

AWARDS AND HONORS

Congratulations to these members of the Indiana University family on the following recognitions:

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Call for Nominations

Nominations of individuals for the 2001 Elizabeth A. Greenleaf and Robert H. Shaffer Awards are now being accepted. The Elizabeth A. Greenleaf Award is presented annually to a graduate of the master's degree program who exemplifies "the sincere commitment, professional leadership and personal warmth" of Betty Greenleaf, for whom the award is named. Previous Greenleaf Award recipients include Louis Stamatakos, Phyllis Mable, Deborah Hunter, Vernon Wall, Jamie Washington, Kathryn Goddard, and Helen Mamachev, to name a few. The Robert H. Shaffer Award is presented to a graduate of the Higher Education doctoral program who exemplifies outstanding service to the student affairs profession. Previous recipients have included "Sandy" McLean, Don Creamer, Alice Manicur, Donald Mikesell, and Gary McGrath.

Nominations for both awards close February 1, 2001. The awards will be presented at the 2001 NASPA and ACPA conferences. Please direct your nominations and letter of support to Jillian Kinzie, 4228 W. W. Wright Education Bldg., 201 N. Rose Ave., Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Thank you.

Satisfaction Among College Students Living in Greek Housing and Living-Learning Centers

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This study investigates how living environments facilitate social, academic, and institutional satisfaction among college students. Specifically, the satisfaction levels of students in Greek chapter houses were compared to those of students in a living-learning center. Results demonstrate that student satisfaction differs by place of residence and by gender, and serve to provide implications for future practice and research.

With the current national focus on assessment, student outcomes, and persistence rates in higher education, levels of college student satisfaction have become increasingly important. Students' level of satisfaction with a particular institution has been shown to be related to their perceptions of their educational experience (Astin, 1993). The value of a student's level of satisfaction cannot be underestimated because satisfaction, in turn, can have substantial effects on outcomes such as persistence, academic performance, and overall success in acclimating to the campus climate (Astin, 1993). One major determinant of satisfaction is a student's living environment. Specifically, Pennington, Zvonkovic, and Wilson (1989) list "place of residence" as being related to overall college satisfaction. Thus, residential environments play a large role in an institution's attempt to enhance the satisfaction of students.

The American College Personnel Association (1994) notes that student affairs professionals can intentionally create conditions that enhance student outcomes. To illustrate this point, Grimm (1993) observed students living in college residence halls and determined that those who lived in living-learning centers (LLC) were more satisfied than those who did not. Research also indicates that students living in Greek houses are more satisfied with their college experience than their peers living in traditional residence halls or in off-campus housing (Pennington et al., 1989).

Living-learning centers and Greek housing have certain similar characteristics, including the fact that students residing in them have intentionally chosen to do so. However, differences exist, such as how

selection takes place. A mutual selection process of rushing and pledging takes place among members of Greek organizations, whereas in living-learning centers, applications are reviewed by faculty or administrators.

Although these studies show that both Greek housing and living-learning centers are more effective environments for enhancing student outcomes than traditional residence halls, the authors of this study are unaware of any research directly comparing levels of satisfaction between the two. Such a comparison is an important step towards gaining knowledge of what types of living environments can and should be created in order to produce the greatest levels of college satisfaction.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare satisfaction among students living in Greek houses to that of students residing in living-learning centers. It is the goal of this study to further understand which type of intentional living environments promote and enhance greater degrees of social, academic, and institutional satisfaction. The results of this study can be examined and utilized by student affairs professionals when designing, evaluating, or restructuring intentional living environments. A better understanding of what types of environments produce greater satisfaction levels among students can aid administrators in reaching the goals of increasing persistence and retention.

Literature Review

The majority of a student's time in college is spent outside of the classroom (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbeil, & MacKay, 1991), and is divided up among various kinds of activities, including time spent in the living community. According to Schroeder, Warner, and Malone (1980), the time students spend in their living environment is a determining factor in their satisfaction with college. Schroeder, et al. (1980) further report that a student's sense of congruency with their living environment has been linked to increased levels of student satisfaction, higher levels of persistence and more stability in vocational choice.

The link between satisfaction and a student's place of residence can be explained in part by the interaction that takes place among students within the living community. Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994) and Astin (1993) note that living communities promote the development of peer groups, which in turn is a determinant of overall college satisfaction. In addition to promoting the

development of peer groups, living communities can also promote increased student involvement in campus activities such as student clubs and organizations or participation in intramural sports. All of these factors have been shown to be positively associated with overall college satisfaction (Astin, 1993). A student's peer group is the "single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (Astin, 1993, p. 398).

Given this understanding of living communities, the following discussion will illustrate the benefits of living in residence hall living-learning centers and Greek houses.

Living-Learning Centers

The early concepts of the living-learning center originated from the mutual desire of students and educators to integrate the knowledge gained from both inside and outside of the classroom, thereby "reaffirming the relevance of education to daily life" (Rowe, 1981, p.51). This integration has been accomplished by a number of strategies and styles, which allow for experimentation and flexibility in creating or changing living-learning centers. Thus a single, all-encompassing and agreed upon definition for this type of environment is problematic.

While living-learning centers vary among institutions, Love and Tokuno (1999) observe the foundation of a successful living-learning center consists of a shared setting where students and faculty collaborate to incorporate the curriculum into daily life. Living-learning communities can impact residents in a number of ways. First, Love (1999) notes that these units help students form social networks with peers, provide opportunities for faculty interaction, and increase student involvement. Second, it has been observed that increased retention, stronger commitment to the institution, and increased personal development are outcomes of living-learning centers (Barefoot, Fidler, Gardner, Moore & Roberts, 1999). Third, Strommer (1999) notes that greater exposure to collaborative learning, frequent class attendance, and overall higher academic success are benefits of living-learning units. In addition, students who reside in living-learning centers see their environment as more personal and less isolated (Williams & Reilley, 1972). Finally, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling's (1994) evidence suggests that "residing in an LLC is more educationally beneficial to students than living in a conventional residential hall" (p. 32).

Greek Houses

The second type of intentionally selected living communities examined in this study, Greek housing, has also been shown to promote student learning outcomes and overall college satisfaction. Astin (1977) writes "fraternity and sorority membership has a substantial positive effect on persistence, overall satisfaction with college, and satisfaction with instruction and social life" (p. 222). Given the aforementioned discussion by Astin (1993) of the influence of peer groups, Greek housing environments assist in the growth and development of students, and leave strong and lasting impressions.

The development of peer relationships in Greek houses has other benefits as well. Parker and Gade (1981) state that students living in Greek housing units have a high commitment to the house, receive high levels of emotional support, experience a drive for academic achievement and intellectual pursuits, and are given the freedom to govern themselves. In addition, Winston, Hutson, and McCaffrey (1980) write that studies completed using the University Residence Environment Scale (URES) showed that fraternities ranked higher on involvement, emotional support, and social interaction when compared to residence halls. Therefore, Greek housing environments may be better able to meet the needs of students and increase their overall satisfaction when compared to traditional residence halls. Seitzinger and Ellis (1989) note that independent students look to peer groups for assistance and are able to find that support within their living environment. Likewise, members in Greek houses turn first to fraternity brothers or sorority sisters for support.

In summary, not only do living environments play a large role in a student's overall success and satisfaction with the college experience, but among the various living environments, living-learning centers and Greek houses facilitate high rates of student involvement, academic development, social interaction, and in turn, overall satisfaction. Both living-learning centers and Greek houses have been shown to have benefits for the students living in them. The question remains, however, as to which of these two environments engenders more satisfaction among students.

Hypotheses

The researchers developed two hypotheses based on Barker's behavior setting theory (as cited in Walsh, 1978). Barker suggested that a behavior setting, such as a Greek house or living-learning center, imposes a pattern of behavior on the individuals in that setting. There-

fore, due to the social nature of Greek letter organizations, the researchers believed that members of the Greek houses would have higher levels of social satisfaction than those residing in living-learning centers. Second, due to the academic purpose and emphasis of the living-learning center, the researchers believed that the living-learning center residents would have a greater academic satisfaction than that of the Greek participants.

A third hypothesis stems from Blimling's (1993) review of the influence of residence halls on student satisfaction and perception of the campus social climate. Though Greeks exhibit more social satisfaction with their houses, students in residence halls have demonstrated more satisfaction with the campus social climate in general. "One possible explanation may be that exclusionary peer environments found in fraternities and sororities foster a sense of elitism. This feeling of elitism may encourage some cynicism about some campus activities outside of the fraternity and sorority experience" (p. 261). Therefore, the researchers of this study hypothesize that Greeks will have a higher social satisfaction and living-learning center residents will have a higher institutional satisfaction.

Method

Sample

The study was conducted at a large, public, residential, Research I institution located in the Midwest during the fall semester of 1999. A convenience sample was used from one fraternity house, one sorority house, and a living-learning center. From the distributed surveys, a response of 95 surveys was collected. The response rate from the sorority was 32 out of 35 (91.4%) and 34 out of 40 (85%) from the fraternity. The response rate for the living-learning center was 100 percent for both males and females, yielding 14 and 15 surveys respectively. These specific environments were chosen for comparison because of characteristics they have in common. For example, each has a strong tradition and history, high retention rates within the place of residence, and the fact that students must participate in a specific selection process to live in these environments.

After identifying fraternity and sorority chapters with the desired number of residents, the researchers approached the presidents of one fraternity chapter and one sorority chapter to ask for volunteers for the study. The living-learning center was selected because it embodied many of the identifying factors associated with the various definitions of living-learning centers found in the literature. This

includes student, faculty, and curricular collaboration. The living-learning center also housed a desirable number of males and females of sophomore class standing or higher, which is comparable to the fraternity and sorority living environments.

Instrumentation

A survey, specifically designed for this study, was administered to participants. The survey instrument was pre-tested by sixteen student volunteers from a fraternity and a thematic residence hall floor. The purpose of the pre-test was to determine the suitability of the instrument for assessing student satisfaction and to evaluate the clarity of instructions and individual survey items. Comments received from the pre-test volunteers were used to modify and further develop the survey instrument.

The survey was designed to measure the students' levels of satisfaction as it relates to their living environment. The instrument contained 47 Likert scale items, and three open-ended questions. Multiple choice responses ranged from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). The survey was divided into five sections: demographic information; academic satisfaction; social satisfaction; institutional satisfaction; and the three open-ended questions.

Analysis

The completed survey responses were entered into SPSS to determine the mean and standard deviation of each item. In addition, t-tests were used to compare the means and determine the statistical significance of the mean differences. The levels of satisfaction of students in the living-learning center and those in the Greek houses were compared. The same procedure was used to analyze differences between males and females. Specific areas of analysis examined academic, social, and institutional satisfaction. The open-ended responses were coded and categorized by common themes. Percentages of responses within each group were calculated and compared to discern differences between the Greek housing and living-learning center residents.

Limitations

Before discussing the results of the data collection, it is important to identify the limitations of this study. The small sample size from the living-learning center, especially as compared with the Greek sample, may skew results. In addition, the sample is by definition, a

convenience sample, and therefore may limit generalizability to other institutions, different types of living-learning centers, or to other Greek houses.

The reliance on self-reported data is another noteworthy limitation of this study, because it produces a certain degree of superficiality. In particular, satisfaction levels can fluctuate during various times in an academic term (Pennington, et al., 1989). In addition to the timing of the data collection, participants may have over-reported their agreement with individual survey items in an effort to improve the perceived results for their respective sample group. Therefore, self-reporting may have an impact on results.

Results

Table 1 provides an overview of academic, social, and institutional satisfaction among men and women in living-learning centers and Greek houses. This table also indicates the means and standard deviations for each category between all living-learning center and Greek participants. The gender differences among the three satisfaction categories are also illustrated.

Table 1

	All L.L.C Participants		L.L.C. Men		L.L.C. Women	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Academic	3.14	0.66	3.18*	0.65	3.67*	0.59
Social	3.41*	0.78	2.92**	0.81	3.86**	0.39
Institutional	4.06	0.82	3.83	0.99	4.29	0.56

	All Greeks		Greek Men		Greek Women	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Academic	3.53	0.52	3.48	0.55	3.59	0.5
Social	4.14**	0.39	4.02*	0.36	4.27*	0.39
Institutional	4.28	0.41	4.13	0.39	4.43	0.38

Significant Group Differences, * $<.05$, ** $<.001$ (two tailed probability)

First, participants living in fraternity and sorority houses have slightly higher levels of social satisfaction. The mean score was 4.14 for Greeks and 3.41 for living-learning center participants. There were no significant differences between Greek residents and living-learning center residents for academic and institutional satisfaction.

Second, there were significant differences between men's and women's academic and social satisfaction levels within the living-learning center sample. Women produced a mean score of 3.67 on the academic measure and 3.86 for social satisfaction, while men reported a mean of 3.18 and 2.92, respectively. Thus, women there were more academically and socially satisfied than men on both measures.

Third, there was a significant difference in the level of social satisfaction between Greek men and women with women being more socially satisfied than men. Women's mean score was a 4.27 and men's was 4.02. This finding is consistent with that of the living-learning center sample showing women are more socially satisfied in each environment.

There were no significant differences in academic or institutional satisfaction between the two genders. No large differences existed between the mean scores of individual survey items for these two groups. In general, women reported slightly higher agreement with all the individual survey items except for the number of hours spent each week in co-curricular activities. For this measure men reported a minimally higher level of agreement.

Another interesting finding is that the mean scores for both the Greek and living-learning center samples were at or above 4.0 for the final three survey items, which specifically mention the institution and reflect on the student's college choice. The high levels of satisfaction reported by these questions seems to indicate that the study University is meeting student expectations.

In addition to the Likert-scale items, three open-ended items were used to further assess the satisfaction levels of the subjects in their respective living environments. Specifically, their likes and dislikes about the environment and reasons for choosing their surroundings were examined. The first open-ended statement asked the subjects what they liked best about their living environment. The majority of the responses for this item were primarily directed at social and institutional aspects of the living environment, while academics were only mentioned in six responses. Greek participants specifically mentioned friendship as the thing they liked best about their living environment. However, no living-learning center resident provided this response. Both Greek and living-learning center participants' responses included social events, relationships with peers, diversity, acceptance and respect, food, brotherhood, and community.

The second open-ended item asked respondents to report what they liked least about their living environment. The most often mentioned category response among the Greek subjects was a lack of privacy and personal space followed by high noise levels that prevented people from sleeping or studying. Living-learning center residents reported facilities, peer group characteristics, and high levels of noise as the most frequently cited responses.

For the final open-ended item, "Why did you choose to live

here?" the authors found a wide range of responses. For the living-learning center, both desire for a single room and food availability occurred with the most frequency, followed by responses such as aesthetics, accepting or supportive environment, diversity, "lived here last year," and "recommended" which all occurred with the same frequency. On the other hand, the Greek residents' most common reason given for choosing to live in their house was peer group characteristics, which was followed by social life and events.

The responses found in this open-ended analysis are primarily based on the social aspect of both environments. These results support and complement those found in the Likert-scale section of the survey.

Discussion

Through a review of the research findings, several important implications can be drawn from this study. This section will discuss academic satisfaction in the living-learning center, gender differences among study participants, participation rates in the living-learning center, residence hall retention, selection of living-learning center residents, and institutional retention.

The closed-ended responses yielded no significant difference in academic satisfaction between Greek housing and living-learning center residents. This appears contrary to the original mission of living-learning centers. Rowe (1981) reported the initial premise of living-learning centers was to integrate knowledge into daily life. In the open-ended items, students cited the desire for a single room and food as the top reasons they chose to reside in a living-learning center, indicating that the living-learning center may have moved away from its academic foundation.

Given the positive outcomes associated with residing in a living-learning center (Barefoot, et al., 1999; Love, 1994; Pascarella, et al., 1994; Williams & Reilley, 1972), it would be beneficial for this living-learning center to revisit its historical roots and implement more academically based programs and policies. Practitioners should proceed with caution, however. While there cannot be any conclusive results drawn regarding academic satisfaction, the reported mean score of social satisfaction (3.41) does suggest this living-learning center is fostering a certain degree of social satisfaction. Thus, efforts to enhance the academic climate should not be at the expense of social opportunities for students.

Comparisons between male and female residents show female students are more socially satisfied in both the living-learning center

and Greek residences. This may be attributable to the differences in environments in men's and women's residences, or to gender difference itself. Gilligan (1996) suggests that women are socialized differently than men and place a greater emphasis on cooperation and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the nature of the relationships on women's floors and in the sorority house may be a cause of the differences found in this study. Future researchers may want to examine the different environments established by men and women to determine the cause of this discrepancy.

During the data collection process, the research team also noted differences in participation rates between the living-learning center and Greek housing residents. After visiting one fraternity and one sorority the desired number of surveys for this study were obtained. However, five visits to the living-learning center yielded an average of less than six surveys per visit. This suggests that Greek participation rates in organizational meetings and events is higher than that of LLC functions. These attendance rates may support the high levels of commitment typical in Greek organizations as stated in the literature (Parker & Gade, 1981; Winston, et al., 1980). The commitment shown by Greek housing residents may be the result of the peer relations found in these environments. However, it should be noted that often times house and chapter meetings are mandatory for members. If future research can demonstrate that peer relationships result in stronger organizational commitment, efforts to increase social involvement in living-learning centers may increase participation in meetings and hall functions.

The research conducted in this study indicates that students residing in Greek houses have higher levels of social satisfaction than students residing in the living-learning centers. This warrants further research to determine what causes higher levels of social satisfaction. However, if these elements can be properly determined and applied to living-learning centers, it may be possible to increase social satisfaction among students living in residence halls. Increased social satisfaction in the residence halls may lead to more students choosing to reside there. Given the positive outcomes of residing in a living-learning center as cited in the literature (Barefoot, et al., 1999; Love, 1999; Pascarella, et al., 1994; Williams & Reilley, 1972;), future research should be conducted to determine why students in Greek housing are more satisfied with their social lives, and practitioners should attempt to incorporate these elements into the living-learning centers.

One possible explanation for the higher levels of social satisfaction in the Greek housing units is that those students self-select with

whom they will live. This takes place through the recruitment or rush process that is used to supply Greek organizations with new members. The open-ended responses to why students from the Greek housing sample chose their particular living environment indicated it was due to the characteristics of their housemates, the social life and events, and their friends. Conversely, living-learning center residents reported they chose their environment because it provided the opportunity for a single room and because of the food. According to a living-learning center staff member, students do not participate in the selection process for the living-learning center, but rather apply and are chosen by a selection committee composed of two faculty members (personal communication, December 5, 1999). The authors of this study feel there is a strong possibility that if students were allowed to participate in the selection process for the living-learning center, social satisfaction may improve. However, caution should be used. Living-learning center residents responded favorably to the presence of diversity in their environment. Greek houses surveyed in this study show very low levels of diversity among their membership. Therefore, any changes in the selection process should strive to maintain a diverse student population within the living-learning center.

This study concludes that living-learning center students are less socially satisfied than the Greek housing population. Further, Grimm (1993) observed that students who reside in living-learning centers are typically more satisfied than those students who live in traditional residence halls. Thus, there is cause for concern regarding student satisfaction with traditional residence halls. Residence hall satisfaction is a determinant of overall satisfaction, which is closely tied to institutional retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Future research is needed to determine how to increase student satisfaction in the residence halls, and maintain and increase institutional retention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to compare academic, social, and institutional satisfaction among students in living-learning centers and Greek houses. The results of data collection demonstrate that satisfaction differs by place of residence and gender. Given the current debate in higher education regarding accountability, it is critical that

institutions assess the satisfaction of their students. It is the view of the research team that thorough and continuous investigation into the nature and causes of student satisfaction will allow practitioners to implement structures and policies on college campuses that will facilitate student development, positive outcomes, and greater satisfaction with the college environment.

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