2019

Partnering with College Students in Need of Change: A Case Study Analysis of Motivational Interviewing in a Residence Hall

Brett Borland

PARTNERING WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS IN NEED OF CHANGE:

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

IN A RESIDENCE HALL

_____

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

_____

by

Brett Borland

May 2019

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
_____

MASTER'S THESIS
_____

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Brett Borland

entitled

Partnering with College Students in Need of Change: A Case Study Analysis of
Motivational Interviewing in a Residence Hall

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2019

_____   _____
Scott Gaier, Ph.D.   Date   Skip Trudeau, Ph.D.   Date
Thesis Supervisor   Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

_____
Kim Case, Ph.D.   Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

_____
Tim Herrmann, Ph.D.   Date
Director, M.A. in Higher Education and Student Development

Abstract

This study explores the use of motivational interviewing by a resident director in his

residence hall at a faith-based, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. The purpose of this

study was to determine if the practice of motivational interviewing led students to enact

meaningful change in their lives. A secondary purpose was to observe how the practice

of motivational interviewing affected the relationship between the resident director and

his students. Data was collected through a questionnaire sent to students after meeting

with the resident director who used motivational interviewing in an academic support

meeting, as well as two interviews with the resident director. While limited by the

number of participants, results from the study indicate potential for the use of

motivational interviewing by a resident director to help students enact change and to

positively impact the relationship between the resident director and student. Despite the

exploratory nature of the study, residence life departments may benefit from the

implementation of the results as well as considering the use of motivational interviewing

within their institution.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

"If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be."

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Approaches to Helping People Change

Miller and Rollnick (2013) described the styles of helping conversations along a continuum, with directing at one end and following at the other. A directing style focuses on providing information, giving instruction, and providing advice. The director holds all of the power, and the recipient is expected to adhere to the information given to them. Conversely, a helper with a following style seeks to listen to the recipient and trust that they will figure things out on their own. In this way, helpers using the following style act more as a passive companion.

In the middle of the continuum between the directing and following styles is the guiding style. Miller and Rollnick (2013) explained this style using the analogy of hiring a guide in another country:

> It is not the guide's job to order you when to arrive, where to go, and what to see or do. Neither does a good guide simply follow you around wherever you happen to wander. A skillful guide is a good listener and also offers expertise when needed. (p. 5)

The guiding style seeks to incorporate elements from both the directing and following styles. A counseling method that uses the guiding style as a cornerstone of its practice is motivational interviewing (MI).

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is defined as a "collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 12). A vital piece to the practice of MI is its person-centered approach that relies heavily on the partnership and trust between the practitioner and the participant. Lundahl, Kunz, Brownwell, Tollefson, and Burke (2010) described it as both a philosophy and set of techniques that assist people in a wide range of readiness levels in making positive direction toward change. Since the 1980s, practitioners have used this method to successfully help people achieve lasting change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Change in College Students

For various reasons, college students find themselves in situations requiring change. It could be they struggle with procrastination, have a hard time managing academic stress, abuse alcohol, or have broken legal or institutional expectations. In the last two decades, college counselors have experienced success when using MI with students abusing alcohol (Borsari & Carey, 2000; Branscum & Sharma, 2010; Scholl & Schmitt, 2009). Rash (2008) found college health practitioners believed using motivational interviewing in alcohol interventions was more effective than the traditional directive approach. One reason for this is many college drinkers often try to develop autonomy from their parents and consequently resist authority figures telling them what to do (Baer et al., 2008).

More recently, MI has been used to help college students in the discipline process achieve change and restoration (Fueglein, Price, Alicea-Rodriguez, McKinney, & Jiminez, 2012; Lake, 2009). Similar to research on alcohol use intervention, a more legalistic directing style has been found incompatible with helping students grow and develop (Ghering, 2001; Lake, 2009). Much of this can be attributed to MI's focus on joining alongside college students and being less adversarial in its method (Lake, 2009). Further supporting a guiding approach to college students is Arnette's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, which suggests benefits to college students who engage in a counseling context that allows them to explore their own identity.

In light of this research, motivational interviewing, which uses a guiding style, has the potential to be effective in helping college students in need of change. MI reduces opportunities for disagreements and resistance by avoiding an authoritarian posture (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). While previous studies have been mostly limited to college counselors and health workers, resident directors could also benefit from the methods of MI as they help students within their residence halls pursue change.

University Residence Life Department

The residence life department at the university in the study—a small, private, faith-based institution in the Midwest—places a high value on the growth and development of its students. To achieve this mission, the university hires resident directors with graduate degrees and pairs them with graduate students pursuing a degree in higher education and student development. Additionally, the university's commitment to Christian community is reflected in how it serves and supports students within its residence life department. The university mentions on its website its commitment to

fostering love, service, and accountability amongst its students. Students' holistic growth and development is a priority of the institution.

The Present Study

Currently, no research has been conducted on the use of MI by resident directors within the realm of higher education. In light of this gap in the literature, a need for further research exists. The institution in the present study, which seeks to support students holistically and employs a resident director proficient in MI, provides a conducive environment to study MI in a residence hall.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the practice of MI by the resident director with college students living in his residence hall. This study was grounded and driven by the research questions below.

Research Questions

1. Does the practice of motivational interviewing increase a student's ability to make meaningful change in their life?

2. What are the effects of motivational interviewing on the relationship between the resident director and the college student?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to understand more fully the potential of MI in a residence hall, this literature review looks at the origins, practices, limitations, and skills needed to effectively practice MI. Potential limitations and issues within MI are also explained. Additionally, this literature review covers the role and expectations of a resident director, specifically within the context of student development. Finally, the relationship between MI and two student development theories is explored.

Overview of Motivational Interviewing

With its origins in addiction counseling, motivational interviewing (MI) is a technique used to encourage people to change through reducing their ambivalence and helping them discover reasons to change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Motivational interviewing is often thought of as an integrative approach, combining elements of both cognitive behavior therapy and humanistic behavior therapy (Scholl & Schmitt, 2009). Elements taken from cognitive behavior therapy include drawing out change statements and focusing on a client's desire to change. From humanistic behavior therapy, counselors are encouraged to use empathy, positive regard, and authenticity.

Since its inception by William Miller in 1983, MI has expanded beyond addiction counseling in its uses (Arkowitz, Westra, Miller, & Rollnick, 2008). In addition to substance abuse disorders, MI practitioners have also found success in the areas of diet,

exercise, gambling, and mental health (Arkowitz et al., 2008; Lundahl et al., 2010). A meta-analysis of over two decades has found MI practitioners consistently experience higher levels of change talk with their clients as well as less resistance to change in comparison to highly directive and confrontational counseling methods (Hettema, Steele, & Miller, 2005).

Varied results. While many studies have proven the validity of MI, not all trials have provided positive results. Baker et. al. (2006) found null results with clients attempting smoking cessation, while Treasure et al. (1998) witnessed insubstantial change in clients struggling with eating disorders. Furthermore, not all alcohol abuse trials have yielded successful results (Kuchipudi, Hobein, Fleckinger, & Iber, 1990).

One theory substantiating the failure of some trials compared to others is the proficiency of the MI practitioner. Understandably, different MI practitioners are more proficient in the skill and spirit of MI than their peers. Miller and Rose (2009) noted that the MI practitioner's style and delivery can either amplify or reduce their clients' ability to change.

Training. In light of the fact that not everyone easily masters MI, those interested in practicing MI must receive proper training. While a study showed that people attending a one-time MI workshop gained self-perceived proficiency in MI, the same study revealed those individuals saw no increased change in their clients (Miller & Mount, 2001). For most practitioners to experience tangible results in client change, ongoing training and practice are needed (Miller & Mount, 2001; Moyers, Martin, Catley, Harris, & Ahluwalia, 2003; Moyers, Miller, & Hendrickson, 2005).

Spirit of motivational interviewing. More importantly than just understanding how MI works, practitioners should understand what Miller and Rollnick (2013) described as the spirit of MI. The spirit of MI consists of experiential as well as a behavioral understanding of collaboration, acceptance, compassion, and evocation. "Without this underlying spirit, MI becomes a cynical trick, a way of trying to manipulate people into doing what they don't want to do: the expert magician skillfully steers the hapless client into the right choice" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 14). Miller and Rose (2009) noted that while, the spirit of MI is hard to evaluate, without it, it ceases to be MI.

Important components of motivational interviewing. Unique to MI are certain components that help to contribute to the framework of the practice. Key aspects include addressing ambivalence, rolling with resistance, and developing discrepancies, (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Before people can change, they are often in a period of ambivalence—that is, they can see both positive and negative reasons to change. According to Miller and Rollnick (2013), this often leads individuals to feel stuck, unable to move in a positive direction. Within the human experience are both "sustain talk"—statements favoring the current state—and "change talk"—statements favoring change. An important role of an MI practitioner is helping participants understand their ambivalence and encouraging them to verbalize both sides. Without understanding their own feelings, participants often feel too paralyzed to move forward with change.

A practitioner's ability to roll with resistance is vital to positioning themselves as a partner. Rolling with resistance requires accepting a participant's actions and ways of thinking and avoiding a communication style dominated by confronting and arguing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). If successful, helpers are better equipped to come alongside

the participant. Miller and Rollnick (2002) noted that taking the opposite view of the participant often leads to them arguing reasons against change. Instead, they suggest showing understanding, which allows more opportunities for the participant to explore reasons why they should change.

Lastly, MI practitioners seek to help participants develop discrepancies. After helping participants understand their ambivalence, MI practitioners help participants verbalize their values and beliefs. As change and sustain talk are held in conjunction with a participant's values and beliefs, many times discrepancies between the two arise (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). For example, an alcoholic getting inebriated every night of the week might be incongruent with their desire to spend more meaningful time with their children. As discrepancies are discovered, a participant's self-motivating desire for change often grows.

Core skills of motivational interviewing. Miller and Rollnick (2013) noted that certain skills are required for a helper to practice MI effectively:(a) asking open questions, (b) affirming, (c) reflective listening, (d)summarizing, and (e) informing and advising. These competencies are often shared with other counseling forms, especially those under the umbrella of person-centered approaches (Hill, 2009). While these skills do not fully constitute MI, they remain essential to its success.

At the heart of asking an open question is evoking the participant to reflect on their experiences and to elaborate their thoughts further. Conversely, asking a closed question seeks to obtain specific information and can usually be answered succinctly. Miller and Rollnick (2013) viewed open questions as crucial to understanding a person's

lens with which they view life; such questions help the practitioner begin to develop a plan toward helping the participant change.

An important aspect of MI is attributing value and capability to the participant, which Miller and Rollnick (2013) suggested is done through affirming. Affirming is both a tangible action as well as a way of thinking for the helper. To offer affirmation, the helper comments on specific strengths, abilities, and efforts of the client, reinforcing to the participant they have many attributes to bring to the table. Affirming is a way of thinking, in that a helper must be disciplined to be attuned constantly to filtering and processing the positive attributes of the participant.

The skill of reflective listening requires the helper to guess the meaning of a participant's statement. Benefits of this include clarifying understanding between the two individuals and allowing the participant to hear their thoughts and feelings in another way, giving them the opportunity to reflect further. "Good reflective listening tends to keep the person talking, exploring, and considering" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 34).

In practice, a helper builds on reflective listening throughout the session by summarizing. Summarizing seeks to collect important points made by the participant, organize them, and offer them back in a succinct way. This method affirms to the participant that the helper has been listening, leading the participant to feel valued. It also allows the participant to fill in any gaps of understanding that the helper might have missed or that they have not yet shared.

Lastly, a helper must acquire the skill of informing and advising within the context of MI. Avoiding a highly directive style, a helper should only offer advice or recommendation with permission from the participant. Furthermore, the process of

informing and advising should not be a one-way communication of content with the participant but rather a collaborative effort to help the participant understand the information in a way that fits within their framework (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

The skills and theories that define MI demonstrate this communication style has implications beyond clinical counseling alone (Lundahl et al., 2010). Recent research has sought to connect the practice of MI with college practitioners' role in the growth and development of students (Iarussi, 2013).

Student Development Theory

Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quaye (2016) defined student development theory as "a collection of theories related to college students that explain how they grow and develop holistically, with increased complexity, while enrolled in a postsecondary environment" (p. 6). Resident directors and other student affairs professionals, when working effectively, apply these theories to foster growth and development in the college students with whom they work. Without a framework of student development theories, student affairs practice proves severely lacking and inefficient (Patton et al., 2016).

Iarussi (2013) found the use of MI with college students fosters college student development. She connected principles of MI with two student development theories: Rendon's (1994) validation theory and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven-vector theory (Iarussi, 2013).

Validation theory. According to Rendon (1994), validation is "an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development" (p. 46). The more students are validated, the more meaningful their lives will be both academically and interpersonally. Iarussi (2013)

noted that "MI's emphasis on the expression of empathy and the evocation of client's perspective, values, and goals" aligns closely with Rendon's validation theory and promotes college student growth and development (p. 163).

Seven-vector theory. Even more in-depth, Iarussi (2013) explored the connections between MI and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven-vector theory, which explores a college student's path toward individualization. The seven vectors or stages include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity.

Within the realm of higher education, student affairs practitioners use student development theories to assist them in helping college students grow and better understand themselves (Patton et al., 2016). One position many colleges and universities rely on in the development of their students is the resident director.

Resident Director

While historically the role of resident director was limited to staffing dormitories or serving as a housemother, significant strides have been made since the 1960s to shift to a more professional vocation—to one of student education and development (Frederiksen, 1993; Schroeder & Mable, 1994). Resident directors are often at the forefront of the holistic development of students and have a broad range of interactions with the individuals they serve. The institution in the current study highly values their resident directors pursuing the development of their students.

University Context

The present study was conducted at a private, faith-based, liberal arts institution in the Midwest with about 2,000 students. As a predominately residential campus, most students are under the care and supervision of a full-time resident director. At the institution, resident directors help students in personal adjustment and conflict, intervene in crisis situations, and maintain current files of counsel, discipline, and informal advising sessions.

The focus of this case study followed a resident director in an all-male residence hall at the institution. The hall consists of approximately 270 residents and includes students from their freshman to senior year. The resident director is in his fifth year in his role and has used motivational interviewing techniques throughout the last two years.

Conclusion

As suggested by the literature, MI has great potential to affect the growth and development of college students positively by helping them achieve lasting change in their lives. However, MI is a recent practice and scarcely used in the field of higher education outside of alcohol abuse intervention and, more recently, discipline sanctioning. Thus, there remain many gaps in the research for its many possible uses. One of the gaps is the implications of resident directors using MI within their specific residence halls. What benefits, if any, exist for students and hall directors through the use of MI?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose and Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the current use of motivational interviewing and the effects it has in a university residence hall. This included evaluating whether MI leads students to move toward change, as well as measuring the relational impact MI has on the resident director and students receiving help.

In light of the lack of research on practitioners implementing MI in college residence halls, a case study design was selected with the aim that an investigative approach would provide preliminary findings to a new area of application. Creswell (2007) explained that a case study explores a specific topic within a bounded system. For the purpose of this case study, the bounded system was the use of motivational interviewing by one resident director in a residence hall at single university. The case study was also confined to the time period of October 2018 to January 2019.

Participants

As a case study of a single residence hall on the campus of the present university, the participants were the resident director and the students who participated in motivational interviewing with the resident director. While the resident director regularly uses MI with many students in the residence hall, participants in this study were limited to those struggling academically who had been placed on the "Below C-" list. The Below

C- list is an internal document created by the university's Office of the Registrar. At the middle of the semester, faculty are required to submit grades to the Office of the Registrar for any student currently earning a D+ or lower. This information is compiled as the Below C- list and made available only to university faculty and staff who need to know this information in order to provide support for students on the list.

Once the Below C- list was received by individual Residence Directors, they reached out to students and asked to meet. If a student on the Below C- list did not respond to the initial contact of the resident director for a meeting, the resident director tried twice more. These meetings usually consist of checking in with the student and providing a list of resources to help them improve their grade. The students who participated in the current study are those who agreed to meet with the resident director about their academic struggles and who agreed to complete a questionnaire following their meeting.

The residence hall included in the research is a single-sex, male hall. Of the five students to respond, four were freshmen, and one was a junior. All respondents had multiple classes with grades below C-, with two students having three courses below C-. Of the five students who completed the questionnaire, the most common answer to why they thought they had multiple grades below C- was that the course material was too hard to understand. Three of the five listed test anxiety and lack of motivation as reasons, and two of the five listed poor study habits, procrastination, and dislike of the class. One response was also noted for both mental health and an inability to connect with the professor. Additionally, participation in this study was voluntary, and students' identities were not included in order to protect their anonymity.

Procedures

To increase validity in qualitative research, Creswell (2007) noted the importance of clarifying bias by the researcher. This clarification was accomplished through the researcher addressing "past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (p. 208). In regard to this study, the resident director is the supervisor of the researcher and works in the same residence hall. They are in their second year of working closely together.

In March 2018, the researcher first approached the resident director who practices motivational interviewing to see if he had interest in participating in a case study. Once the director agreed, the researcher moved forward in developing the methodology for the case study.

The first step in the research was to complete and submit the application to the university's Internal Review Board. Once approved, the researcher sought student participation in the study. To obtain this, the researcher had the resident director provide students with an optional choice to provide feedback on their experience meeting with him after they had completed their Below C- meeting. If the student agreed, the resident director provided the student with a questionnaire via email, with a SurveyMonkey link attached. Within the questionnaire, students developed a self-generated unique identifier to protect anonymity. The survey results were then directed to the researcher and not the resident director. The survey consisted of Likert-scale questions along with a few open-ended questions at the end (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to assess both the student's confidence and commitment to change as well as to gauge how the meeting impacted the relationship between the student and the resident director.

Once the Below C- meetings with students were completed and questionnaires collected, the researcher arranged two interviews with the resident director. The interviews were conducted face-to-face a few days apart and sought to gain information on the resident director's use of motivational interviewing within the residence hall, drawing mostly from its use in Below C- conversations. Both interviews were recorded in the resident director's office. Once both student questionnaires were collected and interviews with the resident director were completed and transcribed, data analysis began.

Throughout data collection, procedures were established to protect the anonymity of the student participants. First, the researcher did not have access to—nor did he discuss—the names of the students on the Below C- list with the resident director. This ensured the researcher did not know the pool of participants answering the questionnaire. Second, the questionnaire did not contain any questions so specific as to reveal the identity of the participant. Finally, the resident director did not have access to the results of the individual questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) explained that case study research requires "detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes" (p. 73). Upon personally collecting and coding all data received from the questionnaires and interviews, the researcher began to develop tentative themes around the study. The analysis focused on two areas: the potential impact motivational interviewing had on students' ability to change and the effect MI had on the relationship between the resident director and the student throughout the process.

From the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics and then identified patterns in the data. Analysis of the quantitative data consisted of comparing the means between student responses of how they felt before and after they met with the resident director. Differences in how students' confidence and commitment to change their below C- grades because of their meeting with the resident director were noted.

Validity

In order to increase validity, the resident director in the study was given time to review the themes drawn from his interviews to see if they properly reflect his experiences in the residence hall using MI. By using member checking, the resident director had the opportunity to present the researcher with feedback on the accuracy of the interpretations and themes made by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher used thick descriptions to increase validity of the findings. Creswell (2007) noted that thick description is necessary "to make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied" (p. 204).

Anticipated Benefits of the Study

While motivational interviewing has been used extensively in many areas of counseling, there remains a gap in the research in its use by resident directors seeking growth and development of the students living in their residence halls. While this research is exploratory in nature, it could offer helpful data to understand if MI effectively leads college students to change and how the use of MI affects the relationship between resident directors and students. More specifically, this study can provide counseling techniques for interacting with students struggling academically.

Furthermore, this study can provide universities with helpful information in the training and development of their residence life staff. Evidence of successful results in one of the university's residence halls using MI can suggest replication in other residence halls. Additionally, the results of the study could be compared to the values and goals of the present university's residence life department to evaluate if congruence exists.

Conclusion

By selecting a case study design of one specific residence hall, the goal of this research was to begin to explore the potential motivational interviewing has on the ability to help students make meaningful change, as well as how it affects the relational dynamics between students and their resident director. Themes drawn from the research provide data for higher education institutions to consider pursuing MI as a part of their residence life and academic support operations.

Chapter 4

Results

The results consist of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative results were obtained from the questionnaire students received after meeting with the resident director. The qualitative results were obtained from two open-ended questions on the questionnaire as well as two face-to-face interviews with the resident director. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used when considering the essence of the research. After collecting the questionnaire responses and the interviews, the results were used to answer the research questions:

1. Does the practice of motivational interviewing lead to a student's ability to make meaningful change in their life?

2. What are the effects of motivational interviewing on the relationship between the resident director and the college student?

Quantitative Results

In light of the literature, the researcher anticipated an increase in students' confidence to raise their grades above C- after meeting with the resident director who used MI. Similarly, the researcher expected an increase in students' commitment to improving their grades. Additionally, the researcher believed students would have a better understanding of how to improve their grades after the meeting with the resident director.

Descriptive statistics. Table 1 displays the results of the questionnaire. Questions were answered on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree," 4 representing neutral, and 7 representing "Strongly Agree." Additionally, the number of classes each participant had below C- is listed.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	_P1_	_P2_	_P3_	_P4_	_P5_	_Mean_	_SD_
Classes below C-	2	3	2	2	3	2.4	.55
Confidence before meeting RD	7	6	4	3	2	4.4	2.07
Confidence after meeting RD	7	6	5	5	2	5	1.87
Commitment before	7	7	5	5	2	5.2	2.05
Commitment after	7	7	5	6	2	5.4	2.07
Know how to improve grades	6	6	5	6	2	5	1.73
RD is supportive	7	7	6	6	2	5.6	2.07

According to Table 1, before meeting with the resident director, respondents scored an average of 4.4 on the 7-point Likert scale in their confidence to improve their grades above C-. After they met with the resident director who used MI, respondents scored an average of 5. For commitment to work toward improving their grades, respondents scored an average of 5.2 on the Likert scale before meeting with the resident director and an average of 5.4 after meeting with him.

Comparing the means to determine the difference between students' confidence and commitment to improve their grades to above a C- from before to after meeting with

the resident director, a slight increase is seen in both factors. On average, there was a 0.6 increase in confidence to improve their grades to above a C- and a 0.2 increase in their commitment to improve those same grades. While the average student confidence and commitment increased after meeting with the resident director, both changes were minimal. Due to both the number of participants in the study and the minimal increase, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions.

Other quantitative data include a respondent's average score of 5 regarding if they better understood the ways of improving their grades as a result of meeting with the resident director and an average score of 5.6 when asked if the resident director was supportive in their meeting with him. Both of these means point to the general agreement that the resident director was helpful and supportive in his meetings with students.

Qualitative Analysis

Analysis of the open-response questions from students and two face-to-face interviews with the resident director provided greater depth to the quantitative results. Furthermore, the interviews with the resident director added more breadth as he drew on additional experiences using motivational interviewing in the residence hall. Based on this qualitative data, various themes emerged.

Enacting meaningful change. Since he began using motivational interviewing, the resident director has witnessed positive changes made by students. Two factors he believed influenced this positive change include students taking greater ownership of change behaviors and their ability to enact change behavior in future circumstances.

Theme 1: Ownership. According to the resident director, MI "has become this form of dialogue where the student and I can explore change and their own motivation

for change in situations they're in, rather than me dictating or enforcing a change to take place." He mentioned that he has found the most success in Below C- meetings when he leaves the ownership to change on the student.

The structure of MI helps provide the scaffolding for students to take ownership of change. The resident director mentioned posing questions like "What is the most effective thing?" or "How committed to change are you?" keep students in the driver's seat to their own outcomes. He believes much of MI entails providing the space for students to recognize and capitalize on the resources they already have.

Theme 2: Promotes future initiative. A benefit the resident director noticed in using MI was the ways it helps students enact change in the future. Throughout his time using MI, the resident director noticed many cases in which students continue to "work for change for themselves or advocate for their own change." The resident director specifically mentioned an occasion when a student he met with the first semester due to academic and personal challenges found himself again on academic probation the following semester. This time, however, the student was better equipped to take initiative for change. The resident director explained,

> Skills that we worked on or that he was able to develop in the first time through, he is now enacting for this semester. He is utilizing counseling resources, he is utilizing people around him, reaching out for help, communicating with professors. All of this in a way that I think his likelihood of being able to cope and succeed this semester in the midst of dealing with some of these challenges is a lot higher.

The resident director attributes this future initiative to the aforementioned ownership students develop through MI. He noted, "Forced change does not last and so in these college years we really want to help them develop principles or skills to help them make decisions moving forward."

Resident director and student relationship. Since using MI, the resident director has seen a relational improvement with students in the residence hall. A student noted the interaction with the resident director made him "feel known as a person outside of school." The resident director attributed a portion of this relational improvement with students to his movement away from an authoritarian posture to one that seeks to come alongside students in a partnership. The resident director reflected,

It seems like a lot of students I interact with are used to interactions where authority figures have told them what to do or have instructed them in a certain way and so sometimes I wonder if I see a sense of relief of like, "Oh okay you really respect me or you're going to honor me here or you're going to listen to what I have to say or my own input in my situation is going to really play a part." In that situation, I almost see relief sometimes or this sense of encouragement by that.

Theme 1: Empathy and respect for students. The use of MI has increased the resident director's level of empathy and respect for students. Part of this development arose from understanding the "complicated nature of situations that students find themselves in." In the questionnaire, a student affirmed this empathy by stating the resident director "understands the struggle many students go through." Additionally,

multiple students claimed they felt listened to and encouraged after their meeting with the resident director.

One way the resident director believed the use of MI provides respect for students lies in how the practitioner asks permission to offer advice or information instead of just telling the student what to do. If the student agrees, the resident director offers potential avenues for change in what MI refers to as "menu setting". The student then has the ability to pick something off the "menu" if they want. The resident director believes this process values a student's choices and has seen a positive response to this process.

Theme 2: Students on the margins. One specific segment of students in which the resident director has seen a relational improvement is students on the margins or who live outside of the expectations of the university. Motivational interviewing has given him the freedom to explore the possibility that the university might not be the right fit for the student if they are not willing to change certain aspects of their behavior. However, if they do value remaining at the university, the resident director has the ability to work with the student in how to modify the behavior in a way that aligns with university expectations. The resident director stated:

> MI has helped me to hold up the standards of the university and also maintain strong relationships with the students where they understand that I can be a safe and approachable person or a person that is willing to walk alongside them in the process.

Theme 3: Additional support. In reflection on MI meetings, the resident director noted how it has opened up doors to support students—many times beyond the situation they are meeting to discuss. He stated, "What's nice about motivational interviewing is it

allows enough room to address a number of concerns ranging from personal issues, to things going on in their home life, to mental health problems, to poor study habits."

As he and one student explored factors holding the student back from doing well academically, the student revealed one of the reasons he was struggling was a recent loss of a close friend. A result of this loss was that the grief consumed a large amount of his mental capacity and hindered him from doing well academically. In response to this, the resident director and the student began to develop a plan to care for him in ways that went beyond his grades for the semester.

Supplemental benefits to using motivational interviewing. While the goal of MI is to benefit the student in need of change, the resident director mentioned ways it has positively impacted his own life.

Theme 1: Resident director mental health. When the resident director was approaching Below C- conversations with a more directing and authoritarian approach, he found himself overwhelmed when students did not respond or seek change in their life. However, through the use of MI, he noted,

> There's certainly a mental health benefit to the fact that, when I go into a meeting
> with these students, I do not feel the necessity that they change in order for me to
> be a competent Hall Director or to effectively do my job.

He felt reduced stress and anxiety as he moved away from the notion that his value and success as a resident director was tied to convincing students to change.

Theme 2: Personal growth. Additionally, the resident director believed many of the core competencies of MI like reflective listening and asking open-ended questions have yielded growth in other areas of his life. He stated,

It's affected my work life, personal life, family life, and even probably my faith

life as well. Spiritually, really recognizing my role in terms of helping people

change and not over-estimating my capacity, and so, that's helped me to

recognize my limits where God is in control and I'm not. And in my personal

wellbeing it's helped me to establish better boundaries of what I can do and what

I can't do.

Mixed Analysis

While the quantitative data showed limited change for participants after meeting

with the resident director in relation to confidence and commitment to improve their

grades above a C-, the qualitative data could explain why those changes did occur. The

resident director could recall instances in which he witnessed noticeable change in

students after they met with him. However, taking the results from both the quantitative

and qualitative analyses, it is not possible to conclude clearly that motivational

interviewing leads to meaningful change for students.

Conversely, all of the data indicates that MI benefits the relationship between the

resident director and the student. Results from the quantitative data revealed that all but

one of the five respondents either agreed or strongly agreed the resident director was

supportive. Themes of help, encouragement, and understanding emerged in the students'

open-ended answers describing the resident director after meeting with him.

Furthermore, the resident director noticed how the use of MI consistently improved his

relationship with students in the residence hall. The following discussion of findings

presents possible reasons for both students' change and an improved relationship with the

resident director.

Chapter 5

Discussion

As seen in the results of the present study, motivational interviewing has the potential to help resident directors effectively support students, specifically within the context of academic success meetings. While not conclusive, this corroborates other studies that found MI successful in addressing issues within higher education such as binge drinking and the discipline process (Borsari & Carey, 2000; Branscum & Sharma, 2010; Fueglein et al., 2012).

Though the quantitative results show only slight increases in students' confidence to improve grades (0.6) and commitment to change (0.2), there was notably positive movement in both change factors. This increase is similar to findings by Lundahl et al. (2010), who point to MI's ability to assist people in a wide range of readiness levels in making positive direction toward change. Further supporting this claim, student participants averaged a 5 on a 7-point Likert Scale when asked if they knew better how to improve their grades after meeting with the resident director.

Data collected from the two face-to-face interviews revealed the resident director experienced success in partnering with students when he moved away from a directing style with students and adopted a guiding style, a core tenant of MI. As seen in the data, this movement reduced pressure on him to change students while it simultaneously equipped him to help students develop ownership for the changes they needed to make.

This aligned with the research that states a more legalistic directing style has proven incompatible with helping students grow and develop (Ghering, 2001; Lake, 2009). Much of this can be attributed to MI's focus on coming alongside college students and being less adversarial in its method (Lake, 2009). The resident director noted how MI has helped shape his interactions with students as more like a partnership. Additionally, the resident director noted how he has felt less frustration and tension with students in meetings, which corroborates previous research that MI reduces opportunities for disagreements and resistance by helping practitioners avoid an authoritarian posture (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Furthermore, the resident director's increased empathy and respect for students can be attributed to him embracing core aspects of MI. One of the core tendencies of MI is attributing value and capability to the participant, which Miller and Rollnick (2013) suggested is done through affirming. Affirming is both a tangible action as well as a way of thinking for the helper. Multiple students, when responding to the questionnaire, described the resident director as encouraging and supportive.

Another connection to the literature appears in the resident director's observation that students often take future initiative for change after experiencing MI one time. This was reflected in the resident director's work with the student who, after meeting with him one semester, came into a meeting the next semester already leveraging resources like talking his professors and visiting the counseling center, which they had previously discussed. This result reflects Iarussi's (2013) findings that MI fosters college student development especially in connection with the first three stages of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven-vector theory, a model that explores a college student's path

toward individualization. The first three stages include developing competence, managing emotions, and moving through autonomy toward interdependence. In the student observation noted by the resident director, the student took part in all three of these stages of development.

The use of MI by resident directors and academic affairs offices could also lead to better use of resources. An advantage to MI is it requires fewer meetings or interventions with students than other forms of counseling and advising (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Additionally, if MI is successful in helping students take future initiative to change, the institution could see a decrease in the need to meet with the same student multiple times. This could open up opportunities for both resident directors and academic affairs offices to cast their net wider as they seek to support students.

Implications for Practice

In light of the findings, one implication for the practice of resident directors and other student affairs practitioners is a movement away from a directive and authoritarian posture when seeking to help students change. In both the present study and previous research, helping students discover their own motivation and reasons for change has proven far more effective than taking the posture of an expert and telling the student what they need to do (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Resident directors and other student affairs practitioners would be advised to find ways to minimize their own presence in their meetings and seek opportunities to elevate the ideas, motivations, and values of students. One practical way of doing this is by adopting techniques developed by MI such as reflective listening. Reflective listening requires the practitioner to make their best guess about the meaning of a student's account and then state it back to them in a different way.

This practice keeps the focus and attention on the student and, when executed well, allows the student to further explore their thoughts and motivations from another angle (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Furthermore, the director of residence life or housing at colleges and universities should consider recommending MI as a way to help reduce anxiety and help the mental health of resident directors. As seen in the present study, MI reduced the pressure the resident director felt in whether or not the student decided to change. This was accomplished through the use of MI creating a healthy perspective of student ownership for the resident director. In a highly relational role that often leads to stress and anxiety, MI could be a tool to help improve the mental health of resident directors.

Finally, academic affairs offices at higher education institutions should consider collaborating with resident directors using MI as they seek to support and resource students. One potential benefit to an increased desire to change is that students will begin to seek out resources to help them accomplish this goal. Through the MI technique known as "menu setting," resident directors can help point students toward the academic affairs office.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the close relationship between the researcher and the resident director, the first limitation is the potential for researcher bias. This researcher bias is especially significant when interpreting qualitative data, as there could have been a proclivity to portray the resident director in a more positive light. Additionally, potential bias could be present in the student respondents. Previous positive or negative interactions with the resident director could influence how they answered the questionnaire.

Another limitation was the number of participants in the study. Due to the low response rate on the questionnaire, the researcher was only able to collect data from five students. These five students were a small portion of the 23 students who met with the resident director and received the questionnaire. The small size also limited the type of descriptive statistics that were performed.

The timing of data collection also presented a limitation in this study. While the questionnaire was sent out during the process of Below C- meetings with the resident director, some students did not receive the questionnaire until a week after they had met with the director. Furthermore, some students chose not to complete the survey until multiple weeks after they had met with the resident director. This gap in time may have hindered their ability to reflect on the Below C- meeting with the resident director.

Additionally, the institution type and residence hall demographics limited the scope of the research. Since the research took place at a small faith-based institution in an all-male residence hall, the data lacked diversity. Therefore, the results found in this study may differ from a study collecting data from various institutions and residence halls.

Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the limited research available regarding the use of MI in a residence hall and the limitations in the present study, clear suggestions appear for future research. The first suggestion is to increase the size of the research and widen the demographics from which the participants were drawn. An increased number of participants would allow additional forms of descriptive statistics to be performed with the data. This would lead to more conclusive results on the effectiveness of MI. Additionally, including a

variation of gender and institutional type in a study would provide a more balanced understanding of the effectiveness of MI.

In order to increase the validity of research on MI within a residence hall, the researcher also suggests a study in which MI meetings with students are recorded and examined by MI experts. This would confirm the reliability of the resident director staying true to the techniques and requirements of the practice of MI, not just using principles from MI.

The addition of a control group within the study of MI in a residence hall would also add validity to the research. This would help determine if the practice of MI led to an increased change in students or if a plethora of other ways resident directors interact with students in need of change had the same or greater effectiveness.

Another suggestion for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study on MI in a residence hall. A longitudinal study would lead to greater certainty to observe if students made lasting tangible changes in their life. In the case of Below C- meetings, students' grades could be observed at the end of the semester and could even be tracked into the following semester.

Finally, the researcher proposes a study be done on the use of MI between a resident director and students in cases where there are perceived and/or actual power differences. An example of this would be to study a white resident director using MI with students of color in his or her residence hall. It would be helpful to see if the practice of MI decreases the power differential by placing more ownership on the student. Additionally, it would be useful to see if the core competencies of MI like affirming and

treating the student with positive regard help decrease the distance created by racial or ethnic differences.

Conclusion

While the exploratory nature of the present study does not provide conclusive evidence to the effectiveness of motivational interviewing in a residence hall, both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest it may be a useful tool in helping students in need of change. Specific outcomes of MI present in this study can lead to positive change within a student, including students' ability to take ownership of their own motivation to change and their ability to take initiative for change in the future. The study also suggests a potential benefit to specifically using MI within the context of academic success meetings with students.

Additionally, in agreement with other studies, MI had a positive effect on the relationship between the resident director and the student. Through the use of MI, the resident director found a deeper level of respect and empathy for students and their challenges. The resident director believed multiple aspects of MI—such as collaboration, reflective listening, and affirmation—have increased his effectiveness in partnering with students in need of change. Likewise, multiple students felt supported, heard, and understood in their interactions with the resident director. Overall, motivational interviewing within a residence hall has the potential to help students achieve change while also caring for them in a holistic way.

References

Arkowitz, H., Westra, H. A., Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2008). *Motivational interviewing in the treatment of psychological problems*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469–480. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469

Baer, J. S., Beadnell, B., Garrett, S. B., Hartzler, B., Wells, E. A., & Peterson, P. L. (2008). Adolescent change language within a brief motivational intervention and substance use outcomes. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, *22*, 570–575. doi:10.1037/a0013022

Baker, A., Richmond, R., Haile, M., Lewin, T. J., Carr, V. J., Taylor, R. L., . . . Wilhelm, K. (2006). A randomized controlled trial of a smoking cessation intervention among young people with a psychotic disorder. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *163*, 1934–1942. doi:10.1176/ajp.2006.163.11.1934

Borsari, B., & Carey, K. B. (2000). Effects of a brief motivational intervention with college student drinkers. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *68*, 728–733. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.68.4.728

Branscum, P., & Sharma, M. (2010). A review of motivational interviewing-based

    interventions targeting problematic drinking among college students. *Alcoholism*

    Treatment Quarterly, *28*, 63–77. doi:10.1080/07347320903436276

Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco,

    CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

    approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Fredericksen, C. F. (1993). A brief history of collegiate housing. In R. B. Winston, Jr., S.

    Anchors, & Associates (Eds.), *Student housing and residential life* (pp. 167–183).

    San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fueglein, J. S., Price, K. S., Alicea-Rodriguez, A., McKinney, J. W., & Jimenez, A. L.

    (2012). The e.p.i.c. journey sanctioning model. *Journal of College and Character*,

    13(3), n.p. doi:10.1515/jcc-2012-1916

Ghering, D. (2001). The objectives of student discipline and the process that's due: Are

    they compatible? *NASPA Journal, 38*, 466–481. doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1155

Hettema, J., Steele, J., & Miller, W. R. (2005). Motivational interviewing. *Annual Review*

    of Clinical Psychology, *1*, 91–111. doi:10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.143833

Iarussi, M. M. (2013). Examining how motivational interviewing may foster college

    student development. *Journal of College Counseling*, *16*, 158–175.

    doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2013.00034.x

Kuchipudi, V., Hobein, K., Fleckinger, A., & Iber, F. L. (1990). Failure of a 2-hour

    motivational intervention to alter recurrent drinking behavior in alcoholics with

gastrointestinal disease. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, *51*, 356–360. doi:10.15288/jsa.1990.51.356

Lake, P. F. (2009). *Beyond discipline: Managing the modern higher education environment*. Bradenton, FL: Hierophant Enterprises.

Lundahl, B. W., Kunz, C., Brownwell, C., Tollefson, D. & Burke, B. L. (2010). A meta-analysis of motivational interviewing: Twenty-five years of empirical studies. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *20*, 137–160. doi:10.1177/1049731509347850

Miller, W. R., & Mount, K. A. (2001). A small study of training in motivational interviewing: Does one workshop change clinician and client behaviors? *Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology*, *29*, 457–471. doi:10.1017/S1352465801004064

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people change* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2013). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Miller, W. R., & Rose, G. S. (2009). Toward a theory of motivational interviewing. *American Psychologist*, *64*, 527–537. doi:10.1037/a0016830

Moyers, T. B., Martin, T., Catley, D., Harris, K. J., & Ahluwalia, J. S. (2003). Reliability of the motivational interviewing skills code. *Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *31*, 177–184. doi:10.1017/S1352465803002054

Moyers, T. B., Miller, W. R., & Hendrickson, S. M. L. (2005). How does motivational interviewing work? Therapist interpersonal skill predicts client involvement

within motivational interviewing sessions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*, 590–598. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.73.4.590

Patton, L. D., Renn, A. R., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student development in college* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rash, E. M. (2008). Clinicians' perspectives on motivational interviewing-based brief interventions in college health. *Journal of American College Health, 57*, 379–380. doi:10.3200/JACH.57.3.379-384

Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, *19*, 33–51. doi:10.1007/BF01191156

Scholl, M. B., & Schmitt, D. M. (2009). Using motivational interviewing to address college client alcohol abuse. *Journal of College Counseling*, *12*, 57–70. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2009.tb00040.x

Schroeder, C. C., & Mable, P. (1994). Residence halls and the college experience: Past and present. In C. C. Schroeder, P. Mable, & Associates (Eds.), *Realizing the educational potential of residence halls* (pp. 3-21). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Treasure, J. L., Katzman, M., Schmidt, U., Troop, N., Todd, G., & DeSilva, P. (1998). Engagement and outcome in the treatment of bulimia nervosa: First phase of sequential design comparing motivational enhancement therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, *37*, 405–418. doi:10.1016/S0005-7967(98)00149-1

Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

1. I am currently classified by credit hours as a: (freshman/sophomore/junior/senior)
2. I have (0/1/2/3/4 or more) classes that are below a C-.
3. I believe the reasons I currently have a below C- in one or more of my classes include: Check all that apply. (course material is hard to understand/do not connect with the professor/poor study habits/procrastination/test anxiety/family concerns/mental health/lack of motivation/difficulties outside of class/don't like the class)
4. **Before** meeting with my resident director, I was confident I could improve my grades to C- or above? (strongly disagree-strongly agree)
5. **After** meeting with my resident director, I am confident I can improve my grades to C- or above? (strongly disagree-strongly agree)
6. **Before** meeting with my resident director, I was committed to improve my grades of D- or below. (strongly disagree-strongly agree)
7. **After** meeting with my resident director, I am committed to improve my grades of D- or below. (strongly disagree-strongly agree)
8. As a result of meeting with my resident director, I better understand the ways I can improve my grades (strongly disagree-strongly agree)
9. I believe my resident director is supportive. (strongly disagree-strongly-agree)
10. The actions or resources I used before my meeting with my resident director to improve my grades include: Check all that apply. (talking to your professor/visiting the Academic Enrichment Center/tutoring/study tables/counseling/other)
11. After meeting with my resident director, the actions or resources I plan on using in the following weeks include: Check all that apply. (talking to your professor/visiting the Academic Enrichment Center/tutoring/study tables/counseling/other)
12. In what ways was, if any, was the interaction with your resident director helpful?
13. What words would you use to describe your resident director in this meeting?

Appendix B

Resident Director Interview Protocol

Background information
1. How long have you been a resident director in the current hall?
2. How many students do you typically meet with throughout a semester?
    a. What are the main reasons for these meetings?

Motivational interviewing
1. What is motivational interviewing?
2. Where did you first learn about motivational interviewing (MI)?
3. What training have you received for MI?
4. What benefits do you believe MI offers in a residence hall setting?

Motivational interviewing within the residence hall
1. When did you first begin using MI in your current residence hall?
2. What situations/student experiences have you used MI in the residence hall?
3. What impact on students have you seen since implementing MI?
    a. How do you know MI has had an impact?
4. How has the use of MI impacted your view of the students in your residence hall?
5. How do MI interventions effect the relationship between you and the students?

MI in below C- meetings:
1. What does your typical Below C- meeting look like?
2. How do you use MI in these meetings?
3. What are some typical questions that you ask students?
4. What resources do you offer students in these meetings?
5. Have you received any formal or informal feedback from your use of MI from students?