

"They View You in a Certain Authority":
*An Ethnographic Look at Understanding Identity Formation, Role Strain and Minimization of
Role Strain in Community Advisors at Kenyon College**

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**"They View You in a Certain Authority":
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This paper examines the relationship between the position of a Community Advisor, personal and positional identity formation, role strain, and the resulting management and minimization of role strain. A review of existing relevant sociological literature discusses Social Identity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism in order to understand the formation of participant's personal and CA role identities. Additionally, a discussion of Goode (1961) offers insight into role conflict and management mechanisms. Through qualitative methods of participant observation and interviews, it is evident that there appears to be a relationship between an individual's personal and positional identity as a Community Advisor. Due to the dual role as Community Advisor and peer of residents, role strain is displayed through the expression of feelings of difficulty, discomfort or uneasiness in specific social situations with resident. Through mechanisms of bargaining between costs and benefits of fulfilling either role, participants manage the role conflict in order to minimize the felt strain. This paper is placed into a relevant sociological discussion of identity, sociology of work and our understanding of the ever institutionalized society in which we live.

INTRODUCTION

The mission statement of Kenyon College emphasizes the importance of a residential college where students can "learn and develop, intellectually and socially, from their fellows and from their own responses to corporate living"; in order to achieve this atmosphere in residential living on campus, the college employs 38 Community Advisors. Their job responsibilities include a variety of tasks ranging from emotional support to helping students transition to college life, from reporting maintenance problems to enforcing college policies, and from creating social programming to linking students with the administrative and professional staff of the College ("Kenyon College: Its Mission and Goals"; "Housing and Residential Life Staff").

At the recommendation of a close friend last year, I became a Community Advisor (CA) myself. As my first semester progressed I enjoyed the time I spent with the freshmen who were my residents, and I became friends with my fellow CAs. However, at the same time I recognized that the position was not simply about building these relationships. There were nights when I was awoken at 4:00 AM by screaming residents, and when I told friends that I was going to be a CA they looked at me like I was crazy, asking "WHY!?" In a sense, I realized that this position was no longer just a free room on campus or a typical job, but that instead it permeated and encompassed my life in all aspects.

During a brainstorming session last spring in the Qualitative Methods in Sociology course, a classmate suggested looking at how CAs handle the dual role of being both a peer and an authority figure. They typical college students with their own personal, social and academic pressures while simultaneously maintaining a leadership position with authority in handling college policies with their peers. From this suggestion developed my research project for the course, as well as the inspiration for this senior exercise.

Taking into account what I had learned from my previous research project, I developed two research questions. First, *Is there a relationship between the participant's personal identity and their identity as a Community Advisor?* Second, *Does role strain exist due to the demands of the participants' roles as both a Community Advisor and peer of residents?* Additionally, if this is true, *how is this dual role managed?* My research suggests that the relationship between a personal identity and an identity as a CA does exist, and that the conflicting interests between participant's social role and their role as a CA creates role strain that manifests itself in feelings of uneasiness and/or discomfort. Participants most often handled these feelings through a series of role bargains by first determining what they valued and according to these evaluations, and second, by enforcing these valued aspects consistently while allowing the less-valued expectations to be minimized, cut short or altogether ignored.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of literature pertaining to college life, the articles and reviews published in the *Journal of College Student Development* encompass the existing literature regarding college and university life, including a wide spread of discussion of issues ranging from those solely pertaining to classroom issues to those concerning issues of identity. My research will join this existing field of research, because it does deal with identity and college students, but it also differs from these articles, which tend to deal with issues of identity and its relationship with race, gender and ethnicity. Because my research investigates the connection between identity and a collegiate occupational role, it explores a lesser researched area. Within the *Journal of College Student Development*, a small area of research discusses the role of residence halls in college life, particularly as they are used to measure students' satisfaction at the college or university and

predictions of involvement. With the exception of one book, *Lessons Learned: How to Avoid the Biggest Mistakes Made by College Resident Assistants*, by John D. Foubert (2007), this research does not delve into the understanding of the role of Resident Assistants, or as they are referred to at Kenyon College, Community Advisors.

In order to better understand the concept of identity, and thus answer the first research question, I began a review of the existing sociological discussion and literature on identity. According to Social Identity Theory as explained by Ashforth and Mael (1989), an individual's "self" "is comprised of a *personal* identity encompassing idiosyncratic characteristics," which can include bodily attributes and abilities, but also interests (p. 21). Giddens (1991) contends that personal identity is reflexively controlled over the long-run of an individual's life; therefore, it is controlled in relationship to external changes and transformations, such as an individual's memberships in groups that may come and go with time (p. 6).

In addition to this personal identity, there also exists a "*social* identity" which includes "salient group classifications" (Ashforth and Mael 1999: 21). With the establishment of these two separate roles, and therefore identities, it is evident that individuals' identities are comprised of different parts, or "discrete identities" (Stryker 1968: 559). These different identities are conceptualized as "role identities" in which "*Role identification* is said to occur when a role occupant *defines* himself or herself at least partly in terms of the role and its identity (e.g. 'I am a machinist, a bowler, a parent')" (Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate 2000: 483). Along with the establishment of different distinct roles and identities, comes a process of negotiation between the identities, understood as a process, rather than an immobile state or trait (Burke 1991: 836). Similarly related is the notion that this negotiation is not passive, and that humans "preserve a

division between their self-identities and the ‘performances’ they put on in specific social contexts” (Giddens 1991: 58).

Continuing with the concept of identity as a process and negotiation, according to Burke (1991), “an *identity is a set of ‘meanings’* applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is” which serves as a guideline and reference for who an individual is (p. 837). Therefore, the ideas of symbolic interactionism become relevant in the understanding of identity. In Stryker’s (1968) interpretation of symbolic interactionism, “Actors within this social structure name one another, in the sense that they recognize each other as occupants of positions, and in naming one another invoke expectations with respect to one another’s behavior” (p. 559); additionally, “we see ourselves through the way in which others see or define us” (Blumer 1969: 13). The effect of communication with others, and the role of their responses to an individual’s behavior is outlined by Goffman (1955): “What the person protects and defends and invests his feelings in is an idea about himself, and ideas are vulnerable not to facts and things but to communications,” thus emphasizing the impact that the process of interpreting feedback from others has in forming behaviors (p. 335). With these explanations, we can recognize that an individual not only creates their own identity, but that others help in shaping this identity through demonstrated expectations. Moreover, it is understood that what others expect of us due to our role positions, in turn defines our identities in that role.

With the establishment of identity theory and symbolic interactionism, I began reviewing the sociological literature on role conflict. In an article by Stryker and Macke (1978) the impact of social structure on role interaction is characterized by the idea that that the demands from social structures are not necessarily consistent, forming the basis of the idea of conflict within the social structure (p. 57). Additionally, they contend that who is brought together, and in what

activities, in a social structure is "critical for the activation of....role conflict" (Stryker and Macke 1978: 58). Therefore, the conflicting expectations of various roles are brought about by interactions with others.

Taking the base of role conflict within the social structure to a more micro level, Ashforth and Mael (1989) write, "given the number of groups to which an individual might belong, his or her social identity is likely to consist of an amalgam of identities, identities that could impose inconsistent demands upon that person" (p. 29). These inconsistent demands are what Goode (1960) defines as *role strain* or "the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations" due to conflicting demands (p. 483). Goode (1960) asserts that "even when role demands are not onerous, difficult, or displeasing, they are required at particular times and places. Consequently, virtually no role demand is such a spontaneous pleasure that conformity with is always automatic" (p. 485). Therefore, even on a small scale, there may be "conflicts of time, place, or resources" in which an individual must negotiate their various role positions in order to manage the differing demands (Goode 1960: 485).

Goode (1960) offers that individuals carry out a sequence of role behaviors through a process of reducing role strain via different mechanisms and bargains (p. 495). These mechanisms he outlines as compartmentalization, delegation, elimination of role relationships, extension, obstacles against the indefinite expansion of ego's role system and barriers against intrusion because "the individual cannot satisfy fully all demands" (p. 486-487; p. 495). Additionally, Stryker and Macke (1978) also state, "facing contradictions we can compartmentalize"—again supporting the idea that role strain is managed through a negotiation of the priorities so as to carry out the different role responsibilities with the least contradictory actions and behavior (p. 74).

In the same vein of thought, the theory of boundary work contends that individuals create and maintain ““territories of the self”” in order to simplify and order their environments (Nippert Eng 1996: 569; Ashforth et al. 2000: 474). Connecting the ideas of identity and role conflict together is Stryker and Macke’s (1978) assessment that the “ability to separate our ‘true’ from our portrayed self allows for role performance in spite of conflicting demands” (p. 74). These ideas suggest that physical boundaries may assist in creating conceptual boundaries between roles.

In terms of identity theory, the previously discussed literature clearly establishes the idea that there are differences between personal and social identities, and that these identities are shaped by the various roles that individuals hold in society. Additionally, it is evident that while these roles not only impact how an individual decides how to behave, they also influence how individuals view others, and how their expectations of how to behave with others is shaped by the roles they fulfill. Because individuals hold various roles simultaneously, the literature discusses that there are often conflicting expectations and requirements based on the range of roles an individual holds, which can create conflict for the individual. Consequently, Goode (1960) discusses the impossibility to avoid this strain, but that there are mechanisms in which to manage and minimize these conflicting feelings. As Ashforth et al. (2000) acknowledge that today’s “industrialized society is moving toward a greater proliferation and institutionalization of roles,” the importance of understanding the different identity and conflict issues as they pertain to roles becomes increasingly important (p. 472). My research not only deals with these already established issues of role, individual and social identity and the resulting conflict, but also explores the relatively un-explored population of college students and how these individuals also

handle the various identities and expectations that correspond to their various role responsibilities.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to obtain an understanding of how my participants subjectively understood their role and identities as CAs, I used qualitative research methods (Adler and Clark 2008). I began with participant observation in order to see participant's behavior as a supplement to how they discussed their behavior, and also in case particular behaviors were demonstrated but not mentioned in an interview. Because participant observation allows for conversation and informal interviewing, it allows for a discussion of topics that might not come up during an interview but are still pertinent to my research questions. Additionally, the observation period helps to develop rapport between myself and participants, which in turn helps the participant to be more comfortable during the interview and potentially even reveal more rich information. The second part of the research was composed of semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to respond with their own ideas and assessments, rather than pre-established answers. The semi-structured nature allows for continuity of discussion topics between research subjects, but gives time to discuss particular topics in more depth when applicable.

In order to obtain participants I sent an e-mail, a copy of which is shown in Appendix A, to the entire CA staff. The nine individuals who responded became my participants. Seven of these participants are female and two are male; four of the participants are CAs in upperclass dorm and apartment areas, while five of them are CAs in first-year dorms^{*}. Of the participants,

^{*} Since the completion of my research, one of my participants was asked to resign from staff and is no longer a CA. The resignation did not occur until after I had completed the participant

four were returning CAs, meaning they had been a CA for at least a year prior to my research, and four were first-time CAs who had been CAs for roughly two and half months before participating.

The first half of my research involved shadowing each of the CAs for two hours on a night they were on duty. The nights when I shadowed were determined by our collective availability and the participants' scheduled evenings of duty, determined the month before I began my research and which I had access to because of my own position as a CA. For the participants a typical duty night entails being available in their respective areas (this requires being anywhere within the confines of the area for which they are a CA) from 10:00 PM-8:00 AM on weekdays, and 8:00 PM-8:00 AM on weekends, and able to respond to any emergency or policy violation situations. While the essential nature of duty rounds is to walk through buildings ensuring that students are safe, obeying school policies such as no alcohol use in freshmen dorms, no drug use, and observing quiet hours, duty rounds are also used as a time to talk with residents or check in with any sick or injured residents. During duty they each carry a designated "Duty Cell Phone" for the evening so that the professional staff, students and CAs in need of assistance can reach them, and complete duty rounds throughout their designated areas. For first-year area CAs on weeknights there are two required rounds, whereas for the upperclass area CAs there is only one round per weeknight. On weekends, upperclass area CAs also have two rounds per night. Upperclass area duty rounds include an individual walking through multiple buildings across a wider geographic area, while first-year areas staffs typically have two CAs on duty per night, and they complete the duty rounds through their buildings together; physically the first-

(continued) observation and interview with this participant. Additionally, the incident that eventually resulted in this CA's resignation occurred after the completion of my observation and interview.

year building locations are much closer together than upperclass area dorms and apartments. Because of differences in geographic area covered and relationships between CAs and residents, the time of duty rounds can vary greatly. For example, a first year area CA who chats with all of their residents may have a round take as long as an hour; while an upperclass area CA, who doesn't stop to talk to anyone, may have a duty round last 20 minutes. An average upperclass duty round took between 20 and 30 minutes, while the average first year area duty round lasted about 15 minutes. Within 24 hours of each participant observation, I wrote a field note from my memory of the conversations and interactions that occurred.

After shadowing the CAs for two hours of their duty nights, we set up interview times according to our availability. My intention in completing the semi-structured interviews after the participant observation was so that the participant would be more comfortable with me, so as to make the interviews as relaxed as possible. The interview schedule is included in Appendix B. The interviews lasted anywhere from 15 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on how much the participants expanded upon their answers, and depending upon which questions were pertinent to the participants. All interviews were completed in a semi-private location, and all used the same general schedule of questions; some interviews were conducted in participants' rooms, my own apartment or public spaces with no one around so as to maintain confidentiality and to minimize the potential for others to influence participants' responses. All interviews were recorded and after completing them I then transcribed each interview.

After completing all shadowing, interviews, field notes and interview transcriptions, I read through all of my field notes and interview transcriptions. I began with an open coding process, looking line-by-line at each field note and transcription for any and all reoccurring themes. From this group of themes I began a process of more focused coding, grouping the

themes into categories with other similar themes. These themes included conversational excerpts or observational behavior of personal identity creation, creation of the CA identity, bending rules, efficiency, compartmentalization, expectations, ignoring of responsibilities, felt role conflict and staff support. After re-examining the existing literature and theoretical framework established in the literature review section, I revisited these themes in order to analyze the themes along the lines of how they answered my research questions: the establishment of a personal identity, the establishment of an identity as a CA, and how these two identities related to each other. Next, I categorized the remaining themes into how they demonstrated role conflict and the management of role conflict.

I believe that my role as a CA both helped and hindered the research developed from this study. Not only did I have instantaneous access to participants, they already knew me which helped to pass the observation time, as well as perhaps creating a setting in which they disclosed more information with me informally. Additionally, they may have been more comfortable sharing personal or more sensitive ideas and issues during the interview. By being a CA I have a greater understanding of the roles they must fulfill and the way in which the position operates. Finally, in my analysis I am able to impart a bit of my own knowledge as a CA into the interpretation and understandings of the participants' responses. As much as this inside knowledge may have helped, it may have also tainted my data with my own perspectives and opinions, infusing their opinions and interactions with my own thoughts and understandings of the pressures and expectations that I myself perceive, which may differ from their own. Furthermore, because I have experience in the typical interactions between residents and CAs, from my own experiences and from seeing my own fellow staff members interact with residents, in my analysis I was unable to offer a set of new eyes that could reveal more striking data.

RESULTS

Answering Research Question #1: Is there a relationship between the participant's personal identity and their identity as a Community Advisor?

To answer this first research question, it is crucial to establish that through my research I was able to gather an understanding of the participants' personal identity, particularly as it is seen separately from their identity as a Community Advisor. While my interview questions did not explicitly ask my participants their view of their own personal identity, while responding to other questions, several of the participants offered tidbits that revealed how they view themselves as individuals and their own personal values. Lisa* told me, "I really like helping people, or like nurturing people or like being a mentor to people". When I asked Robert how he decided to become a CA, he went through the reasons, telling me, "I'm that kid who like always has a first aid kit around like I'm always like you know, I'm pretty stable and I'm pretty good at talking to people." Both of these statements exhibit Gidden's (1991) idea that an individual's personal identity maintains consistency even when external factors change. Although both Robert and Lisa are both first year CAs, both discussed a connection with helpful and leadership behavior before they ever became a CA.

When Lindsay and I were chatting about a college administrator who had lashed out at the CAs during a staff in-service, she exclaimed her dislike for him and said "We're some of the most responsible people here!" The quotes from Lisa and Robert indicate their perceptions of themselves, while Lindsay's reflects not only a view of herself and her identity, but also her understanding of her fellow CAs, indicating that the individuals who comprise the CA staff are responsible individuals, separate from their expectations as CAs. These anecdotes all arrive at

* All participants' names are changed to protect confidentiality.

the point that there is a personal identity that is established prior, or separately, to their identity as a CA. Moreover, the importance of the participants' narrations of their personal identities is in line with the idea espoused by Giddens (1991) that "the potential for the unraveling of self-identity is kept in check because demeanour sustains a link between 'feeling at home in one's body' and the personalised narrative," emphasizing the role of the personal narrative in defining a self, or personal, identity (p. 100).

Once the participants' personal identity is established, we can then continue answering the research question by establishing that the participants develop and establish an identity particular to their role as a CA. While some of my participants explained that much of what they accomplish as a CA they would "naturally do anyway" or "would already be doing", it still became evident that many of the CAs actively created their identities as CAs through the interactions and reactions of their residents, indicating a separation between their personal identity and their identity as a CA. The role was not something that was automatic—it changed through the course of the year, or from year to year, indicating that instead it is a process, reflecting Blumer's (1960) ideas of symbolic interactionism. For example, when I asked participants who had been CAs for more than one year, there was often a difference in their role from year to year. Lindsay told me, "Last year it felt like something that just came so easily" whereas this year "I feel like more and more I refer to it as a job", Amy mentioned that the first year she was a CA she felt like a parent figure but then the second year when she moved to an upperclass dorm she no longer felt that way. Amanda, who followed a similar path as Amy, said on move day when she was in a freshman hall she "was so nervous" but this year, in an upperclass dorm, "I was so indifferent, just because they're in Canyon [an upperclass dorm]."

These three anecdotes demonstrate the changing attitudes and identities of the CAs contingent upon interactions with residents.

According to Baldwin (1986), Mead defends that the "self", or an individual's conception of their identity, "arises in the process of social experience" (p.107-108). Similarly, Stryker (1968) writes that "actors within a social structure name one another, in the sense that they recognize each other as occupants of positions, and in naming one another invoke expectations with respect to one another's behavior" (p. 559). This concept of deriving a sense of an identity from others became very apparent as the CAs talked about their identity as a CA. When I asked Amanda "Do you think that you maintain control or some sort of leadership with your residents?" she responded, "The whole... dynamic. Like, they come to you ask for things, and, like, they view you in a certain authority because they know you have power over, I don't know, maintenance and telling people to shut up. So I feel like they view it more so than I do, I just feel like another person." Amanda's line, "they view it more so than I do," indicates that she derives her identity as a CA directly from how her residents view her, rather than from her own perspective.

On a related note, when Lindsay discussed the differences from her first year to second year as a CA, she explained, "I feel like more and more I refer to it as a job whereas last year it felt like something that just came so easily to me, and I think that a lot of that had to do with that my residents came to me more", once more indicating that meaning of her position is derived from the reactions of her residents. Robert, reiterating the idea of his identity drawing from his resident's expectations, told me, "There are people who didn't know what to make of me when they first got here and have since figured out that because I am an employee of the college and because I am here to prevent them from being absolutely free they don't want to get to know

me." Finally, when Susan discussed her role as a CA in an upperclass dorm on the Southern end of campus she explained, "Down South I definitely thought I had some authority, because people in division housing...they're like 'You're a CA, which equals Res Life, which equals I have to deal with Dean Gocial or whoever, later," again showing how the authority and identity of her role as a CA was contingent upon the residents she interacted with.

Since I have now established that these two separate identities exist, it is possible to go back to the research question and begin to look at the relationship between the two separate identities. Interpreting Blumer (1960) it is understood that meaning for individuals develops from the interactions an individual has with others. When Lisa, Lindsay and Robert, in their individual ways talk about how before they were a CA they would help others, they are defining what is important in their lives; in other words, they are explaining what they value and what character traits have meaning for themselves, which can be seen as defining their own identities via their interactions with others. In particular, Lisa's explanation of how she decided to become a CA illustrates this point, she says that the previous year "I felt like I ended up taking over a lot of the roles that a CA might do, like I was a mediator between everyone in the hallway...I really liked putting together program type things" and saying "it's something I'm going to do anyways". By seeking out a position as a CA, a position that each of them cite as a way to express and share their care and concern for others, the three of them are demonstrating a connection between their own personal identity and their choice to become a CA.

Answering Research Question #2: Does role strain exist due to the demands of the participants' roles as both a Community Advisor and peer of residents? If so, how do the participants manage this role strain?

In order to understand the relationship between the individual's role as a CA and their role as a peer of their residents, it is important to have a general understanding of the role of the CA as established by the Office of Residence Life. In the 2007-2008 Head CA/CA Staff Acceptance Agreement, the various job expectations are outlined, in addition to a section outlining particular conduct expectations. Prior to this section there is a short summary of the position expectations in which is suggested that CAs are "helpful, approachable, outgoing, and provide resources to help his/her residents make good decisions." In the "Conduct" section, it is clearly stated that "CAs are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times both on and off campus. CAs must abide by the standards set forth in the Kenyon College Student Handbook" and that any infraction of College or Residential Life standards may cause a termination of their employment. Additionally, the section continues, explaining the Office's view of CAs: "CAs should be aware that they are viewed as student leaders and so all actions...should be held to the highest standards."

Following a similar format as the first research question, in order to answer whether or not role conflict or stress exists due to the demands of the participants' dual role, I first looked for whether or not my participants discussed any conflict, discomfort or stress due to their multiple roles. While many of the participants explained that most of their interactions with residents are friendly, or that a majority of what the position is they would naturally do anyways, when I asked participants what their least favorite part of the position entails, whether they felt there were certain standards they had to uphold, or if they felt like their position as a CA had ever restrained them from participating in other college activities, there was a tone of uneasiness when the participants responded, telling stories about uncomfortable situations with residents.

Alice told me, "On nights when I'm not on duty...and I go out with a group of my friends and I see my residents I feel like guarded, like I really have to be on my best behavior." By saying that she feels she has to be guarded, Alice indicates feelings of discomfort, or no longer being able to act in her normal way when she is in these social settings and residents, indicating a level of anxiety or uneasiness. When telling me about the previous year as a CA, Amanda explained that when she would run into her freshmen residents at a party, "I'd always be like 'Oh, shit!'" again indicating a feeling that she *shouldn't* be doing something. When I asked Rebecca, "Have you had a worst moment with your residents?" she laughed nervously and responded, "When one of my residents opened my refrigerator and found vodka!" attributing one of her worst moments as when her residents found out about her (underage) possession of alcohol. All three of these stories indicate that there appears to be some sort of awkwardness for these participants between who they are outside of their role as a CA, as someone who does go to parties or does drink underage, and someone who, through their job expectations, is supposed to uphold specific behavior models, as well as enforce college policies and state laws that they themselves do not always follow. Therefore, the conflict is between what their role as a peer, or as any other college student, and their role as a CA where they are expected to be role models.

Participants also discussed role conflict that did not deal with their social lives or interactions with residents at parties. For example, Lindsay told me about an incident her first year as a CA where a resident of hers had to leave Kenyon because he assaulted police officers. She explained that afterwards, "There was only one person still holding a grudge and that was his roommate and we were all like 'Why can't you just understand that's not what he's like normally? Like why can't you let it go?' and it was hard because I felt that way too but I had to, you know, be there for him, as much as for the other residents." Lindsay admits that it was hard, and

attributes this difficulty to having to manage her own feelings, but still complete her expected role as CA to help and support her residents when they are in need. Robert offered that his least favorite part of the position is "When I have to yell at them about quiet hours, because I'm their friend and I'm all buddy-buddy during the day and when the suns out and everybody's happy and then at night they become a pain in the ass, with regularity, and I have to yell at them" he continues, telling me that he hates this because "they can get hurt because they go from thinking of me as a friend to thinking of me as the bad guy." In this example, Robert is expressing the conflict between being a friend to residents and being a CA. The contrast between the phrases he uses—in one role he describes himself as "buddy-buddy" with his residents, while when he has to enforce quiet hours he feels as if he is the "bad guy", demonstrates a stark contrast between the two social positions. By expressing dislike, saying that he hates when he has to make that switch from being the friend to being the enforcer, Robert explicitly mentions discomfort about the difference between the roles. In both of these situations, the CAs attribute the stress that they feel as due to the fact that in some ways, they connect with and understand where their residents are coming from, but that at other times they have to disconnect from this understanding and maintain neutrality or enforce specific policies to protect other residents.

With the anecdotes about role conflict, each participant conveys an overarching theme that this role conflict develops from the fact that it is the residents who view the CAs in a specific role, and that they are supposed to act in a certain way. Because the CAs discuss the awkward moment in terms of how their residents perceive them, their experiences support the statement by Goode (1960) that "like any structure or organized pattern, the role pattern is held in place by both internal and external forces—in this case, the role pressures from other individuals" (p. 495).

A final example that characterizes the idea of role conflict came at the end of the interview with Robert. He was talking about when a few of his residents come to him with personal information. He explained,

One of my girls will come over and we'll be talking as a friend and she'll say something like "Oh I got so hammered last night, I hooked up with this guy" and the friend would say one thing, but the CA would say something different and it's making that decision whether to be active and say like "well, do you regret that, do you wanna talk about this?" or just saying "Who was he? How was it?"

In this excerpt Robert exemplifies the idea of negotiating between roles by explaining the two different mindsets from which he would respond—as a friend, or as a CA, and how he must make a decision. Additionally, this excerpt typifies the immediate nature of the decision making process in these interactions with resident, because it is clear that in a matter of seconds he will respond to the resident and in those few seconds there will be a decision of whether to respond as a friend or a CA.

Through the stated examples above, it is clear that role strain does exist for the participants, and at this point the final portion of my research question comes into analysis. According to Goode (1960), one important aspect of understanding role conflict pertains to how the individual makes his or her "whole role system manageable" and "how to allocate [his or her] energies and skills so as to reduce role strain" (p. 485). In order to reduce this role strain, there mechanisms in which the individual minimizes this strain and the first he lists is "compartmentalization" (Goode 1960: 486). Through a process of categorizing interactions, and thus role expectations, by "location and context", Goode (1960) suggests that the individual may be able to minimize some strain (p. 486). While this was not a directly explicit concept brought up most of the CAs, many of them did use the term "resident" to describe those who lived on

their halls, rather than by their names or by a neutral term as "hallmates." Additionally, Robert in particular mentioned that he did compartmentalize his life to a certain extent when he told me that "there are things that I keep my residents from finding out about", displaying the compartmentalizing by literally blocking certain contextual aspects of his life from his residents.

A second method of managing role strain that Goode (1960) cites is the "elimination of role relationships" (p. 487). When I was talking with Susan, she mentioned that she had been friends with people her freshman year who became her residents their sophomore year in Canyon. She explained " I actually lost some friends because of it, because...I had to choose being a CA over being their friend, because I felt that there were some policies that needed to be enforced, and they didn't like that." In this event, Susan eventually eliminated the role relationship of being friends with these girls because of the conflict, exemplifying the minimizing of role strain.

Additionally, Goode (1960) discusses the idea that role decisions are made through a process of bargaining in which the individual carries out a role in part by the perceived gains of carrying out, or failing to carry out, a particular role (p. 489). This idea is reflected most clearly in the CA's decision making process about duty rounds, and when to complete duty rounds. While following each CA on their duty rounds, all of the upperclass CAs either talked about skipping a section of their duty area, or literally minimized the area we covered so as to make the round shorter. Similarly, the freshman area CAs in Fasher and Fairide discussed the most efficient route so as to eliminate excessive duplication of walking through particular halls, and members of both the Fasher and Fairide staff, and the freshman quad staff, who do their rounds in pairs, all either split or talked about splitting specific areas so as to accomplish the most at one time. Lindsay told me one time she "sat down and like drew out a map of the building to try to figure out how to do it!"

The “location and context” Goode (1960) offers as a method of making role bargains is demonstrated in Robert’s behavior in the previous excerpt of deciding whether to respond to a resident’s concerns as a friend or a CA. When I asked how he made the decision in that example he told me, “I decided to be a CA because the one I’m thinking about is a total space cadet, and um we actually wound up talking about sexual expectations so it ended up being really valuable for her I think,” demonstrating that he chose the CA role because it would have a better outcome in the end for the resident. In this situation, Robert handles the role conflict of whether to be the resident's peer, and gossip about the situation, or be a CA to her by evaluating the context of the situation and offering her help as an advisor. By telling me that he actively made a decision of which role to fulfill, saying, "I decided to be a CA," Robert demonstrates an evaluation of the context of the situation; he evaluated who he was talking to, and what it would mean for her if he responds in one particular way or another, whether it is as a peer or an advisor, and from this decided which role he was going to take on when responding to her story.

Another way that the CAs made decisions by bargaining between the roles is in the completion of school work. While I shadowed Lindsay she stayed in her room, writing a paper due the next morning with her door shut and a note that said “Please knock only if you really need me.” She also told me that she and the other CA on duty in her area would be completing duty rounds separately because they each had a large amount of work to complete that night. Matthew told me a story about one time when he wanted to change duty shifts with someone because he had procrastinated so much on homework, only to lose to someone who had made a more appealing offer. All of these examples show the bargaining mechanism in which the participants decide when they are going to fulfill CA duties, and when they will fulfill the responsibilities of a student.

Skipping sections was not the only way that CAs tried to become the most efficient during duty rounds, but they also talked about coming up with the most effective times to do rounds. Robert explained "Yeah, we do one at 10 and one at midnight" and when I asked whether or not this was a personal decision or staff decision he said "I mean, we realized that this way you maximized the time you had to yourself when on duty." When I discussed duty round times with Alice, she explained her decision making process depends on "the weekend and what else I have going on that weekend, I might do a round early and late, as opposed to in the middle of when things are happening. So, I mean, it would be more inconvenient to standardized duty round times." Both Robert and Alice's explanation for duty round times highlight the underlying issue of efficiency—how to make it so that they have the most time to themselves, thus bargaining in their roles as CA to minimize their time in the actual role of being a CA. Because they choose times that are most convenient for them indicates that there are other activities going on in their lives outside of their CA responsibilities—they therefore may be attempting to minimize or fit CA duties into times that do not conflict with their role as a friend or a student.

Besides the mechanisms outlined by Goode, I noticed that there were other ways in which the CAs minimized the stress or discomfort they could potentially feel. As I discussed earlier in this research, one of the most prevalent situations where role conflict exists for the participants is in situations where partying or drinking occurs. Without literally asking what their policy is on residents drinking, most of the CAs explained that they tried to look the other way. For example, Matthew told me "If you're gonna be safe and responsible and I don't really I know about it, I don't care"; Robert said "I haven't had to confront residents of mine in the act of doing something, but that also [has] to do with my choice to ignore smaller offences"; Lisa told me about one time when she confronted residents of hers who were drinking in their room, saying "I

just like knocked on the door and was like 'Hey guys, don't know what you're up to, BUT, you might want to leave the hall, I'll come by in 2 more minutes.'" While on my field visit with Rebecca she came back from a duty round and said "So, when I was on my way out of Fasher, the last room at the end I heard this guy go 'Hey man, give me another beer!' and their door was WIDE open and I saw it happen and I just kept on walking" and she laughed heartily. Lindsay told me, "to be really honest, I do all in my power to turn my head the other way unless they're like pouring beer on each other and dancing and yelling down the hallway." All of these CAs are freshman area CAs, where drinking is restricted from the dorms, which could indicate a higher level of role conflict due to the greater restrictions, something that Amanda, a former freshman area CA noted, she explained she felt more separated, which could correlate to role conflict, from her residents the previous year because "they had like more policies...the freshman dorm has stricter policies." All of these anecdotes reflect the attempts by the CAs to minimize the uncomfortable, or according to role strain theory, the strain that these CAs feel when having to confront residents, thus managing the amount of role conflict in their lives.

Another possible method that CAs manage role conflict is through the support of fellow staff members. Many of the CAs mentioned that one of their favorite parts, or the reason they returned the next year to be a CA was because they liked their fellow staff members. Amy told me, "So I decided to come back just because I really liked the staff", Susan said her favorite part of the position is "Being with the staff", explaining she really liked the staff meetings because they were fun, and after Rebecca had told me earlier in our interview that the real reason she decided to become a CA was for the money, she mentioned in a separate part of the interview that one of the reasons she became a CA was "because I really liked my staff I got placed on". While the previous excerpts establish the general sense of staff camaraderie, there are occasions

in which CAs help each other as they balance their role as CA with their other roles as individuals. For example, when I shadowed Matthew, his partner CA for duty that night forgot she was on duty, and no one on staff could get in contact with her. At one point, Lindsay, who was not on duty that night, stopped by Michael's room and said "I'm wondering if I should like go find [her friend] or something", offering support for the missing CA, who by forgetting her duty obligation, demonstrates the difficulty in balancing different roles.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the results of my research indicate that there is a link between personal identity and the decision to be a CA. For some of the participants, the role seemed natural, would be something they felt they would be already doing, or that it would not be too much of a stretch from their normal behavior. While some participants mentioned that social connections with staff members or financial benefits played a significant role in their decision, there was no glaring evidence that these participants saw the position as too distinct from their personal identity.

The second research question is answered through a series of anecdotes and narrative passages in which the participants discuss feeling "uncomfortable," "awkward," or having to deliberately set aside personal feelings at specific times when interacting with residents in situational social settings, it is apparent that role strain exists for participants. Role strain most often was mentioned in situations where CAs had to manage the gray area between expectations of their peers, due to their role as a CA, and choices about behaviors such as drinking. When I asked participants whether they felt the pressure to maintain a specific standard of behavior from administration, such as the Office of Residential Life and Housing, or from their residents, the answers I received were mixed. While many mentioned that they feared losing their position if a

bad decision was made, they also mentioned that the respect from residents as a major source of these feelings of expectations.

The ways in which participants managed the role conflict was handle predominately through a series of negotiations in which participants made decisions based up on an evaluation of the costs and benefits of fulfilling either role in conflict. Prevalent standards for evaluation rested in the safety of residents, the efficiency and convenience of a particular role, the needs of residents and the effectiveness of a role based on the context of a particular situation.

As is evident through my literature review and results sections, my research clearly fits into existing sociological discussions of identity, but brings a new perspective because it examines identity issues for CAs, an otherwise fairly untouched field of study. Additionally, this research indicates that the issues and theories developed more than 40 years ago are still pertinent in society today, as well as prevalent in newer generations of participants, adding more support to these theories.

While the role of a CA is one particular and limited to Kenyon College, there are similar roles at many other colleges and universities across the nation. Although this position appears at first glance to be limited to college environment, when looking at the CA position from a more abstract view, it is in essence a position in between authority and individuals; with the high level of interpersonal relationships and confiding of personal information, it enters into the realm of minister, social workers and counselors. Therefore, the position is not necessarily limited to the college environment when viewed from the perspective of the sociology of labor or work, and also to the existing literature on such positions as ministers, social workers and counselors.

Another related occupational role in relationship to the CA role is a foreman position. In sociological literature on foremen they are often described as “men in the middle” due to their

experiences in “a conflict relationship between (1) employees’ expectations that foremen should be sensitive to workers’ needs and feelings, and (2) managerial expectations that first-line supervisors should implement organizational policies” (Grimm and Dunn 1986: 359-360). By substituting “employees” for “residents” and “managerial expectations” for “administrative expectations” in the above excerpt, the link between the two fields becomes clear. Because of the similar feelings of conflict, it is evident that there is a relationship between the role conflict that my participants noted, and the existence of a “conflict relationship” between employees and managerial staff, bringing the relevance of my research into another pre-existing field of sociological study.

In addition to the academic contribution to sociological literature that this study offers I believe that it provides insight into the understanding of the CA role. By offering this insight for those involved with Residential Life at Kenyon, it could offer a better understanding of the CAs roles, from their own perspectives and experiences, and thus offers the potential to improve the actions and expectations of the office, making it in turn run more smoothly.

Finally, the evidence of the ways in which the CAs negotiate the bureaucratic demands of their positions, through an evaluation of risk assessment, role bargaining and possible avoidance of policy violations, offers a possible explanation of how individuals handle the bureaucracy in our ever expanding institutionalized society (Ashforth et al. 2000).

Appendix A. Body of E-mail Asking for Participants

For my Sociology comps I am continuing a study I started last year about Community Advisors at Kenyon and how they handle being both a typical college student and an authority figure simultaneously. What this means is that I need to interview and "observe" (follow around on a night you're on duty) 10 different CAs, from all different areas on campus. The interviews will last about 45 minutes long and will be basic questions about your experiences as a CA. If you're interested in helping me out, please respond to this email so we can set up a time for the interview etc.

Appendix B. Interview Schedule

1. How do you see the Community Advisor position? (i.e. as a job, an authority position, a community builder, an honor, something that you naturally would do anyways)
2. How did you decide to become a CA?
3. When you decided to become a Community Advisor did you take into account your course load, extracurriculars etc.? Will you if you re-apply for next year?
4. Before you became a CA, did you have an impression of what you thought it would be like?
5. Since being in the role, has this idea changed? How has it changed?
6. Did you feel prepared when your residents moved in on the first day of classes/orientation?
7. What is your favorite part of the position?
8. Has there been a "best" moment with your residents so far?
9. What is your least favorite part of the position?
10. Has there been a "worst" moment with your residents so far?
11. Of the different requirements and policies you're supposed to fulfill as a CA, are there any that you believe are more important than others? Are there any that you value?
12. Of the different requirements and policies you're supposed to enforce as a CA, are there any that you believe are less important to enforce than others? What policies do you value less?
13. How do you handle enforcing these policies?
14. Are there any that you completely disagree with?
15. Have you ever had to handle a situation regarding one of the policies you disagree with?
16. How did you handle this?
17. Have you ever felt uncomfortable in confronting a resident of yours about a college policy violation?
18. Do you think that you maintain authority or control with your residents?
19. How much of your interactions with residents are friendly?
20. How much of your interactions with residents are policy enforcements or required duties?
21. How do you see your relationship with your resident? IE: your position in relation to them?

22. Do you think you're getting to know your residents better, or that you are becoming separated from them because of the fact that you are a CA?
23. Have you ever felt that your position as a Community Advisor has restrained you from participating in other college activities?
24. As a Community Advisor do you feel that there are certain moral and community standards that you must uphold?
25. How do you think that your relationship with your residents will change next year when they might not be your residents anymore? (Or, if you have been a CA in the past, how did your relationships with them change?)
26. Have you ever been a Community Advisor for some of your friends? How was this experience?

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