (Bray, 2010), faculty (Braxton & Bayer, 1999; Braxton et al., 2011), institutional advancement officers (Caboni, 2010), admissions officers (Hodum & James, 2010), and graduate teaching assistants (Hellend, 2010), but the normative structures of student affairs remains unexamined (Braxton, 2010). Bray (2010) argued that a "real and compelling need" (p. 285) exists to study college administrators and how they should behave. To date, there are no comprehensive, empirical examinations of HRL administrators' perceptions of professional behavior.

The perception of norms among professionals sometimes varies by personal and professional characteristics. Female faculty members and administrators have been found to show higher levels of disdain for inappropriate professional behaviors than their male colleagues (Fleming, 2010; Hodum & James, 2010), and years of experience showed differences in norm espousal for

university fundraisers (Caboni, 2010) and admissions administrators (Hodum & James, 2010). Regarding professional characteristics, Fleming (2010) found that administrative roles and institutional type revealed differences in faculty members' assessments of inappropriate professional behaviors. It follows that a normative structure inquiry should examine personal and professional characteristics of HRLPs.

Typical college housing functions include facility management, maintenance, housekeeping, room assignments, billing, contracts and leases, capital planning, project management, and conference services. Residence life functions often include the hiring, training, and supervision of student and professional staff; educational programming; academic endeavors; assessment; student conduct; conflict resolution; and safety. Larger operations may have their own human resource, payroll, information technology, budgeting, dining services, and marketing units. Some campuses contract with external vendors for a variety of functions and services such as maintenance, housekeeping, food service, and security. HRL programs may report through student affairs, business affairs, or both (Fotis, 2013, pp. 38–39), and housing and residence life professionals perform both administrative and programmatic roles.

HRLPs hold considerable autonomy in their enactment of these roles, and without codes of conduct (Braxton, 2010) or informal rules such as norms (Braxton et al., 2011), they may make unconstrained and idiosyncratic choices. These choices have the potential to harm, to varying degrees, the welfare of one or more of their clients, including student residents, their parents, HRL colleagues and other staff with whom they interact, HRL as an organizational unit, and the employing institution. Unclear guidelines about acceptable professional behavior can lead to poor judgments that could adversely affect an individual HRLP's career standing, the unit's reputation, a student's academic and social integration, or the well being of residential community members. Both individuals and the institution may be held liable for harming clients if codes of conduct are lacking or ignored. Consequently, formal codes of conduct or informal rules such as norms can safeguard the welfare of these clients, thus providing a risk management strategy for HRLPs and institutional leaders.

Conceptual Framework

Norms emerge from a variety of situations that HRLPs have experienced directly or indirectly through their personal experiences as an undergraduate or graduate student, day-to-day dealings with other HRLPs, and their interactions with the university community. When people engage in a particular pattern of behavior, those behaviors become typical or expected and normative (Opp, 1982). Norms also transpire as a result of others' behavior (Demsetz, 1967). Some behaviors might evoke approval because of benefits derived from them, whereas other behaviors may result in harm and elicit disapproval (Horne, 2001).

Behaviors that result in harm and prompt disapproval assume proscriptive normative properties. Such proscribed, or banned, behaviors elicit varying degrees of moral outrage or indignation (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]). The severity of sanctions individuals regard as befitting such proscribed behaviors indexes the degree of moral outrage they experience: Some behaviors warrant severe, formal sanctions, whereas other behaviors provoke less severe, more informal reactions.

Research Questions

Two research questions framed the study: (a) Does a normative structure exist for college HRL professionals? If so, what inviolable normative patterns comprise this normative structure? (b) If a normative structure exists for HRLPs, does the level of disdain espoused for the inviolable

norms differ based on HRLPs' personal characteristics (i.e., gender and years in the profession) or positional characteristics (i.e., functional area of responsibility and institutional type)?

Method

Survey Instrument

This study used a cross-sectional, quantitative research design using a 10–15-minute, web-based survey, completed by ACUHO-I members. The Housing and Residence Life Behaviors Inventory (HRLBI) is a web-based, 98-item instrument that identifies professional behaviors in HRL work. Item construction was informed by professional documents including ACUHO-I's (2010) *Standards & Ethical Principles for College & University Housing Professionals*, CAS (2012) standards for housing and residential life programs, hall director competencies (Porter, 2011), ACUHO-I whistle blower policy (2008), and through field-testing of entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrators. Field testing involved asking eight current HRLPs to review the survey: one ACUHO-I staff member, three chief housing officers, three midlevel administrators, and one entry-level hall director. Campus-based reviewers represented three ACUHO-I regions and worked at small private, mid-sized public, and large state institutions, and one at a private housing company. Reviewers commented on the content, length, and wording of the survey. Based on their suggestions, we made wording changes to increase clarity and dropped 22 items to shorten the survey.

By design, the HRLBI identified only specific behaviors that respondents view as inappropriate, so typical psychometric qualities of instruments do not apply. Put differently, the purpose of the instrument is to identify specific behaviors that meet normative criteria. The scale registers a respondent's view of the how inappropriate each behavior is. This approach stems from Durkheim's (1995 [1912]) contention that norms appear best recognizable when violated. Hence, the behaviors are worded in the negative and the social significance of violations is indexed through the responses people have to the behaviors. Participants expressed their reaction to each of the specific behaviors in the HRLBI using this scale: 1 = *Behavior is appropriate*; 2 = *Behavior is neither inappropriate nor appropriate*; 3 = *Behavior is mildly inappropriate, generally not confronted*; 4 = *Behavior is inappropriate, to be handled informally by an administrator suggesting change or improvement*; 5 = *Behavior is inappropriate, requires formal administrative intervention*. Participants also provided demographic information.

ACUHO-I has institutional memberships that may list campus professionals; administrators do not join via individual memberships. Additionally, corporate partners, faculty members, employees of non-member institutions, students, and retirees of higher education institutions can join. Due to a reasonably sized population of 11,000 and the efficiency of a web-based survey, all professional members of the association were invited to participate. Institutional review boards at the authors' universities approved the study.

Data Collection

The authors recruited survey participants through an email invitation sent to all members by ACUHO-I in February 2013. Participants received a link to an electronic survey plus two reminders. Of 11,286 invitations sent, 1,294 participants submitted surveys. The responses excluded from the data analyses follow: 320 incomplete surveys and 2 from undergraduate resident advisors. The analysis is based on 972 responses, for an 8.6% return rate. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics including gender, race/ethnicity, educational level, years in the profession, functional area of position, current position level, and institutional type of participants.

Table 1

Characteristics of sample: means, standard deviations, and percentage (N = 972)

Variables	Percent
Gender (mean = 0.61, SD = 0.49)	
Female	61.5
Male	38.3
Transgender	0.2
Racial/Ethnic Identity (mean = 1.26, SD = 0.72)	
White, non-Hispanic	85.9
Black or African American	6.3
Hispanic or Latino/Latina	3.5
All else (Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Multi-Racial)	4.3
Highest Educational Level Completed (mean = 2.91, SD = 0.61)	
Less than a bachelor's degree	3.1
A bachelor's degree	14.6
A master's degree	70.8
A doctorate or professional degree	11.5
Years in the Housing and Residence Life Profession (mean = 2.73, SD = 1.43)	
Fewer than 5 years	23.1
5–10 years	29.8
11–15 years	18.1
16–20 years	9.0
More than 20 years	20.0
Functional Area of Responsibility (mean = 2.13, SD = 1.04)	
Business/Management	23.6
Education/Program	58.2
Residential Facilities	6.1
Other or combination of two areas	5.4
Director/chief housing office/all three areas	6.6
Level of Current Position (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.98)	
Graduate student staff member	3.9
Entry-level, professional staff member	24.9
Midlevel	43.6
Most senior housing and/or residence life officer	23.1
Senior student affairs role (associate dean/VP, VPSA)	1.8
All else (faculty/consultant/staff)	3.0
Institutional Type (mean = 1.42, SD = 0.75)	
4 year public college or university	69.0
4 year private, not-for-profit college or university	24.8
2 year public or private not-for-profit college	1.3
All else (proprietary, consultant, unemployed)	4.8

According to Leslie (1972), the possibility of nonrespondents differing from respondents increases when the response rate is lower; later respondents show more similarity to nonrespondents than to initial respondents. If responses from early participants differ from later participants, the data may be biased. To estimate effects of response bias, the authors conducted a mailing wave analysis. First, the authors conducted crosstabs on each of the four personal characteristics variables and the two position characteristics with the first, second, and third waves of completed surveys. Of the six variables, one was significant (race/ethnicity, X^2 [6, N = 962] = 18.17, $p < 0.01$)), indicating that the sample may underrepresent HRL professionals of Color. *T*-tests on the six inviolable norms compared participants who responded after the first mailing compared to those from the third. No significant differences between the response groups resulted. With the noted exception of race/ethnicity, there is a high degree of confidence that the respondents reasonably represented the population of ACUHO-I members.

Data Analyses and Findings

To address the first research question, data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Consistent with other normative structures research (e.g., Braxton & Bayer, 1999), items with mean scores between 4.0 and 5.0 were considered inviolable norms. The mean scores reflect the agreement among HRL professionals that the behaviors are highly inappropriate and should be sanctioned. Fifty-four items met this criterion.

The authors performed principal components factor analysis using varimax rotation to determine the normative clustering of the behaviors and resulted in six factors extracted from the inviolable norms that explain 34% of the variance of the exploratory factor analysis model. The authors concluded that a normative structure exists for college housing professionals. Violations of these norms occur when individuals enact one or more of the proscribed, or prohibited, behaviors of a given normative orientation.

Inviolable Norms

Descriptions of the six inviolable norms follow. Table 2 displays the proscribed behaviors that comprise each of the norms, listed in descending order of the percent of variance explained by each factor.

Careless safeguarding. This demonstrates a failure to protect the welfare of others. Many of the behaviors related to this norm fall in the facilities area such as not working to correct known fire safety violations. Others fall more on the programmatic responsibilities such as failing to follow the crisis management plan, not maintaining control of the master keys, or leaving the duty phone unattended. The careless safeguarding normative pattern pertains to the administrative role of HRLPs. The pattern safeguards the welfare of students living on campus. HRLPs who fail to adhere to this norm jeopardize the health and safety of residential students. Clients in this case may include students and their families. The health, safety, and career advancement of HRL colleagues may also suffer when this norm is violated. In extreme cases, such as not correcting known fire safety violations, potential loss of life, damage to facilities, and exposure to lawsuits, may negatively affect the institution.

Self-interested action. This normative pattern includes behaviors benefitting oneself or one's family or friends. Sample items include purchasing items for personal use from petty cash and taking goods intended for charity or campus surplus. Self-interested action pertains to both the administrative and programmatic roles of HRLPs. Violations may harm the welfare of clients. For example, releasing a student from a housing contract so the student can rent from the professional's

Table 2

Specific behavior items comprising the inviolable norms with factor loading, Cronbach alpha, mean, standard deviation, and percent of variance explained for each norm

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Careless Safeguarding (16 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.852)

A staff member does not work to correct known fire safety violations.	0.610
A staff member does not complete required health and safety inspections.	0.600
A staff member defers maintenance issues that jeopardize student and staff safety.	0.595
A staff member does not report inadequate safety procedures for chemicals used in cleaning the residence halls.	0.550
A staff member fails to follow the crisis management plan when faced with an emergency.	0.531
The facilities manager fails to acquire appropriate construction project permits.	0.523
A staff member does not maintain proper control of master keys.	0.485
A staff member does not follow proper procedures for adjudicating student conduct violations.	0.474
An on-call staff member leaves the duty phone unattended for several hours.	0.445
The supervisor does not provide staff adequate training for staff to perform all job duties.	0.437
A staff member provides inaccurate statistics for the annual security report required by the Clery Act.	0.392
A staff member does not enforce policies with which the staff member disagrees.	0.367
A staff member ignores residents' requests for repairs.	0.365
A staff member collects data for a research study without gaining informed participant consent.	0.347
An on-call staff member does not conduct rounds of the building at the appointed times.	0.346
A staff member directs maintenance personnel to dispose of chemicals or other hazardous materials inappropriately.	0.340

Mean = 4.59, SD = 0.30, % of Variance Explained = 8.87

Self-Interested Action (8 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.731)

A staff member takes some items that students donated to charity at move-out.	0.641
A staff member does not disclose that a potential vendor is a family member.	0.595
A staff member receives gifts or free services from a vendor with whom the department conducts business.	0.589
A staff member takes furniture home that was supposed to be sent to campus surplus.	0.562
A staff member does not take annual leave when he or she is off campus doing a consulting job for pay.	0.516
A staff member registers for a professional conference but does not attend sessions.	0.379
A staff member releases a student from a housing contract so the student can rent an apartment owned by the staff member's friend.	0.366
A staff member uses departmental petty cash to purchase items for personal use.	0.335

Mean = 4.41, SD = 0.43, % of Variance Explained = 6.01

Insolent Insensitivity (9 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.716)

A staff member uses disparaging remarks to students about another student affairs office.	0.589
A staff member is discourteous to students.	0.572
A staff member avoids interactions with students because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.	0.569
A staff member tolerates racist, sexist, or homophobic comments made by students.	0.443
Two staff members will not speak to each other, interfering with departmental effectiveness.	0.434
A search committee chair does not actively recruit a diverse pool of candidates.	0.432

Table 2

(**Continued**)

A staff member makes a mistake and blames an administrative assistant.	0.398
A staff member discloses confidential information about a student to another person who has no specific need to know.	0.341
A search committee chair does not ensure that references are checked on the preferred candidate.	0.305

Mean = 4.30, *SD* = 0.33, % of Variance Explained = 5.69

Negligent Leadership (7 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.723)

The director does not provide a written job description to each employee in the department.	0.607
The director does not facilitate annual evaluations of employees.	0.591
The director fails to inform students in advance of a housing rate increase.	0.547
The director gives a larger salary increase to a staff member because of a personal relationship with that person.	0.537
The director does not effectively manage the departmental budget.	0.502
The director does not immediately inform the campus community of a potential safety threat.	0.447
An adviser to a student organization does not monitor the organization's checking account spending.	0.358

Mean = 4.35, *SD* = 0.44, % of Variance Explained = 5.63

Moral Turpitude (3 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.482)

A staff member sexually harasses another employee.	0.545
A staff member embezzles cash from a student organization's checking account.	0.490
A staff member does not report suspected assault of a child during a summer conference program.	0.395

Mean = 4.98, *SD* = 0.37, % of Variance Explained = 4.31

Public Indiscretion (5 items, Cronbach alpha = 0.486)

A staff member is convicted for driving under the influence of alcohol.	0.618
A staff member is intoxicated at a local bar frequented by students.	0.561
A staff member looks at pornographic websites during work hours.	0.362
A residence director shares the staff apartment with a domestic partner in violation of the published policy.	0.360
A staff member dates his or her supervisee.	0.358

Mean = 4.34, *SD* = 0.45, % of Variance Explained = 3.75

friend reduces revenue. This affects funding for staffing and student programming. Such incidents undermine the HRL's goal to support the institution's educational mission.

Insolent insensitivity. This normative pattern demonstrates disrespect toward others and a lack of support for diversity. It pertains to both administrative and programmatic roles of HRL. Non-compliance harms students and HRL as an organizational unit. More specifically, proscribed behaviors such as a staff member disclosing confidential information about a student to another person who has no specific need to know may negatively influence the self-esteem and social self-confidence of students affected by such behaviors. When HRLPs who have frequent interactions with students as clients disrespect their needs and sensitivities, they injure students' welfare. HRL as an organizational unit also stands as a client that suffers harm when this norm is violated. For example, proscribed behaviors such as a search committee chair who does not ensure to check a candidate's references can hinder HRL from achieving its goals. The failure to achieve goals may result in reduced institutional resources to the organizational unit.

Negligent leadership. The items comprising this normative pattern rebuke inadequate oversight, communication, supervision, or management by directors or advisors. This pattern pertains to HRLPs' administrative role. Adherence to the proscribed behaviors of this normative pattern safeguards the welfare of HRL as an organizational unit. HRL directors who engage in proscribed behaviors such as not managing the departmental budget effectively undercut the effectiveness of their organizational unit and prevent it from achieving its goals. In doing so, the damage comes to the HRL unit as client.

Moral turpitude. This norm concerns egregious abuse of authority or responsibility and pertains to both the administrative and programmatic roles of HRLPs. If, for instance, a staff member embezzles cash from a student organization, that action negatively affects the goals and activities of the group. It also undercuts the goal of HRL to support the educational mission of the institution. The clients of students as a group and HRL as an organizational unit experience injury from such disdained behavior.

Public indiscretion. Criminal or ill-advised actions that demonstrate lack of good judgment indicate this normative orientation concerning the administrative role of HRLPs. Violations of proscribed behaviors of this norm, such as being intoxicated at a local bar frequented by students, damages the reputation of HRL and may result in a reduction of institutional resources—financial and human—allocated by the institution to HRL. This reduction in resources, in turn, hinders the ability of HRL to play "an integral part of the educational program and academic support services of the institution" (ACUHO-I, 2014, p. 4). HRL as a client suffers from violations of the public indiscretion norm. Violations can also hinder the effectiveness of HRL by creating a climate marked by strain and disharmony among staff members due to perceived inequalities and create potential for litigation.

Differences in Disdain Espoused for Inviolable Norms

To address the second research question, the authors tested for differences in the level of disdain espoused by HRLPs for each of the six inviolable norms across the personal characteristics of gender and years in the HRL profession and across the positional characteristics of functional area and institutional type. The authors computed composite scales to measure the level of disdain HRLPs attribute to the specific proscribed behaviors that comprise each of the inviolable norms. The authors computed these scales by summing HRLPs' perceptions of the severity of action scale (1 = *Behavior is appropriate* to 5 = *Behavior is inappropriate, requires formal administrative intervention*) that they believe apt for each of the specific proscribed behaviors that comprise a given normative pattern and then dividing this sum by the number of specific proscribed behaviors that encompass a given inviolable norm. The authors used multiple linear regression to determine if statistically significant relationships exist among the personal and positional characteristics and any of the inviolable norms (Research Question 2).

For the regression analyses, the authors created a dummy variable for gender (female = 1, all else = 0), and years in the HRL profession spanned five categories (fewer than five years = 1, more than 20 years = 5). Regarding the two position characteristics, the authors created three dummy variables for functional area of responsibility (business/management = 1, all else = 0; educational programming = 1, all else = 0; and director/chief housing officer/combination of the three functional areas = 1, all else = 0) and one dichotomous variable for institutional type (private = 1, all else = 0). Table 3 displays the regression results. For the analyses, the authors used the 0.05 level of statistical significance and confirmed acceptable parameters for tolerance and V.I.F. in multicollinearity diagnoses (Ethington, Thomas, & Pike, 2002). Standardized coefficients of less

Table 3

Results of multiple regression analysis of inviolable norms

	Careless Safeguarding		Self-Interested Action		Insolent Insensitivity		Negligent Leadership		Moral Turpitude		Public Indiscretion	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Personal Characteristics												
Female	0.058	0.094**	0.008	0.009	0.069	0.101**	0.099	0.109**	0.003	0.012	0.143	0.155***
Years of HRL Experience	0.007	0.035	0.043	0.146***	0.018	0.079*	−0.010	−0.033	0.002	0.026	0.045	0.145***
Position Characteristics												
Business/Management	−0.003	−0.004	0.046	0.061	−0.006	0.007	−0.067	−0.064	0.008	0.028	−0.033	−0.032
Education/Programming	−0.061	−0.101	−0.105	−0.121	−0.030	−0.045	−0.138	−0.154*	0.003	0.010	−0.056	−0.061
Residential Facilities	−0.087	−0.070	−0.001	0.000	0.029	0.021	−0.078	−0.042	−0.024	−0.046	−0.082	−0.044
Director or 3 Functional Areas	0.029	0.024	0.000	0.000	−0.029	−0.022	−0.071	−0.040	0.023	0.017	0.008	0.004
Institutional Type: Private	−0.005	−0.008	−0.189	−0.201***	−0.013	−0.017	−0.050	−0.051	0.009	0.010	0.042	0.043
F	3.25**		15.90***		2.69**		2.96**		0.62		6.85***	
R^2	0.02		0.10		0.02		0.02		0.00		0.05	

Notes. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient, β = Standardized regression coefficient; N = 962.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

than 0.05 were considered trivial. Significant findings emerged in the regression models for five of the six inviolable norms (not moral turpitude). The authors found that normative patterns vary across personal and positional characteristics.

Personal characteristics. Findings reveal significant differences on norm espousal among at least one of the two personal characteristics on five of six inviolable norms. Detailed results for each variable follow.

Gender. Female HRLPs showed statistically significant stronger levels of disdain for four of six inviolable norms, the largest number of all personal and positional characteristics. Specifically, there was a significant relationship between females and careless safeguarding ($\beta = 0.094$, $p < 0.01$), insolent insensitivity ($\beta = 0.101$, $p < 0.01$), negligent leadership ($\beta = 0.109$, $p < 0.01$), and public indiscretion ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.001$).

Years of HRL experience. The number of years of experience in HRL had significant positive relationships with the HRL professional norms. More experienced professionals consider three inviolable norms more disdainful than less experienced professionals: self-interested action ($\beta = 0.146$, $p < 0.001$), insolent insensitivity ($\beta = 0.079$, $p < 0.05$), and public indiscretion ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.001$).

Positional characteristics. The regression analyses show that the level of norm espousal differs by the positional characteristics of functional area and institutional type. Such differences exist but to a lesser extent compared to the personal characteristics.

Functional area. Statistically significant differences between functional areas were sparse. Only educational programming and residential facilities showed a significant difference on the normative patterns. To elaborate, HRLPs working in educational programming perceived the inviolable norm negligent leadership with less reproach than their colleagues in other functional areas ($\beta = -0.154$, $p < 0.05$). No differences appeared with the business/administration and director/combined dummy variables.

Institutional type. HRLPs working in private settings indicated different assessments of one of the normative patterns, compared to HRLPs in public institutions. Professionals in private institutions have a significantly less scornful view of the inviolable norm self-interested action ($\beta = -0.201$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The normative structure for HRLPs described herein provides moral boundaries for performance of administrative and programmatic roles of HRLPs that safeguards the welfare of clients. The existence of this normative structure suggests a need for two types of social mechanisms: mechanisms of norm internalization and mechanisms of social control to deter, detect, and sanction violations of the norms that comprise the normative structure for HRLPs. Scholars and practitioners can extend these mechanisms and their ensuing formulations with some alterations to other critical roles positions for which normative structures exist, such as institutional advancement officers (Caboni, 2010) and college admissions officers (Hodum & James, 2010).

Graduate school and organizational socialization can foster norm internalization for HRLPs. The graduate school socialization process entails the acquisition by students of the attitudes, values, norms, knowledge, and skills needed for professional role performance (Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy, & Boyle, 2014). Campuses offering graduate degrees in higher education and student affairs, including preparation for working in residence life, should

inculcate their students with the behavioral proscriptions of the inviolable norms empirically delineated in this study. Graduate-level courses focusing on residence life should include a discussion of these normative patterns and their importance as guide to the performance of administrative and programmatic roles to safeguard the welfare of the various clients of HRLPs.

Organizational socialization entails the internalization of the role behaviors, norms, and values that a specific organization wants learned by newcomers to that organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Two avenues for promoting organizational socialization include training and orientation programs for professional and student staff that should include a session on the normative structure for HRLPs. The inviolable normative patterns the authors identified in this study should provide the foundation for such a session. The training should emphasize to staff the importance of adhering to these norms in the performance of their duties and should acknowledge that more seasoned professionals may consider some inappropriate behaviors more serious than early career professionals may. Similarly, female professionals may deem some behaviors as more egregious than male professionals. Candid conversations about expected professional conduct among HRL professional staff may curb transgressions of normative guidelines, reducing the potential of harm to clients. Well-advised HRLPs understand the views of their supervisors and those of other institutional leaders regarding inviolable norms. To facilitate discussion, HRL department leaders can conduct an audit of their staff members' perceptions of what professional behaviors consider egregious and sanctionable.

Violations of these six inviolable norms constitute misconduct. The severity of the misconduct stems from the harm that comes to HRL clients. Because norms and behavior never perfectly correlate (Merton, 1976), we can expect some misconduct to occur that makes necessary mechanisms of social control including the detection, deterrence, and sanctioning of acts of wrongdoing (Zuckerman, 1988).

The authors posit that both graduate school and organizational socialization work to deter and detect violations of the inviolable norms discerned by this research. Organizational socialization occurs at the institutional and professional association levels. Institutional type provides a context for professional behaviors (Hirt, 2006). HRL units at individual colleges and universities should develop codes of conduct for the performance of their administrative and programmatic roles. These codes provide a public statement of ethical principles or standards of conduct that assure the lay public that the institution safeguards the welfare of its clients (Bray, Molina, & Swecker, 2012). The promulgation of such a code would also provide a basis for the detection and reporting of norm violations by HRL professional colleagues as well as students, parents of students, and various other individuals working at a college or university. These inviolable norms provide the basis for the development of the tenets of such codes of conduct.

Additionally, institutions must create organizational arrangements for either victims of such detected misconduct or individuals who personally know of such incidents to report them. Such organizational arrangements would process allegations, recommend courses of action for responding to them, and develop procedures to assure the confidentiality of both the accuser and the accused, as appropriate. Other organizational arrangements include the delineation of sanctions for norm violations. Severity of the sanctions should consider the frequency of the norm violation by the offending HRL professional as well as the degree of harm suffered by the focal client (Braxton et al., 2011). Termination, a reprimand, no salary increase, a reduction in salary, or

suspension constitute possible sanctions suggested for faculty members (Franke, 2002) but are also plausible for HRLPs.

ACUHO-I leaders can incorporate the normative patterns identified in this study in its formal documents for the HRL profession. Articulating a code of conduct for HRLPs will assist new professionals and their supervisors to consider the norms of the profession as well as those salient for their particular institution. Similarly, ACUHO-I leaders can offer guidance to HRLPs about professional norms by recommending systems for clients to report norm violations, communicating the role of norms in professional work, and suggesting ways to educate new professionals. For example, the Harvard Seminar for New Presidents prepares participants for their responsibilities, acknowledging that new institutional leaders will face "opportunities and hazards" (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2015), sure signs of ambiguity. Empirically derived norms can guide ACUHO-I leaders in socializing new professionals regarding judgments they may make in their professional roles.

Conclusions

The authors derive four primary conclusions from the pattern of findings of this study. First, the six inviolable normative patterns form crisply defined and robust moral boundaries for the administrative and programmatic roles performed by HRLPs, given the severity of actions HRLPs ascribe to them. These moral boundaries provide necessary guides to HRLPs in making choices in their role performance that protect the welfare of the various clients served by HRL programs, particularly in light of the autonomy HRLPs hold in the discharge of their duties.

Second, the level of disdain for several of the norms differed by personal and professional characteristics. Such differences call for intentional conversations about how HRLPs may perceive behaviors and why they consider them inappropriate. Early conversations with new staff about normative expectations and potential consequences for violations may avoid performance issues later. Similarly, discussions about expected professional behavior among HRLP staff members who have a range of years of experience and include gender diversity may promote the staff's understanding of different perspectives and inform future training and development sessions.

Third, the inviolable norm of moral turpitude functions as a core norm for HRLPs because of the invariant degree of espousal expressed for it across the personal characteristics of gender and years in the HRL profession and across the positional characteristics of functional area and institutional type. This boundary is clear.

Fourth, normative structures of such critical role positions in colleges and universities as the presidency (Fleming, 2010), the academic dean (Bray, 2010), institutional advancement officers (Caboni, 2010), and college admissions officers (Hodum & James, 2010) have been empirically derived. Individuals in these role positions characterized by ambiguity and autonomy may make unconstrained and idiosyncratic choices in their role performance if social controls such as formal codes of conduct or normative structures do not exist (Braxton, 2010; Braxton & Bayer, 1999). This study adds HRL professionals to the group of critical positions that possess such necessary normative structures.

Limitations

The authors present limitations of their research that temper the implications for practice and conclusions. First, the behaviors included in the HRLBI developed for this study exclude possible behaviors that might meet normative criteria, such as ignoring student opinion or inappropriate social media usage. Second, the 8.6% response rate is low, raising a question about how well the sample represents the population. Additionally, the mailing wave analysis revealed a potential bias of underrepresenting Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o HRLPs in the sample. Because ACUHO-I was not able to provide a detailed demographic profile of members, it is not possible to estimate the extent of the potential bias in the sample. The authors detected no bias using mailing wave analyses conducted on each of the inviolable normative patterns. Finally, the reliability coefficient levels of moral turpitude and public indiscretion dip lower than recommended. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, the authors retained them to provide insight into the behaviors that HRL professionals consider most egregious.

Recommendations for Further Research

The authors offer recommendations for further research. First, the authors empirically derived a normative structure for HRLPs that consists of six inviolable normative patterns. As noted above, scholars such as Merton (1976) and Zuckerman (1988) discerned a disjuncture between norms and the actual behavior of individuals, as norms and behavior never perfectly correlate. Given that the authors did not ascertain the extent to which HRLPs adhere to these norms, future research should address this question. Put differently, such research should focus on the extent to which HRLPs avoid the highly inappropriate behaviors that comprise the normative patterns identified in this study. Such research should also concentrate on whether adherence to these norms varies across personal and positional characteristics of HRLPs.

Second, as previously stated, colleges and universities function as client-serving organizations (Baldridge et al., 1978). Other functional areas, including fraternity and sorority life, campus activities, and academic advising, also serve individual students as well as the cause of learning as clients. Accordingly, the authors recommend that future research focus on the delineation of an empirically derived normative structure for these other functional areas.

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