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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics of students living in a quiet resident hall to assess how they differed from other resident hall students personally and in terms of their environmental perceptions of the University of Missouri at Columbia. Thirty-five students were randomly selected from 2 "quiet" halls and 35 from 2 conventional halls. Information was obtained on their SCAT scores, GPA, major, division, age, classification, and parental education, and they were administered Pace's College and University Environmental Scale (CUES). Their responses showed perceptions of the college environment along 7 dimensions: practicality, community, scholarship, awareness, propriety, campus morale, and teacher quality and faculty-student relationship. Employing the psychometric process of scoring, the findings showed a marked difference between the residents of quiet and conventional halls. The quiet hall resident was usually an older student, generally an upper classman, who perceives his environment as characterized by intellectuality, scholastic discipline, consideration for others, and propriety. (AF)

A Comparison of Environmental Perceptions of Student Subgroups in Residence Halls

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Part of the resident hall philosophy at the University of Missouri is that of providing a choice in campus living between off campus or within the resident halls. The second choice is being developed by offereing different living environments such as houses of students requesting international, graduate or "perpetually quiet" atmospheres.

This interest in providing a choice of resident hall house environments may be part of what Chickering (1969) calls the movement toward clusters of small units. Chickering feels this movement is caused by knowing the key to productivity, personal development and a satisfying experience for individuals and corporate groups. Students become a part of a smaller unit that can be grasped, experienced and known. The units provide an interpersonal environment where a set of students interact with each other with some regularity over a continuing period of time (Newcomb, 1967). Newcomb (1967) believes the student's interpersonal environment has a great deal to do

with what and how well the student learns; and that educators can arrange environments to benefit learning.

Although there are numerous questions and comparisons that can be explored in these small living units, the purpose of this research is to explore a few questions about the "perpetually quiet" house as compared to conventional resident houses. A perpetually quiet house is one in which the residents request to live and jointly decide upon floor regulations. The existing quiet houses require their residents to (1) keep doors closed at all times, (2) refrain from gathering in the halls or lobby, (3) keep lights off in the corridors, (4) take phone duty, (5) play all radios, televisions, and stereos at low volume.

Because there is an observable difference in environment between a conventional and quiet house, do students requesting to live in a perpetually quiet house differ in their perceptions of the University of Missouri environment or in other ways related to their educational progress. Variations in these characteristics would suggest that a quiet house draws a different kind of student who performs differently at the institution.

Related Research

Environments have been assessed through (1) student's personal characteristics (Astin & Holland, 1961) or (2) the student's perception of the college image (Pace, 1969). The later assessment can be made through the use of the College and

University Environmental Scales (CUES) which is designed to provide a characterization of the institution as a whole, based on the collective perceptions of qualified reporters (Pace, 1969). A secondary purpose of the CUES, for which it was not initially constructed, is identifying differences in environmental perceptions. Pace (1969) reports that

> on most of the scales different groups of reporters, such as students in different academic fields, resident students, or commuting students, see the institution as a whole in fairly similar fashion. They do not see it in identical fashion, however, and one can use the CUES to find out how similar the perceptions of different groups are about the environment as a whole even though the differences may not be large (p. 10).

Several studies have found differences in environmental perceptions among subgroups in an institution. Some of the subgroups used in distinguishing environmental perceptual differences have been administrators, faculty, staff and students. Ivey (1967) found a diversity of perceptions of the campus environment among students, student personnel staff and head residents. Heskett & Walsh (1969) compared perceptions of a college environment of management staff, student officers and personnel staff. Gelso & Sims (1968) reported a few significant differences between residents, commuters and faculty members. Wilson & Dollar (1970) found differences in perception of a junior college environment between administrators and faculty and between administrators and students.

Other studies have found differences in environmental perception among subgroups of students. Lindahl (1967) found differences in environmental perceptions of commuter students and resident students at a junior college. Jansen & Winborn (1968) reported that social-political action leaders had different perceptions of the campus environment from other campus leaders on all scales of the CUES except propriety. Baker (1966) found differences in environmental perceptions of a college environment among students in different types of residents--living with parents, on campus, or in boarding houses.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate students living in a perpetually quiet resident hall house to assess how they differ from other resident hall students. The major questions are: Do students choosing to live in a perpetually quiet house as compared to students choosing to live in a conventional resident hall house:

1. differ in their environmental perceptions of the University of Missouri, Columbia?
2. possess different student characteristics?

Method

Data collections and subjects. Single male students living in two perpetually quiet houses were selected and compared to single male students living in two conventional houses in the same resident halls. About half of the students in each of the four houses were used (or 35 in each group).

The students used in this study were randomly selected employing the use of a table of random numbers.

Demographic data was collected from university records. The data compared and analyzed was: SCAT scores, GPA, major, division, age, classification and parental education.

Instrument. The instrument used in this study was Pace's College and University Environmental Scale, second edition (1969). In using the CUES the subject responds to true-false alternatives about college life as facilities, rules and regulations, faculty and instruction, curricula, student life and campus organizations. These responses show their perception of the college environment along five dimensions: practicality, community, awareness, propriety and scholarship, campus morale, teacher quality.

> Practicality. This scale reflects an environment characterized by enterprize, organization, material benefits, and social activities. School spirit, student leadership, and both vocational and collegiate emphases prevail.
>
> Scholarship. High academic achievement, intellectual speculation and involvement with knowledge and theories is the emphasis of this scale.
>
> Community. This environment would have a strong sense of togetherness and group loyality. Faculty know the students and are interested in them.
>
> Awareness. This scale measures a perception of self understanding, reflectiveness and identity searching in the environment. Items comprising this scale reflect an awareness of self, of society, and of aesthetic stumuli.
>
> Propriety. An environmental atmosphere that is mannerly, considerate, proper and conventional. There is an absence of demonstrative, assertive, argumentative, risk-taking activities.

Campus Morale. Acceptance of social norms, group cohesiveness, friendly assimilation into campus life and at the same time, a commitment to intellectual pursuits and freedom of expression.

Quality of Teaching and Faculty-Student Relationships. An atmosphere in which professors are perceived to be scholarly, to set high standards, to be clear, adaptive and flexible. At the same time, this academic quality of teaching is infused with warmth, interest and helpfulness toward students.

Data Analysis. Since the intent of this study was to center specifically upon comparisons of group perception, the psychometric process of scoring was employed instead of CUES plus 66 method. Items responded to in the keyed scale direction were scored for the four groups on each of the five scales and two subscales. Group means and standard deviations for each scale were figured.

A null hypothesis that there are no significant differences among the perceptions of the groups was used. To test the null hypothesis a t-test was employed to determine if significant difference in perception existed between the groups on each of the scales. The level of rejection was established at the 0.05 level of significance.

Findings

The results of this study are presented in two sections. The first section deals with environmental perceptions of the sample of resident hall students. The data was analyzed in terms of the environmental image described by the groups. The second section deals with those characteristics of the groups that were significantly different.

Using the psychometric scoring process on the first 100 items only, means and standard deviations for each scale, by group, are presented in table 1. To test the hypothesis, t-tests were performed between each of the four groups on each of the five scales. The hypothesis was:

> There is no difference in perception of the environment as measured by each of the five CUES scales among the four groups or the two kinds of resident hall floors.

The results of the analysis are presented in table 2.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

A brief explanation regarding the interpretation of the statistical analysis as it relates to each scale for which significant differences were found as presented here.

Scholarship. The quiet floors as a group (AB) had the highest mean score on this scale indicating they perceived an environment characterized more highly by intellectuality and scholastic discipline than did the conventional floors. When tested for significant differences in perceptions of the environment, the quiet floors were found to be significantly different form the conventional floors. The null hypothesis was thus rejected.

Propriety. As a group and singly, the quiet floors had the highest mean scores. This indicates they perceive an environment that is polite and considerate. Caution and thoughtfulness are evident. Group standards of decorum are importnat. The significant difference between their perceptions brought the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Campus Morale. As a group and separately the quiet floors had the highest mean scores. They perceived an environment of group cohesiveness, friendly assimilation into campus life and at the same time, a commitment to intellectual pursuits and freedom of expression. These quiet floors were significantly different in their perceptions of the environment; the null hypothesis was rejected.

When group characteristics were examined, the quiet floors as a group had significantly older students (table 4) and had significantly more upper class students (table 5). Ability scores differed significantly between group B (quiet) and group A (quiet), and between group B (quiet) and group D (conventional). Cumulative grade point averages differed significantly between the two quiet floors and between groups B and C and groups B and D. Therefore, group B had a significantly higher GPA than any of the other groups (table 3).

As a whole there was no differences among the groups for characteristics of mother's and father's education (table 6). The majority of the students in both groups were enrolled in the College of Arts and Science (table 7). The most frequent majors were business, history and undecided (table 8).

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

Insert Table 5 about here

Insert Table 6 about here

Insert Table 7 about here

Insert Table 8 about here

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings showed a difference between the two kinds of resident hall floors. These differences should support a resident hall philosophy of providing a choice for students, because the quiet floors are attracting a slightly different kind of student--one that is older and an upper classman. He perceives his environment

characterized by intellectuality and scholastic discipline (scholarship). He also sees his environment being considerate, mannerly and conventional (propriety). Because this is a different student attracted to the quiet floor such an environment may be helping this student achieve his potential.

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Table 1

Mean Scale Scores and

Standard Deviations on the CUES

Scales	Quiet Floor				Conventional Floor			
	A(N-35)		B(N-35)		C(N-30)		D(N-35)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Practicality	10.20	3.09	10.03	2.82	10.50	2.62	10.23	3.01
Scholarship	9.80	4.54	9.66	4.83	7.30	3.54	8.06	4.57
Community	9.20	3.01	9.06	2.91	9.47	2.58	8.83	2.85
Awareness	7.74	4.85	8.23	4.12	7.23	3.95	6.60	4.17
Propriety	6.00	2.59	7.63	3.08	4.63	2.48	5.54	3.15
Morale	8.86	3.87	9.80	3.92	7.73	3.05	7.74	3.28
Quality	5.74	1.80	6.03	2.02	5.53	1.63	5.80	2.06

Scales	Quiet Floors		Conventional Floors	
	AB(N-70)		CD(N-65)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Practicality	10.11	2.94	10.35	2.82
Scholarship	9.73	4.66	7.71	4.11
Community	9.13	2.94	9.12	2.73
Awareness	7.99	4.48	6.89	4.05
Propriety	6.81	2.94	5.12	2.88
Morale	9.33	3.90	7.74	3.15
Quality	5.89	1.91	5.68	1.86

Table 2

Significance of Difference

of Mean CUES Scale Scores: t-ratios

Groups	Pract.	Scholar.	Commun.	Aware.	Propri.	Morale	Quality
A & B	0.24	0.12	0.20	-0.46	-2.40*	-1.01	-0.63
C & D	0.40	-0.78	0.98	0.65	-1.34	-0.01	-0.61
A & C	-0.44	2.57*	-0.40	0.46	2.26*	1.36	0.51
A & D	-0.04	1.60	0.53	1.05	0.67	1.31	-0.13
B & C	-0.72	2.33*	-0.62	1.04	4.49**	2.47*	1.14
B & D	-0.29	1.42	0.33	1.65	2.81**	2.38*	0.47
AB & CD	-0.48	2.68*	0.02	1.50	3.37**	2.61*	-0.65

* significant at 0.05 level
** significant at 0.01 level

Table 3

SCAT, GPA & Age Means

and

Standard Deviations

Groups	A		B		C		D	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
SCAT	71.50	14.88	81.00	16.62	77.21	12.63	71.71	19.34
GPA	2.5	.78	2.97	.52	2.57	.55	2.64	.68
Age	19.69	1.28	20.14	1.35	19.10	.76	19.41	1.19

Groups	AB		CD	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
SCAT	76.25	16.36	74.24	16.70
GPA	2.74	.70	2.61	.62
Age	19.91	1.33	19.26	1.02

Table 4

Significance of the Difference

in

Mean Scores: t-ratio

Groups	SCAT	GPA	Age
A & B	-2.41*	-2.83**	-1.43
C & D	1.35	-0.46	-1.23
A & C	-1.62	-0.30	2.30*
A & D	-0.05	-0.69	0.98
B & C	1.01	2.98**	3.89**
B & D	2.10*	2.27*	2.43*
AB & CD	0.69	1.14	3.20*

* significant at 0.05 level
** significant at 0.01 level

Table 5

Classification Frequency Distribution*

Year	Groups	A	B	C	D	AB	CD
Freshman		10	6	12	14	16	26
Sophomore		7	11	15	16	18	31
Junior		14	9	3	2	23	5
Senior		4	6	-	3	10	3
Graduate		-	3	-	-	3	-

* Chi Square for AB vs. CD and Freshman and Sophomore vs. Junior, Senior and Graduate was 23,478; p .001

Table 6

Parental Education Frequency Distribution

Groups	Mother's Education*					
	A	B	C	D	AB	CD
Less than High School	3	1	2	1	4	3
High School	22	18	19	21	40	40
Some College	6	6	4	6	12	10
Bachelor's Degree	2	9	5	5	11	10
Graduate Work	2	1	-	2	3	2

Groups	Father's Education**					
	A	B	C	D	AB	CD
Less than High School	4	1	2	2	5	4
High School	14	18	8	13	32	21
Some College	7	5	9	5	12	14
Bachelor's Degree	6	7	7	12	13	19
Graduate Work	4	4	4	3	8	7

* Chi Square for AB vs. CD and some high school, and high school vs. some college, bachelor's degree, and graduate work was 0.160; this was not significant.

** Chi Square for AB vs. CD and some high school, and high school vs. some college, bachelor's degree and graduate work was 2.812; this was not significant.

Table 7

Division Frequency Distribution

Groups	A	B	C	D
Arts & Science	16	19	23	16
Business	4	3	-	5
Agriculture, Forestry	8	3	1	5
Journalism	1	-	-	--
Education	3	5	4	5
Engineering	2	2	2	4
Graduate	-	3	-	-
Community and Social Services	1	-	-	-

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Majors

Groups	A	B	C	D
Anthropology, Geology	1	-	2	1
Business	3	2	1	7
Computer Science	-	1	-	1
Economics	1	3	-	2
Mathematics, Statistics	-	3	1	3
Forestry, Horticulture	1	2	1	1
Zoology, Physical Education	8	3	1	-
Animal & Dairy Husbandry, Wildlife	2	1	-	1
Agriculture, Food Science, Agronomy	1	-	-	1
Music Education	-	-	1	2
Speech, Speech Pathology	-	2	2	-
Drama	-	-	-	1
English, Journalism	3	3	2	1
Pre Law	-	-	2	-
Chemical Engineering	-	1	1	-
Physics, Chemistry	1	3	-	2
Mechanical Engineering	1	1	-	1
Electrical & Nuclear Engineering	1	-	1	2
Industrial & Agricultural Engineering	1	1	-	1
Pre-Veternary Medicine	3	3	-	3
Pre-Medical School	1	3	1	2
Social Work, Psychology	2	-	1	1
History, Political Science, Philosophy	2	2	7	-
Dual Major	-	-	-	1
Recreation & Park Administration	1	-	-	-
Undecided	2	1	6	1