

Teaching and Learning volume about helping students learn disciplinary ways of thinking. Bruce Jacobs collaborated with colleagues on research that examines late night bus service outsourcing on college and university campuses. As many of you know, Deborah Carter and Ed St. John are no longer at IU. We are grateful for the service they provided during their time here. We are extremely excited to welcome two new faculty members to IU. Thomas Nelson Laird (Bloomington) and Robin Hughes (IUPUI). In addition, Don Hossler will be returning to the HESA faculty full time in Fall 2005. Also, for the past academic year, Alvin O. Chambliss, lead attorney in the US & Ayers v. Fordice landmark higher education segregation case has served as a visiting faculty member. Congratulations to Vasti Torres who received tenure this year. Nancy Chism, an IUPUI HESA faculty member, and Mary Howard Hamilton have each been promoted to full professor status. The promotion to full professor status makes Mary Howard Hamilton, the first African American woman in the field of student affairs to earn this achievement. It is indeed an honor to be amongst wonderful, talented colleagues who continue to contribute so much to the profession through their research, service and dedication to the masters and doctoral students in the HESA program.

Throughout the year, the HESA program continues to emerge as the program of choice for students who seek careers in higher education. We receive frequent inquiries about the program thanks to the many alumni who refer students to the program. This year we hosted about 100 students on campus during the HESA Outreach Weekends. The Fall 2005 cohort looks extremely promising. We are excited about the next academic year.

The IUSPA journal remains a prominent component of the HESA Program. The enormous quality of the journal is owed to the time commitment and efforts of our students to submit, edit and review articles. The journal plays a major role in encouraging scholarly work among our students and serving as a visible reminder of the wonderful intellectual talents of our students. As alumni, you play a significant role in the maintenance of the IUSPA journal. Your support and contributions allow us to continue to have this venue for intellectual expression. Please designate donations to the annual fund drive to go towards the *Journal* so that we can continue to produce this exceptional opportunity for our students and for you to receive as alumni. On behalf of the faculty, students, and staff of the program, thank you for your support and contributions to the HESA program. Through your continued efforts to refer talented students to the program and financial support for our program, you provide the necessary elements to sustain our strong Higher Education & Student Affairs program at Indiana University!

### Faculty Advisors

1960-1977:	Elizabeth Greenleaf	1990-1996:	George Kuh
1970-1971:	Wanda Deutsch	1996-1997:	Bruce Jacobs
1972-1976:	David Decoster	1997-1998:	Teresa Hall
1977-1982:	George Kuh	1998-2000:	Ada Simmons
1983-1987:	John Schuh	2000-2002:	Jillian Kinzie
1987-1988:	Don Hossler	2002-2004:	Kate Boyle
1988-1989:	Frances Stage	2004-2005:	Lori Patton
1989-1990:	Don Hossler		

## Academic Environment with a Family Feel: An Honors Residential Community

Janna Bradley, Jennifer Jacobs, Stephanie Kuhn, Misha Mikhailov,  
and Jason Rodocker

*The emphasis on honors residential communities has increased in the last decade. Although studies have explored the topics of honors students and residential communities, little research has been conducted on how honors residential communities contribute to the undergraduate experience. This qualitative study examines one floor of an Honors Residential Community in order to understand how the environment contributes to the undergraduate experience of the residents on that floor.*

### Introduction

Research indicates honors residential communities are growing in importance at colleges and universities, particularly as marketing tools for attracting highly qualified students (Selingo, 2002). Several authors (Friedman & Jenkins-Friedman, 1986; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) identified characteristics and needs of honors students. Other authors (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Strange & Banning, 2001) evaluated the physical environment and the interaction between culture and environment. Schuman (1989) and Selingo examined the positive and negative aspects of honors residential communities. The purpose of this study was to explore life in an Honors Residential Community (HRC) to identify distinguishable characteristics that contribute to students' undergraduate experience.

### Literature Review

#### Honors Students

Friedman and Jenkins-Friedman (1986) used the term "gifted" in reference to honors students and listed three characteristics generally exhibited by gifted students: above-average intellectual ability, creativity, and task commitment. Day (1989) asserted that honors students were typically efficient, academically oriented and motivated. In addition, they were confident in their ability to earn good grades and were active learners able to think for themselves.

While honors students share some unique character traits, they also have distinct needs in their college environment. According to Upcraft and Gardner (1989), honors students need to develop friendships with students who have common goals. Upcraft and Gardner also indicated honors students should learn to develop tolerance for themselves and others, including

faculty, as they tend to have high expectations and are critical of themselves and others. Because of the challenging nature of their coursework and outside interests, honors students can experience additional levels of stress and should therefore become more comfortable dealing with anxiety (Upcraft & Gardner).

### *Residential Communities*

A review of the literature revealed few publications specifically related to honors residential communities. Schuman (1989) briefly described the positive and negative aspects of separate living spaces for honors students. On the positive side, honors students who live in honors residence halls have the opportunity to live with other serious, academically-oriented students; this experience helps them develop their identity as honors students (Schuman). Conversely, isolating honors students on particular floors or in designated residence halls can create a feeling of elitism (Schuman). Additionally, it can remove some of the most serious, focused students from the rest of the residence halls where they could be a positive influence on other residents (Schuman).

Since research on honors residential communities is limited, it is important to consider general information on effective residential communities. O'Hara (2001) identified environmental elements that support social and educational objectives in a residential college. According to O'Hara, common rooms should support the gathering of small social groups and recreational activities. O'Hara also added that musical instruments, plants, and books make better accessories than televisions. Structures that support this residential community, including a face book, contact list, website, coat of arms, mascot, or newsletter help galvanize the community (O'Hara). These suggestions for effective residential communities are echoed in literature about purposeful physical spaces on campus. For instance, Strange and Banning (2001) discussed the issue of behavior settings in physical environments, which are environmental cues that convey to students what type of behavior is expected. In an effective residential community, the presence of books and newspapers instead of video games in a lounge would convey the message that academic work is encouraged. O'Hara stated that weekly social gatherings such as movie nights, monthly events like formal dinners, and yearly rituals such as welcome week contribute to the culture of the floor.

The development of honors residential communities is not without criticism. Many directors and deans of honors colleges across the country believe that a common living environment is not necessary for honors students' success. In addition, critics of honors programs contend that institutions are using such programs as a recruiting tool to attract both high

achieving students and renowned faculty, while neglecting the general undergraduate education program (Selingo, 2002). Sperber (2000) noted that honors housing is a perk offered to honors students; this type of housing is often more quiet, more academically focused, and features more amenities. Also, Sperber commented that honors housing alleviates honors students' fear of being labeled "nerds" for studying more than the average college student. Sperber's caution about these seemingly positive attributes is that every student could benefit from this honors style housing, not just a certain group of elite students.

### *Research on Subcultures*

Kuh and Hall (1993) wrote that culture is not monolithic within an institution but can differ within student groups. They defined culture as:

The collective, mutually shaping patterns of institutional history, mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions which guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institution of higher education and which provide frames of reference for interpreting the meanings of events and actions on and off campus. (p. 2)

Kuh and Hall noted that honors students, among other unique groups of students, can have their own set of beliefs and practices, which is sometimes defined as a subculture. Bolton and Kammeyer (1972) suggested that in order for a student group to qualify as a subculture it must have persistent interaction, a way to communicate values to newcomers, some form of social control over its members, and values that are different from the dominant culture. Subcultures often use their own language to communicate with other group members, and members of subcultures tend to use "we-they" language (Kuh & Hall, 1993, p. 117).

Student subcultures are created and maintained through ceremonies, rituals, and rules of membership (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). A less formal way subcultures are maintained is by informing newer members of how things have been done in the past (Kuh & Whitt). Some subcultures have more influence than others; predictors for highly influencing subcultures include a smaller group, a relatively homogeneous group with common attitudes and characteristics, and a certain amount of communicative isolation from other groups (Newcomb, 1962).

### *Rationale*

This research was conducted for the purpose of gathering information about the environment of the HRC. The guiding research question was, "How does the environment of the HRC contribute to the residents' undergraduate experience?" The researchers sought to understand whether this group was unique and whether it was indeed a subculture. Since there is a

dearth of research describing and explaining how HRCs contribute to honors students' undergraduate experience, this research can serve as a vehicle to initiate further dialogue on the topic. Because HRCs are growing in number and importance (Sperber, 2000), this research can provide qualitative data on perceptions and experiences of honors students in order to improve existing and future honors residential communities. Additionally, this research can serve as motivation for more formal longitudinal and comparative studies in similar communities.

### Methodology

Data collection consisted of three qualitative components: observations of the residence hall floor, a focus group, and individual interviews. A convenience sample and referral techniques allowed the researchers to talk to as many different people as possible during the course of the three-month study. By gathering data from a variety of sources, the validity of the data was enhanced (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Triangulation allowed the researchers to note inconsistencies as well as similarities in the data collected (Fraenkel & Wallen). Other techniques used to ensure validity included accounting for researcher effects and seeking information from outliers (Kvale, 1996). The researchers provided as many details as possible about the HRC so readers could determine if and to what degree other HRCs resembled the one studied and therefore to what degree the results might be transferable to their situation.

#### Participants

At the large, public, research university in the Midwest where the research was conducted, students were automatically invited to join the Honors College if they either had a combined SAT score of 1350 or above, an ACT composite score of 31 or higher, or a class rank in the top five percent of their graduating class (Honors College Bulletin, 2004). Honors students can choose to live in the HRC or a different residence hall on campus. If students choose to live in the HRC, they pay an additional \$50 fee per semester, which allows them to plan floor activities beyond those customary for other floors. The participants in this study were HRC residents who all lived on the same floor of a residence hall in which three floors were designated for honors students.

A convenience sample was utilized for the focus group session. The researchers chose this method because the focus group was conducted on one night only; a random sample might not have yielded the desired turn out considering the busy schedules of college students. The researchers utilized a referral technique to create a pool of candidates for individual interviews.

This was accomplished by requesting that focus group participants suggest other students from the community to participate in individual interviews. This method of sampling is effective because it gives the researchers a degree of credibility due to being able to use the referrer's name (Streeton, Cooke, & Campbell, 1998). While both the focus group and the interview pool represented a convenience sample, no claims can be made that the sample was representative of the floor population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Ten students participated in the focus group and five different students participated in individual interviews. No major demographic differences existed between the two groups. Seven of the participants were female and eight were male. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 20. Three participants were first-year students, eleven were sophomores, and one was a junior. For three participants, this was their first year living in the HRC; for the rest of the participants, it was their second year. Nine participants were from a major metropolitan area located fifty miles from the university. Two participants were from smaller towns in the same state as the university and the remaining four were from out-of-state. Thirteen participants identified themselves as Caucasian, one identified as Jewish, and one as Indian. Eight participants listed more than one major, and majors represented areas as diverse as social science, arts/humanities, science, business, and pre-medical.

Researchers selected a second group of participants from faculty and staff who worked with the HRC. They included the Resident Assistant (RA) of the floor studied, the Graduate Supervisor (GS) who supervised the RA on the floor, the Residential Floor Fellow, the dean and assistant dean of the Honors College, and the assistant director of Academic Initiatives and Services (AIS) for Residential Programs and Services (RPS). This was a purposive sample designed to gather relevant information about the HRC from staff and faculty who work closely with that community.

#### Data Collection

The researchers conducted a total of four hours of observation on the HRC floor being studied. During the observation periods, the researchers did not attempt to engage in conversation with the participants but instead tried to be unobtrusive. During these observations, notations were made of interactions between residents, behaviors exhibited, layout and structure of the floor, and artifacts.

In response to a posted flier, ten individuals participated in a one-hour focus group. Participants were provided with a brief information sheet containing demographic questions prior to the beginning of the focus group. Researchers asked participants open-ended questions and took detailed notes on the participants' comments. The focus group was also tape-recorded;

researchers informed participants of the recording. After the focus group, the researchers checked the tape for verification of statements made.

At the conclusion of the focus group, each attendee was asked to identify two other residents who might be interested in meeting with researchers for this study. Each of these recommended students was e-mailed to request their participation in the study. Five students responded and were interviewed using the same questions as used in the focus group. In addition to student interviews, the researchers conducted five interviews with faculty and staff members affiliated with the HRC. The individual student interviews were taped; one researcher was responsible for transcribing the interview while the other researcher was responsible for checking the transcription for accuracy and thoroughness.

### *Data Analysis*

All student participants were given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity and titles were used for staff and faculty. A master list of participants' real names was kept separate from the data. Each transcription of the focus group, student interviews, faculty interviews, and staff interviews was segmented by topic, and the pseudonym of the student or the title of the faculty/staff person was noted. These data were printed and brought to an analysis session where emerging themes were suggested by the researchers. Five main themes were decided upon and segments of the transcripts were placed in the appropriate themed category. The categories were then analyzed as a whole and findings were discussed. Biases were minimized as much as possible by working as a group on data analysis.

### **Limitations**

The abbreviated time frame of the research project was the largest challenge and the cause of several subsequent limitations. Multiple interactions with the same participant provide better reliability (Kvale, 1996), but the researchers were only able to meet with each participant one time. Although the researchers would have preferred to meet with each resident, they were only able to meet with 15 of the 40 floor residents. The possibility exists that the people who participated in the focus group had a different perception of the HRC than the rest of the floor. Because there was no opportunity for follow-up, researchers were not able to revisit issues that emerged during interaction.

Another structural difficulty exists with observations, as people are likely to alter their behavior when they know they are being observed (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). While it is possible the behavior of the floor was not altered significantly by the researchers' presence during observations,

there is no way of verifying the information is authentic and complete. Finally, because of the non-comparative nature of the study, the researchers have a limited ability to determine whether or not residents' experiences on the floor are truly unique.

### **Results**

Through the process of data collection, five themes emerged. Many of the participants interviewed in the study offered thoughts about the community and family atmosphere, insider status, elitism, perceived uniqueness, and academic/social balance. These five themes, along with the researchers' observations, will be discussed and framed in context with interpretations of the data and its implications.

#### *Environmental Scan*

The floor studied was accessible with key access by stairs or elevator. There were 27 rooms on the L-shaped floor, with one side of the floor housing men and the other side housing women. Less than a quarter of the doors were open during most observation periods. Outside the lounge in the open area by the elevator, posters advertised upcoming campus events, as well as HRC activities.

At the center of the "L" was a pentagon-shaped lounge where most of the observation occurred. The carpeted lounge had windows running along two sides of the room, and the furnishings consisted of four couches, one coffee table, and three desks. A couch faced a television with a DVD player and a video gaming system. The television and DVD player were recently purchased with floor funds, and the gaming system belonged to a resident who left it in the lounge for other residents to use. One desk held a computer and another desk held a printer. The walls had very few decorations. On one wall was a copy of the floor rules and the residence hall diversity statement.

#### *Community and Family*

Themes of community and family emerged frequently throughout the collection of data. Kara, a sophomore and second-year resident, talked about the family environment:

The biggest thing about living on the floor honestly is, um, somehow the community that is fostered on it. I really feel like that is the identifying characteristic of the HRC even aside from the fact that it's academically oriented or anything like that.

In addition, students in the HRC felt they had their own vernacular. Mark, a sophomore student, explained that they quote a lot of movies, television shows, and other humorous sources, and these quotes and recitations make

up a large part of their vocabulary when talking to one another. Participants also discussed formal and informal programs that enhance the family environment on the floor. Christine, a first-year student, is involved with floor programs, as well as other university and community events. She mentioned the 11:30 Lunch Club and Elevator Nights as events that help promote community. The 11:30 Lunch Club is a weekly gathering of HRC students and Honors College staff in a nearby campus-dining hall. Elevator night, a less formal example, occurs approximately once a month. A group of HRC residents stand in front of the elevator door on the floor in an attempt to surprise passengers as they arrive. Furthermore, on a daily basis, hungry residents run down the halls yelling "food! food!" as an indication to fellow HRC members that they are going to the dining hall.

Some participants also noted a difference in the HRC community and family structure this year as compared to the previous year. Jack, a sophomore student and second-year resident, holds an on-campus job. He reflected:

Last year we had this huge sense of community, because we really needed each other, were all first year, we didn't know a lot of people on campus. This year we have more friends outside the HRC, more people we know, more organizations, more jobs and things beyond [residence hall name] that we're involved in. As time goes on we diversify out of the HRC.

Mark commented on "de-facto" members of the floor, including previous members of the floor who no longer lived there and students on other floors who spend a great deal of time in the HRC. Additionally, Austin, a second-year student from out-of-state, described a few people on the floor who do not bond with the rest of the floor. He said "They have [state in which research was conducted] friends and hang out with them or they met people through summer programs and hang out with them."

Two staff members associated with the HRC also offered their comments on the family-like community environment. The assistant director for Academic Initiatives and Services in the residence halls called the HRC "home," explaining that it was a place where students can identify with one another and connect. She went on to say, "The HRC is community." In addition, the Residential Fellow on the fourth floor of the HRC noted that the HRC environment gives students the opportunity to belong to "something small enough that a connection takes place." The Residential Fellow further explained that the family atmosphere in the HRC is felt immediately upon arrival and helps students to make a more successful transition to a large university setting.

Within the community and family-like atmosphere of the HRC, some noteworthy issues surrounding racial, religious and socio-economic differ-

ences arose. During the focus group session, the following exchange took place between Angie, a Caucasian junior studying comparative literature, and Tom, a sophomore who identified himself as an ethnic minority and was completing coursework for a premedical program:

Angie: Nobody is really discriminated against because of their culture or what they believe in.

Tom: [made a skeptical face and attempted to comment on Angie's statement]

Angie: [laughing] Tom, you don't count. We tease each other a lot, but that's what we do.

Though the intent of the exchange is unclear, it is significant to note the differences and issues of diversity that exist within the community. Matt, who also identified as an ethnic minority, added that "we don't hold prejudices like we come off—we tease each other and are protective of our community. If you have a problem, it is everyone's problem."

### *Insider Status*

Insider status refers to the sense of belonging that comes from being an active part of the floor. This theme emerged from both residents and staff members in several ways. Ashley indicated residents who do not follow the unspoken rule of promoting a family culture on the floor are not looked upon in a positive manner. The Residential Fellow called those who stay behind closed doors and do not socialize with others the "ghosts on the floor." He further explained that those students are not incorporated into the social community experienced by the majority of residents on the floor.

Ashley said the floor even has its own language and everything that happens in the HRC is meaningful, but only to the insiders. Participants mentioned inside jokes and stories are commonplace on the floor. Matt, a second-year student, shared:

I would say [it] is kind of a drawback because it's almost gotten to the point where our entire life, at least with each other, is just one giant inside joke, that you really need to make an effort to penetrate and we need to accept you in order for you to penetrate it. That is kind of an issue.

Alumni of the HRC also play an important role in the traditions and culture of the floor. Several participants mentioned others who no longer live on the floor but came back frequently or kept in close contact with current floor residents. Participants indicated HRC members sometimes elect to live

together in off-campus housing once they move out of the residence hall.

### *Elitism*

The researchers heard the word "elitism" used several times in various ways during the course of the study. Often times it was a preface statement, "Not to sound elitist, but..." followed by a statement that could be perceived as elitist. For example, Jack shared, "I mean not to sound elitist, but you probably make closer friends with people that are closer to your intelligence level." Matt expressed that on this floor, everyone is of the same intelligence level - it is not a "one-way street." Sarah, a second-year, shared that last year they considered having a t-shirt made that read, "We're elitist because we're better." When asked how HRC students perceive themselves in comparison to non-HRC students, Matt said:

I really hate to say this, but I think to a certain extent it is true [that HRC students are better than non-HRC students]. I do feel a little above some people. I have the support that makes me more confident as a person. I try not to let it get in the way...we make fun of ourselves for being elitists, but to a certain extent I think we are [better].

The dean and assistant dean of the Honors College said HRC residents want to be one with the campus community; however, the participants in this study shared some different feelings. When asked, "Why did you choose the HRC?", Austin said, "I didn't want to [room with] a southern [state in which research was conducted] farm country person." The GS of the residence hall said HRC students have a certain type of mentality that reflects an appreciation of their sameness.

Austin shared his opinion that professors who teach honors classes expect more out of the students and they get more than they would from non-honors students. Some professors come to speak to HRC residents on their floor. He added that the professors probably would not "even talk to a normal floor." The assistant director of AIS for campus residence halls shared that HRC students tend to show a hint of arrogance and can come off as separatists.

### *Perceived Uniqueness*

The researchers identified numerous comments about programs or experiences on the floor that participants identified as something unique to their experience. Residents on Academic and Thematic floors pay an additional \$50 fee for each semester they live in the community. Several participants mentioned how much money the floor had and how that has enabled them to have trips to nearby large, urban areas and extra programming. Another instance of perceived uniqueness came from Ashley, who expressed that their co-ed floor was the only one on campus. One student

shared this comment regarding perceived uniqueness:

Jack: I would say the biggest difference I see especially with myself but as well as with other students in the HRC too is that I think people on the campus in general are more apathetic, that's towards politics, towards studying, it might be an overgeneralization... So I would say that the biggest difference is that HRC people are interesting and they are enthused about things, enthused about each other.

Participants commented on several aspects of life on their floor that seem to be unique. Jordan, a sophomore involved in numerous extracurricular activities, shared that for some floor programs as many as 20 or 30 residents participate. The RA gave a rather comprehensive list of residents who hold leadership positions at the institution. While several floors have one or two residents who are leaders on campus, this floor has at least five residents who hold leadership roles. Residents can also identify who these people are and what position they hold.

Participants indicated that there is not a stigma about working hard. On this floor, it is acceptable to be an overachiever. One participant used the word "geeks" when referring to herself and others on the floor. Kara said, "We always joke about, you know, how we're all dorks, and we're okay with that because we live in the HRC."

### *Academic/Social Balance*

Participants in the study noted a purposeful balance between their academic life and social life as it relates to their experience in the HRC. The GS of the HRC floors explained that the students want to be challenged academically, but also want to have a strong social network. The RA greatly contributes to this paradox. He says that he acts as a "role model by being laid back, funny, not too serious, earning good grades and not being a slave to studying." Mark offered a joke about the HRC, "GPAs would be higher if we *didn't* live in the HRC." Austin countered this point by stating that residents respect the quiet hours set for the floor. He went on to say that people are "open and willing to say they need quiet or to move if someone else does."

Some participants commented on their expectations of the academic and social balance of the HRC being different than the reality they now know. Kara said this about her expectations:

I know that some of the other areas of campus have stereotypes of the dorms, you know, that they are crazy partying dorms and I just - that wasn't really what I was going for. I wanted to stay in an environment that would be a little more conducive to academics, I guess.... I probably expected too much, you know, hoity-toity academic types.... I don't know



if for some reason in the back of my mind I expected that nobody would, you know, want to go out, nobody would want to do anything but study. I don't know if that was an expectation but definitely, that is definitely not the case. But I think it is better that way, actually.

Mark said that in this living environment there is "no stigma attached to studying or working a lot." Sarah noted that there is a strong element of peer support in the HRC. She also said that because many of the HRC residents have classes together, they can academically support one another outside the classroom setting. Jack explained the HRC programs help residents get to know one another and bond with people they are with rather than just limiting the peer connection to academic support.

### Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to explore the HRC for the purpose of understanding how the HRC affects the undergraduate experience. Little literature exists specifically about HRCs, prompting the researchers to investigate which issues should be considered for further research. As the number and marketing of HRCs increases (Sperber, 2000), understanding how these environments affect students' undergraduate experience will be vital to ensuring a beneficial experience for students. Close connections are evident between the existing body of literature and the findings of this study with respect to the areas of honor students, honors residential communities, and subcultures.

#### *Honors Students*

Many parallels exist between the data collected and the aforementioned characteristics of honors students. The researchers found the students of the HRC exhibit above-average creativity, which is typical of honors students as indicated by Friedman and Jenkins-Friedman (1986). HRC students recommended fire poles and cargo nets for better access between HRC floors, took an unusual rafting trip through a small creek on the campus, and enjoyed creating metaphors for their HRC floor environment. Frequent mention of quiet hours and leadership positions showed HRC students to be academically oriented and motivated, consistent with Day's (1989) suggestion that these attributes are typical of honors students. HRC students exhibited a strong desire to develop friendships with students who have common goals, ability, and sense of belonging to the university which is typical of honors students according to Upcraft and Gardner (1989). Upcraft and Gardner also addressed honors students' need to learn how to deal with anxiety and stress. The researchers found evidence of this occurring through accounts of students helping each other, such as were mentioned in the

description of the academic-social balance in the community.

Elitism may be an issue of greater importance with respect to honors students. This research revealed statements that superficially appear to be elitist in nature. During both interviews and the focus group, students repeatedly used the term "elitist" in various contexts and seemed to be aware of its salience for honors students.

#### *Honors Residential Communities*

The danger of isolating honors students in a particular community is that it may create feelings of elitism as described by Schuman (1989). Selingo (2002) echoed the concern that honors residential communities promote an elitist mindset while robbing the rest of the student body of higher quality education. Schuman's writing on the positive and negative aspects of separate living spaces for honors students indicated that residents of honors residential communities have the opportunity to live with other serious, academically-oriented students. Many of the HRC residents chose the HRC specifically because of their desire to live with other academically-oriented students. As Schuman (1989) suggested, this experience can help them develop their identity as honors students. Several participants' comments about it being okay to be a "dork" or a "geek" in the HRC demonstrated that a person was not looked down upon for studying or being academically focused.

Prior to living on the HRC, the participants did not anticipate the strong sense of community and family that comes from a social experience within this academic community, but it was welcomed as a pleasant and beneficial surprise. A noticeable disconnect exists between the reality of this HRC and Sperber's (2000) statement that honors housing is often a quieter, more academically focused environment that features more amenities. While the HRC environment is academically-oriented, the residents seem quite proud in proclaiming they are a loud and active floor that encourages open doors with the expectation that non-academic activities occur at all times of the day and night. The lack of perks and amenities in the physical space is evident in the sparsely decorated lounge and standardized living areas.

Unique behavioral cues exist in the HRC environment. RPS and university policies are not always followed and formal rules are not consistently enforced. The RA places greater priority on being a role model who is relaxed, conveying a sense of social and academic balance, rather than rigidly enforcing rules. Although intellectual influences such as conversations, quotes, and pictures were present in the lounge, a prominent feature of the lounge was a television and gaming system which would not be expected in an academic-focused community (Strange & Banning, 2001).

The HRC appears to be an effective interpersonal environment that

promotes personal responsibility and respect for others by creating a community that fosters learning and development (Hennessey, 1981). The normative environment of the HRC is characterized by participation in or awareness of floor activities and inside jokes. The cultural climate created is one of insider status that may only be achieved with acceptance from a majority of HRC residents. Conversely, residents also create an expectation that all HRC members will cultivate a family atmosphere and participate in HRC activities.

### Subcultures

Using Bolton and Kammeyer's (1972) criteria, the researchers concluded that students living on this particular floor in the HRC have their own subculture. The HRC residents are constantly interacting with one another due to proximity and common attitudes. Socialization is expected to occur informally and frequently through shared meals, participation in programs, and active interaction encouraged by open doors. By their use of a common language and experiences that are specifically meaningful only to residents in the HRC, there is strong evidence of an existing subculture. Other signs the HRC is a subculture include greater than average social cohesion among HRC members and consistently high program attendance.

The HRC does have characteristics that allow it to be classified as a subculture when other residence hall floors may not. The HRC has its own language strongly influenced by inside jokes. Residents of the HRC tend to use "we-they" language, indicating their belief that they are a unique set of people (Kuh & Hall, 1993). Residents of the HRC must be unofficially invited to belong to the community, which is a method of social control exercised by current members of the HRC. Socialization is monitored and encouraged through rituals like elevator night, academic dinners, and ultimate frisbee.

Though the HRC can be identified as a subculture, the HRC residents may perceive a greater uniqueness than what actually exists. The assistant director of Academic Initiatives and Services for the residence halls indicated that the HRC is not structurally unique from other Thematic and Academic floors at the institution. The HRC has the same \$50 additional activity fee as other Thematic and Academic designated floors, which creates additional programmatic funding for residents of each floor. Other floors on campus also take trips to major metropolitan cities. Some HRC students believe their floor to be the only co-educational floor on campus. Other floors on campus are coed, some of them by room and not just by hall. From these examples, it is evident that HRC residents perceive a greater uniqueness of their environment than indicated by other evidence.

### Implications

The findings of this study identify areas that would benefit from further investigation. Researchers interested in the topic of HRCs should consider comparative studies with other floors and communities, both honors and non-honors. Moreover, a longitudinal study would more accurately portray the experiences of students living in an honors residential community. The researchers suggest that students' input is valuable to the future success of the HRC. In order to maintain a strong partnership with honors students, student affairs practitioners should take many of the factors presented in this research into account. A deeper evaluation of the themes may offer further support for the benefits of an honors residential experience for students at a large, public institution.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with previous literature on the topics of honors students, residential communities and subcultures. In addition, this research gave HRC students at one particular institution an opportunity to share their experiences as members of the floor. Participants indicated that their family atmosphere was important, along with the existing balance between an academic and social focus of residents on the floor. Issues of perceived uniqueness among floor members, an insider status, an elitist mentality and challenges with diversity also emerged from discussions with participants. This research has identified factors that student affairs professionals should be aware of when interacting with students in an honors residential community. It is the goal of the researchers that this study will motivate others to seek a more complex understanding of this particular environment.

### References

- Bolton, C. D., & Kammeyer, K. C. (1972). Campus cultures, role orientations, and social types. In K. A. Felman (Ed.), *College and student: Selected readings in the social psychology of higher education* (pp. 377-391). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Day, A. L. (1989). Honors Students. In M. L. Upcraft, J. N. Gardner, & Associates (Eds.), *The freshman year experience* (pp. 352-262). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fraenkel, J. R. & Wallen, N. E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Friedman, P. G. & Jenkins-Friedman, R. C. (Eds.). (1986). *Fostering academic excellence through honors programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Honors College Bulletin*. (n.d.). Retrieved September 21, 2004, from Indiana University, Honors College Web site: <http://www.indiana.edu/~iubhonor/bulletin/bp4.php3>
- Honors residential community* (n.d.). Retrieved December 4, 2004, from Indiana University, Honors College Web site: <http://www.indiana.edu/~iubhonor/hrc.php3>
- Kuh, G. D. & Hall, J. E. (1993). Using cultural perspectives in student affairs. In G.D. Kuh



(Ed.), *Cultural perspectives in student affairs work* (pp. 1-20). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Kuh, G. D. & Whitt, E. J. (1988). *The invisible tapestry: Culture in American colleges and universities*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 17, Number 1. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Newcomb, T. M. (1962). Student peer-group influence. In N. Sanford (Ed.), *The American college* (pp. 469-488). New York: Wiley.

O'Hara, R. J. (2001). How to build a residential college [Electronic version]. *Planning for Higher Education*, 30(2), 52-57.

Schuman, S. (1989). *Beginning in honors: A handbook* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Ames, IA: National Collegiate Honors Council.

Selinger, J. (2002, May 31). Mission creep? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48(38), p. A19.

Sperber, M. (2000). *Beer and circus: How big-time college sports is crippling undergraduate education*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Strange, C., & Banning, J. H. (2001). Physical environments: The role of design and space. In C. Strange & J. H. Banning (Eds.), *Educating by design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Streetson, R., Cooke, M., & Campbell, J. (1998). Researching the researchers: Using a snowball technique. *Nurse Researcher*, 12(1), 35-46.

Upcraft, M. L. & Gardner, J. N. (1989). *The freshman year experience: Helping students survive and succeed in college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*Janna Bradley earned a M.S. degree in Student Affairs Administration from Indiana University Bloomington in 2005. She received a B.S. in Psychology from Indiana University in 2001. During her time at Indiana University, Janna worked as an academic advisor at the University College advising center at IUPUI.*

*Jennifer Jacobs received a Master of Science degree in Student Affairs Administration from Indiana University Bloomington in May of 2005. Jennifer earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and Culture and Political Science from Indiana University in 2003. During her graduate career, Jennifer served as a Graduate Supervisor at Read Residence Center and also worked as the leadership coordinator for the Student Activities Office.*

*Stephanie Kuhn graduated from Indiana University Bloomington in May 2005 with a M.S. in Student Affairs Administration. She received a B.A. in Communication Studies from the University of Iowa. While at Indiana University, Stephanie held an assistantship as an academic advisor in University College at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI).*

*Jason Rodocker received a joint J.D. and M.S. in Higher Education Administration from Indiana University Bloomington in May 2005. Jason graduated from Hanover College in 2001 with a Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Communication. During graduate school, Jason was a Graduate Assistant at the IU Career Development Center, Instructor of Career Development at the Kelley School of Business, Certified Legal Intern at IU Student Legal Services and Intramural Champion in Basketball.*

## Pray! Or Not to Pray: The History of Chapel at Indiana University: An Illumination of Institutional Practice and Policy

Camille B. Kandiko

*Part of the history of religion can be analyzed using Indiana University chapel's structural, political, economic, and societal policies, practices, and relations with the university. This investigation illustrates the tension between religion and public higher education, the secularization of academia and society, the impact of the emergence of science, and the change in the relationship between religion and higher education from one of practice to research. This history, although anecdotally noted, has not been thoroughly explored.*

Religious practices have been a large part of the history of American people, although the traditions vary as society's needs change. These transformations often begin with the youth, particularly within the collegiate student body. The history between religious practice and university administration can give insights into today's changing religious landscape. The history of this relationship on campus developed and transformed as the quantity, quality, and diversity of the student body changed. Analyzing the history of chapel services at one institution serves as a case study for the factors that impact religion and higher education, and creates a foundation for future decisions and directions.

Indiana University (IU) is a public institution, located in a country with a historical tradition of the division of church and state. Yet for the first 50 years of its existence, the university had a policy of compulsory chapel services. Although chapel was common at public universities during the early- to mid-nineteenth century, chapel lasted much longer at IU than at its peer institutions in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois (Chapel Committee Report, 1897).

The story of chapel has five phases. First was the early compulsory period, followed by a time of transition and debate in the 1880s and 1890s that mirrored societal secularization and the rise of science. The third period covers the growth of the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations and the development of student life. The fourth phase was the institutionalization of religion on campus through the formation of the IU School of Religion. Chapel services were moved under the auspices of the School of Religion during its founding in 1910. The final, fading phase of chapel is defined by the closing of the School of Religion in 1970 and the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.