

EDITORS' COMMENTS

This issue of the **Journal** is respectfully submitted to the alumni of the Indiana University master's program in student personnel. The articles contained within cover a range of student services and include original research by students currently enrolled in the program. The articles are the product of both class requirements and independent efforts. Significant revisions were often necessary and the cooperation of the authors in making these revisions was greatly appreciated. We thank and salute their efforts.

We would be remiss if we did not take the time to extend our heartfelt thanks to the faculty. Drs. Philip Chamberlain, Nancy Evans, George Kuh and John Schuh continue to uphold the tradition of quality student affairs preparation at Indiana University, both collectively and individually. Special thanks go to Dr. John Schuh who, despite an extremely busy semester, found the time to provide guidance and advice to the editors.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the various offices across campus which have provided support to the **Journal**. Specifically, the Offices of Student Activities and Residence Life provided funds for the publication of the Newsletter and operating costs, and postage for the **Journal** mailing. The Alumni office and the IU Foundation have been very cooperative in providing names and addresses of alumni, answering questions and handling the bookkeeping involved in alumni contributions.

We would also like to point out two special sections of this edition of the **Journal**. On both the first and last pages you will find tear-out forms. The front page is a mailing form for the most recent publications available from the American College Personnel Association. This represents the **Journal's** first efforts in the area of advertising. This revenue has provided us the opportunity to publish more articles in the increased page space. The back page is an information sheet which we request you fill out and return to us as soon as possible. This information will be used in an effort to better coordinate the "network" of the IU personnel program. Please take the time to fill this out.

Finally, comments about this edition and suggestions for future editions of the **Journal** are welcome. We hope you will enjoy this issue of the **Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association**.

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ENVIRONMENTALLY-INFLUENCED BEHAVIOR IN RESIDENCE HALLS

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The influences of territoriality, crowding, and architectural design on students' behavior in residence halls are examined. Several solutions are offered to counteract the negative aspects of these factors.

Several factors have an effect on students' behavior and on the level of students' satisfaction with their lives in residence halls. The relative importance of the opportunity to study and sleep and the opportunity to form friendships and other relationships will depend upon the student's reasons for wanting to live in a residence hall. More to the point, the room in which a student lives might be considered the most significant aspect of that student's life in the residence hall, because the boundaries of the room determine the student's "home." The amount of control that the individual has over the environment of the room and of the surrounding areas is a primary factor in attaining satisfaction with the residence hall. In particular, as Walden, Nelson, and Smith (1981) related:

Satisfaction in a situation depends upon obtaining a balance between an ideal level of desired interaction, the value of privacy, and the actual amount of interaction with others, achieved privacy. When one has more interaction with others than wanted, a feeling of crowding is experienced. (p. 205)

The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of some environmental factors which potentially influence the behavior and satisfaction of students in residence halls. Specifically, aspects of territoriality, crowding, and architectural design will be addressed. Problems which are created by these factors will be discussed, and solutions to these problems will be suggested.

Territoriality

Almost all animal species are instinctively guided to establish and to protect their own territories, and homo sapiens are no exception. According to Schroeder (1978), it is reasonable to assume that many typical problems in residence halls, such as damages, excessive noise, and disruptive group activities, may be the result of students' inability to manipulate their physical environment to make it more responsive to territorial needs. Mercer and Benjamin (1980) contended that territorial behavior is most fully developed in adult males, and that males tend to establish larger private territories than do females. Mandel, Baron, and Fisher (1980), however, asserted that "a dormitory room is more territorial in meaning for females than for males" (p. 313). Additionally, Mercer and Benjamin claimed that the function of private territory can be seen as a more aggressive social statement for females than for males. Assuming, however, that males are more

intent upon establishing territories, it is not surprising that more behavior problems in the residence halls are attributable to males due to their unfulfilled territorial needs.

The most frequently suggested solution to alleviate unfulfilled territorial needs is to allow residents to have as great an amount of freedom as is possible to personalize their environment. Brandt and Chapman (1981) claimed that students who were not able to personalize or decorate their rooms were more likely to drop out of school before the end of the year than were students who had this privilege. They observed the differences in student behavior between two residence halls, one in which the students were allowed to make a high degree of change in their environment (High Change), and one in which the students were allowed to make relatively few changes in their environment (Low Change). They found that "students in the High Change residence hall showed significantly more involvement, emotional support, influence, and innovation and significantly less competition than those in the Low Change residence hall" (p. 41). Furthermore, it was revealed that 49% of the residents of the High Change hall signed up to return to the hall the following year; only 14% elected to return to the Low Change hall.

Several professionals have made suggestions about personalizing the residence hall environment: (a) Spencer (1979) suggested the use of barriers, movable furniture, and bunk beds to increase the individual's opportunity to structure the living environment; (b) Brandt and Chapman (1981) stated that students who were able to build lofts in their rooms generally had better relationships with their roommates than did students who could not build lofts; and (c) Schroeder (1978) stressed that resident educators should actively encourage residents to paint and decorate their rooms as well as the hallways, stairwells, and public areas of their residence hall. He also found that damage and maintenance costs declined significantly following the implementation of such a program, and that student morale, group development, academic achievement, and retention were enhanced by personalization programs.

In an in-depth study on paint projects, Werring, Winston, and McCaffrey (1981) found that at some institutions, higher retention rates, lower damage costs, and decreased outlays of capital for renovation of residence hall facilities were attributable to the use of territorial strategies such as permitting students to paint public areas. One institution in the study saved a great deal of money by allowing students to complete the necessary painting work in their own style (the Physical Plant's estimate for the work was five times more expensive). Additionally, residents who participated in the painting project perceived their environment more positively than did residents who did not participate in the project, even though they lived in the same unit. Interestingly, males who did not participate were much more negative in their perceptions than were their female counterparts. In conclusion, Werring et al. stated that:

... paint projects can be an effective means of influencing students' environmental perceptions of relationships and social system maintenance and change in residence halls. These benefits seem to accrue only to those residents who take active parts in the project. (p. 7)

It is of interest to note that Mandel et al. (1980) found women to be more motivated than men to personalize their rooms. This may be explained by relating how females, compared with males, cope with crowding, which will be discussed below.

Hence, the instinctive urge to establish and defend territories is one factor which influences the behavior of students in residence halls. Several studies have indicated that permitting students to personalize their living environment will (a) help to satisfy the students' territorial needs, (b) increase student morale and satisfaction with their living environment, and (c) save the institution money in terms of damage and maintenance costs. It is important to note that the greater the amount of personalization allowed, the lesser the amount of damages to the hall (Schroeder, 1978). Students may not be satisfied by merely placing posters on the wall or by bunking their beds. According to Brandt and Chapman (1981), "It appears that being able to make major, permanent structural changes in a room is significantly more important to students than being able to do minor decorating or to make minor temporary structural changes with movable furniture" (p. 42).

As several of the studies indicated, personalization of the environment is an effective, proactive solution to the potential problems caused by territorial behavior. Institutions of higher education with residence hall programs should be encouraged to reevaluate the level of personalization permitted in the residence halls. A decision to liberalize the policies regarding the personalization permitted may benefit the institution by increasing retention and by saving money as a result of fewer damages and lower maintenance costs. Students would also benefit by having their territorial needs met, gaining satisfaction with their living environment and enjoying an increase in morale.

Crowding

A second factor which has a definite effect on student behavior in residence halls is the level of crowding present within the halls. Due to high demand for residence hall space, several institutions have resorted to placing some students either temporarily or permanently in smaller than usual living spaces. The most common of these situations occurs when three students are placed in a room designed to accommodate two students. This section of the paper will focus on the problems which may occur when residence halls are forced to create "triples".

A distinction must first be made between density and crowding. These two terms have been used interchangeably, and hence, incorrectly, on several occasions. Spencer (1979) defined density as "the physical state of spatial limitation" (p. 12). He defined crowding as "the experiential state in which the restrictive aspects of limited space are perceived by the individual exposed to them" (p. 12) and contended that crowding is a subjective experience. While a triple room has a higher density than a double room, the residents in a triple room may not feel any greater sense of being crowded than do the residents of a double room. As Reddy, Baum, Fleming, and Aiello (1981) stated, "minor increases in residential social density are not necessarily associated with greater crowding stress. Rather, factors that contribute to loss of control over privacy and interaction in the bedroom unit appear more crucial than increasing group size" (p. 535).

Reddy et al. (1981) asserted that crowding in triple rooms is not a function of increasing social density but rather is a function of the unique social dynamics

associated with three-person groups. In essence, when three people are living in a room, there is a tendency for two of them to pair up, leaving the third person to assume the role of what is commonly referred to as an "isolate". In this study, it was found that tripled isolates reported more crowding, more difficulty in controlling what happened in the room, more problems in achieving privacy, and more dissatisfaction with the room than either students in double rooms or non-isolates in triple rooms. Isolates also reported having less in common with their roommates and having less input into decoration and arrangement of the room than did non-isolates. Finally, isolates complained more of physical ailments such as stomach pains and headaches than did non-isolates. Reddy et al. suggested that efforts at improving communication among roommates and reducing the likelihood of pair formation may be equally effective in alleviating many problems.

The results of the study by Spencer (1979) are in accordance with those of the study conducted by Reddy et al. (1981). Specifically, Spencer found that students in triples expressed less satisfaction with their living space, privacy, and degree of perceived control over room activity. These students also were less satisfied with their roommates and spent less time in their rooms. This is partially in contrast with the results of the study conducted by Walden et al. (1981), who found that tripled males spent the least amount of time in their rooms, followed by doubled males and doubled females. Surprisingly, tripled females were reported to be spending the greatest amount of time in their rooms.

Fewer of the problems noted above were found in a study done at Purdue University, where twenty students from each residence hall floor are annually placed in suites. Ten people are housed in four double rooms at each end of the hallway, thus living as a group with two double and two triple rooms. Null (1981) found that suite residents perceived their environment as supportive. Null also found that virtually all students rated their fellow suite residents as close friends. Additionally, the students, a small subgroup in a large residence hall, derived a sense of security from the suite environment. Although several problems could have arisen in interpersonal relationships, few materialized. Null noted, however, that one or two uncooperative or inflexible people in the group could adversely affect the total group living environment. Overall, Null concluded that the general reaction to the residence hall suites has been positive in spite of high density living conditions.

One question that has captured the interest of many researchers is the effect that crowding has on academic performance. This is generally studied by comparing the grade point average (GPA) of students in both low density and high density living conditions. The results of several studies have indicated that over-assignment does not have a detrimental effect on freshmen GPAs (Hefke & Cahill, 1981; Desler & North, 1978; Spencer, 1979; Hallenbeck & Balwick, 1978). The results of the Desler and North study indicated that the GPAs of first-time freshmen who were overassigned for the entire fall term were as good as, if not slightly better than, students who were not overassigned. The result of a study by Glassman, Burkhart, Grant, and Vallery (1978) contradict the results of the above studies. In comparing students in both high and low density conditions, they found that students living in the high density condition earned significantly lower GPAs than did students living in the low density condition.

How does one cope with the feeling of being crowded? According to Walden et al. (1981), "A crowded person attempts to resolve discrepancies between desired and achieved privacy by either expending new energy to achieve the level of privacy desired or by shifting the desired level of privacy" (p. 208). In dealing with high density situations, Walden et al. noted a great difference between male and female responses. Specifically, males respond to high density conditions by decreasing the value placed on privacy and physically withdrawing from the situation, whereas females tend to increase the value placed on privacy and their input to the situation. This may help to explain, in part, why females were found to be more motivated to personalize their rooms, as noted previously. One variable that relates to the need to cope with crowding is the amount of time to be spent in the crowded condition. Spencer (1979) found that in short-term situations, men tend to react more negatively than do women in crowded conditions, while the opposite trend is true for long-term situations.

What are the short-term effects of living in a triple room? Karlin, Rosen, and Epstein (1979) found that (a) tripled students tended to show greater improvement when GPAs from first semester freshman year were compared with sophomore and junior performance than did doubled students, (b) adjustment to college had improved to a greater degree for tripled students than for doubled students, and (c) tripled students felt a greater desire to change roommates than did doubled students. In conclusion, Karlin et al. noted that "...however negative the immediate consequences of tripled living conditions, the effects do not persist after students are no longer tripled" (p. 394).

Spencer (1979) made several suggestions for lessening the potential problems associated with crowding and density. These suggestions included (a) using light, bright paint on walls (citing studies which have shown that people view light-colored rooms as being larger than dark-colored rooms), (b) allowing students and staff to participate in selecting areas to be used for "triples", (c) allowing students to personalize their residence hall environment, (d) training staff members in the promotion of the community concept (i.e., promoting those factors which develop a sense of belonging among the individuals in a residence unit), (e) selecting more sensitive and proactive staff members to work with students in alternate housing arrangements, and (f) structuring small group areas in the hall with which students can readily identify.

West, Warner, and Schroeder (1979) suggested a concept, the group room, that ties together suggestions c, d, and f. This is a vacant room on the floor where residents can gather to watch television or engage in conversation. Students on the floor would be given free reign to decorate the room as they like. The results of this study were positive:

Those students who lived in units with such a group room developed more concern for others, better communication patterns, closer relationships with floor mates, more concern for academics, and had a higher retention rate than did those students living in units without a group room. (p. 23)

In summary, crowding in residence halls had definite effects on residents who were exposed to high density conditions. Not all of the effects were negative, nor did the effects generally persist once the person no longer felt crowded. Since

crowding is and will continue to be a reality in most residence hall systems, it may be valuable for institutions of higher education to make changes in their residence halls as suggested by Spencer (1979) and by Stoner and Thurman (1978). Such changes may lessen the adverse effects of crowding and lead to a higher level of student satisfaction.

Architectural Design and Social Environments

A final factor influencing students' behavior in residence halls is architectural design. According to Moos (1978), "Architectural variables may influence the social environment, and the social environment may in turn influence a student's perception of architectural conditions" (p. 115).

Miller, Rossbach, and Munson (1981) claimed that living in long corridor-style dormitories which expose residents to high social density has adverse psychological consequences in comparison to suite and short corridor dormitory styles where smaller groups of residents share common facilities. In contrast, they related that residents in a low density hall (a) experience less unwanted interaction with strangers, (b) make more attempts to interact with others, (c) spend more time in areas where interaction is more likely to occur, (d) show a greater tendency to form cohesive residential groups, and (e) are more likely to choose friends from their floor.

Miller et al. (1981) stated that residents in a low density situation may find it difficult to engage in solitary activities and function independently of others. The authors suggested that this problem can be countered through a series of group sessions held soon after everyone moves into the residence hall unit.

These findings are partially supported by the results of a study performed by Baum, Aiello, and Calesnick (1978). In that study, residents of the long-corridor residence hall, in comparison with short-corridor residents, were found to be more competitive, active, and in control of their lives during the early weeks of the semester. By the middle of the semester, however, they had become more withdrawn, were less involved, and exhibited symptoms of helplessness. In addition, long-corridor residents reported more crowding, more frequent unwanted interaction, less satisfaction, and more problems than did short-corridor residents. In a related study, Moos and Van Dort (1979) reported that freshman students complained of more adverse physical symptoms when they were living in groups whose characteristics were similar to those of long-corridor residents (e.g., lack of unity, low participation, somewhat competitive, etc.).

Another variable reported by Stoner and Thurman (1978) is that high-rise residence halls seem to adversely affect social interaction as a result of the relatively greater density of that type of structure. In a study of friendship formation in relation to floor level, Holohan, Wilcox, Burnam, and Culler (1978) found that (a) floor level had an inverse relationship to satisfaction with social participation, (b) higher floors were lowest in satisfaction with social privacy, (c) the greater number of residence hall-based friendships were found on lower floors, and (d) with the level of crowding held constant, both social satisfaction and friendship formation were lower on high floors. One interesting result of the study conducted by Mandel et al. (1980) was that with increasing floor height, females perceived their rooms as larger, while males perceived their rooms as smaller.

Case (1981) found that, "...dependent upon a student's random room assignment in the dorm, the persons whom they would most likely come to know were highly predetermined by the architecture" (p. 36). Additionally, Case asserted that in spite of the passage of time, patterns of freshman social relations influenced by architecture were found to persist through the senior year. Lastly, Case claimed that, overall, roommate choices could be attributed to architecturally-influenced social patterns at all levels more often than would be true if the choice process was random.

The results of the above studies indicate the need to diminish the negative consequences of architectural design as much as possible. In the event that new residence halls are planned, Stoner and Thurman (1978) felt that students should be consulted for input at every step of the building program. Furthermore, they asserted that flexibility in room design should be stressed and that corridor arrangements should be avoided. Finally, Holahan et al. (1978) stressed the need for designers, educators, and psychologists to pursue the challenge of developing more innovative and psychologically sound design solutions to high rise housing needs.

With the problem of declining enrollments in higher education, it is doubtful that many new residence halls will be built on many campuses. The focus should instead be placed on maximizing the use of existing halls, particularly in formulating strategies for retention in the residence halls.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to outline several environmentally-based factors which influence student behavior and satisfaction within the residence halls. Although presented as three separate issues, territoriality, crowding, and architectural design are closely related. The design of a residence hall may have an effect on how crowded it is perceived to be, and the level of perceived crowding may aggravate or fulfill individuals' attempts to meet their territorial needs. The relationship between territoriality, crowding, and architectural design is important to keep in mind; if one of these variables is being targeted for possible change, the others must also be considered.

The results of the studies discussed herein have several implications in two major areas: (a) by using these variables in such a way as to positively influence student behavior, institutions should reduce damage and maintenance costs, and (b) by increasing student satisfaction, retention rates should increase. As enrollment figures in institutions of higher education continue to decline, the need to increase retention rates in all areas of the institution will continue to grow.

Territoriality issues, crowding, and architectural design have been shown to have effects on the behavior and level of satisfaction of students in residence halls. It is necessary for institutions of higher education to realize the importance of these factors and the relationship between them in order to accentuate their positive aspects and to minimize, if not completely eliminate, their negative aspects. The rewards which may accrue to institutions that recognize and capitalize on the influence of these factors make it advantageous to study these topics in greater depth.

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