Factors in the Adjustment of College Students to Campus Living

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This paper was written for Dr. Kraemer’s Survey Research course.

Abstract

To determine how well new students are to living on campus, a survey was administered to 54 students at LaGrange College. It was hypothesized that factors such as distance from home and the amount of weekends a student goes home would influence satisfaction with on-campus living arrangements. The survey included a rating scale for satisfaction. It was discovered that there are relationships in the types of residence hall factors, such as satisfaction with privacy received, living quarters, and roommate, that affect student satisfaction. However, the type of college community could be a factor as well.

In an issue of *Journal of College Student Development*, Berger (1997) mentions that every campus is composed of multiple communities, but the role that these communities play in integrating is underexplored. It is mentioned that no previous researchers had investigated a specific campus’ communities and how the integration process is affected. Also, residence halls provide students with a greater sense of community, and students are more likely to be integrated into the larger social system. It is noted that residence halls are the prime candidates for this type of research to look at social integration.

A previous study (Janosik, Creamer, & Cross, 1988) looked at the relationship of student-environment fit and the students’ sense of competence. The researchers used a test called the *University Residence Environment Scales* (URES) to assess a sample of college freshmen at a large Southeastern University. The results demonstrated that students perceived the residence hall environment as relatively harmonious with views of how it should be. However, there is doubt of the validity of the URES as an indicator of social etiology in student residence halls, according to Janosik, Creamer, and Cross (1988).

Berger (1997) conducted a longitudinal study that looked at many different factors, including race, sex, and income. Results showed that those students’ family incomes impact the culture throughout the entire campus. These results are implications for studies of student development and retention. This sense of community can be applied to both smaller and larger campuses, so the campus can look at how important social integration is. Pike (1999) studied relationships...
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among background, college experiences, and outcome measures in residential learning communities. It was discovered that students in these communities were more involved with more interaction and integration. Although Pike found these interesting results, research opportunity was limited at the small university where the study was conducted.

The purpose of all this research was to look at different types of student adjustment and contentment to living on campus. Researchers interested in this area have wanted to determine how well students fit into the lifestyles on campuses. Present research is minimal on this topic. Berger’s study indicates that the sense of community living on a college campus and students’ contentment could potentially be influenced by factors such as distance from home or satisfaction with roommate and/or living quarters. Based on this research, it was hypothesized that students should adjust relatively well to living on a college campus because they will feel a sense of community and fit in well with the on-campus lifestyle and living arrangements.

Method

Participants

The participants were 54 LaGrange College students living on campus; this included 36 freshmen and 17 sophomores. The approximate average age of participants was 18.7. They included seven African Americans, 46 Caucasians, and one identified as other.

Materials

The survey titled “Survey for adjustment to living on campus” was the necessary material for this study. The survey contained 15 items (see appendix). Four of these items, satisfaction with amount of privacy roommate allows, satisfaction with roommate overall, satisfaction with overall living quarters, and how restful is a night of sleep, were based on a 1 to 5 rating scale. Five was the most positive response, such as very satisfied or very restful, and one was the most negative response, such as very unsatisfied or very restless.

Procedure

Surveys were delivered to individual dorm rooms, which were selected at random. The researcher knocked on the door of each selected room and occupants were asked if they would like to participate. The participants then proceeded to fill out the surveys, which took less than ten minutes. They then handed the surveys back into the folder in the researcher’s possession. A total of five dormitories were selected as the population; each of these primarily housed freshmen and sophomores.

Citations
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**Results**

The data from the surveys showed that 81.5% of participants sampled had a roommate. 46.3% reported being very satisfied with their roommates, and 37.0% reported being very satisfied with the amount of privacy from their roommates. Table 1 shows more data on the frequencies of satisfaction of participants with different aspects of living on campus.

Table 1 *Satisfaction Frequencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Overall</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Quarters</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restful night</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from Table 1 suggest that most students responded that they are moderately to highly satisfied with living on campus.

Correlations of the survey items displayed many relationships. The relationship between class and the amount of privacy from a roommate was significant ($r = -.385$, $p < .01$), as was the relationship between class and satisfaction of living quarters ($r = -.371$, $p < .01$). We can interpret these relationships as those who are above freshman class status are more likely to be dissatisfied with the amount of privacy they receive and the dormitory living quarters. There was a significant relationship ($r = -.359$, $p < .01$) between age and satisfaction with a roommate. Older students are more likely to be dissatisfied with a roommate. A more significant, higher correlation was found between satisfaction with privacy and satisfaction with roommate ($r = .912$, $p < .01$). We can interpret that a solid relationship exists between being satisfied with a roommate and being satisfied with the privacy that roommate allows.

A significant relationship exists ($r = -.269$, $p < .05$) between class standing and satisfaction with roommate. The particular residence hall has a significant relationship with satisfaction of privacy ($r = -.335$, $p < .05$), as well as the particular residence hall and satisfaction of roommate ($r = -.333$, $p < .05$). Certain residence halls could possibly create a better community atmosphere possibly according to these findings. A significant relationship between satisfaction of living quarters and how restful of a night’s sleep for a student exists ($r = .330,$
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p<.05). More satisfaction with living quarters may equate to a better night’s rest. Finally, a relationship, though not significant, exists between the restfulness of a night and the amount a student speaks to their parent/guardian on the phone (r = -.271). This can be interpreted as the better the night of sleep the student gets, the less the student calls home.

Discussion

The “Survey for adjustment to living on campus” results have demonstrated many significant relationships. Particular causes of any satisfaction cannot be determined, but it appears that the more satisfied students are with privacy offered by roommates, the more satisfied students are overall with roommates. Pike (1999) points out those residence halls are potentially powerful venues for integrating students’ experiences. That could be an implication of this survey. We could see that students living with each other help them integrate their experiences.

Factors such as how far a student lives from home, how often a student goes home on the weekends, and how much room a student spends in his or her room on a daily basis are not significantly related to satisfaction. Also, if a student is not very satisfied with living arrangements and/or roommate, that does not necessarily mean the student will go home on the weekends or call home every day.

This survey is relevant to some of the underexplored research on specific campus communities. Berger (1997) believes that the social integration process affects the first year of college life. Students may find that sense of community once they have moved into a residence hall and learn to live with a roommate. That could be the most important reason that we see overall satisfaction. Of course, the type of campus matters as well. This survey was conducted on a relatively small campus, and subsequent research must follow on larger campuses. Also, the survey has the potential to be modified. Some of the survey items could be thrown out or replaced in an attempt to study new relationships in on-campus living.

References


Appendix

Survey for adjustment to living on campus

1. Please indicate your class standing according to credit hours earned. (Check one)
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Other (Please specify) ____________________

2. What is your age? (Check one)
   - 17 or under
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
   - 21 or older

3. What is your gender? (Check one)
   - Male
   - Female

4. What is your race? (Check one)
   - African American
   - Caucasian
   - Asian
   - Pacific Islander
   - Native American
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Other (Please specify) _____________________

5. In which residence hall do you live? (Check one)
   - Hawkes
   - Pitts
   - Henry
   - Boatwright
   - Turner

6. Do you have a roommate? (Check one)
   - Yes
   - No
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7. How satisfied are you with the amount of privacy your roommate allows you to have? (Choose one)
   Very satisfied 5  4  3  2  1 Very unsatisfied

8. How satisfied are you with your roommate overall? (Check one)
   Very satisfied 5  4  3  2  1 Very unsatisfied

9. How satisfied are you with your living quarters on campus overall? (Check one)
   Very satisfied 5  4  3  2  1 Very unsatisfied

10. In an average night on campus, how restful is your night of sleep? (Check one)
    Very restful 5  4  3  2  1 Very restless

11. In an average day of classes, how many hours during the day (not including when you sleep) do you spend in your dorm room? (Check one)
    0-3
    4-7
    More than 7

12. Do you share a bedroom with anyone at home? (Check one)
    Yes  No

13. How many miles away from home are you here at college? (Check one)
    0- 25
    26- 50
    51- 100
    101- 200
    201- 500
    More than 500

14. In an average month during a semester, how many weekends do you go home? (Check one)
    0
    1
    2
    3
    4

15. Do you speak with your parent/guardian each day on the phone? (Check one)=
    Yes  No

Citations