



# Strong Willed Women: A Qualitative Analysis of First-Year, Female College Students in Integrated Learning-Living Communities

**Jordyn Baker**

**Advisor: Savio D. Franco, Ph.D.**

## Research Question

How do female first-year undergraduate students describe their social, educational, and personal experiences while participating in a female-only integrated learning-living community at the University of Dayton?

### Abstract

Living-Learning Communities are a nexus for the student experience. They bring classroom learning to the residence halls and build community through out-of-class social interactions. Through ten interviews, this phenomenological study sought to understand how integrated learning-living communities at the University of Dayton influenced the social, personal, and educational experiences of female, first-year students. Female students spoke positively about their ILLC experiences, stating that they provide friendships and comfort for classroom experiences as well as academic support in the form of study groups and motivation.

### Methods

- Phenomenological Research
- Eight individual interviews with former and current ILLC students at UD

“We seek to understand others, instead of just seeing them”  
- Rachel

“[We] are strong-willed women, who stand up for what we believe in”  
- Lay’la

“It doesn’t matter that I’m a girl, I can do whatever the guys are doing”  
- Gillian

## Key Findings

- Students found motivation to stick with their major because they saw female peers succeeding
- View women as strong, compassionate, and passionate—in general and in their field
- ILLCs provide:
  - Educational support systems
  - Accessible study groups
  - Friends with common interests
  - Excitement about future career

## Future Research

- Academic Persistence for female students in ILLCs
- Contribution to Sense of Belonging
- How ILLC membership impacts mental health

## Select References

Jessup-Anger, J. E., Johnson, B. N., & Wawryznanski, M. R. (2012). Exploring living-learning communities as a venue for men’s identity construction. *Journal of College and University Housing*, 38/39(2/1), 162-175.