challenges and supports, provide students the opportunity to evolve to higher levels of competency.

REFERENCES


Assignment of students to rooms in the residence halls is still viewed primarily as a clerical job despite the large amount of recent literature indicating its developmental impact and the increased use of computer assistance in the process (Garb, 1978). Housing officials need to consider the use of specific assignment programs for the manipulation of residential environments. Both satisfaction (and thus retention) and the educational development of residents can be promoted through specific assignment programs.

Historically, the residence hall has been a convenient place for students to eat and sleep, with little attempt made to provide education or promote development within its walls. Residents were randomly assigned, with the possible exception of freshmen, who were sometimes assigned to all-freshmen floors or halls. Because of the application of developmental theory to residence halls, residence educators are recognizing the need to promote academic learning and personal development. A growing emphasis on environmental redesign has led some housing officials to experiment in the area of homogeneous grouping (Williams, Reilly, & Zgliczynski, 1980). However, no consensus has evolved as to the validity of these programs in promoting measurable development in residents. It is also the case that little has been done in the area of systematically matching roommates as an intervention for development and satisfaction of residents. This paper reviews recent literature regarding programs of homogeneous groupings and roommate matching as an intervention for development of residents.

Housing arrangements at a residential college have a significant influence on the development of students because of the amount of time spent in the hall. Room assignments can be one of the most important developmental tools the residence educators have at their disposal. Chickering (1979), in describing conditions for development, argued that:

Residence hall arrangements either foster or inhibit development of competence, purpose, integrity, and freeing of interpersonal relationships, depending upon the diversity of backgrounds and attitudes among the residents, the opportunities for significant interchange, the existence of shared intellectual interests, and the degree to which the unit becomes a meaningful culture for its members. (p. 152)
In addition to student development, residence educators are increasingly concerned with student satisfaction and retention in the halls. Ten years ago a limited survey of residence systems indicated the need to fill large institutions to 90.2% of capacity and medium-sized institutions to 85.6% of capacity to meet current bond indebtedness (Williams, 1973). The continued need to maintain full capacity in the residence halls has resulted in many residence educators actively pursuing a variety of programs designed to encourage the students to remain in the halls rather than move off-campus. Aside from financial considerations, the reason residents move away from the halls is most often lack of satisfaction — with facilities, ability to study, programming, or relationships with roommates and other floor members (Schroeder, 1976). The use of specific assignment programs could increase the residents’ satisfaction with the environment and relationships with others, thus aiding in retention.

Brown (1967), commenting on the residence hall environment, stated:

A situation which throws people together in a university but provides little shared intellectual experience will quite naturally lead the students to seek ways of interacting that are not necessarily congruent with the purpose of the university. Therefore, the university should consider new ways of grouping students in the curriculum, in the residential arrangements, and in scheduling so that large numbers will have some common shared intellectual life which will serve as a foundation for intellectual and social interaction. (p. 101)

Residence educators have begun to tailor developmental environments to students through homogeneous housing. Several of these programs have been evaluated and reported in recent literature, indicating a general positive effect on students in terms of academic achievement and satisfaction with the living environment. These programs include grouping by major and curriculum similarity, academic ability, common personality traits, and class standing.

The most common method of homogeneous grouping assigns students according to major and curriculum similarity. Two reports from Colorado State University demonstrate the benefits of homogeneous grouping in conjunction with modifications of facilities within the hall. Madson, Kuder, Hartsanov, and McKelfresh (1976), in discussing the residence unit for forestry students, indicated that those students in the special living unit were more satisfied with their residence, received more tutorial help from classmates, and felt a greater degree of commitment to the college than forestry students who lived elsewhere. McKelfresh (1980) evaluated a special unit for engineering students, and found the residents were more satisfied with the academic assistance from classmates and opportunities for extracurricular activities than were those engineering students living in other halls.

The programs at Colorado State University were designed to encourage students in the same field to learn from one another, and make effective use of the special facilities, programs, and equipment which were provided in the residence hall. The evaluators concluded that these goals are being accomplished, and satisfaction and regard for the college is increasing among these students. This has resulted in greater retention in these residence halls.

Another study of an academic homogeneous grouping is that of pre-pharmacy students at Auburn University (Schroeder, 1980). It was found that the special unit facilitated more supportive interaction on the floors and resulted in the residents having a better self-concept and feeling less isolated. The special unit also had a higher retention rate than the other halls housing pre-pharmacy students. The residents reported having more friends on their floors than did the students in traditional halls, which the author suggested created an “insulated subsystem”. This raised the question of whether homogeneous groupings stifle individuality and growth, but the results indicated that growth did occur in the areas of interaction with others and self-concept. Schroeder concluded that homogeneous academic groupings might be best suited for such rigorous disciplines as engineering, pharmacy, and architecture.

A second method of homogeneous grouping is that used by many honors programs in which students are grouped according to academic ability. DeCosters’ early study (1966) found that high ability students performed better when placed together in a residence hall. Stewart (1980) evaluated the residence honors unit at the University of Maryland and found that it attempted to promote a community atmosphere by having students participate in administration, social and academic programming, and community service. However, the honors students’ grade-point averages (GPAs) were not significantly higher than those housed in traditional halls. Stewart concluded that because results of past studies are not consistent, housing officials should not rely on previous research to justify the establishment of new programs, but should continue to evaluate programs already in existence.

An honors program at Southern Illinois University also made use of special housing for their students. The purpose of the hall was to create and maintain a studious environment, to foster intellectual contact among the residents, and to increase serious academic effort. Duncan and Stoner (1976) found that place of residence did not have a significant effect on the GPAs of the honors students. The residents, however, felt that the special housing had a positive influence on their academic achievement because of an atmosphere conducive to study and the motivation provided by close proximity of other high achievers.

Schroeder, Warner, and Malone (1980) took the homogeneous grouping concept one step further by developing a method of grouping by common personality traits. They suggested that this grouping would provide the same increased satisfaction in the residence environment and positive effect on peer relations that the academic and ability groupings had provided. Schroeder, et al. used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to categorize the dominant mental processes of residents: sensing, intuition, thinking, or feeling. A distinct social environment and sense of community was developed on each of the four floors involved. The thinkers, however, did not have as much interaction with other floor members as did the other types, which suggested they might be better suited to a heterogeneous housing situation.

Another option in homogeneous housing groupings is that of class standing, usually reserved only for freshmen. It is probable that a new student is most susceptible to peer influence in the residence hall (Moos, DeYoung, & Van Dart, 1976). Through learning to live and interact with other students and to deal with administrative restrictions, the freshman’s social and personal development is
greatly affected. Freshman halls have been viewed as a positive means to ease the transition from high school to college, with special programs and staff prepared to meet the unique needs of new students.

Cude (1979) conducted a study to determine whether grouping freshmen in a freshman hall as opposed to assigning them randomly in upperclass halls had any effect on the development of Chickering’s vectors of autonomy and managing emotions. The homogeneous freshmen were further grouped on floors according to academic major, and all freshmen were matched with roommates according to their preference for study hours, smoking, and visitation hours. The results of the study neither supported nor refuted the concept of freshman housing. All freshmen moved positively along the Autonomy and Impulse Expression scales of the Omnibus Personality Inventory. However, there appeared to be more significant change among the freshmen in the upperclass halls on the Impulse Expression Scale, which might indicate the positive effect of the upperclassmen on freshmen.

In a review of the literature, Schelhas (1977) concluded that the existing data does not support the concept of freshman housing sufficiently to continue using it until further research is conducted. If college freshmen are segregated by class in the halls and are given limited opportunities to interact with non-freshmen, they will have a limited perspective from which to define their roles as students and individuals. Instead, they will exhibit behavior which they believe is expected. Pounder (1973) found that although rapport was high among residents of a woman’s all-freshman hall, there also tended to be great pressure to conform to expected standards. Social contacts with the opposite sex were restricted by a sense of conformity, while in the mixed hall the freshmen had greater opportunity to develop relationships outside the hall, and thus a more relaxed atmosphere prevailed.

A more specialized and perhaps more controversial method of special assignment to residence housing is matching roommates. The close contact students have with their roommates and the ensuing satisfaction with that relationship can significantly affect the student’s social and academic development, and the total impact of the college experience on the individual (Lozier, 1970). Thus, specifically matching roommates in other areas besides ability or academic interest is seen by some educators as very important. The variables described in conjunction with matching roommates are academic interests, demographic variables, value similarity, and personality traits.

In considering the method of assigning roommates, the residence educator needs to decide whether the purpose of the assignment is to provide a learning experience for the residents, or to insure the formation of friendship and mutual satisfaction with the living environment. Depending upon the purpose chosen, emphasis will be placed on different variables. Garb (1978) suggested that these two purposes for matching are not mutually exclusive, but that students’ satisfaction should be recognized as the key element in roommate matching.

Several demographic variables used to match roommates have been evaluated in the literature. In a study done in 1970, Gehring found no significant difference in compatibility between randomly assigned students and those matched on the basis of educational level of the father, enrollment size of the high school, regular church attendance, student’s smoking habits, or predicted GPA. Gehring concluded that these variables were important in developing roommate compatibility, but were not sufficient in themselves as a basis for a specific program. Lozier (1970) conducted a study to determine if matching roommates by educational goals and extracurricular plans would decrease the number of roommate changes during the year. He found no significant differences in number of changes between the random and matched roommates, and concluded that matching roommates on more than one variable might have an impact on the number of changes.

Scheidt and Smith (1976) concluded from their research that roommates whose birth order is compatible will have less conflict in their relationship. However, Schuh and Williams (1977) found that birth order seemed to have no effect on roommate compatibility. Hallsey, Harren, and Caple (1980) used nine variables: hall, roommate status, sex, race, class, student's residence, academic division, fall GPA, and hometown size to attempt to predict roommate changes. It was concluded that these variables were not sufficient to predict who would remain as roommates.

In a study conducted in 1970, Pierce suggested that similarity of needs influenced roommate satisfaction. However, research on the significance of value similarity in roommate satisfaction has been contradictory. Pierce and Schwartz (1974) found that amount of satisfaction reported was significantly related to the previous year’s value similarity. This suggested that instead of satisfaction being attributable to initial value similarity, roommates may become more similar in value orientation as they live together, thus increasing satisfaction. Perkins (1974) found that value similarity did not seem to be a part of satisfaction with living groups.

Jones, McCaa, and Martecchin (1980) assigned roommates according to similarity of study and sleep habits and a particular personality trait—Machiavellianism, a cynical view of man’s motives and character. It was found that differences between roommates may be less likely to become serious problems if their personal orientations are compatible. Ainsworth and Maynard (1976) conducted a study on the personality characteristics of male freshmen. They suggested that personality similarity may have a detrimental effect on average-ability roommates. The combination of a high-ability student and an average- or low-ability student with a similar personality may be beneficial to the lower-ability student and not harmful to the student with higher ability. When personalities are dissimilar, a high-ability student will undergo change when rooming with an average- or low-ability student. This seems to demonstrate that personality has an impact on the academic achievements of roommates.

Wetzel, Schwartz, and Vasu (1979) tested three hypotheses in the attempt to discover if there was an ideal roommate relationship. The authors suggested that roommates will be compatible if they (a) possess similar amounts of the same personality traits, (b) perceive each other as having socially desirable traits, and (c) see each other as fulfilling each other’s ideals. The results showed a significant positive relation between these variables and roommate satisfaction, although a potential break-up could not be predicted. The method of roommate matching suggested by this study is for freshmen to rate themselves and their ideals, and then match each roommate’s self-concept to the other’s ideals. The author concluded that this would be an impractical method because roommates do not
perceive each other in the same way they perceive their own needs. Potential for compatibility might exist and the individuals would not perceive it.

In conclusion, as can be seen from the previous studies, no consensus has been reached as to the advisability of consistently using either homogeneous grouping or roommate matching in residence halls. Several programs have been tested on various groups of residents, with differing results. Thus far, the GPA of the residents has not improved significantly in any of the programs, although some positive impacts in other areas have been documented. Student response in the academic groupings has been positive, with the residents experiencing a greater sense of community and an atmosphere more conducive to academic pursuits.

Residents matched on the basis of personality, habits, and values tended to have less conflict, and closer personal relationships developed. Satisfaction with the total living environment increased, and the residents tended to remain in the halls. Student satisfaction with roommates and location in the hall decreased the number who asked to be moved each semester.

Ultimately, the practicality of both homogeneous groupings and roommate matching has to be considered. Each residence system needs to decide the worth to the college of implementing a specialized assignment program. The cost of establishing a special residence area or using computers to match roommate variables may be prohibitive. Most residents, as they become familiar with the hall and develop friendships, will eventually move into a positive environment without outside help. A few do have some serious relationship or adjustment problems, and a specific assignment program may be able to help them. Further research is necessary and more experimental programs need to be established to discover whether the possibility of developmental benefits to the residents is worth the expense of the program.

REFERENCES


COUNSELING RE-ENTRY WOMEN: 
A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF HELPING PROFESSIONALS

Stephen Roth and Jeanna Cledfelter Anglin

Helping professionals in various settings provide a view of re-entry women as persons with special needs and concerns. Related counseling approaches and programs are examined. Recommendations for future program design are offered.

A continuing trend in American society is the increasing participation of women in the work force. In 1981, women made up 43% of the total work force, demonstrating a steady growth from 38.2% in 1971 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1982). Women 25 to 44 years old accounted for most of this growth. Some of these women are re-entering the work force after an extended absence. In a federally funded study for the Women's Re-entry Project, Weinstein (1980) reported that re-entry women have the following demographic characteristics: (a) they fall predominantly between the ages of 28 and 50; (b) they are single, married, divorced, or widowed, with or without children; (c) they vary in ethnicity and class; (d) they vary in educational attainments; and (e) they have varying amounts of work experience.

Many women re-enter the work force to supplement their spouses' income or to support their family due to divorce, death or unemployment of a spouse. Others re-enter for personal reasons such as to obtain greater personal satisfaction and fulfillment through a career. According to Sheehy (1976), some women preferred to begin a new career rather than return to the types of jobs they held before marriage since these jobs were usually lacking in opportunities for personal development.

For the purpose of this study, re-entry women are defined as those individuals re-entering the work force or preparing to re-enter by pursuing an education or training program. This study examines the current needs and concerns of re-entry women focusing on the services that helping professionals, such as student affairs practitioners and counselors, can provide.

Method

The primary method for collecting information was the personal interview. It provided the most pertinent and current information for meeting the study's objectives.

The population for the interviews consisted of fourteen local, regional, and national helping professionals currently working with re-entry women and considered knowledgeable about re-entry women by other professionals. The population was developed through a process of selection and referral. Selection of professionals was based on the published reputation of their programs and additional professionals were referred by these individuals. The population represented private counseling firms, public agencies, and universities.

Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone. The interview questions followed a basic outline; (a) the professional's position and experience with re-entry women; (b) the professional's assessment of current needs and concerns of re-entry women; and (c) the services being provided by the professionals. Referrals to additional professionals were gathered during these interviews. In addition to answering questions, the professionals were encouraged to provide any other relevant information.

Results

Extensive information resulted from these interviews. Findings which were common to a majority of the professionals were identified as major findings and are listed below:

1. Re-entry women experience low self-esteem and self-confidence. Re-entry women are confused about who they are, what they are, and what they are doing with their lives.

2. Many of the problems of re-entry women originate with themselves as opposed to family members, friends, and children. For example, they are conditioned to be reserved achievers and postpone their development.

3. Re-entry women feel guilty about neglecting their children while preparing for and performing in the work force.

4. Re-entry women feel anxiety over having been away from work and school. Related to this, women are anxious about leaving their children unattended.

5. Financial insecurity is a contributing factor in creating anxiety among women.

6. A major need of re-entry women is to nurture and be nurtured. Group counseling was suggested as an approach for women to nurture each other, while individual counseling was suggested as an approach to explore ways to respond to their needs and nurture themselves.

7. All of the professionals viewed their counseling approaches and programs as an effective means of assisting women who want to pursue an education and re-enter the work force.

Four components similar among all of the programs were: (a) a self-discovery component including interests identification, value clarification, and skills