



Examining the relationship between living environments and sense of belonging: A multi-institutional study

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Background

- Decades long assumptions about the benefits of living on-campus
- Including the idea that on-campus residences better promote belonging (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996)
- Not necessarily true for all students (Harwood et al., 2012; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012)
- Unclear which aspects of living environment actually promote belonging
- Leaves questions about whether belonging can be facilitated in other environments

Framework

- Many different scholars have used many different definitions of belonging
- Early discussions come from Schlossberg's (1989) work on mattering
- Johnson (2007) uses a composite definition: "a fundamental need to feel that they are an important part of a large community that is valuable, supportive, and affirming" (p. 527).
- Critiques that belonging focuses on assimilation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón et al., 2000)
- Calls to understand how institutional environments facilitate belonging (Cabrera et al., 1999; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005)

Framework

- Researchers have identified differences in belonging for Students of Color or minoritized students (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016)
 - Understanding themselves as part of a community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)
 - Incorporating safety and respect as part of their definitions (Vaccaro and Newman, 2016)
- Based on previous research we use two measures of belonging:
 - safety and community

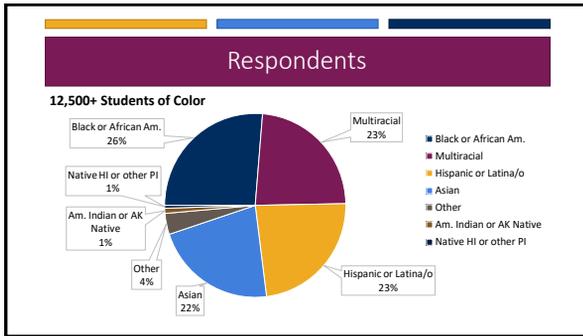
Purpose

- To challenge long-held assumptions about students' living experiences
 - Our understandings of safety, belonging, and community may not apply to Students of Color
 - The approaches of on-campus residences may not promote safety and community for all students equitably

1. How does *Sense of Safety* and *Sense of Community* differ by students' a) racial/ethnic identification? b) living environment?
2. How does *Sense of Safety* and *Sense of Community* differ by students' living environment when controlling for racial/ethnic identification?
3. What are typical characteristics of living environments for racial/ethnic minority students?

Data & Measures

- 2018 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement
- 76 institutions received living environment questions
- Sense of Safety (Agree/Disagree)
 - I feel physically safe where I live.
 - I feel free from harassment and discrimination where I live.
 - I feel comfortable being myself where I live.
- Sense of Community
 - I feel valued where I live
 - I feel a sense of community where I live.
 - I can resolve conflicts that might arise within my living arrangements



How does Sense of Safety and Sense of Community differ by students' racial/ethnic identification?

	Sense of Safety		Sense of Community	
	Low	High	Low	High
Am. Indian or AK Native			Am. Indian or AK Native	+
Asian	-		Asian	
Black or African Am.	+	-	Black or African Am.	+
Hispanic or Latina/o	-	+	Hispanic or Latina/o	-
Native HI or other PI			Native HI or other PI	
Other			Other	
Multiracial			Multiracial	

How does Sense of Safety and Sense of Community differ by students' living environment?

	Sense of Safety		Sense of Community	
	Low	High	Low	High
Traditional hall	+	-	Traditional hall	+
Suite style	+	-	Suite style	+
Apartment			Apartment	+
Frat. or sorority housing		+	Frat. or sorority housing	-
House	-	+	House	-
Definitely no	+	-	Definitely no	+
Definitely yes	-	+	Definitely yes	-

How does Sense of Safety differ by students' living environment when controlling for racial/ethnic identification?

Living Environment	Effect
Man	+++ (Large Positive)
Woman	+++ (Large Positive)
Straight	+++ (Large Positive)
Bisexual	+
Living with family	+++ (Large Positive)
Fraternity or Sorority Housing	+
House	+++ (Large Positive)
Asian	-- (Medium Negative)
Gender variant	--- (Large Negative)
Gender PNR	-
Questioning/unsure	-
Sexual orientation PNR	-

+/- small effect
+/-/- medium effect
+++/-/- large effect

How does Sense of Community differ by students' living environment when controlling for racial/ethnic identification?

Living Environment	Effect
Man	+++ (Large Positive)
Woman	+++ (Large Positive)
Straight	+++ (Large Positive)
Bisexual	+
Living with family	+++ (Large Positive)
Fraternity or Sorority housing	+++ (Large Positive)
House	+++ (Large Positive)
Asian	-- (Medium Negative)
Gender variant	-
Gender PNR	-
Questioning/unsure	-
Another sexual orientation	-
Sexual orientation PNR	-
Suite style housing	-

+/- small effect
+/-/- medium effect
+++/-/- large effect

What are typical characteristics of living environments for racial/ethnic minority students?

Race/Ethnicity	Living Environment	Percentage
Black	Traditional Style Hall	32%
	Suite Style Hall	33%
Asian	Inst. Owned/Family Housing	27% & Black
	Apartments	26%
Latino	Houses	36%
	Living with Family	37%
Multiracial	Fraternity/Sorority Housing	38%
	Other Housing	31%

Discussion & Implications

- Clear differences between racial groups—a reminder to not view all Students of Color has the same.
 - Support Patton et al.'s (2017) call for using a cultural center model with on-campus living
- When controlling for race, we found differences for individuals with other minoritized or marginalized identities
 - Gender variant students and students questioning their sexual orientation felt lower sense of safety and community
 - Need to ensure intersectional approaches to promoting belonging

Discussion & Implications

- With regard to environment—students in houses felt safer and more community
 - More related to who they live with than structure
 - Students living with families also felt safer and more community
- Challenges Astin's (1993) claim that *leaving home* was the reason living on-campus was most impactful
- We don't think residence halls are inherently bad, but that we can't rely on the assumptions that they benefit everyone in the same way
 - Programming efforts need to evolve to reflect and affirm cultural backgrounds
 - Institutions might consider bringing back family housing

Discussion & Implications

- Students with no roommates or 3+ roommates felt safer
- For students with zero roommates: aligns with Samura's (2016) finding about privacy
- For students with 3+ roommates, again might be more about *who they live with*
 - Challenges policies that require students to be randomly assigned
 - Fosnacht et al. (2018) found these policies have trivial effect on interactional diversity, so the potential for greater belonging might outweigh that

Final thoughts and questions?

Thanks for joining us!

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Analyses

1. How does *Sense of Safety* and *Sense of Community* differ by students' a) racial/ethnic identification? b) living environment?
 - Low/medium/high perceptions based on percentiles; representation was analyzed using χ^2 tests and adjusted standardized residuals
2. How does *Sense of Safety* and *Sense of Community* differ by students' living environment when controlling for racial/ethnic identification?
 - OLS regression with effect coding
3. What are typical characteristics of living environments for racial/ethnic minority students?
 - Descriptives