4-15-2008

How Does the Living-Learning Environment Affect Honors Students’ Perception of Self, Others, and the Institution?

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How Does the Living-Learning Environment Affect Honors Students' Perception of Self, Others, and the Institution?

By

Janaan Mary Decker

April 15, 2008

Master's Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty of the College of
Education
At Grand Valley State University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master Education

Grand Valley State University
Acknowledgments

I dedicate this thesis to my children Jason, Karla, and Benjamin who give me the love and determination for lifelong learning so that I may pay it forward to others. My gratitude goes to Dr. Johnine Callahan who was instrumental in helping me pursue a graduate program. I thank the honors students who made this study possible with their support and feedback. I extend my appreciation to Dr. Andrew Beachnau for his guidance, patience, and support as my thesis advisor. I thank Dr. Jeff Chamberlain, Dr. Jay Cooper, and Dr. Lorraine Alston who encouraged me, provided feedback and direction, and taught me how to persevere. I am grateful for the help from Dr. Brian Lakey and Dr. Jennifer Gross with the experiment and statistical analysis. I thank Dr. Christine Rydel for her help in editing my thesis. I also express appreciation to Alayne Chapman, Hannah Gaff, and Grace Tillison for their assistance in coding the data. I am grateful for Rita Kohrman’s help in my research, and the flexibility the honors faculty provided for students to participate in this study.

Janaan Mary Decker
Abstract

Research supports a positive relationship between living-learning communities and students' academic accomplishments and personal development. Successful communities reflect the institution's mission, and the institution's purpose and goals are adapted for the student population the communities serve. Living-learning communities provide a sense of belonging, which is critical for students to persist in college to realize their full personal and academic potential. With limited research concerning living-learning communities and honors students, it is difficult to determine which characteristics of living-learning communities positively affect honors students. This document examines the relationship between the living-learning community (Niemeyer Living Center) and honors students at Grand Valley State University. The findings indicate honors students who participate in the Niemeyer Living Center perceive themselves to be more socially connected to their community and the campus, and are more involved in activities outside the classroom, than honors students living off-campus. The difference is less significant between honors students living in the Niemeyer Living Center and honors students living elsewhere on-campus.
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Chapter One: Thesis Proposal

Statement of the Problem

The amount of time and energy that students put forth in their educational experience is the best predictor for student learning and personal development. Students who cannot connect the meaning from their college activities often report academic difficulty or social isolation, which puts them at risk of leaving college (Astin, 1993).

Tinto (1997) argues that the more students become academically and socially involved, and the more they interact with other students and faculty, the more likely they are to persist in college. He states that today’s educational institutions need to promote collaborative and engaging learning experiences by means of learning communities. Studies indicate that honors students’ intellectual and social needs differ from those of the non-honors students. Most honors students are likely to be nonconformist, independent, have a high need for achievement, and take their studies and grades extremely seriously. These characteristics perpetuate their perfectionist tendencies (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). Parker and Adkins (1995) state there is limited research on whether perfectionism is healthy motivation or not (as cited in Rinn & Plucker, 2004). A challenging academic environment, different levels of competition, independence, and solitude may help develop honors students’ characteristics and strengthen their learning (Rinn & Plucker, 2004).

This study assumes that the living-learning community provides a more socially connected environment for honors students, and that such an atmosphere
leads to more involvement in the campus and community, and ultimately academic success.

_Importance and Rationale of Study_

According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and Associates (2005), the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University has identified DEEP (Documenting Effective Education Practice) institutions that create a success-oriented campus for student learning. Such institutions include the development of the whole person and healthy relationships among students, faculty, and staff, with students’ academic excellence. This feeling of belonging helps students connect with peers and the institution; the students then associate this connection with a sense of persistence and satisfaction. DEEP institutions assume that “because you are here, you are capable of learning anything” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005, p. 57).

DEEP institutions have a mission that is “alive” and influences every aspect of the institution, including policies and practices that support student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). Each institution’s “living mission” is “what happens when a college delivers the curriculum, organizes human talent, and allocates resources in a manner that enables it to realize its aspirations” (p. 267). Kezar and Kinzie (2006) note how each type of institution can draw on the diversity of its student body and faculty in order to create an engaging environment through a “lived mission.”
Institutions are not alone in their responsibility for students' success. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) recognize that students also should bear a major responsibility for their educational experience (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). Kuh, et al. (2005) emphasizes individual engagement as the critical factor of the impact of college, which has two key components. The first involves the amount of time that students put toward their studies and other activities, which promote their success. The second is the manner in which the institution allocates its resources for learning opportunities to encourage students to participate and to benefit from such activities. Living-learning communities can provide the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities that encourage student engagement.

Astin (1984) points out that students tend to be more involved on campus when they feel a connection with the campus. However, this involvement depends on whether students believe their behavior is compelled internally or externally. Pritchard and Wilson (2003) suggest honors students have impressive academic credentials; however, high scores and grade point averages do not necessarily mean they are more likely to stay in school. Some honors students tend to lack the needed social support to be successful in college. An honors community can help students develop friendships and value community by sharing responsibilities and values. Stanlick (2006) notes the social circumstances in a community offer the setting for students to attain their individual goals as well as the community's goals.
Background of the Study

Haynes (2006) notes that the argument for educating the whole student has been around for years. This argument claims that educating the whole student is important because the emotional, social, and cognitive development components are valuable for effective learning. Honors students need this type of learning as well. “If learners are unsure of who they are or what they believe, they will find it difficult to pursue intellectual inquiry” (Haynes, 2006, p. 18).

It is necessary to understand students’ development in order to improve their academic success. CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) has provided notable data that reveal “the importance of faculty-student contact, of the residential experience, of the power of the student peer groups, and of the critical role played by student involvement (Astin, 2003, p. 24). It also provides documentation for prospective significance for activities, such as service learning, honors programs, study abroad, interdisciplinary studies, scholarships, and cultural relations (Astin, 2003). Astin (2003) asks “What personal qualities should we be trying to cultivate in our students?” (p. 27). Society’s problems demand that our students need different talents and abilities to deal with the new millennium challenges. Since our society has evolved into a global society, educational institutions need to provide not only knowledge, but also develop “citizenship, social responsibility, leadership, global understanding, self-understanding, and the like” (Astin, 2003, p. 27).

Ruthellen Josselson wrote, “Identity is what we make of ourselves within a society that is making something of us” (as cited in Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 18).
Our society has high expectations for our students to appreciate and work well with today’s diversified population. Higher education has the responsibility to help these young adults not only to survive, but to offer strong leadership and citizenship for the future of our society (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Cognitive theories and psychosocial/identity theories segregate student development and learning that fits into our predecessors’ learning paradigm. These hypotheses explain the fragmented structures of why offices of academic affairs oversee students’ intellectual needs and offices of student affairs take care of students’ physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Transformative education embraces a unified theory of learning that questions most higher education structures (Keeling, 2004).

Statement of Purpose

This study will investigate how the living-learning environment influences honors students’ perceptions of self, others, and the institution. The purpose of the study is to examine the correlation with social connectedness, activities outside the classroom, honors students who participate in the living-learning community, and those who do not. Honors students who were admitted into the Grand Valley State University Honors College during the Fall 2007 semester participated in the study. Dr. Andrew Beachnau, the researcher’s thesis advisor, approved the research proposal and methodology (Appendix A). The Human Research Review Committee granted permission to conduct the study during the Winter 2008 semester (Appendix B).
committee approved the Consent Form (Appendix C) in which the honors students signed as an agreement to participate in the study. The findings will explain the benefits for honors students to participate in a living-learning community, and examine the correlations among the variables.

**Objectives of the Study**

The first objective was to identify honors students with the living-learning environment. To establish this relationship, the honors students at Grand Valley State University were surveyed for the most important components of their living-learning community. From this survey (12.5% of students responded), eight activities outside the classroom were identified. A frequency scale was designed to measure honors students' level of involvement in these activities. This level of involvement will be correlated with social connectedness and the honors students' living arrangements. Extroversion will be ruled out as a variable that affects honors students' social connectedness.

**Definition of Terms**

The dependent variables are the eight activities outside of the classroom that differentiate honors students participating in a living-learning environment with those who do not. Predictor variable one is the current living arrangements of the honors students which include living in the Niemeyer living-learning community, off-campus, or elsewhere on-campus.
Predictor variable two is campus connectedness that is measured by the Campus Connectedness Scale (Lee, 1995). This scale identifies the level of social connectedness with students who participate in a living-learning community and those who do not.

Predictor variable three is control for extroversion. The Extroversion Scale (International Personality Item Pool, http://ipip.ori.org) is used to rule out as a variable affecting students’ social connectedness in a living-learning community.

Limitations of Study

Because this study concerns only one institution and one honors freshman class, it cannot pretend to make a generalization about all honors students. Students of color and male students are not proportionately represented. Some variables may correlate significantly with each other by chance alone. Causal relations cannot be established.

Summary

Learning is defined as a “comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each” (Keeling, 2004, p. 4). Neither student development nor student learning can occur without the other. Educational institutions need to align their goals for student learning outcomes with society’s expectation and needs for graduates (Keeling, 2004).
Vaill (1996) states that “learning must be connected to how one understands oneself in one’s work role and in one’s private life” (as cited in Gabelnick, 2000, p. 50). Living-learning communities assimilate the types of learning that actively engage students to connect their minds with their bodies. The learning types include “self-directed”, “creative”, “expressive”, “feeling”, “on-line”, “continual”, and “reflexive.” Each of the types of learning helps students to develop the competencies they need to integrate into the larger campus community (Gabelnick, 2000).

An honors community provides the environment for honors students to develop relationships by sharing a common purpose that creates a sense of identity. Respect and concern for others is necessary for students to share a purpose and to feel a sense of community. When students perceive their relationships as commitments to themselves for personal development as well as an obligation to the community to promote its growth, they are more likely to be more academically honest (Stanlick, 2006).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Since the 1980s and 1990s student demographics have changed in age and diversity, a situation that leads this generation to experience more diversity, crime, poverty, and homelessness than previous generations (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Our society expects our students to appreciate others' differences and work well with today's diversified population. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) state that "building communities of learners creates an environment that can potentially advance a whole society" (p. iii). Higher education has the responsibility to help these young adults not only to survive, but to offer strong leadership and citizenship for the future of our society (Baxter Magolda, 2001). This type of education offers students opportunities to develop relationships with off-campus organizations/businesses that make it possible for students to learn how to address human and community needs (Jacoby, 1999).

Kezar and Kinzie (2006) propose a "lived mission" helps administrators focus their human and financial resources for programs to improve student learning. Mission statements for educational institutions vary from campus to campus. Student learning is positively affected when institutions relate their mission statements to support programs, policies, and practices. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and Assoc. (2005) point out that budget issues do not excuse decisions to stop the continued creation of mission-related programs to increase student success. DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) institutions are an example of this
commitment because they have “a system of values and beliefs that reflect the institutions’ willingness to take on matters of substance consistent with their priorities and commitment to student success” (p. 133). They strive to be the best they can be (Kuh, et al., 2005).

It is imperative to develop programs that reflect the institution’s mission and not use temporary strategies. Tinto (2007) points out the “add a course strategy” does not address students’ increasing fragmented experiences that separate students’ learning. The conditions that improve student learning and retention are the setting for classrooms, laboratories, and residence halls. Learning communities include linked interdisciplinary courses, outside classroom activities connected with coursework, and frequent interaction with faculty. Shared learning is the norm, not the exception.

Pritchard and Wilson (2003) comment that honors students are more likely to meet with faculty than non-honors students, and are more inclined to discuss social issues, politics, and world events with their peers, as well as participate in academic activities outside the classroom. Honors Colleges appear to offer an environment for students to recognize the value of learning and feel safe to explore their academic interests (Shushok, 2006).

A Historical Viewpoint

A brief look at past traditions, theories, and paradigms in relation to student learning and development helps us to understand the progression of our educational
system. Over the years, society and students have shaped campuses across the nation. As these forces change over the years, graduating student outcomes become redefined.

The American educational system first came into being in colonial times to provide a liberal arts curriculum for a select group of men studying to become clergy, judges, and political leaders. After the Civil war, literary societies, debate clubs, and intercollegiate sports were developed because students pressed for more stimulation (Grace, 2002). The post-Civil war era saw the industrial age demanding more specialized educated leaders. As a result, publicly funded universities, agricultural and mechanical institutes, and community and teacher’s colleges were established to prepare students for research and specialized skills to serve the needs of a more complex society. Faculty responded to these changes by focusing on research and scholarship while personnel deans addressed student behavior concerns. Students demanded more extracurricular activities, a charge that placed more responsibility on the student affairs professionals who disciplined students, advised, counseled, and coordinated student organizations (Grace, 2002).

After World War II, the G.I. Bill funded tuition and housing for millions of Americans who served in the armed forces. Before the bill was passed, only 7% of enlisted soldiers planned to go to college. After the bill was put into effect, 29% of whites and 43% of blacks wanted to go to college ("How the GI Bill Widened the Racial Higher Education Gap," 2003). This new law created a substantial housing boom on America’s campuses. During this time, our nation’s defense department
requested universities/colleges to increase the number of engineers and scientists. Institutions could not expand their programs until they could provide satisfactory accommodations. Inadequate housing arouse from “permanently increased enrollment, deterioration of temporary housing, high building costs, and tuition already increased to the point of diminishing returns” (Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1952, p. 3). Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950 resulted from universities/colleges demanding financial assistance from the government to provide low interest rate loans to renovate and build housing units. Priority was given to institutions with the most defense related programs.

In the mid-twentieth century, the diverse student population enrollment reached record highs, which meant universities/colleges had to address the change of students’ cultural backgrounds, needs and interests. As a result, the divide between the faculty’s responsibilities and residence life grew farther apart. The American Council on Education was created to establish guidelines and expectations as new positions in student affairs were created to take care of the changing needs of these students (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). Student Affairs personnel applied student development theories to improve student learning and to increase student involvement on campus (Grace, 2002).

When the baby boomers entered college, housing kept up with the demand by constructing sizeable buildings to house numerous students. The rooms were small with built-in furniture because institutions had to complete the housing project as economically as possible. Institutions did not have the luxury to take into
consideration students’ developmental needs, a situation that negatively affected students’ housing decisions. To offset this disparity, programs were introduced to address students’ frustrations such as lack of personal space and roommate conflicts. These situations many times resulted from a discrepancy between students and their chosen living arrangements (Provost & Anchors, 1988).

During the 1960s and 1970s, laws continued to break down the obstacles for women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities to attend college. Court rulings granted more freedom for students to participate in university governance and faculty evaluations, decisions that deepened the student-institution relationship. This new focus on student development led to the project called Tomorrow’s Higher Education (THE). As a result, learning communities were built and programs put into practice to integrate students’ cognitive development with their academic work by offering topics such as human sexuality, alcohol awareness, and interpersonal relationships. (Schroeder & Mable, 1994).

A shift in the mid-1980s and early 1990s occurred when educational institutions struggled with higher costs of education and reduced state funding while students carried a heavier debt burden. Graduates faced a highly competitive worldwide economy. Universities and colleges dealt with enormous demands to improve undergraduate education to meet society’s changes. At that time universities also experimented with business strategies such as cost-effective purchasing, check approval, and employee evaluations to tie them closer to the public (Grace, 2002).
For the twenty-first century, educators speculate about the characteristics of the new student population; what will be taught, how it will be taught; and what society expects from the educational system. A plan to combine educational programs and resources with society’s needs and opportunities could possibly integrate student and institutional development – the possible approach for the future (Grace, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Environment. Research reveals a number of theoretical frameworks that may help to understand the effects of the living-learning environment and student development. Bronfenbrenner links peer culture with college student behaviors and outcomes by examining students’ interactions in their subcultures on the college campus. By examining these interactions, we can understand peer group effects on learning occurring inside and outside the classroom (as cited in Renn & Arnold, 2003).

Bronfenbrenner’s Model (1977) explains the “how” as well as “the what” of development by using attributes known as the “developmentally instigative characteristics.” The four types of characteristics include “those that act to invite or inhibit particular responses from the environment,” “selective responsivity” (how students react to and explore their surroundings), “structuring proclivities” (the differences in how students engage or persist in complex situations), and “directive beliefs” (students’ behaviors reflect their beliefs of the institution; i.e., diligent efforts result in high grades) (as cited in Renn & Arnold, 2003, p. 268). These characteristics
do not determine the course of development; rather they “put a ‘spin on a body.’ The
effect of that spin, depends on other forces and resources in the total ecological
system” (as cited in Renn & Arnold, 2003, p. 269). Students’ involvement in more
complex relationships and tasks in college is inherent to their development.

Another theoretical framework presents the “seven principles for good
practice in undergraduate education” designed by A. W. Chickering and Z. F.
Gamson (1987). Grace (2002) points out that the goal of the seven principles propose
to prepare students to deal with the real world. Chickering and Gamson’s (1987)
principles provide insights about how our educational system can help students
develop their leadership skills and abilities, which are demanded of our students’
from our competitive economy and society.

Principle #1: Encourage contact between students and faculty.

Principle #2: Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students.

Principle #3: Encourage active learning.

Principle #4: Give prompt feedback.

Principle #5: Emphasize time on task.

Principle #6: Communicate high expectations.

Principle #7: Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Seifert, Pascarella, Colangelo, and Assouline (2007) applied these principles
to a group of honors students and non-honors students. Their findings suggest honors
students have more exposure to these principles, which may explain their higher
cognitive/intellectual growth. Honors students also participate in more rigorous academic experiences in contrast to their non-honors peers.

Renn and Arnold (2003) examined how college students’ peer cultures interact in a variety of environmental contexts by applying this ecological model. They analyzed various sub-environments, levels of environments, and the students themselves to identify the processes by which these interactions produce change in individuals. This theory offers an understanding of how peer culture influences college student development and may link peer culture with college student behavior and outcomes. Chickering and Reisser (1993) contend that student development is promoted when students make friends and “participate in communities that become meaningful subcultures, and when diversity of backgrounds and attitudes as well as significant interchanges and shared interests exist” (p. 275).

Student Involvement. Astin’s (1984) defines his theory of student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 297). This hypothesis places importance on students’ behaviors, and not on the thoughts behind the behavior. His theory puts forth five assumptions about involvement, which are:

1. Involvement refers to an “investment of physical and psychological energy.”

2. The level of involvement changes “along a continuum.”

3. There are quantitative and qualitative elements of involvement.
4. The quality and quantity of student involvement is directly related to the level of student development and learning.

5. There is a positive correlation between the effectiveness of educational policy and increasing student involvement.

Astin (1984) suggests exploring what lies between the institutional policies (the input) and students’ grade point averages (the output) to understand the relationship. The author identifies several educational theories that he labels “subject-matter” (emphasizes passive learning and course content), “resource” (physical facilities, support personnel, large numbers of high-achieving students, and prestigious professors) and “individualized” (identifying the curriculum and the most effective teaching style that meet the students’ needs).

Astin links the variables in the three pedagogies to student developmental outcomes with his theory of student involvement. For the first variable of “content” the student development theory implies that learning may not happen when students merely attend specific courses, but when their interests are peaked and they are dedicated to apply themselves. The focus of teaching becomes student centered and puts into effect the how of student development (Astin, 1984).

The “resource” variable represents monetary growth for college administrators; whereas student’s time is the most valuable resource for Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement. Institutional policies that govern academic and nonacademic activities significantly effect how students spend their time and energy for their college education as well as make time for families, friends, and a job.
Universities must consider the importance of nonacademic issues (e.g. the location of residence halls, the design of recreational facilities, on-campus employment opportunities, dining facilities, parking, etc.) as well as academic policies (e.g. academic advising and probation, participating in honors courses, class attendance, etc.) because it directly affects the "most precious institutional resource" of student time. When students have more time and energy to focus on their educational goals, they are more likely to increase their level of involvement on campus. The most significant environmental factor that positively affects student involvement and retention is students' on-campus residency (Astin, 1984).

Tinto's theoretical framework for student involvement complements Chickering and Gamson's principles and Bronfenbrenner's model. He states that the more students are academically and socially involved and the more they interact with other students and faculty, the more likely they are to persist. Tinto's approach is to "bridge the gap that divides theory, research, and practice to better promote the education of our students" (Tinto, 1998, p. 167, ¶ 3). The more students are academically and socially integrated, the more the quality of their learning increases. Collaborative experiences teach students that regardless of their race, class, or gender, their academic interests remain the same (Tinto, 1998).

*Student Development.* Chickering's seven vectors from his student development theory focus on students' emotional, interpersonal, and ethical development as well as their intellectual development. This model is based on the
assumption that a nurturing and challenging college environment promotes student development. The seven vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) include the following:

1. Developing competence
2. Managing emotions
3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships
5. Establishing identity
6. Developing purpose
7. Developing integrity

Erickson's theory describes “identity formation” as a “growing awareness of competencies, emotions and values, confidence in standing alone and bonding with others, and moving beyond intolerance toward openness and self-esteem” (as cited in Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 173). An early stage of identity formation consists of identity versus role confusion, which includes people identifying their personal beliefs and values, as well as making decisions about their career.

Erickson describes intolerance as a defense against people’s lack of being comfortable with themselves. The break away from home causes stress for some students when they begin to hear conflicting information that does not coincide with their family's beliefs or values. Students begin to interact with students who have different cultures, religious backgrounds, and sexual orientations. Each situation presents an opportunity for students to define themselves in these situations and in the way they relate to others with different perspectives. The dissonance and anxiety in
these situations can push students to resolve their inner conflict if they have enough support in their environment (as cited in Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) confirm the importance of the interaction of faculty and peers with students for ego development (as cited in Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Extroversion. Astin, Tinto, and Chickering’s theories help us to understand students’ needs, behaviors, and development and consequently help institutions apply useful student policies and activities. Institutions must understand the psychological types and patterns of student involvement to provide a balance of academic and social activities that reduce stress and provide a means for emotional health. Provost and Anchors (1988) describe extroversion as “focus on variety and doing; discharge of energy through physical activity and action; and opportunities for multiple interactions with others” (p. 99). Introversion, on the other hand, is described as “opportunity or small group, one-on-one, and individual activities; space for private leisure (e.g., contemplation); and opportunities for renewal through solitude, nature, passive activities (e.g., a lecture) (Provost & Anchors, 1988, p. 99). Students’ attitudes directly affect the intensity of their activities and time-management (Provost & Anchors, 1988).

Provost and Anchors (1988) note that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has proven to be a useful tool in planning residential environments by placing students with roommates and floormates who have complementing personality traits to increase student satisfaction and personality development. These
traits are indicators for the balance of support and challenge that is needed to stimulate thought and behavior beyond students' norms. These kinds of positive interactions reinforce student involvement on campus. Astin (1984) notes that the more strongly the students identify with the institution, the more involved they become—a situation that leads to increased retention. The more they are involved with faculty, the more satisfied they become with their college experience (Astin, 1984).

**Living-Learning Communities**

Many types and definitions for learning communities must come under consideration. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) have formulated a useful definition that describes a true community as one that "involves inclusiveness, commitment, consensus that allows differences to be acknowledged and processed, contemplation, vulnerability, and 'graceful fighting,' where conflict is not avoided, minimized, or disregarded" (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 5). The definition adds "purposefulness, shared values, caring for one another and appreciation for cooperation" to the other qualities of this ideal community (p. 5). Wolfson (1995) indicates that this definition implies trust and will change as education and society changes (as cited in Lenning & Ebbers, 1999).

The concept for learning environments to educate students holistically has evolved over the years. Colonial colleges expected students to be isolated from society as college officials acted *in loco parentis*. They assumed responsibility for
educating the whole student—body, mind, and spirit. This teaching approach changed in the late nineteenth century when American institutions adopted the European model, which rewarded faculty for research, rather than teaching. The Student Affairs division became responsible for students’ behaviors—the first move towards a code of conduct to establish standards for behavior (Carnegie Foundation, 1990).

In the 1920s, the academic scholars John Dewey and Alexander Meiklejohn, appealed to educators to become experimental and intentional in their teaching. Dewey supported student-centered learning, an approach that reflects the learning communities in the twenty-first century (Price, 2005). A. Meiklejohn argued that the educational system was fragmented and did not offer a general education for all sectors of society, a lamentable condition that resulted from competition for status among disciplines and professors. This conclusion led Meiklejohn to experiment with learning communities and teach students how to think, not what to think. His Experimental College was designed as a “living-learning residential community in which the community would support students, rather than distract them from intellectual work” (Price, 2005, p. 5).

Today’s campus communities are not separate from society, but campuses are separated socially and administratively. Students and faculty need to come together to establish academic and civic standards, which are needed to define a college or university community. This coming together may help to erase racial and ethnic divides among our student body. Society needs students who pursue their academic as well as personal growth, so they may be prepared for their social and civic obligations

Baxter Magolda (2001) notes that as students develop their framework for knowing, they develop their own beliefs, which are transferred into their professional practices. Erickson (1968) claims this transformation occurs with the interaction of students’ physical and cognitive worlds when they meet challenges in their environment (as cited in Baxter Magolda, 2001). “Literature on teaching and learning indicates that both faculty and students want more collaborative and experiential learning; learning communities appear to meet this demand” (Price, 2005, p. 17).

Smith, et al. (2006) looked at the trends and sustainability of living-learning communities; they found they are flourishing because they are affordable, address faculty needs for more collaborative and collegial work environments, and promote student success and engagement. Andrade (2007) suggests learning communities succeed because they share common goals and they are shaped according to each institution’s needs.

Boyer developed six principles as guidelines for faculty, administrators, and student personnel to create community. The first principle requires a *purposeful* community with teaching and learning as the central functions, and undivided academic and nonacademic programs. Second, an *open* community offers trust for students to speak and listen with respect for each others’ differences, and thus presents opportunities for students to realize prejudices and act with compassion. Third, a *just* community embraces diversity, and looks for ways to serve everyone in
society. Fourth, a disciplined community follows a code of conduct standards that define behavior in social and academic situations. Fifth, a caring community provides a sense of belonging, and helps students to integrate their required knowledge into their lives. The sixth principle, a celebrative community, preserves traditions for continuity from year to year (as cited in Carnegie Foundation, 1990).

The National Study of Living-Learning Programs provides evidence that students who participate in living-learning communities are more likely to converse with peers about academic and social issues; have a mentoring relationship with a faculty member; experience a smoother transition into their new environment; utilize critical thinking skills; be more involved in community; drink less; and perceive their residence hall as academically and socially supportive (National Study of Living Learning Programs, 2007). Students participating in an honors learning community enjoy benefits as well as take on obligations, dual acts that expand to the larger academic campus and contribute significantly to the students' personal, moral, and intellectual excellence in their environment. “To be a member of a community is also to perform actions and develop or possess traits of character consistent with those actions. In a community of honors students, membership requires that one be or become a person worthy of honor” (Stanlick, 2006, p. 75).

Characteristics of an Honors College

Huggett (2003) points out the economic conditions of the United States now force educational institutions to accomplish more with less. Stakeholders (students,
faculty, and administrators) in honors programs, without fail must know the benefits this particular type of education brings to colleges/universities in order to make informed decisions about allocating resources. Conversely, Honors Programs/Colleges also ought to identify what they need to foster the specific student characteristics and skills that society expects from college graduates: "communication ability (oral and written), ability to organize, ability to engage in research, initiative/willingness to engage in extra work, and interest in a given area" (Cunha, 2003, p. 38).

"The pedagogical intent of honors programs and honors colleges is to provide intellectually motivated students with increased opportunities to challenge themselves and each other" (Pehlke, 2003, Fall/Winter, p. 28). With the number of honors colleges doubling across the nation since 1994, competition for these students has soared. The admission process is streamlined for students with intellectual status, not necessarily with intellectual curiosity. Baird (1985) suggests there is a low positive relationship between academic aptitude and professional success (as cited in Rinn & Plucker, 2004).

Honors students need to take advantage of newly developed career opportunities by working with their advisors to integrate their interests and goals in their academic endeavors. Because honors programs vary among colleges/universities, employers may not understand the value of an honors education; therefore, honors students need to demonstrate how their achievements
resulted from their honors education, rather than simply list them on their resumes (Cunha, T., 2003).

Huggett (2003) developed an “environmental theory of high-quality honors programs” to improve undergraduate teaching and learning. When Huggett added quality to her model of an honors program, she “placed students’ learning, growth and development – rather than students’ satisfaction – at the center” of his paradigm (p. 82). The theory is “anchored in the idea that “ideal” honors programs are microenvironments for teaching and learning in which program participants interact with each other and take specific actions that affect this environment” (Huggett, 2003, p. 62). Huggett identifies twelve attributes for an “ideal” high-quality honors program.

1. Customized learning experiences
2. Purposeful mentoring
3. Learner-centered advising
4. Open and inviting community of teachers and learners
5. Opportunities to create new knowledge
6. Shared responsibility for teaching and learning
7. Procurement and measured distribution of fiscal resources
8. Investment in Human Resources
9. Development of physical resources
10. Advancing program visibility and stature
11. Fostering a shared commitment to the program
12. Continuous assessment and improvement

Huggett’s environmental theory confirms that high quality honors programs run across a wide range of dimensions and levels that differ greatly from the traditional outcome approach. Honors program administrators can align their program’s definition of quality with the twelve attributes of this theory (Huggett, 2003, Fall/Winter). In 1994, The National Collegiate Honors Council Executive Committee formulated the “sixteen basic characteristics of fully developed honors programs/colleges” as a guideline. Huggett’s theory may encourage administrators to re-examine these characteristics and convince them to assess their existing programs in new, more diverse ways (Huggett, 2003, Fall/Winter).

Characteristics of Honors Students

“To be an “honors student” is more than to attain a high level of academic achievement. An honors student is a moral exemplar in the academic community” (Stanlick, 2006, p. 90). Honors students have quantitative and qualitative characteristics that need to be considered in order to predict their success in an honors curriculum. Their high school grade point averages and standardized test scores indicate the quantitative level of intellectual ability. Qualitative characteristics include curiosity in learning, proficient communication skills, understanding the difference between privileges and responsibilities, serious commitment to studies, and participation in extracurricular activities (Freyman, 2005).
Rinn and Plucker (2004) observe that universities compete for the best and the brightest students, and yet research on these talented students remains limited. Identifying these students becomes complicated because honors programs/colleges require different aptitude scores. Students usually need to initiate their application to such programs; consequently a large number of “gifted” students enter the traditional academic programs.

Non-cognitive and personality characteristics need to be included in the admissions process because these qualities appear to be more important than others in order to predict gifted students’ success in college (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). “Aptitude for honors depends at least as much on attitude as on accomplishment and furthermore that the presence of the latter without any indication of the former is not a good sign” (Freyman, 2005, p. 24). Universities admit students much more easily into their honors programs/colleges when they base their criteria solely on academic abilities; however, in order to recognize the qualities that characterize an honors student, personal communication is critical with applicants (Freyman, 2005).

Castro-Johnson and Wang (2003) measured emotional intelligence between honors and non-honors students. Their findings reveal that honors students are better able to re-direct negative feelings into their school work and thus improve academic performance. They do not promote emotional intelligence as the predictor for academic performance. They encourage professors to consider honors students’ emotional intelligence as well as their high intellectual abilities to help them succeed. Academically gifted students experience homesickness, an increasing sense of
independence and responsibility, and adjustment issues in the transition to college just as any other college student does. Gifted students have the potential for these issues to be intensified because the strategies and support systems that helped them succeed in high school are no longer in place (Rinn & Plucker, 2004).

Adjustment difficulties become more intense and extreme when perfectionism stands in the way of dealing with life challenges (Rice, Brooke, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006). Flett and Hewitt (2006) point out that “normal” and/or “adaptive” perfectionism greatly resemble conscientiousness and achievement. The term perfectionist refers to “individuals who hold rigidly to their standards, even in situations that do not call for perfection, and who continue to place an irrational importance on the attainment of impossibly high standards in not just one but in several life domains (Flett & Hewitt, 2006, p. 476). However, students that have a high positive correlation between their expectations and performance enjoy more social connections (Rice, et al., 2006). Parker and Adkins (1995) state that only limited research about whether perfectionism acts as healthy motivation for honors students exists, even at this late date (as cited in Rinn & Plucker, 2004). A challenging academic environment, different levels of competition, independence, and solitude may help develop honors students’ characteristics and strengthen their learning (Rinn & Plucker, 2004).

Lee and Robbins (1998) affirm that students deal with their emotions and meet their needs in healthier ways when they are more socially connected. Social connectedness is described as “a pattern of active, trustful interpersonal behaviors,
whereas social disconnectedness might be characterized by a pattern of more passive or mistrustful interpersonal behaviors” (Lee & Robbins, 1998, p. 338). Rice, Brooke, Leever, Christopher, and Porter (2006) point out that when honors students are socially connected, they learn they are not alone in their struggles and they develop supportive relationships. They recommend stress management, social programming, and relationship building as possible solutions to help honors students find the emotional support they need.

Achterberg (2005) states that “honors students from similar institutions (with similar selection criteria) are more likely to be similar to one another than are honors students from very different institutions (or even similar institutions with different selection criteria for honors)” (p. 79). Achterberg (2005) comments that honors students get unfairly labeled in a particular way because research remains too limited to represent them accurately. Nevertheless, five assumptions from existing literature attempt to provide a portrait of honors students.

1. They do not share identical traits (partly because of institutions’ different criteria).
2. Honors and non-honors students have much in common.
3. Honors students excel over other students academically at any institution.
4. Today’s honors students most likely resemble yesteryear’s students because honors programming has experienced minor changes in the past forty years.
5. Research needs to continue to identify how honors students develop academically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

Summary

As higher education builds a relationship with the world by sharing common values about learning, civic engagement, and professional development, students will transfer their knowledge into the world to continue to initiate change (Gabelnick, 2000). As Senge wrote “Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human” (as cited in Gabelnick, 2000, p. 51).

Gabelnick (2000) states that living-learning communities are recognized as the conduit for change on campuses. “Relationship becomes the basis for learning, and we understand that unless we establish strong relationships, our learning will be compromised” (p. 46). In learning communities, faculty and students report more meaningful relationships, connected learning, higher expectations, and innovative assignments.

Students enrolled in Honors Programs/Colleges find the main advantages lie in the challenging and unique class experiences, small class size, and the general academic environment. These gifted students have higher grade-point averages compared to non-honors students after their freshmen year. Honors Colleges seemingly influence the intellectual and social development of these students (Rinn & Plucker, 2004).
Grand Valley State University’s Office of Institutional Analysis reported markedly different rates when comparing honors students who lived in the Niemeyer living-learning community with honors students living off-campus. The honors freshmen class of Fall 2000 were tracked for their retention and graduations rates. Batty (2008) reported that at the end of the Fall 2006 semester, the university’s retention rate for honors students was 87% and a graduation rate of 84%. Students living off campus had a 66.7% retention rate and a graduation rate of 57.1%. Batty’s (2008) report correlates with the findings in my study about the influences of a living-learning environment for honors students.
Chapter Three: Thesis Report

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine how the living-learning community influences the honors students' perception of self, others, and the institution. A quantitative analysis will be applied to test the link between the living-learning community and the activities outside the classroom. Extroversion will be ruled out as a variable affecting students' social connectedness in a living-learning community.

The multivariate correlational statistical analysis of multiple regression will be used to determine if there is a different level of social connectedness with honors students who participate in a living-learning community and those who do not. The $r$ value will show the correlation of the linear combination of extroversion and students' living arrangements and correlate students' connectedness on campus. The Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference test will be applied to compare the relationships with all variables.

Subjects. The subjects were the freshmen honors students who entered Grand Valley State University Honors College during the Fall semester 2007. The honors students lived in the Niemeyer Living Center (a living-learning community) as well as other on-campus living centers, and off-campus. They enrolled in the honors arts and humanities sequences during their first year of college. The total number of students participating was 237 (93% of the freshmen class) which included 155
females and 82 males. The ethnicity of the students was twelve Asian, one African-American, four Hispanic, four not identifying ethnicity, and 216 White.

The sample was limited to freshmen because they were more inclined to live on-campus or in the honors living-learning community during their freshmen year. This controlled for students' age and students' level of college experience. There was no need to control for other student characteristics.

Design of Study

Procedure. The author of this thesis document was granted approval from the Human Research Review Committee to distribute the Scale for Extroversion, Campus Connectedness Scale, and Survey for Outside of Classroom Activities. Since the honors students were registered for an arts and humanities sequence during their freshman year, the researcher requested permission to distribute the surveys in these classes. During the Fall 2007 semester, the researcher e-mailed the professors of the honors arts and humanities courses with an explanation of the study, and requested their permission to distribute three surveys to the students in their classrooms. Every professor agreed to provide the class time for the students to complete the surveys. The professors were e-mailed the first week of January, 2008 to schedule a date and time for the researcher to come to their class (Appendix D). Students were e-mailed two weeks prior to the researcher’s classroom visit with a brief explanation of the study (Appendix E). Students were told it was not mandatory to participate, and there
were no repercussions if they declined. Underage students were instructed not to participate.

The researcher left the room when the surveys were distributed to the students in the classrooms. The professors collected the completed surveys and forms and placed them in separate envelopes that were sealed and delivered to the honors office.

**Instrumentation**

*Social Connectedness.* The present study applied the Campus Connectedness Scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995) because it has established reliability and validity (Appendix F). This scale was used by Lee and Robbins (1998) in their study to research the relationship among social connectedness, anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity. The researcher received approval to use the Campus Connectedness Scale from the author Dr. Richard Lee (Appendix G). The Campus Connectedness Scale was used to determine if there was a different level of social connectedness with students who participate in a living-learning community and those who did not. The reliability of this scale in the present sample was alpha = .93 for the full-scale score.

*Extroversion.* Participants completed the Scale for Extroversion from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, et al., 2006). It was not necessary for the researcher to acquire permission to use the scale since it was available on a public domain website (Appendix H). This scale was used to rule out extroversion as a
variable affecting students’ social connectedness in a living-learning community. The reliability for this scale in the present sample was alpha = .87.

Outside Classroom Activities. During the Fall 2007 semester, honors students were surveyed for their perceived most important activities in the Niemeyer living-learning community. The activities correlated honors students’ level of involvement with honors students who participated in a living-learning environment and those who did not. The eight activities were: “meet with professors”, “use tutoring/MS3/writing center”, “participate in extracurricular activities/organizations”, “discuss homework with classmates”, “participate in study groups”, “use the library (electronically as well)”, “stress reliever (sports, working out)”, and “hours spent studying (per week)” (Appendix I).

The Outside Classroom Activities scale was analyzed in several ways. The total score had a lower than desired internal consistency reliability, which was alpha = .60. In addition to determine potentially useful subscales, a principal component factor analysis with orthogonal rotation was conducted that revealed three factors. The factor “meeting activities” included items “meet with professors”, “discuss homework with classmates”, and “participate in study groups” with an internal reliability of alpha = .54. Factor “extracurricular activities” included items “participate in extracurricular activities/organizations” and “stress reliever (sports, working out)” with an internal reliability of alpha = .45. Factor “facilities activities” included items “use tutoring/MS3/writing center” and “use the library (electronically as well)” with an internal reliability of alpha = .27.
Data Analysis

The analysis of results are reported in the form of the one way ANOVA that tested the differences between the mean scores of the dependent variable (outside classroom activities), variable one (honors students' residency), variable two (campus connectedness), and variable three (control for extroversion). The Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference tests were used to determine which of the three groups for residency (living in Niemeyer Living Center, living elsewhere on-campus, and living off-campus) differed with the honors students’ level of connectedness.

The one way ANOVA indicated significant differences among the residence groups on connectedness (F(2, 234) = 8.58; p < .05), activities (F(2, 234, ) = 3.37; p < .05), activities subscale “extracurricular” (F(2, 234,) = 5.84; p < .05), and the activities subscale “meeting” (F(2, 234) = 2.65; p < .05). There was no significant differences among the residence groups on the activities subscale “facilities” (F(2, 234) = .76; p > .05). The one way ANOVA indicated no significant difference with the number of study hours and the students’ residency (F(2, 226) = 1.09, p > .05.

The Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference tests were conducted when the one way ANOVA was significant. In Table 1 (Appendix K), the three groups of residency are displayed with the means and standard deviations of the variables. Honors students living in Niemeyer reported higher connectedness than honors students living off-campus (mean difference = .81, standard error = .20, p = .000), a higher level of activities (mean difference = .34, standard error = .14, p = .037), and higher extracurricular activities (mean difference = .76, standard error = .24, p =
Honors students living elsewhere on-campus reported higher connectedness than honors students living off-campus (mean difference = .74, standard error = .22, p = .005). Honors students living in Niemeyer did not differ from honors students living elsewhere on-campus in connectedness (mean difference = .07, standard error = .13, p = .85), extracurricular activities (mean difference = .28, standard error = .16, p = .19), or activities (mean difference = .11, standard error = .09, p = .46). Honors students living elsewhere on-campus did not differ from honors students living off-campus in the activities (mean difference = .23, standard error = .15, p = .28) or in extracurricular activities (mean difference = .48, standard error = .26, p = .16).

Supplementary analyses that examined the extent to which the study variables are interconnected are displayed in Table 2 (Appendix L). Honors students who reported higher extroversion also reported higher levels of connectedness, activities, and extra-curricular activities. Honors students who reported higher connectedness also reported higher levels of activities in general, in addition to the subscales meeting activities and extracurricular activities.

Conclusions

The main findings of this research indicate that honors students participating in a living-learning community reported significantly higher levels of connectedness and participation in activities outside the classroom as compared to honors students living off-campus. The present findings are strongly correlated with Batty’s (2008) report which revealed a significantly higher retention rate for honors students who
participated in the Niemeyer living-learning community. This adds to the body of evidence suggesting that environmental factors influence students’ social interactions and involvement in their communities and campus (Astin, 1984; Boyer, 1990; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Gabelnick, 2000; Erickson, 1968; Tinto, 1998). The findings of this study validate earlier studies conducted by Astin (1973) and Chickering (1974) that identified the most important environmental factor for students’ higher retention rates, involvement, and identity with their campus, was on-campus residency.

Future research may assess the same students in a longitudinal study that includes gender differences on a yearly basis until the students graduate to validate the present study’s findings. A question to ask is whether there is an intrinsic variable with honors students which affected the results. Does the connectivity that honors students experience with faculty in the Niemeyer Living Center, with the enrollment of most freshmen in the honors arts and humanities sequences, influence this study’s results? A future study may compare honors students participating in the Niemeyer Living Center to non-honors students living on-campus.

In summary, this research found a significantly higher level of honors students’ connectedness in their community and campus when they lived on-campus. There was no significant difference between honors students who participated in the living-learning community and honors students who lived elsewhere on campus. Extroversion was positively correlated to students’ level of connectedness, activities, and extra-curricular activities. Thus, living-learning communities and other on-
campus living centers provide the environment for students to develop an identity with their community and institution that fosters their likelihood to be academically successful.

_Plans for Dissemination_

A copy of this thesis document will be given to Dr. Andrew Beachnau, my thesis advisor; Dr. Jay Cooper, the professor for ED 695; Dr. Jeff Chamberlain, the Director of the Honors College; the Grand Valley State University's library; and an article will be prepared for publication.
References


Castro-Johnson, M., & Wang, A. Y. (2003, Fall/Winter). Emotional intelligence and


student experience. Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Association (ACPA).


Lenning, O. T., & Ebbers, L. H. (1999). The powerful potential of learning


45


Smith, B. L., Eby, K., Jeffers, R., Kjellman, J., Koestler, G., Olson, T., Smilkstein,


From: Andy Beachnau
To: Decker, Janaan
CC: Cooper, Jay
Date: 11/27/2007 8:34 AM
Subject: HRRC statement

Janaan,

Please include the following text under section 9.

I have reviewed the research proposal for Janaan Decker for validity and merit. I believe the proposal is appropriate for the methodology outlined. I support this research proposal for winter semester 2008.

Andy Beachnau, Ph.D.
Director of Housing and Health Services
Grand Valley State University
(616) 331-2120
(616) 331-3790 Fax
Beachnaa@gvsu.edu
Appendix B
December 13, 2007

Proposal No.: 08-73-H  
Expedited  
Approval Date: December 13, 2007 
Expiration Date: December 12, 2007  
Title: ED 695: Research Applications 

Dear Ms. Decker,

Grand Valley State University, Human Research Review Committee (HRRC), has completed its review of the revisions and clarifications submitted for this proposal. The HRRC serves as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Grand Valley State University. The rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and the methods used to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Your project has been APPROVED as EXPEDITED. Please include your proposal number in all future correspondence. The first principal investigator will be sent all correspondence from the University unless otherwise requested.

**Revisions:** The HRRC must review and approve any change in protocol procedures involving human subjects, prior to the initiation of the change. To revise an approved protocol including a protocol that was initially exempt from the federal regulations, send a written request along with both the original and revised protocols including the protocol consent form, to the Chair of HRRC. When requesting approval of revisions both the project’s HRRC number and title must be referenced.

**Problems/Changes:** The HRRC must be informed promptly if any of the following arises during the course of your project. 1) Problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving the subjects. 2) Changes in the research environment or new information that indicates greater risk to the subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved. 3) Changes in personnel listed on the initial protocol, e.g. principal investigator, co-investigator(s) or secondary personnel

**Renewals:** The HRRC approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. For this project to continue beyond the expiration date above a Continuing Review form must be submitted at least ten (10) business days prior to the protocol expiration date listed above. You can find this document at http://www.gvsu.edu/forms/research_dev/FORMS. A maximum of 4 renewals are
possible. If you need to continue a proposal beyond that time, you are required to submit a new application for a complete review.

**Closed:** When the project is closed to further enrollment and all data analysis has been completed, a close protocol form must be submitted to the HRRC. You can find this document at [http://www.gvsu.edu/forms/research_dev/FORMS](http://www.gvsu.edu/forms/research_dev/FORMS).

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at 616-331-3417 or via e-mail: reitemep@gvsu.edu. You can also contact the Graduate Assistant in Faculty Research and Development Office at 616-331-3197.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Reitemeier, Ph.D.
Human Research Review Committee Chair
301C DeVos Center
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Informed Consent

Study Title: Social Connectedness in a living/learning community

Principal Investigator: Janaan Decker, Honors College Assistant, Grand Valley State University

Introduction: I am being asked to participate in a study designed to investigate the correlation of a living/learning community and honors students.

Procedure: I am selected to participate in this study because I am a freshman in the Honors College. I will be asked to complete the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised, and the Outside of Classroom Activities survey, and an extroversion questionnaire. These surveys should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. I will complete the surveys in a GVSU classroom.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Benefits: There are no known benefits associated with participation in this study.

Cost of Participation: There are no costs to me associated with participation in this study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this study. In the unlikely event of an injury resulting from the study, no reimbursement, compensation, or free medical care is offered by Grand Valley State University.

Voluntary Participation: My decision to participate in the study is purely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time. Should I decide to withdraw from the study, there will be no negative consequences.

Confidentiality: I will not be identified by name in any information obtained from this study. No information regarding my identity is requested for my participation. The investigator (Janaan Decker) will bring the consent forms and uncompleted surveys to the classroom, and give them to the professor of the class and then leave. Completed consent forms will be placed in an envelope labeled consent forms, which will be sealed and will remain unopened in a locked file. Completed surveys will be placed in an envelope marked completed surveys and will be given to a student assistant in the Honors College office. After the data is collected from the surveys, they will be kept in a locked file for three years. These files will then be destroyed. The data will be used in my Masters thesis, which may be on record through the Grand Valley library.

Questions: If I have any questions regarding this study, I am encouraged to contact Janaan Decker, Grand Valley State University, 181 Niemeyer Living Center, Allendale, MI 49401 (phone 616-331-3219). If I have any questions about the rights of research participants that have not been answered by the investigator, I may contact the Grand Valley State University Human Subjects Review Committee Chair at 616-331-2472.

Consent to participate in this research study: I have read all the above information about this research study, including the research procedure, possible risks, side effects, and the likelihood of benefits to me. All my questions have been answered. I know that participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to decide not to participate in this study, or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting my relationship with the investigator or Grand Valley
State University. This decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I hereby consent and voluntarily offer to follow the study requirements and take part in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form, upon request.

Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Print your name here ___________________________
Investigator

Janaan Decker, Principle
E-mail sent to the Honors faculty during the first week of January, 2008

To: The Honors faculty in the Arts and Humanities Sequences:

Subject: A date to bring my surveys to your class

This e-mail is a follow-up to my request to come to your arts and humanities course during the week of January 14th or January 21st. I am using the completed surveys for my master’s thesis research to examine how the living-learning community affects honors students’ perceptions of self, others, and the institution.

Could you please let me know which week and day would work best for me to come to your classroom with the three attached surveys. I have e-mailed the students and told them that it is voluntary, and that there are no repercussions for not participating. Students have been told that if they are under the age of 18 they cannot participate.

I will give the instructions to the students and answer any questions, and then leave the classroom.

There will be an envelope left for the completed surveys. I will ask you to arrange for a student to seal the envelope and bring it to the Honors Office in 181 NMR and give it to the office assistant.

I appreciate your help.
Janaan Decker
331-3219
Appendix E
E-mail sent to the Honors Students (e-mailed the week of January 7th):

To: Honors students in the arts and humanities sections

Subject: Participating in a study

Hello everyone,

I am the office coordinator for the Honors College. Last semester, I had asked for your feedback for activities that are important to you in the living-learning environment. I am using that information in my master's thesis research to look at how the living-learning community affects honors students' perceptions of self, others, and the institution. I am asking for your participation once again by volunteering to complete three surveys during your arts and humanities course.

I have made arrangements with those professors for me to come to one of your classes during the weeks of January 14th or January 21st. I will hand out the surveys with the instructions, and then I will leave the classroom. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete the surveys. An envelope will be left in the classroom for the completed surveys. I will ask a student to seal the envelope and bring it to the Honors Office at 181 NMR and give it to the office assistant.

There are no repercussions if you do not participate. If you are under the age of 18, you will not be able to participate because you are a minor. All responses are confidential and anonymous.

Thank you for your help with this project.
Janaan Decker
331-3219
Appendix F
PLEASE INDICATE WHERE YOU LIVE:

NMR_________ On-Campus_________ Off-Campus_________

CAMPUS CONNECTEDNESS SCALE

Directions: The following statements reflect various ways in which you may describe your experience on this entire college campus. Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 6 = Strongly Agree). There is no right or wrong answer. Do not spend too much time with any one statement and do not leave any unanswered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. There are people on campus with whom I feel a close bond........... 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I don't feel that I really belong around the people that I know on campus................................................................. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I feel that I can share personal concerns with other students........ 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I am able to make connections with a diverse group of people....... 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I feel so distant from the other students.................................. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I have no sense of togetherness with my peers.......................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I can relate to my fellow classmates........................................ 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I catch myself losing all sense of connectedness with college life... 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I feel that I fit right in on campus.......................................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. There is no sense of brother/sisterhood with my college friends..... 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I don't feel related to anyone on campus................................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. Other students make me feel at home on campus.......................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. I feel disconnected from campus life....................................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group.................... 1 2 3 4 5 6
Appendix G
Thanks for your interest in my instruments. I have attached a copy of the two scales, scoring procedures, relevant references, and terms of agreement for usage. Please read over the terms and let me know if they are acceptable to you. Best, Rich

TERMS OF CONDITION FOR USE OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS SCALE

Thanks again for your interest in the Social Connectedness Scale (original, revised, and campus versions). You have my permission to use the scales. There is no cost to use the scales. However, I ask that the following terms be abided: (a) use only for stated research purposes; (b) do not distribute to others outside of your research team without permission; (c) do not make financial profit from its use; (d) notify me of any publications related to its use; and (e) provide me with access to only the social connectedness data, along with basic demographic information, for possible secondary data analysis. Please let me know if these terms are acceptable via e-mail at richlee@umn.edu.

Richard M. Lee, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
University of Minnesota
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Appendix H
Scale for Extroversion

The following are phrases describing people's behaviors. Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes you.

Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly your same age.

So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence. Please read each statement carefully, and then check the appropriate box that corresponds to the number on the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am the life of the party</td>
<td>Very Inaccurate</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Neither Inaccurate nor</td>
<td>Moderately Accurate</td>
<td>Very Accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inaccurate</td>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable around people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start conversations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to a lot of different people at parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't mind being the center of attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't talk a lot.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep in the background.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have little to say.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't like to draw attention to myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am quiet around strangers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLEASE INDICATE WHERE YOU LIVE:**

NMR_______       On-Campus_______       Off-Campus_______
Appendix I
Survey for Outside of Classroom Activities

Please mark the frequency of the following activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2 – 3x a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>2 – 3x per month</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet with professors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use tutoring/MS3/Writing Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in extracurricular activities/organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss homework with classmates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in study groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the library (electronically as well)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress reliever (sports, working out)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hours spent studying (per week) ______________

Where do you live?  NMR_____  On-campus_____  Off-Campus_____
Appendix J
International Personality Item Pool:  
A Scientific Collaboratory* for the Development of 
Advanced Measures of Personality and Other 
Individual Differences

~ Mission Statement ~

This IPIP Website is intended to provide rapid access to measures of individual differences, all in the public domain, to be developed conjointly among scientists worldwide. Later, the site may include raw data available for reanalysis; in addition, it should serve as a forum for the dissemination of psychometric ideas and research findings.

*What is a collaboratory?  
"A collaboratory is a computer-supported system that allows scientists to work with each other, facilities, and data bases without regard to geographical location."  
(Finholt, T. A., & Olson, G. M. From laboratories to collaboratories: A new organizational form for scientific collaboration. Psychological Science, January 1997; vol. 8, no. 1; pp. 28-36.)

Contact the webmaster with comments about this website.  
This page last modified on 4/8/08.

Asking Permission

Please don't!

One neat thing about the world of public domain is that NOTHING is a problem. You are free to use the IPIP items and/or scales in any way you want. You don't have to ask permission.

Cool, huh?

Return Home
Appendix K
Table 1. Living Arrangements with Means and Standard Deviations for Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Niemeyer</th>
<th>On-Campus Other</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Classroom Activities</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities activities a</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting activities a</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities a</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extroversion</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>160</td>
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</table>

a A subscale of the Outside Classroom Activities scale.
Table 2. Intercorrelation of variables (N = 237)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extroversion</th>
<th>Connectedness</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Extracurricular</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extroversion</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.342**</td>
<td>.201**</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.117</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.002</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>.323**</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.273**</td>
<td>.336**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.615**</td>
<td>.764**</td>
<td>.733**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.238**</td>
<td>.214**</td>
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<tr>
<td>facilities</td>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>activities</td>
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<td>.298**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting</td>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extracurricular</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
NAME: Janaan Decker

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

- [X] Adult/High Ed
- [ ] CASL
- [ ] Early Child
- [ ] Ed Tech
- [ ] Ed Leadership
- [ ] Elem Ed
- [ ] G/T Ed
- [ ] Mid & H.S.
- [ ] Reading/Lang Arts
- [ ] School Counseling
- [ ] Sec Ed Admin
- [ ] SpEd ECDD
- [ ] SpEd EI
- [ ] SpEdLD
- [ ] TESOL

TITLE: How Does the Living-Learning Environment Affect Honors Students' Perception of Self, Others, and the Institution?

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

- [X] Thesis
- [ ] Project

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Winter 2008

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Using key words, choose as many descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your paper.

1. Honors classes
2. Living learning centers
3. Student housing
4. Social development
5. Student development
6. Character
7. Honor codes
8. Campuses
9.
10.

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.

This study examines the relationship between the living-learning community (Niemeyer Living Center) and honors students at Grand Valley State University. The findings indicate honors students who participate in the Niemeyer Living Center perceive themselves to be more socially connected to their community and the campus, and are more involved in activities outside the classroom, than honors students living off-campus.

** Note: This page must be included as the last page in your master's paper.