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Examining the Impact Parental Educational Attainment Has on Students' Perceptions of Residence Hall Living

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EXAMINING THE IMPACT PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT HAS ON
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESIDENCE HALL LIVING

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by

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ABSTRACT

The current study sought to examine the impact parental educational attainment had on how students perceived their residence hall environment. This multi-campus study utilized the University Residence Environment Scale, along with a demographic form to gather data. The study occurred on three campuses during the Spring 2012 semester and had 347 participants. The findings suggest there were no differences in how parental educational attainment impacted participants' perspectives of the residence hall. Parental educational attainment was a significant factor when coded only as two options (i.e. college degree, no college degree). Additional results were that gender and ethnicity played a role in how students perceived their residence halls.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is part of the mission of most post-secondary institutions. There are students who have a diversity that is not readily observable, such as students with learning disabilities; gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered students; religious or non-religious students; first-generation students; and students from the working class. Practitioners are not talking and writing about students with unobservable diversities as much as they are talking and writing about students with visible diversity (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012), like gender and visible ethnicity, even though students with invisible diversities are working on campus, taking classes, and living in the residence halls.

Parental Educational Attainment

Students with invisible diversities have unique needs because of their invisibility. Many studies (Choy, 2001; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010) have used the concept of first-generation students to create the binary categories of first- and non-first-generation students. Defining a student simply as first-generation can be based on whether or not either parent has a college degree. This binary concept is inadequate on a modern college campus because parental education is a spectrum, not simply college versus no college.

A more nuanced view of parental education can be found in the work of Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) as well as the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Hollingshead and Redlich created seven categories for educational attainment as listed in Table 1. The U.S. Census Bureau uses seven categories of educational attainment, which are (a) less than 9th grade, (b) 9th grade-12th grade no diploma, (c) high school graduate, (d) some college no degree, (e) associate's degree, (f) bachelor's degree, and (g) graduate or professional degree.

Table 1

Hollingshead's Educational Categories

Category Names	Descriptions
Less than seventh grade	Below 7 th grade
Junior high school	9 th grade
Partial high school	10 th grade or 11 th grade
High school graduate	Complete high school
Partial college or specialized training	At least one year
Standard college or university graduation	Graduating from college
Graduate professional training	Obtaining a graduate degree

(Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's *2010 American Community Survey*, there are more than 43.5 million U.S. adults over 25 who have some experience in college. The same study also found a difference in earning ability based upon educational attainment. An average person who holds a high school diploma made \$26,349 annually, while an average person with some college earned \$31,928 annually. An average person holding a bachelor's degree earned \$47,422 annually (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The results demonstrate that some experience in

college leads to more income. Additionally, some experience in college will allow parents to help their children prepare for and successfully negotiate the college environment.

Dividing college students into two groups, first-generation and non-first-generation, does not add new information to the conversation. By using a more complete list of parental educational attainment, this research explored differences between students in a more nuanced and complete fashion. The two competing definitions of first-generation students, no college degree and no college attendance, create confusion in the literature. As noted above, some experience in college is associated with higher earned income. It is reasonable to conclude that the children of parents with some experience in college will have more cultural capital about the college experience than children of parents with no college experience (Barratt, 2011). For the purpose of this research, it was assumed that parental experience in education by parents helped them to guide, advise, and mentor their child in his or her campus experience.

Students in this study were defined as belonging to one of six groups based on parental educational attainment. They were classified into that group based on the highest level of educational attainment of either parent: (a) graduate degree, (b) college, four-year degree, (c) associate's degree, (d) some college, no degree, (e) high school degree, (f) less than a high school degree. The categories were selected because of the social and cultural capital parental educational attainment provides students. Cultural capital is known as the knowledge and skill associated with the prestige social class, a person's belonging (pictures, books, etc.), what he or she learns growing up, and thoughts based upon the person's upbringing (Barratt, 2011). Social capital is the connections a person makes throughout his or her life, which helps or hinders his or her success. It is not always important who you know, but who knows you (Barratt, 2011).

The U.S. Census divides *no high school degree* into multiple categories, but for this study there was only be one category for parental attainment of no high school degree. This decision was made because the lack of college experience is the same whether the student's parent finished the eighth grade or the 10th grade. The study also combined any educational attainment above a bachelor's degree into the category of graduate degree. The other categories mirrored the U.S. Census categories for education attainment.

The experiences of students from families who have little or no experience in college, particularly students' experiences in the residence halls, were the focus of this dissertation research. There are few support networks created by student affairs professionals to assist first-generation students on a college campus and yet there are support networks set up to assist students of color and women students.

There are few studies focusing on parental educational attainment and the impact this has on their children. Due to this, I drew from first-generation and non-first-generational research and studies. First-generation students are defined as students with neither parent having obtained a post-secondary education degree (Davis, 2010). It has been found that a parent's educational attainment has an impact on how his or her son or daughter adjusts to post-secondary education. For example, as students whose parents did not attain a post-secondary degree transition to college, they face psychological, interpersonal, and structural obstacles, such as the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the world known as post-secondary education (Saenz, et al. 2007). One first-generation student noted about attending college, "I am not even supposed to be here. My parents always told me when I was growing up, 'We're not college people'" (Stieha, 2010, p. 237). When studying students' arrival to campus, Lillis and Tian (2008) found that first-

generation students experienced a contrast between themselves and non-first-generation students with regards to what they knew and experienced prior to college.

According to Hudley et al. (2009), many first-generation students are also from lower economic statuses and this creates economic barriers to their college success. For some students from poverty and the working class, it is a psychological struggle because they have been found to minimize and accept the adversity they face in higher education (Aries & Seider, 2007). It is difficult to confront social class because it is a difficult topic to get college students, faculty, and administrators to discuss (Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009). I posit that one reason for this difficulty in confronting and discussing class is because it is easy for a student to hide his or her social class, which is known as class passing (Barratt, 2011).

The transition to college is more difficult for first-generation students than for non-first-generation students because first-generation students are less likely to fully understand the expectations of higher education before arriving on campus (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Chaffee (1992) wrote that the reason behind some of first-generation students' struggles with higher education is that they never truly expected to go to college nor did they fully understand how to get to college or how to be successful in college. Due in part to transition to college difficulties, first-generation students do not have high rates of persistence and degree attainment (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2003). Ishitani (2003) found that first-generation students had a 71% higher rate of not completing their first year as compared to a student who had two college-educated parents.

Problem

Obtaining a four-year degree is often seen as a vehicle for upward social mobility (Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Hottinger & Rose, 2006; Mortenson, 2000). Mumper (1996) wrote

that students who attended college improved their verbal skills, quantitative skills, oral and written communication skills, and critical thinking skills. First-generation students learn that college can act as a turning point in their lives. They learn that a college education can provide them with the knowledge and skills to be financially successful, enable them to better understand how they fit into the work world and into society, and add meaning into their lives (Mumper, 1996). Paulsen (1998) stated, “The magnitude of earnings differentials between college and high school graduates—which has increased substantially since the mid-1970s—is clearly one of the most striking and straightforward demonstrations of the value of a college education” (p. 474). For first-generation students, attaining a higher education degree removes them from their social classes of origin both economically and culturally, breaking the cycle that encourages first-generation not to participate in higher education. This educational attainment helps the children of first-generation college graduates to have an easier time with the college application, transition, and educational processes. Completing a college degree is not easily accomplished for first-generation students, but when the generational cycle of not attending college is broken it is a remarkable feat (Hottinger & Rose, 2006). Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) found in their qualitative study of first-generation students a struggle to balance family and college expectations. The students felt a pull from the family, which made it difficult to navigate college when the students lacked cultural capital.

Unfortunately, this social mobility may cause difficulty for the first-generation students with their family of origin. According to Cushman (2007), first-generation students face a culture shock when arriving on campus. Cushman concluded items such as personal and family income, speech patterns, and social norms cause first-generation students to feel like outsiders in higher education. Cushman stated that it is difficult for first-generation students to remain true to

their culture of origin's values and norms, which forces them to assimilate to the values and norms of the campus culture. This assimilation separates them from their families of origin. Non-first-generation students found the transition easier because they had the cultural capital to understand how higher education worked.

According to Smith (2008), "access to American higher education is increasingly becoming a privilege for upper-class youth, while low-socioeconomic status youth are increasingly marginalized and unable to compete in the college choice game" (p. 18). Seider (2008) concluded through a qualitative study that institutions of higher education remain segregated based upon social class. Goldrick-Rab (2006) believed that people in public offices needed to do more than provide access to higher education, given the fact that there is a large gap between the social classes in college attendance and graduation rates.

Ostrove and Long (2007) found that social class played a role in a student's sense of belonging to an institution. Stieha (2010) conducted a qualitative study focusing on first-generation college students. One first-generation student interviewed in that study, coming from a background of poverty, explained how she was able to be invisible to others. Stieha believed "the cost of the invisibility is that she can easily slip through the cracks of the institution" (p. 247).

Residence, Retention, and First-Generation Students

Administrators at institutions of higher education have sought different avenues for retention of first-generation students due to the fact that "first-generation students were also more likely than others to have left [college] without a degree (45 versus 29 percent)" (Choy, 2001, p. 26). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that living on campus increases the likelihood of persistence and degree completion. Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994)

found that living on campus has a strong positive influence on persistence, graduation rates, and involvement. Research has suggested the benefits of living in residence halls, but little is known about whether first-generation students view and benefit from residence halls the same as the non-first-generation students.

Unfortunately, data collected using the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey in 2005 found that fewer first-generation students live on campus than non-first-generation students (Saenz et al., 2007). Saenz et al. concluded in 2005 that 69.3% of first-generation students planned to reside on campus as compared to 84.5% of non-first-generation students. Saenz et al. found the same gap of 14% existed in 1975.

First-Generation Students' Campus Experiences

Through in-depth phenomenological interviews of four first-generation students, Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) concluded that first-generation students lacked cultural capital needed to navigate higher education. The participants shared stories of how they viewed faculty as gatekeepers who sought to ensure people were serious about academics. The idea of feeling abandoned and feeling that the institution felt no duty to support their efforts was a common conclusion in this research. The participants also did not feel close to faculty members throughout their time at the institution of higher education. Using Bourdieu's (1986) terminology, first-generation students had built little cultural capital and social capital on campus.

The outsider feeling was also examined in Jehangir's (2009) qualitative case study, which examined learning communities with specially designed curriculum for first-year first-generation college students. Jehangir concluded these specially designed environments provided first-

generation students a sense of belonging. These learning communities also helped to create a place for first-generation students to have a voice in higher education.

Purpose

Given the fact that many United States institutions of higher education require first-year students to live in campus residence halls, it is to be expected that life in these residence halls is a factor in retaining students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Research has supported the academic and retention benefits of living in residence halls, and all students in this research have typically been treated as a homogeneous group despite their generational status differences.

The purpose of this study was to examine if students' parental educational attainment impacts how they perceive their residence hall experience. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine if demographic aspects of a student play a role in how that student perceives his or her on-campus residence hall experience.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was "Does a parent's highest level of educational attainment, along with the students' gender, ethnicity, and semesters on campus affect perception of their residence hall environment?" This study utilized the University Residence Environment Scale (URES), which measures students' perceptions of three dimensions of their living environment: (a) Relationships, (b) Personal Growth Or Goal Orientation, and (c) System Maintenance And Change (Moos, 1988). Student demographic data were collected using the form in Appendix A.

Significance of the Study

The study provided information surrounding the experiences of students living in the residence halls. It also examined whether students' parental educational attainment had an

impact on how they experienced residence halls. The study provided possible insight for administrators on how to craft policies, procedures, and programs for students living in the residence halls in order to facilitate the academic success of students with different levels of parental educational attainment.

Definition of Terms

The following were the definitions for the key terms used in this study.

Parental Educational Attainment

The highest level of formal education a parent reaches was considered the parent's educational attainment. A demographic form was utilized by students to identify their parents' educational attainment level. If two parents were recorded, the one with the highest level of educational attainment was used for this study.

Residence Hall

A building owned and operated by an institution in which the staff hopes to provide an educational learning and living environment for a student's development while attending higher education is known as a residence hall (Schroeder & Mable, 1994).

Social Class

Social class is based upon income, educational attainment, occupational prestige, accumulation of cultural and social capital, and the social status a person holds in society. In this study, parental educational attainment served as a proximate measure of a student's social class.

Majority Class

The group of people who have the control or power in society or in a segment of society like a college campus is known as the majority class. Human aggregate theory (Holland, 1997) provided a framework for understanding a campus, or any environment, based on the

characteristics of the inhabitants. The majority class in this study reflects the numeric majority of residents in a residence hall. Holland (1997) suggested that the majority members of an environment will exert a strong influence on many dimensions in the environment. For this study, the majority class was non-first-generation students and the minority class was first-generation students.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations to the current study. The categories used to describe parental educational attainment were liberal in focus, which did not always concur with other researchers' focus (generational status). A narrower definition of the classification of parental educational attainment (i.e., first-generation and non-first-generation students) may have produced different results, such as

- not understanding the spectrum of different parental educational attainment needs,
- misunderstanding the plight of students who had a parent who attended, but did not graduate college, and
- viewing parental education attainment in a dichotomous lens.

The data collection was administered at a set time and place. This method only allowed for students present at the time of administration of the URES to participate in the study. If alternative times and locations were made available, the sample size might have been larger.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the literature surrounding first-generation and non-first-generation college students and their experiences in higher education. The chapter begins by providing a historical overview of university housing. This review examines the evolution of housing programs from the Cambridge and Oxford models to the present day approach on most United States campuses. The second section of this review examines first-generation college students. This section focuses on first-generation students' attributes prior to college, cultural shock while attending college, and the rising cost of higher education. The section also explores parental involvement, retention of first-generation students, and faculty engagement. The final section of the chapter examines the theoretical approach and instrument used in this study.

History of University Housing in the United States

Since the inception of higher education in the United States at Harvard College in 1636, most four-year campuses in United States have housing facilities (Frederiksen, 1993). These structures have played different roles on college campuses throughout history. The development of collegiate housing occurred over three distinct phases.

The First Phase

Housing originated with the establishment of Harvard in 1636 (Frederiksen, 1993). Oxford and Cambridge models influenced how US college administrators perceived on-campus

living. The goal of housing was not only to provide a place for students to sleep but also to engage students with faculty outside the classroom. During this phase, faculty members lived with the students and assumed the role of handling any conduct issues, which was the beginning of *in loco parentis* (Schroeder & Mable, 1994).

The Second Phase

The beginning of the Civil War brought about a change in how the function of residence halls was perceived. The German model of education that viewed institutions as places for research and scholarship, with little emphasis on caring for students' personal development, had a great influence during this time (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). This phase saw the decline of *in loco parentis* and funding for on-campus housing (Frederiksen, 1993). Due to the lack of funding and construction of residence halls, students moved off campus to overcrowded boarding housing (Frederiksen, 1993). During this time period, there also was the growth in the number of fraternity houses being built. These houses were built in part to help meet the needs of students needing a place to live (Frederiksen, 1993).

The Third Phase

The shift toward the final phase of university housing began in the late nineteenth century with the land-grant movement and collegiate presidential influence (Frederiksen, 1993). The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 provided resources for the establishment of residential colleges. In addition, college presidents realized the poor conditions students were living in off campus and wanted to create better environments (Frederiksen, 1993). In the beginning of this phase, residence halls were funded through private donations, but this came to a halt when the Great Depression hit higher education.

College enrollment dropped during World War II and residence hall construction halted. This housing construction hiatus continued until Congress passed the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, which opened access to higher education for millions of veterans (Thelin, 2004). The increase in college enrollment after WWII meant a greater need for housing on campus, which institutions could not supply (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). The federal government assisted by giving war surplus buildings to use to house students. These were typically Quonset huts or temporary military barracks. In addition, the federal government passed Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950, which provided low interest rate loans to be taken to support the building of residence halls (Frederiksen, 1993). This started the boom of residence hall building which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s. Frederiksen wrote

The major shortage of collegiate housing, the desire for a fast solution to this shortage, and conditions on the use of the federal loan money resulted in the construction of many dormitories rather than residence halls. The dormitories were built to house and feed students and to maximize the number of beds constructed for the dollars available, with little or no regard for quality of students' educational experiences and personal development. Dormitories were designed for low-cost maintenance, not livability. (p. 172)

During the 1970s, housing demand caught up with institutional enrollment. After the conclusion of the Vietnam conflict college, enrollments, and subsequently residence hall occupancy, declined. During this time, institutions begin to examine the student experience of living on campus (Frederiksen, 1993). Campus administrators began to find ways to make the dormitories into residence halls that focused on experience and educational opportunity.

In the 1970s, higher education experienced massive growth in the areas of learning communities and designing transformative learning environments within the on-campus residential communities. According to the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2004) “Transformative education places the student’s reflective processes at the core of the learning experience” (p. 10). This type of learning was about getting students to actively engage in their learning processes.

Residence halls have been assessed for their impact of creating a sense of belonging for students. Johnson et al., (2007) conducted a study examining sense of belonging for different racial/ethnic groups and examined residence halls’ impact. The study had 2,967 first-year students who completed the 2004 National Study of Living-Learning Programs. With regards to residence halls, the study found them to be significant to how students rated their sense of belonging. In the current study all students, except Multiracial/Multiethnic, found their residence halls to be a supportive and inclusive environment, which had a significance relationship to their sense of belonging.

Fanucce and Taub (2010) conducted a study to understand how homonegativity impacted LGBT and Non-LGBT students’ perceptions of their residence hall environment. They utilized the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Residence Hall Climate Inventory and the Residence Hall Climate Scale. The surveys were sent to 2,000 students and had a return rate of 12.25% ($n = 245$). Through analysis, the researchers found as homonegativity increased on a community the less positive both LGBT and non-LGBT students viewed the community climate. This study demonstrated the import role a residence hall environment has in creating safe and open environments for students.

Banning and Kuk (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on the past five years of dissertations that focused on university housing. The researchers found a commitment by housing professionals to create a positive experience for all students living on campus. Student persistence, success, and satisfaction was positively impacted through living on campus, according to the researchers. The researchers were able to conclude more research needed to be completed around construction and renovation.

In Brooks's (2010) article, he highlighted the impact his department has seen in students' development through living in the residence halls at the University of Pittsburgh. Brooks examined the different ways his team worked to engage students, such creating as hall t-shirts, developing learning communities, making pre-arrival phone calls, creating virtual residence halls, and developing outside the classroom curriculum. Brooks found students developed through their experiences with outside the classroom and learning communities. The residence halls at the University of Pittsburgh have been found to assist with retention and recruitment of students.

The understanding of what draws students to live on campus was examined by Li, Sheely, and Whalen (2005). These researchers conducted a study through administering a survey to 5,747, which resulted in a 44% return rate ($n = 2,553$). They found three important factors influenced whether a student choose to live on campus or not, which were (a) involvement in a learning community, (b) academic support, and (c) leadership opportunities. The researchers found that lower ACT scores had a negative effect on students wanting to live on campus.

Pascarella et al., (1994) summarized and synthesized a number of studies and found that students who live in residence halls are more engaged and involved in the campus community.

Pascarella et al. also concluded that students who lived in a residence hall persisted and graduated at a higher rate than students who did not live on campus. They also concluded that living on campus “has its strongest and most consistent positive influence in the areas of social/extracurricular involvement, satisfaction with college, persistence in college, and degree attainment” (Pascarella et al., 1994, p. 27).

When taking precollege traits (i.e. socioeconomic status, age, academic performance) into account, students’ relationship to living on campus and likeliness to persist to graduate is statistically significant (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Unfortunately, first-generation students live on campus at a lower rate than non-first-generation college students (16% versus 40%), which is why it is important to understand their experiences to assist with retention and persistence (Nuvez & Cuccaro-Almin, 1998).

First-Generation College Students

First-Generation College Students Breaking the Cycle

It has been predicted that the number of first-generation students enrolled in higher education will continue to increase in the coming years (Ishitani, 2003; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Alternatively, the large number of first-generation students who have attended college have children who will likely attend college, making less room for a new generation of first-generation students, so it is possible that the number of first-generation students on campus will decrease. From a third perspective first-generation students enroll at a larger rate (51%) at community colleges versus non-first-generation students (37%), thus educational access has shifted from four-year schools to community colleges (Nuvez & Cuccaro-Almin, 1998).

Gofen (2009) wrote that when a first-generation college student obtains a degree, he or she breaks the cycle of family education history. This is the idea that parents typically pass along their educational level to their children. Studies have found that children whose parents attained a higher education degree are much more likely to attend college than the children of the non-college educated (Saenz et al., 2007). When students achieve a level of education beyond that of their parents, the child is breaking the cycle of non-attendance. Breaking this cycle is not an easy process for first-generation students. During this process of attending college, first-generation students have reported feeling pulled between either remaining close to their families or attaining the dream of going to college (Hottinger & Rose, 2006). London (1992) compared this process to a snake shedding its skin. A first-generation student must shed his or her social class identity to take on the new one required to fit in with the higher education campus. One of the main reasons first-generation students sought higher education was to help support their families financially (Bui, 2002). London (1992) found, “For many first-generation students the very act of going to college indicates an interest in attaining a white-collar, middle-class position not previously attained by a family member, and this may take the student into uncharted cultural territory” (p. 10).

A child’s parents’ education is a strong predictor in the likelihood of the student enrolling in higher education (Choy, 2001). Choy (2001) found

College enrollment rates vary considerably with parents’ educational attainment. In 1999, 82% of students whose parents held a bachelor’s degree or higher enrolled in college immediately after finishing high school. These rates were much lower for those parents had completed high school but not college (54 percent) and even lower for those whose parents had less than a high school diploma (36 percent). (p. 3)

Lower educational expectations were reported in the eighth grade for first-generation students (Choy, 2001). Other research found first-generation students reported lower self-efficacy around going to college expectations than non-first-generation students (Gibbons & Border, 2010). On the other hand, Vuong et al., (2010) found there was no significant difference between first- and non-first-generation students in self-efficacy during the sophomore year of college.

A second predictor as to whether a first-generation student attends college is the type of curriculum the student experienced in high school. Choy (2001) found that taking rigorous courses in high school helped to alleviate the disadvantages first-generation students faced in higher education. Choy believed that providing challenging and rigorous coursework is a step in the right direction to assisting first-generation students to become academically successful.

Terenzini et al. (1996) found that when first-generation students were compared to their traditional peers they “are more likely to come from low-income families, to be Hispanic, to have weaker cognitive skills, to have lower degree aspirations, and to be less involved with peers and teachers in high school” (p. 5). First-generation students also were more likely to have lower SAT/ACT scores than non-first-generation students (Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007). Terenzini et al. also found that first-generation students take longer to reach degree completion. Due to a number of factors, first-generation students also attend less selective institutions than non-first-generation students (Pascarella et al., 2004). Seifert, Pascarella, and Goodman (2010) found that first-generation students use community college as their point of entry into the world of higher education.

The ability to complete the necessary paperwork for college admission is more difficult and complex for low-income and first-generation students than it is for non-first-generation students (Harrell & Forney, 2003). Families of first-generation students are also less likely to

receive assistance from high schools when applying to higher education (Choy, 2001). In fact, income has such an impact that “if a student’s family income is \$75,000 or more per year, that student is more than four times as likely to be considered ‘very highly qualified’ for college when compared to students with family incomes of less than \$25,000” (Harrell & Forney, 2003, p. 152).

First-generation White men from working class families tend to place more value on social capital than non-first-generation men (Moschetti & Hudley, 2008). First-generation college students have also been found to be lacking in the skills or knowledge to make decisions about the value of attaining a higher education degree. Pascarella et al. (2004) concluded that first-generation college students lack the knowledge to know how to select a college and what to get involved with upon entering college. They also found that men who are first-generation tend to seek out campus resources less often than non-first-generation students, which puts them at greater risk. According to Pascarella et al., institutions of higher education have fewer resources and staff focusing on assisting first-generation, low-income, White men to attain higher education than other minority groups. This becomes important for administrators to recognize as first-generation students lack the social and cultural capital to know how to navigate an institution of higher education, as compared to non-first-generation students.

First-Generation Attributes Prior to College

The ability to retain first-generation college students has been a growing concern for higher education (Collier & Morgan, 2008). Ishitani’s (2006) study found that a student’s income level has a large impact on first-year retention. Students from lower income group dropped out of higher education at a rate of over two times that of upper income level students. First-generation students lack the knowledge and terminology needed to prepare for and navigate

higher education (Bryan & Simmons, 2009). Jehangir (2009) wrote that first-generation students report that the experience of higher education is bewildering and less enjoyable than they expected.

In one study comparing state institution students and Ivy League students, it was discovered that first-generation students at the state college had lower career aspirations than students attending Ivy League institutions (Seider, 2008). Non-first-generation students were found to have a higher level of self-efficacy (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Given the many roadblocks, Terenzini et al. (1996) concluded, “Despite the fact that first-generation students entered college with lower reading, math, and critical thinking skills, the two groups gained in their math and critical thinking abilities to about the same degree during the first year of college” (p. 18).

Studies have found that first-generation students are not as academically prepared as non-first-generation students (Choy, 2001; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). The lack of academic preparation requires more remedial classes, which have been found to affect the length of time for degree completion (Ishitani, 2006). Terenzini et al. (1996) found that when first-generation students attended college they “were likely to take fewer course in the humanities and fine arts and to complete fewer total hours during their first academic year” (p. 17) as compared to non-first-generation students. Choy (2001) discovered that first-generation students were not taking as rigorous coursework in high school as non-first-generation students, especially in mathematics. Choy also found that completion of rigorous high school math courses was strongly associated with enrollment in higher education. Harrell and Forney (2003) examined retaining Hispanic and first-generation college students and concluded that if a student successfully completed rigorous course work in high school that student was more likely to

complete a bachelor's degree. A student who pursued rigorous high school course work also needed less remedial work in college, which also assists with time to degree completion. In addition, other researchers found that a first-generation college student's competence around academics increased the more students engaged with their high school teachers (Hudley et al., 2009).

Culture Shock

First-generation students experience cultural shock when they enroll in higher education (Cushman, 2007; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). A reason for this culture shock is caused in part to a lack of social capital. These connections allow a person to have benefits he or she may not had without the connection. Barry, Hudley, Kelly, and Cho (2009) found that first-generation students struggled in higher education because of their lack of social capital.

First-generation students face a shock when they enrolled in higher education. Gofen (2009) called this a cultural shock because first-generation students experience a different world when they enter higher education. First-generation students must make a decision between their home culture and the dominant culture of higher education.

Ostrove and Long (2007) conducted a quantitative study that examined how students felt their social class background impacted their overall college experience. The study was conducted at a selective liberal arts college and included 324 participants. Ostrove and Long found that a student's social class, defined through parent's income, education, and childhood opportunities, plays an important role in a student's sense of belonging. The researchers concluded that lower socioeconomic status students tended to feel more alienated in higher education than students from other socioeconomic backgrounds.

Barry et al., (2009) found that first-generation students did not have as much social support as their peers and were less likely to share their experiences with peers because they lacked social capital. Barry et al. found this caused first-generation students more stress than non-first-generation students because first-generation students were not able to talk through their concerns or fears with a peer group.

Bryan and Simmons (2009) conducted a qualitative study with 10 first-generation college students. Half of the participants in the study felt as if they were living two different lives. One student stated

When I first came . . . I went home every weekend. At that time, it was like I had two sort of separate lives, like I had a life here, where I just did school, and I'd just go home and hang out with my . . . friends and family. (Bryan & Simmons, 2009, p. 396)

Participants in the study discussed how their families lacked the knowledge of higher education and the terminology used in applying for college and for financial aid which impacted the support they received. The participants in Bryan and Simmons's research also recognized that their relationships with family members changed after they had attended higher education institutions.

Rising Higher Education Cost and Impact

The financial cost of attending higher education was identified as one barrier to first-generation students in high school (Gibbons & Border, 2010). Eitel and Martin (2009) found that providing personal financial planning in the curriculum would be a great asset to female first-generation students. Due to the rising cost, first-generation students have been found to work more hours off-campus while attending college than non-first-generation students (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Students' lack of resources growing up had an impact on their ability to successfully navigate higher education. Students with less financial means tend to also be first-generation. Even within the ranks of first-generation students, there is great financial disparity. Lee, Sax, Kim, and Hagedorn (2004) conducted a study examining students' experiences across parent education. They had 5,000 participants from nine different community colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District. Lee et al. concluded, "Greater income disparities exist between junior high school educated parents versus high school educated parents and community college educated parents versus four-year college educated parents than between traditional first-generation versus non-first-generation community college students" (p. 8).

Astin and Oseguera (2004) used data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey (TFS) to examine how socioeconomic status factored into attending highly selective institutions. Through analysis of the data it was concluded that a student's economic status had an impact on whether or not the student attended a highly selective institution. Astin and Oseguera found a student whose parents both had a college degree had a 500% increase in chances of attending a highly selective institution over the chances of a first-generation student.

The TFS was also used by Walpole (2008) to examine how social class plays into the experience of attending college for African American students. African American first-generation students who participated in this study held lower GPAs and degree attainment than their counterparts. It was also concluded that African American first-generation students reported less contact with faculty than students from high socioeconomic status (Walpole, 2008). These findings coincide with Chen and DesJardins (2008) study which found students from low

socioeconomic households were more likely than their peers from higher socioeconomic to drop out of college.

Walpole (2003) used the TFS data to conduct another analysis which examined socioeconomic class and college outcomes. The study demonstrated that students from lower socioeconomic status held different capital than students from higher income levels. It was also discovered students from poverty have lower aspirations and educational goals than their peers from different socioeconomic status (Walpole, 2003).

Through the use of a questionnaire, Bui (2002) compared first-generation and non-first-generation students attending a four-year university examining different student characteristics, first-year experience, and why the students selected the institution they did. Bui concluded that first-generation students worry more about failing college and about the financial aspect of attending higher education.

Growing up in poverty also had an effect on financial support provided to students. The ability of students from poverty to believe they could pay for higher education impacted their preparedness (Long & Riley, 2007), who described the importance of this aspect:

The monetary rewards of a college degree are so great that many in the field of higher education have begun to categorize the decision to attend college as the “Million Dollar Question” because, on average, people with a bachelor’s degree will earn \$1 million more over the course of their lifetime than those with only a high school diploma. (p. 39)

The million dollar question demonstrates the importance of providing first-generation students and students from poverty with the knowledge of how to attain a higher education.

Federal Government's Response to Rising Cost

The federal government administrators shifted how they used grant monies (Long & Riley, 2007; Paulson, 1998) by putting more money into the loan program instead of grants. Kim (2007) examined how loans affect a student's persistence to degree attainment. The loans students take to attend higher education had a negative impact on students from poverty and Black students. Kim concluded that low-income and Black students are sensitive to taking loans for higher education and, as a result, loans have an impact on degree attainment for them. The loan process not only limited access to financial resources for college but had a negative impact on students from poverty graduating as compared to middle class students.

As the U.S. federal and state governments decreased their funding of higher education, they passed the burden on to the universities to make up for the loss of funds. Universities passed the cost of higher education on to parents and students by raising tuition and fees for students to attend. This phenomenon left the students from low-income families out of college because their family contribution was extremely low (Mortenson, 2000). Through analyzing U.S. Census data, Mortenson (2000) discovered that students from the most affluent families were more than 12 times as likely to attain a bachelor's degree over their peers from the lowest level of income. This is occurring, Mortenson wrote, because of a shift in public policy to more merit-based aid than the previous programs of need-based aid. Due to the barriers in place of attainment, higher education was not available as an equal opportunity for everyone (Mumper, 1996).

The notion of the need for more financial aid was a valuable concept to understand, but institutions were moving in the opposite direction. In a mixed method study, Lillis and Tian (2008) found that students were sensitive to the cost of higher education and viewed this as one

aspect in making a decision on which institution to attend. This study confirmed that students with less financial means were less likely to apply to expensive institutions. Lillis and Tian believed as resources became limited, higher education needed to find diverse ways to retain students from poverty.

Long and Riley (2007) examined the notion of the rising cost of higher education and the impact on access. They highlighted how the federal government has created programs to assist with access, such as the Pell Grant, student loans, and tax credits. The Pell Grant is a need-based program that students do not need to pay back after graduation and is the largest need-based program offered by the federal government. Unfortunately, Long and Riley pointed out, the Pell Grant has decreased considerably in buying power, almost 20% less, since its creation in the 1970s. In the past few years, federal government officials have focused more on affordability for middle- and upper-class families than they have on providing access for low-income families. This favoring of the middle- and upper-class families has occurred through the creation of student loans and tax credit programs, which do not create access for low-income students. Long and Riley discovered from financial aid counselors that students from low-income families are often unlikely to take on debt to attending higher education

Students from lower socioeconomic status tended to be more sensitive to the rise in tuition (Heller, 1997; Paulsen, 1998). According to Heller's (1997) meta-analysis, students from poverty were more sensitive to the rising cost of tuition. One reason Heller found was that students from poverty experience sticker shock. This shock can occur when a student is unaware of aid possibilities or believes he or she will not qualify for the aid programs. Heller also noted if the aid packages did not increase to help offset the rise in tuition, access to student from poverty decreased.

Parental Involvement

Studies have indicated that parental involvement is an important contributor to a student's success in higher education (Choy, 2001; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Smith, 2008a; Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009). Smith (2008b) stated

The differences we see in parent involvement for college choice are not the result of inferior culture or misguided views on education. Rather, critical perspectives tell us that the true differences are created by possession or absence of information about college and substantial experience with college. (p. 19)

Smith (2008b) believed parents were involved but lacked information needed to make them a positive resource.

Parental involvement in students' decisions to attend college manifested in myriad ways. Parents assisted students through mapping out how the student was going to be successful in education, which was valuable in students being successful (Smith, 2008a). Turner et al., (2009) conducted a quantitative study that explored the impact of parenting styles on a college student's characteristics. Turner et al. found that a parent being supportive and warm had a positive effect even after the student had enrolled in college. They also concluded that parents played a large role in influencing a student's academic performance, even during the transition to college. It was also found that a good relationship between parents and children had a positive impact on educational aspirations (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

The home environment, which is created by the parenting style, also impacted a child's self-efficacy (Turner et. al., 2009). Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, and Perna (2008) conducted case studies to examine the impact parent involvement had on college attending and opportunities. Rowan-Kenyon et al. found

parents shape college opportunities for their children but involvement varies based on socioeconomic status; parental involvement is shaped by and also shapes, the school context for college opportunity; and parental involvement is also shaped by the higher education context and the social, economic, and policy context. (p. 571)

The concept of experiences that influence students' success, such as parental involvement is important, was intertwined just as much as parental education as with society's view of that person's education.

A study utilizing the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey data from 1971 to 2005 saw a shift in parental involvement in first-generation students making the decision whether to attend college (Saenz et al., 2007). Saenz et al. (2007) found generational status did not impact the importance the students placed on the encouragement they received from their parents. First-generation students rated this encouragement from parents as very important at 47% as compared to non-first-generation students who rated it at 43% in 2005.

Retention Barriers

Ishitani (2006) analyzed National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) data from 1988-2000 and found that "being a first-generation student reduced the odds of graduating in four and five years by 51% and 32%" (p. 880). He also concluded that first-generation students' greatest chance of dropping out of college occurred during the second year of college. Ishitani was also able to find that income was a strong predictor in first-generation dropout rate. According to Ishitani, "students from family incomes ranging between \$20,000 and \$34,999 were 72% more likely to depart than were students with family income of \$50,000 or higher" (p. 873). In a different study, Ishitani (2003) was able to conclude that "students whose families had annual family incomes of \$25,000 or less had 49% higher risk of leaving in the first year" (p. 446).

In analyzing the NELS data, Ishitani (2006) found that first-generation students who had a parent who took some college classes had an advantage on graduating in a timely manner, as compared to first-generation students whose parents have no college experience. Attending a private institution assisted first-generation students with graduating within four years. First-generation students attending a private institution were more than 30% less likely to drop out than if they were attending a public college.

First-generation students are becoming an important issue for higher education's success (Chaffee, 1992) due to their rising numbers and accountability demands on university faculty and administrators to retain more students. In his landmark study, Tinto (1987) found that engagement is the best way to retain students. Dalton, Moore, and Whittaker (2009) examined Lyndon State College's retention data. These authors realized the importance of the first two weeks for identifying and responding to red flags with regards to first-generation students. They created an early alert web-based system to help inform stakeholders (instructors, advisors, student affairs) to assist in the retention of first-generation students.

Engagement can become difficult because first-generation students report they need to put more time in to studying because they are not as academically prepared (Bui, 2002). Seifert et al., (2010) wrote:

Providing these students with the legitimate opportunity to succeed in college may require more than simply providing access. It likely requires a true institutional commitment to foster an environment based on high expectations, academic challenge and support for all students, and a dedication to undergraduate teaching and learning. (p. 19)

In their study of Hispanic and first-generation students, Harrell and Forney (2003) found that many students sought mentors or models to help them navigate higher education. These mentors assisted in helping first-generation and Hispanic students with course selection, terminology, and locating financial resources.

Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) conducted a study using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Survey to examine persistence of first-generation and continuing generation students. Lohfink and Paulsen examined persistence from over 1,167 first-generation and 3,017 non-first-generation students. Their study concluded differences existed between the two groups. Items that were found to impact first-generation students' persistence were income, gender, institutional type, involvement, and faculty connection. Higher income was a predictor of persistence for first-generation students. In addition, the study found first-generation female students were less likely to persist from one year to the next. Attending private institutions was found to negatively impact first-generation students' persistence. Lohfink and Paulsen also found that involvement in activities at college was not a positive predictor of persistence for first-generation students. Faculty-student interactions were found to be a positive influence on first-generation students' retention from one year to the next.

Padgett et al., (2012) conducted a study that examined how being first-generation impacted first-year outcomes. The researchers utilized the Wabash National Study of Liberal Education to collect data, which resulted in 2,609 completing the pre, post, and follow up data collection. The researchers found "across three of the six outcomes measures, first-generation students are significantly at a disadvantage in cognitive and psychosocial measures compared to students whose parents have higher levels of education" (Padgett et al., 2012, p. 252). It was also concluded that students whose parents attended some college, but did not graduate typically

scored higher on these tests than students who had parents who did not attend any higher education institution.

Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study that examined how motivation and social support impacted first-generational minority students' academic outcomes. The study had 100 participants complete a survey during the fall semester of their first year and again during their second year. The researchers sought to examine two types of motivation (career/personal and expectations) as well as two types of social support (family and peers). The results demonstrated that a first-generation minority student's college adjustment and outcome were linked to his or her career and personal motivation to attend college. The interesting finding was the notion that family expectations were not connected to any of the college outcomes in the study.

Faculty Engagement

Kim and Sax (2009) conducted a study that examined the impact faculty student interaction had on a myriad of items, such as first-generation status, gender, social class, race, and gender. The researchers utilized data submitted by more than 58,000 students on the 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey. It was concluded that faculty and student course interaction assisted students in receiving higher GPAs no matter the student's social class. In addition, this type of interaction promoted aspiration for higher degrees and strengthened critical thinking skills. Students who had faculty interaction were more satisfied with their college experience. Unfortunately, first-generation students reported lower interaction outside the classroom with their faculty. In addition, they assisted with fewer research projects or engaged in less classroom dialogue. Kim and Sax also found that students' satisfaction with faculty increased as the students' social class increased.

Kim and Sax's (2009) study coincided with Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice's (2008) study with regards to first-generation students' interaction with faculty. A participant interviewed by Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice shared that he "was hesitant to go see his faculty outside of the classroom because he was afraid that the repercussions for doing so would be negative, not positive" (p. 414).

Research Theoretical Framework

Astin (1993) developed the Inputs-Environments-Outputs (I-E-O) model, which forms the underlying theoretical framework for this study (Inputs = student's age, gender, ethnicity, and mother's and father's educational attainment; Environments = residence hall environment and experiences; Outputs = student perception of the environment, student retention, and student graduation). The I-E-O model examines the impact (outcome) that an environment has on a student's development. Inputs are the basic attributes a student possesses prior to arriving at higher education (Astin, 1993) as well as the residence facility. For this study the inputs were a student's parents' educational attainment as well as gender and age. The environment in Astin's model refers to programs, faculty, staff, and educational initiatives a student experiences when attending higher education. The current study examined the experiences that a student has in the residence halls in which the students reside as the environment. Astin's output examines the student's attributes after experiencing to the environment. This study did not examine the typical outcome of retention and graduation but examined the perceptions students hold around residence hall living.

University Residence Environment Scale

Human Aggregate

In order to study and understand an environment, like a residence hall, one must examine aggregate characteristics of the people living in the environment. Aggregate characteristics of people are items such as socioeconomic status, ability level, attitudes, and values to name a few (Holland, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Researchers must understand the aggregate characteristics of individuals in the environment that they are studying to comprehend the impact the environment will have on the individuals (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A number of researchers believe “most of the social and cultural environment is transmitted through other people” (Moos, 1979, p. 8). According to Holland (1997) individuals would be able to understand and know their environment if they comprehended the different types of people (i.e., characteristics, styles) living within the environment. Strange and Banning (2001) stated a person’s characteristics play a large role in creating an environment that attracts and retains people to the environment.

As an example, a women’s residence hall can be considered as a women’s environment because the aggregate of the gender of the residents is female. Similarly, other examples of human aggregates can be seen at the collegiate level in which the majority of the students on a campus, those forming the aggregate, are second- or third- or fourth-generation students on highly selective campuses.

University Residence Environment Scale

The University Residence Environment Scale (URES) is an instrument designed to assess the student living environments (Moos, 1988). The URES is composed of ten subscales which fall into three overall dimensions: (a) Relationships (b) Personal Growth or Goal Orientation and

(c) System Maintenance and Change. The URES is composed of 100 true-false questions that students answer regarding their current living environments.

According to Moos (1979), the URES was created to help housing professionals assess their living environments. The theoretical background behind the design on the URES was “that the consensus among individuals characterizing their environment defines the social, or normative, climate, which exerts a powerful influence on students’ attitudes and behaviors” (Moos, 1979, p. 26). Moos credited this concept to Henry Murray and his thoughts around environmental press.

The URES has been used in a number of studies. Schragger (1986) used the URES to examine the living environment of freshmen and its impact on academic performance. His study found that a student environment can have an impact on academic performance. Lester (1986) used the URES to assess students’ perception of living in the residence halls at Saint Mary’s College. Lester found that Saint Mary’s residence halls were highly supportive and had high involvement. The URES has also been used in assessing how fraternity and sorority members perceive their house environments (Parker & Gade, 1981). More recently, the URES has been used to assess first-year students’ perception of their living environment regarding academics (Lemon, 2010). Lemon (2010) found a difference between first-year experience halls and traditional halls in how students perceive academics. These studies help support the use of the URES in a study designed to examine students’ perceptions of their residence halls.

Summary

There was a shift in focus of housing from simply housing students to being seen as a part of a student’s educational experience. It is evident the importance cultural and social capital play in how successful students, especially first-generation student, are in college. First-

generation college students struggle to find their way in higher education because of their social and cultural capital. First-generation students' ability to have parental involvement, rigorous high school courses, and faculty engagement assist them in being successful in higher education.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Through this research I sought to examine if students' parental educational attainment had an impact on their perceived experience of living in a residence hall. The study was conducted using the URES and a demographic questionnaire. The study transpired at three public institutions: Eastern Illinois University, Indiana State University, and Western Illinois University.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables that were used in this study were the 10 subscales (involvement, emotional support, independence, traditional social orientation, competition, academic achievement, intellectuality, order and organization, student influence, and innovation) of the URES.

Independent Variables

There were five independent variables for this study. The first one was the student's parental educational attainment. A student's parental educational attainment was a categorical variable which allowed for exploration of different levels. The categories included six possible responses for each parent and I used the highest level of either parental educational attainment for the student. The possible responses were (a) graduate degree, (b) college four year degree, (c) associate's degree, (d) some college, no degree, (e) high school degree, and (f) less than a

high school degree. This approach allowed parental educational attainment to be examined at different levels, instead of in a dichotomous fashion. The second independent variable was the student's gender, for which participants had the options of male, female, and transgender. Ethnicity was the third independent variable, which also was a categorical variable which included the following options for selection: American Indian/Alaskan Native, African American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino(a), multi-racial, and other. Because of the low response number in categories ethnicity was separated into a dichotomous structure of Caucasian/White students and students of color. The fourth independent variable was age, which had the options of 18, 19, 20, and 21 or older. The final independent variable was semesters of enrollment, which also was a scale with the options of one, two, three, four, five, and six or more.

Research Questions

The research question which guided this study was Does mother's or father's educational attainment, along with the students' gender, ethnicity, age, and semesters on campus, affect perception of their residence hall environment? Perceptions of the residence hall environment were measured by the three dimensions and 10 scales on the University Residence Environment Scale.

Design of Study

Sample

The sample contained 347 students: 122 students from Eastern Illinois University, 115 students from Indiana State University, and 110 students from Western Illinois University. The campuses were selected because of their similarity in their Carnegie classifications. For instance, two institutions are classified as master's colleges and university large programs and

one is classified as a doctoral/research university. All three institutions offer on-campus housing options and require at least first-year students to live on campus. A table of each campus's demographics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Basic Information from Institutions Used in Study

Campus	Carnegie Classification	Student Population	Enrollment Profile	Size & Setting	Percent Pell Grant
Eastern Illinois University	Master's L	11,966	HU	L4/R	26%
Indiana State University	DRU	10,534	HU	M4/R	30%
Western Illinois University	Master's L	12,679	HU	L4/R	27%

Note. HU = High Undergraduate Enrollment; Master's L = Master's Colleges and Universities Large Programs; DRU = Doctoral/Research Universities; L4/R = Large four-year, primarily residential; M4/R = Medium four-year, primarily residential (Carnegie Foundation, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012)

The study was conducted during the Spring 2012 semester, more specifically during the months of March and April. Analyzing the demographic data from all three campuses provided a clear picture of the participants (Table 3). With regards to age, over a third (37.3%, $n = 129$) of the participants were 19 years old and close to two-thirds (63.1%, $n = 219$) were in their second semester of enrollment. Over half (57.6%, $n = 200$) of the participants were women, and a majority (64.3%, $n = 223$) were Caucasian/White. Almost a quarter (23.9%, $n = 83$) of the participants' parental educational attainment was some college but no degree, which was similar to the number of participants' parents who had a college 4-year degree (24.2%, $n = 84$). Table 3 provides demographic information for each campus, as well as the entire study.

Table 3

Institutions' and Participants' Demographic Information

Demographic	EIU Sample N = 122	ISU Sample N = 115	WIU Sample N = 110	Total Sample N = 347
Age				
18 years old	30 (24.6%)	26 (22.6%)	21 (19.1%)	77 (22.2%)
19 years old	32 (26.2%)	57 (49.6%)	40 (36.4%)	129 (37.2%)
20 years old	24 (19.7%)	9 (7.8%)	21 (19.1%)	54 (15.6%)
21 years or older	32 (26.2%)	23 (20.0%)	25 (22.7%)	80 (23.1%)
Choose not to answer	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.7%)	7 (2.0%)
Gender				
Male	35 (28.7%)	48 (41.7%)	41 (37.3%)	124 (35.7%)
Female	78 (63.9%)	61 (53.0%)	61 (55.5%)	200 (57.6%)
Transgender	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	2 (0.6%)
Choose not to answer	9 (3.7%)	5 (4.4%)	7 (6.3%)	21 (6.1%)
Ethnicity				
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)
African American/Black	36 (29.5%)	34 (29.6%)	16 (14.5%)	86 (24.8%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	2 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.8%)	4 (1.2%)
Hispanic/Latino(a)	5 (4.1%)	3 (2.6%)	11 (10.0%)	19 (5.5%)
Caucasian/White	75 (61.5%)	71 (61.7%)	77 (70.0%)	223 (64.3%)
Multi-Race	3 (2.5%)	6 (5.2%)	3 (2.7%)	12 (3.5%)
Other	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.9%)	2 (0.6%)
Parental Education				
Less than a high school degree	2 (1.6%)	4 (3.5%)	2 (1.8%)	8 (2.3%)
High school degree	17 (13.9%)	28 (24.3%)	20 (18.2%)	65 (18.7%)
Some college, but no degree	31 (25.4%)	27 (23.5%)	25 (22.7%)	83 (23.9%)
Associate's degree	19 (15.6%)	20 (17.4%)	9 (8.2%)	48 (13.8%)
College 4 year degree	29 (23.8%)	20 (17.4%)	35 (31.8%)	84 (24.2%)
Graduate degree	24 (19.7%)	16 (13.9%)	19 (17.3%)	59 (17.0%)
Semesters Enrolled				
1 semester	7 (5.7%)	2 (1.7%)	8 (7.3%)	17 (4.9%)
2 semesters	74 (60.7%)	79 (68.7%)	66 (60.0%)	219 (63.1%)
3 semesters	31 (25.4%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.6%)	9 (2.6%)
4 semesters	22 (18.0%)	14 (12.2%)	19 (17.3%)	55 (15.9%)
5 semesters	3 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.7%)	6 (1.7%)
6 or more semesters	11 (9.0%)	20 (17.4%)	10 (9.1%)	41 (11.8%)

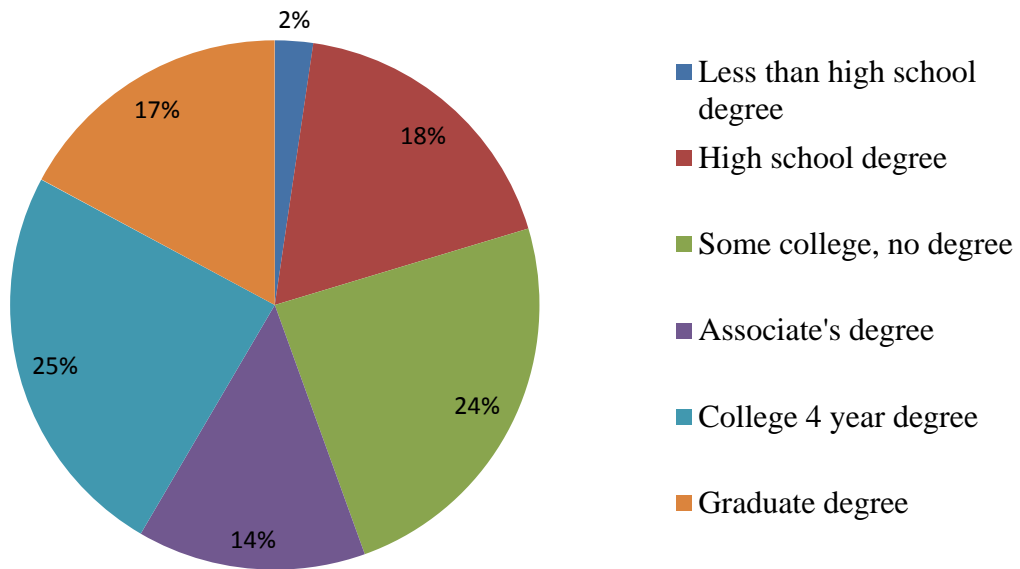


Figure 1. Parental educational attainment for sample.

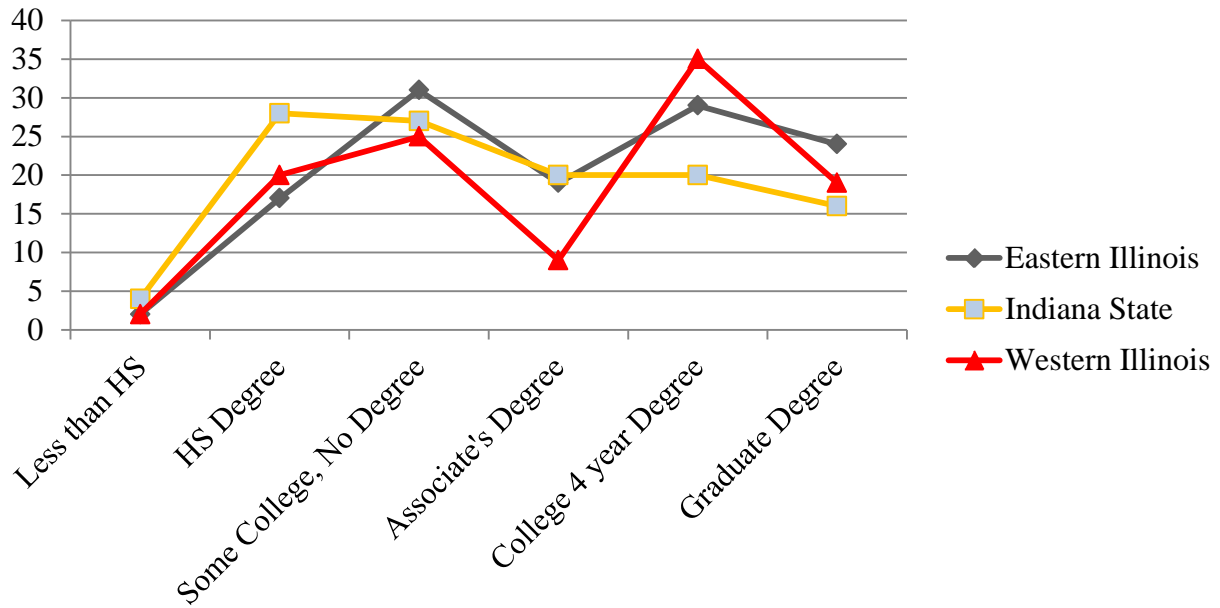


Figure 2. Parental educational attainment by institution.

Instruments

The URES (Appendix C) is a survey designed “to assess the social climates of student living groups, including involvement, emotional support, independence, traditional social

orientation, competition, academic achievement, order and organization, intellectuality, social influence, and innovation” (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001, p. 498). The URES contains 10 subscales: Involvement, Emotional Support, Independence, Traditional Social Orientation, Competition, Academic Achievement, Intellectuality, Order and Organization, Student Influence, and Innovation. The subscales together “tap three underlying domains or dimensions: Relationships, Personal Growth or Goal Orientation, and System Maintenance and Change” (Moos, 1988, p. 1). The URES Real Form (Form R) contains 100 true/false statements. The URES was used in a number of studies examining different living environments. Schragger (1986) used the URES to examine the impact a residential community had on freshmen’s academic performance. Parker and Gade (1981) examined how fraternity and sorority members perceived their living environments through the use of the URES. In his master’s thesis, Lemon (2010) used the URES to examine if a difference existed between traditional communities versus first-year experience communities. The URES breaks the assessment down into three domains of a living environment: Relationships, Personal Growth or Goal Orientation, and System Maintenance and Change.

Relationships. The first domain contains two subscales: Involvement and Emotional Support. This domain assesses the student’s involvement in and support of other students, friends, and staff in his or her environment. Sample statements included in the URES related to the relationship dimension are “There is a feeling of unity and cohesion here” and “People here are concerned with helping and supporting one another” (Moos, 1988, p. 56).

Personal Growth or Goal Orientation. The second domain contains five subscales: Independence, Traditional Social Orientation, Competition, Academic Achievement, and Intellectuality. The domain examines students’ maturity around social and personal aspects,

along with academic growth. A typical statement included in the URES related to the personal growth or goal orientation dimension is “People around here hardly ever seem to be studying” (Moos, 1979, p. 56).

System Maintenance and Change. The third dimension contains three subscales: Order and Organization, Student Influence, and Innovation. These subscales examine “the extent to which the living group functions in a well-organized manner, the influence students have in running it, and the level of openness to change” (Moos, 1988, p. 3). A sample of statements included in the URES related to System Maintenance and Change dimension are, “New approaches to things are often tried here,” and “The students formulate almost all the rules here” (Moos, 1988, p. 56). The URES’s subscale and dimensions descriptions are in Figure 1.

Relationship Dimensions	Personal Growth or Goal Orientation Dimensions	System Maintenance and Change Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement • Emotional Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Traditional Social Orientation • Competition • Academic Achievement • Intellectuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order and Organization • Student Influence • Innovation

Figure 3. URES subscale and dimensions

URES Reliability. Moos (1988) tested the URES for internal consistency using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KRF). This method is appropriate because it tests dichotomous items within a single administration of the instrument where all items are equivalent to each other (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The KRF tested in acceptable scores, “ranging from a high of .88 for involvement to a low of .77 for independence, competition, and innovation” (Moos, 1988, p. 11). The URES was tested and re-tested to establish reliability (Lemon, 2010;

Lester, 1986; Moos, DeYong, & Van Dort, 1976; Parker & Gade, 1981). Moos (1988) administered the URES to the same 83 students at three different time periods. “The test-retest correlations [within each subscale] . . . range from .66 to .77 after one week and from .59 to .74 after four weeks” (Moos, 1988, p. 12). Researchers have used the URES to study co-educational, single gender, and different physically structured living environments.

URES Design. The URES was designed by initially gathering information from different living environment through interviews, observations and talking with housing staff (Moos, 1988). This process created 238 statements, which were then administered to 13 residence halls. The items were reduced to 140 through “selecting items that discriminated significantly among houses, that were not characteristics of only extreme living groups, and that did not correlate with the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale” (Moos, 1988, p. 10). The instrument was then administered in 74 residence halls that had diverse living environments. The results were “intercorrelations, subscale intercorrelations, and item-to-subscale correlation for three successive trials” (Moos, 1988, p. 10). This process produced the 100 items that are used in the URES Form R. Moos (1988) strived for face validity in the process by “formulating definitions of specific constructs . . . by preparing items to fit the construct definitions; and by selecting items that were conceptually related to a dimension as agreed upon by independent raters” (p. 12). Through the examination of “item intercorrelations, item-subscale correlations, and internal consistency analyses” (Moos, 1988, p. 12) items were selected which assisted with validity.

Data Collection

Data collection was completed through a survey methodology using samples described below at the three different institutions. At least two residence halls on each campus were

selected. The director of the housing department on each campus granted permission on which residence halls I could use. Permission to conduct the survey on each campus was gained from each institution's Institutional Review Board (Appendix D), along with each institution's director of housing (Appendix E).

Recruiting Participants

Students were recruited for the study through the use of a regularly scheduled floor or building meeting. At Eastern Illinois University, I collected 122 surveys by attending floor meetings and sitting at a table in the lobbies of two residence halls. At Indiana State University, I attended floor meetings and sat at a table in the lobby of two residence halls, which resulted in collecting 115 surveys. At Western Illinois University, I sat at a table in the lobby of one dining center and attended the Inter-Hall Council, collecting a total of 110 surveys. I was able to collect 347 surveys overall.

Administration

The URES, along with a demographics sheet (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B), were administered during residence hall floor meetings, building meetings, or sitting at a table in the lobby. Students were able to opt out if they desired not to participate in the study.

Students who attended the meeting or stopped at the table in the lobby received a packet that contained the URES, consent form, and demographics form. I explained the purpose of the study and answered any questions that participants had at that moment. After answering questions, I explained that participation was optional and they could choose to stop participating at any time. I then asked the participants to read the consent form and ask me any questions. After answering any questions about the consent form, I asked the participant to sign the form

and return it to me. If students chose not to participate, they returned their blank consent forms to me.

I then asked participants to fill out the demographic form and URES. Once they had completed the two forms, they returned them to me. If the students decided not to participate, they returned the forms without anyone knowing they did not participate.

Research Analysis

This was a multi-campus cross-sectional study. The study used Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVAs) to determine which independent variables (such as parental educational attainment) significantly differentiate among student groups student perception of living on campus (URES).

Sample Descriptive Statistics

The first analysis employed descriptive statistics for the participants and for each campus. Frequencies were generated for the independent variables of parental educational attainment, age, ethnicity, gender, and semester enrolled. The frequencies provided a statistical picture of the participants in the study. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each of the 10 URES subscales.

MANOVA

The primary analysis for this research was a series of MANOVAs. A MANOVA was run on the student's highest level of parental educational attainment for the 10 subscales of the URES. I used a six-ten-three-four-six-six (parental educational attainment, URES subscales, gender, age, race, and semesters enrolled) analysis. Where significance was found ($p < .05$), then post-hoc Tukey t-tests were run on the variables that indicated significant effect.

Summary

This study examined students' perceptions of living in a residence hall during the 2011-2012 academic year at three institutions and made a comparison between students grouped based on parental educational attainment. This research is important to assist residence life professionals in meeting the needs of students living on-campus. The study may also assist practitioners in higher education with better meeting the needs of first-generation college students.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter examines the results of the study. Analysis was conducted to examine the guiding research question: Does a mother's or father's educational attainment, along with the student's gender, ethnicity, age, and semesters on campus affect the student's perception of the residence hall environment? The URES was utilized to determine a student's perception based upon the 10 subscales and three dimensions. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the independent variables. A MANOVA was used to determine if a significant difference between independent variables and dependent variables existed. Where significance was found, ANOVAs and post-hoc Tukey t-test were run.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 19. A correlation was initially run to determine if a correlation existed between the independent variables. Next, a four-by-three-by-six-by-six-by-six-by-ten (age, gender, ethnicity, semesters, parental education, and URES subscales) MANOVA was conducted to determine if the independent variables significantly predicted student perception of living on campus.

Correlations

A correlation analysis among the five independent variables in the study shown in Table 4 demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between semesters and age, $r(335) = .59$,

$p = .000$, two-tailed. According to Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2011), the correlation was higher, which is to be expected because of the inherent connection between age and semester of enrollment. As students accumulate semesters of attendance, they also age. A correlation between ethnicity and age was also found, $r(33) = .12$, $p = .03$, two-tailed. This correlation did not violate assumptions inherent in a MANOVA analysis (Leech et al., 2011).

Table 4

Intercorrelations for Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Semesters, and Parental Education Attainment

Independent Variable	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Semester
Age	--			
Gender	.03	--		
Ethnicity	.12*	-.018	--	
Semesters	.59**	-.072	.084	--
Parental Educational Attainment	-.02	.027	.062	-.063

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 5 provides the mean and standard deviations for the data in this study from the URES 10 subscales.

MANOVA

The first analysis was run leaving the five independent variables (age, gender, ethnicity, parental education, and semesters) as they were coded. Age was a significant (Wilks' $\lambda = .742$, $F(30, 440) = 1.575$, $p = .029$) predictor of the URES when all other variables were held constant. Gender, ethnicity, parental education, and semesters were not found as significant predictors of URES scores, so no additional tests were run on these independent variables. These results are contained in Table 6.

Table 5

URES Standard Deviations and Mean

Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Involvement	48.79	7.89
Emotional Support	47.20	8.88
Independence	48.22	7.49
Traditional Social Orientation	53.33	7.04
Competition	56.57	8.67
Academic Achievement	46.95	7.60
Order and Organization	55.36	7.96
Intellectuality	47.89	8.06
Social Influence	46.89	6.12
Innovation	49.29	7.19

Table 6

Main Effect Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Age	Wilks' λ	.73	1.56	30	440	.03*
Gender	Wilks' λ	.92	1.38	10	150	.20
Ethnicity	Wilks' λ	.64	1.16	60	790	.19
Semesters	Wilks' λ	.76	.84	50	687	.77
Parental Education	Wilks' λ	.70	1.13	50	687	.26

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

ANOVA

Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable was conducted as follow-up test to the MANOVA. Since the ANOVA does not control for differences between variables, the Bonferroni procedure was used to protect against Type I error. To protect against Type I error, the overall significance level of $\alpha = .05$ must be divided by the number of planned

comparison, which is 10 in this study, resulting in an $\alpha = .005$ (Myers & Well, 1995). None of the independent variables had a significant effect on the URES.

I then examined the two-way effects of the independent variables, especially looking at parental education, knowing there was no main effect. Ethnicity and parental education significantly predicted the subscale of Traditional Social Orientation, $F(11,159) = 3.19, p = .001$. Analyzing three-way effects of the independent variables of age, semesters, and parental education had a significant effect on the subscale of Involvement, $F(2,159) = 6.66, p = .002$.

Post-Hoc MANOVA

I then recoded three of the independent variables. The independent variable of ethnicity was recoded into two groups, either Caucasian or students of color (Table 7). Semesters were recoded into years, so there were three groups: one year, two years, and three years (Table 8). Parental education was recoded into four groups instead of six (Table 9). Less than high school and high school degree became one group. Some college, no degree remained a stand alone group, as did associate's degree. College four-year degree and Graduate degree became one group. After the recoding, a four-by-two-by-two-by-three-by-four-by-ten (age, gender, ethnicity, semesters, parental education, and URES subscales) MANOVA was used to determine if the independent variables significantly predicted student perceptions of living on campus. This analysis did not produce any significant main effect (Table 10) with the independent variables.

Table 7

Pre & Post Recoded Independent Variable of Ethnicity

Demographic	Total Sample <i>N</i> = 347
Ethnicity (Original Coding)	
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	1 (0.3%)
African American/Black	86 (24.8%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	4 (1.2%)
Hispanic/Latino(a)	19 (5.5%)
Caucasian/White	223 (64.3%)
Multi-Race	12 (3.5%)
Other	2 (0.6%)
Ethnicity (Recoded)	
Caucasian/White	223 (64.3%)
Students of Color	124 (35.7%)

Table 8

Pre & Post Recoded Independent Variable of Parental Education

Demographic	Total Sample <i>N</i> = 347
Parental Education (Original Coding)	
Less than a high school degree	8 (2.3%)
High school degree	65 (18.7%)
Some college, but no degree	83 (23.9%)
Associate's degree	48 (13.8%)
College 4 year degree	84 (24.2%)
Graduate degree	59 (17.0%)
Parental Education (Recoded)	
Less than & High School Degree	73 (21.0%)
Some college, but no degree	83 (23.9%)
Associate's degree	48 (13.8%)
College 4 & Graduate Degrees	143 (41.2%)

Table 9

Pre & Post Recoded Independent Variable of Semesters

Demographic	Total Sample <i>N</i> = 347
Semesters Enrolled (Original Coding)	
1 semester	17 (4.9%)
2 semesters	219 (63.1%)
3 semesters	9 (2.6%)
4 semesters	55 (15.9%)
5 semesters	6 (1.7%)
6 or more semesters	41 (11.8%)
Semesters Enrolled (Recoded)	
1 year	236 (68.0%)
2 years	64 (18.5%)
3 years	47 (13.5%)

Table 10

Main Effect of Recoded Independent Variables Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Age	Wilks' λ	.89	.82	30	608.26	.76
Gender	Wilks' λ	.95	1.18	10	207	.30
Ethnicity	Wilks' λ	.93	1.59	10	207	.11
Years	Wilks' λ	.92	.92	20	414	.57
Parental Education	Wilks' λ	.91	.69	30	608.26	.90

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Though there was no main effect that were found to be significant, there were two-way interactions. Significant effects were found for two-way interactions between age and ethnicity

(Wilks' $\lambda = .77$, $F(30, 608) = 1.63$, $p = .02$), age and parental education (Wilks' $\lambda = .576$, $F(90, 1414) = .58$, $p = .02$) and ethnicity and years (Wilks' $\lambda = .830$, $F(20, 414) = 2.02$, $p = .01$). No other significance was found between independent variables.

Post-Hoc ANOVA

Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable was conducted as follow up tests to the MANOVA with the $\alpha = .005$. No independent variable had a standalone effect on the URES.

I then examined the two way effects of the independent variables. Ethnicity and years were predictors of Competition, $F(2,216) = 6.38$, $p = .002$, URES subscales. Years and parental education were predictors of the Involvement Subscale, $F(6,216) = 3.17$, $p = .005$.

Second post-hoc MANOVA. I recoded the dependent variables. Instead of using the 10 subscales, I coded the dependent variables into the URES three dimensions, known as Relationships, Personal growth or Goal Orientation, and System Maintenance and Change. The independent variables remained the same coding as they were in the second analysis.

After the recoding, a four-by-two-by-two-by-three-by-four-by-three (age, gender, ethnicity, semesters, parental education, and URES dimensions) MANOVA was used to determine if the independent variables significantly predicted student perception of living on campus. The results showed that ethnicity was a significant (Wilks' $\lambda = .96$, $F(3, 214) = 3.37$, $p = .02$) predictor of the URES when all other variables were held constant. Age, gender, parental education, and years were not found as significant predictors (Table 11).

Second post-hoc ANOVA. Univariate ANOVA for each dependent variable were conducted as follow up tests to the MANOVA. To protect against Type I error, the overall significance level of $\alpha = .05$ must be divided by the number of planned comparison, which is the

three URES dimension, resulting in an $\alpha = .016$ (Myers & Well, 1995). The results showed that ethnicity was a significant predictor of the Personal growth or Goal Orientation Dimension, $F(1,216) = 6.98, p = .009$, of the URES. Figure 4 shows that students of color ($M = 50.83$) rated the Personal Growth and Goal Orientation Dimensions slightly higher than Caucasian students ($M = 50.43$) (Table 12). Ethnicity had no other significant effect on the URES. No other independent variable significantly predicted the dimensions of the URES.

Table 11

Recoded Independent and Dependent Variables Main Effect Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Age	Wilks' λ	.05	1.14	9	648	.33
Gender	Wilks' λ	.99	1.03	3	214	.38
Ethnicity	Wilks' λ	.96	3.37	3	214	.02*
Years	Wilks' λ	.96	1.56	6	428	.16
Parental Education	Wilks' λ	.96	.90	9	520	.52

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 12

Ethnicity Standard Deviations and Mean for Personal Growth or Goal Orientation Dimensions

Ethnicity	Mean	Standard Deviation
Students of Color	50.83	.40
Caucasian Students	50.43	.32

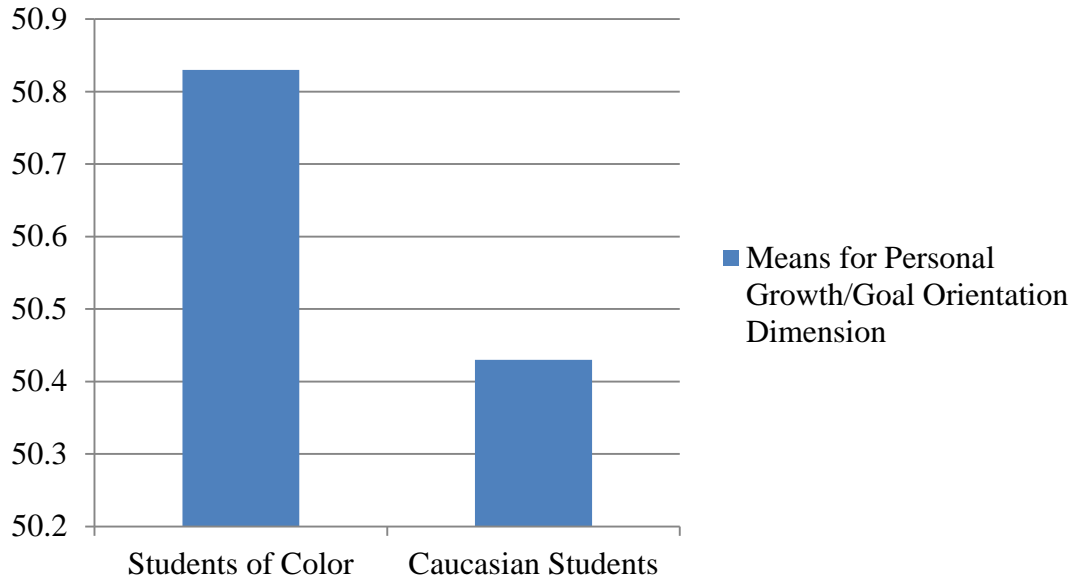


Figure 4. Ethnicity mean for Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimensions

I then examined the two-way effects of the independent variables. Years and parental education significantly predicted the URES Relationship dimension, $F(6,216) = 2.95, p = .009$. The independent variables also had three-way interactions, which were predictors of the URES dimensions. Age, years, and parental education were significant predictors of the Relationship dimension, $F(6,216) = 2.89, p = .009$.

Third post hoc MANOVA. In an effort to see if parental education attainment had an impact, I ran analysis only looking at students who were enrolled in their first year of college, since it was expected the first year would be the time of greatest adjustment. This analysis was conducted using a three-by-two-by-two-by-three (URES dimensions, ethnicity, gender, and parental education). The results showed that none of the independent variables had a significant effect of the URES when all other variables were held constant (Table 13).

Table 13

First-Year Students' Independent and Dependent Variables Main Effect Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Gender	Wilks' λ	.97	2.10	3	204	.10
Ethnicity	Wilks' λ	.99	.27	3	204	.84
Parental Education	Wilks' λ	.96	.99	9	496	.44

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Third post hoc ANOVA. Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable was conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. To protect against Type I error, the overall significance level of $\alpha = .05$ was divided by the number of planned comparison, which is the 3 URES dimension, resulting in an $\alpha = .016$ (Myers & Well, 1995). The results showed that gender was a significant predictor of the Relationship Dimensions, $F(1,206) = 6.14, p = .015$, of the URES. Through examining the means, men placed higher value on the Relationship Dimension, which is made up of Involvement and Emotional Support subscales of the URES, than their female counterparts shown below in Table 14 and (Figure 5).

Table 14

Gender Standard Deviations and Mean for Relationship Dimensions

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Men	49.63	.94
Women	46.78	.66

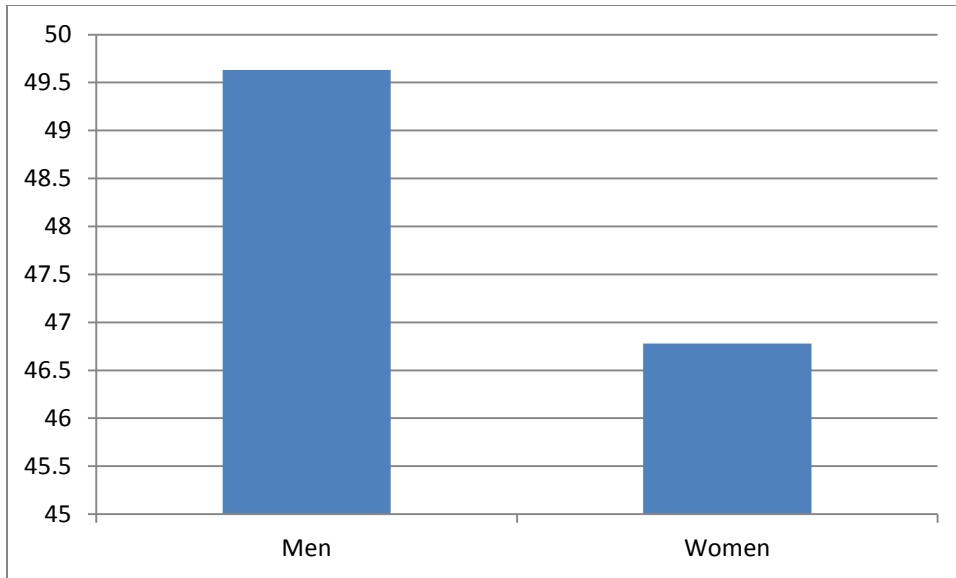


Figure 5. Gender Mean for Relationship Dimensions

Parental educational attainment ANOVA. In order to see if the parental educational attainment spectrum did not have enough participants, I recoded the variable into a dichotomous variable. Less than high school degree, high school degree, and some college, no degree were recoded as non-higher education degree. Associate's degree, college four-year degree, and graduate degree were recoded into higher education degree. A two-by-three (parental educational attainment, URES dimensions) univariate ANOVA was run to understand how parental educational attainment impacted the URES. The results showed that parental educational attainment was a significant predictor of the Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimension, $F(1,339) = 5.12, p = .024$, and the System Maintenance and Change dimension, $F(1,339) = 5.18, p = .024$, of the URES.

Through examining the means, parental educational attainment of no higher education degree placed higher value on the Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimension as seen on Table 15 and Figure 6. In addition, participants with parental educational attainment of no higher education degree rated their communities higher in the System Maintenance and Change

dimensions on the URES as seen in Table 15 and Figure 6. These findings support the notion that the sample size was not diverse enough to find significance on the parental educational attainment spectrum, which was the focus of the current study.

Table 15

Parental educational attainment standard deviations and mean for Personal Growth or Goal Orientation and System Maintenance and Change dimensions

Parental Educational Attainment	Personal <i>M</i>	Personal <i>SD</i>	Systems <i>M</i>	Systems <i>SD</i>
No Higher Education Degree	51.04	3.46	50.95	4.46
Higher Education Degree	50.20	3.36	49.84	4.47

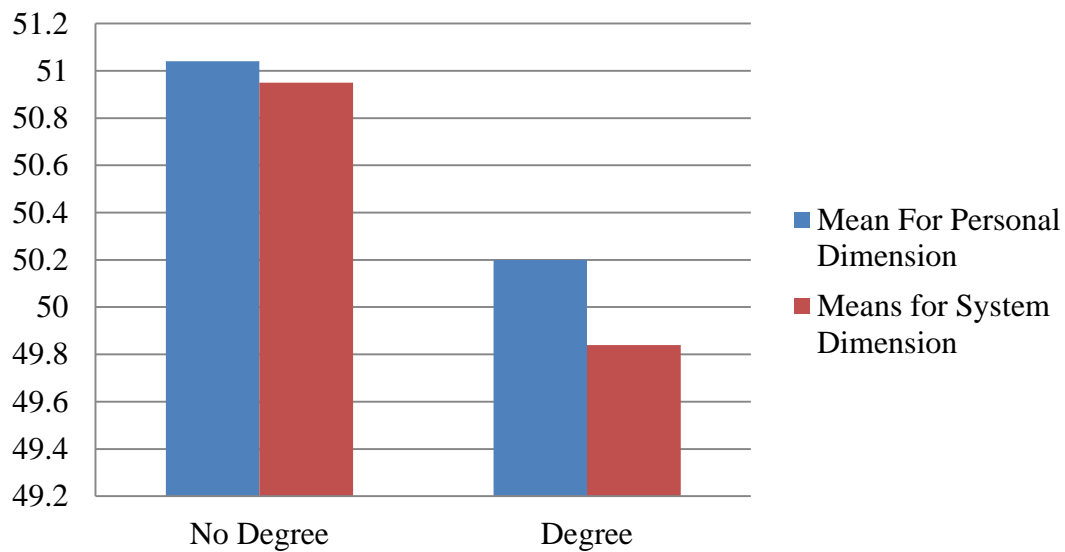


Figure 6. Parental educational attainment Mean for Personal Growth and System Maintenance dimensions

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the data collected from Eastern Illinois University, Indiana State University, and Western Illinois University. The data provided statistical information on how students perceived their residence hall environments through the use of the University Residence Environment Scale. The main focus of this study was to test the question of whether parental educational attainment affected how students viewed the residence hall experience.

In general, there was no statistical significance on the spectrum of parental educational attainment main effect on how students perceived their residence hall environments. There was a main effect when parental educational attainment was reduced to a dichotomous variable. It was discovered that other demographic information impacted how students viewed their residence halls, such as gender and ethnicity. The three major findings of this study were

1. Parental education as a spectrum had no main effect on how students perceived their residence hall experience;
2. Gender was found to play a role in how students perceived the Relationship dimension of the URES, with men rating this dimension higher than women; and
3. Ethnicity was significant with students of color rating Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimension of the URES higher than Caucasian students.

Though the study did not find significance around parental education, it did create the path for future research on the topic of not viewing first generation as a dichotomous, but more of a spectrum.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This quantitative study sought to understand the impact parental educational attainment had on students' perceptions of residence hall living environments. I sought to examine educational attainment instead of generational status to understand if a difference existed between the levels of education, besides simply no college or college degree. This approach was taken because a number of studies around generational status used a dichotomous approach to generational status. I examined residence halls because of the impact they have on a student's success in college attainment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Residence halls were also used because a number of college campuses have a residential component, which requires an enormous amount of resources.

The sample population for this current multi-campus study were students enrolled and living on campus during the 2012 spring semester at either Eastern Illinois University, Indiana State University, and Western Illinois University. The multi-campus study utilized the University Residence Environment Scale (URES) Form R, which assessed the views of students about their living environment (Moos, 1988). In addition to filling out the URES, participants completed a demographic form (Appendix A), which provided additional information for analysis, such as gender, age, ethnicity, parental educational attainment, and semesters enrolled. The study had 347 participants. This study was led by the following research question:

Does mother's or father's educational attainment, along with the students' gender, ethnicity, age, and semesters on campus affect perceptions of their residence hall environments?

Discussion

In working to comprehend the different impact parental educational attainment had on students' perception of residence hall living, this study utilized the URES to make meaning of how students perceived their environments. This study also utilized a spectrum scale of parental educational attainment to ascertain if different education levels resulted in different perceptions of on-campus living.

Current research would suggest that a student's generational status had an impact on how he or she would view the college experience (Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Cushman, 2007; Gofen, 2009; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). Barry et al. (2009) found first-generation students lacked higher education social capital, which was needed to navigate and be successful in higher education. The research led me to draw the conclusion that generational status had an impact on how students' perceive their residence hall living environment. This study found that parental educational attainment as a spectrum alone did not play a role in how the students' perceived their living environments. When I used a dichotomous approach, significance was found.

After analyzing the URES and demographics using MANOVAs and follow-up tests, parental educational attainment as a spectrum was found to not be a significant factor in how students perceived their residence hall experiences. This finding raises more questions than it answers. One explanation for the finding was the notion that generational status as a spectrum, instead of first generation or not, provided a more realistic view on how generational status

impacts a student's college experience. The reason a student might struggle or lack social capital was due to something other than simply his or her generational status. This conclusion means higher education leaders need to focus attention on a multitude of dimensions rather than just generational status.

It should be noted that the URES successfully discerned differences in the sample among gender, ethnicity, and age, so the instrument in this study was sensitive to several of the input and experience variables on which data was collected. It is a possibility that spectrum generational status alone was not a strong enough influence on how students perceived their living environments. Generational status might have been an important factor, when other factors were present. This notion brings a valid point to the surface: students are multi-dimensional. Practitioners cannot view them simply as first-generation students but must view the whole student. The notion that parental educational attainment would be a standalone factor ignored this assumption.

Another possible explanation for the current study's results versus other studies was the fact the sample size was neither large nor diverse enough. The current study had six independent variables and 10 dependent variables, which needs a large sample size to calculate. The current study had 41.2% of the participants' parental education attainment of a college degree or higher. Combining those participants with participants who had parental education attainment of an associate's degree or some college constituted 78.9% of the participants in the study. There were only 21% of the participants who had parental educational attainment of high school diploma or less. This lack of diversity in participants could have resulted in no significant findings around parental educational attainment.

Another factor which could have resulted in the findings was the communities themselves and how they were structured. Housing professionals work to create intentional residential learning environments. It is not uncommon for housing professionals to spend time pairing roommates and training staff to building inclusive communities. Residence hall staff (i.e., resident assistants) work to educate and reach out to students who they believe are struggling with the adjustment to college life. Resident assistants have the role of seeking out students who are isolated or not fitting in and helping them become a part of the community (Blimling, 1995). The resident assistant's main focus is creating an environment that supports the academic and personal growth of residents (Belch & Kimble, 2006). Due to this, the participants in the study might not have felt isolated or lost, because staff had resolved those feelings and concerns prior to the spring semester, which is when this study occurred.

The study found ethnicity and gender played a role in how students perceived their residence hall environments. The results of the study concluded that students of color rated the URES dimension of Personal Growth or Goal Orientation slightly higher than Caucasian students. This dimension is composed of the following subscales: Independence, Traditional Social Orientation, Competition, Academic Achievement, and Intellectuality. This dimension focuses on the "personal and social maturation . . . emphasis on different aspects of academic growth" (Moos, 1988, p. 3). Personal and social maturity focuses on the notion that students can be themselves without the pressure of what society states is the appropriate behavior. In addition, academic growth is the focus on academic competition and focus on "cultural, artistic, and other scholarly intellectual activities" (Moos, 1988, p. 2). This study found that students of color view their current living environment higher in these areas than the Caucasian students.

This finding provides insight into how students of color view their living environments differently than Caucasian students. In terms of social and academic work, students of color viewed their living environments more competitively. In addition, students of color found that dating and going to parties was a focus of their communities.

Gender was also found to have a significant effect on the Relationship dimension of the URES. The current study found men rated their community higher in the Relationship dimension than the women who participated in the study. This dimension is comprised of Involvement and Emotional Support subscales. This dimension assesses the feeling of engagement, friendships, and support from other students and staff in the living environment (Moos, 1988).

This finding was most interesting because it was in contrast to how society would view gender relationships. Men in this study rated their residential communities as having higher level of concern and also assisted others with personal and academic concerns. Men were also found to have higher commitment and friendships in their community.

Implications for Practice

Higher education leaders spend a vast amount of resources on building and maintaining a strong residential communities. The rationale behind this move is based upon researchers' findings that residence life assists students with persistence toward graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There has also been a myriad of research focused on first-generation students and their plight in higher education (Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Cushman, 2007; Gofen, 2009; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). The result of this study did not show a difference in how students with different parental educational attainment viewed their residence hall

experiences. This study did find that gender and ethnicity played a role in how students perceived their on-campus living environments.

The result that parental educational attainment was not significant on how a student perceived his or her living environment is important to examine for practitioners. Residence life professionals have designed learning environments that are intentional and focused on helping the holistic student (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). A few campuses have created living learning communities just for first-generation students, for example a multicultural learning community (Jehangir, Williams, & Jeske, 2012). The multicultural learning community was focused on helping first-generation students with the notion of isolation and marginalization. The learning community was created to help first-generation students transition to college. The results of this study call to question these learning communities.

The notion that parental educational attainment does not matter could be related to human aggregate. It is possible the communities were created in such a manner that a majority of the students were from parents who had a high parental educational attainment, which in turn created an environment based upon those characteristics. Using the human aggregate model, others are socialized in the environment based upon these characteristics and views (Holland, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). If this is in fact the case, then it would be important for residence life professionals to create a philosophy that spreads out the first-generation students, instead of creating a learning community for them.

The finding that the students' gender had an impact on how they viewed the residence halls, regarding the Relationship Dimension, has implementation for practice. The current study found men rated their communities higher for interactions, friendships, and commitment to the floor community. These results demonstrate to practitioners that men were feeling engaged in

their residential communities. Engagement is an important aspect of retention and graduation for students. This finding demonstrates the value of living on campus, especially for male students.

Men also were found to rate their on-campus communities high for honest communication, concern for others, and helping others with academics and personal issues. This finding allows practitioners to comprehend that men are also seeking communities where they feel supported by their peers academically and personally. It is important for professionals to continue to develop training around how to support male students during their transition to college.

Ethnicity was also found to have an impact on students' perceptions of their residence hall communities. The current study found that students of color rated their residence hall environments higher than Caucasian students in the Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimension. This dimension includes Independence, Traditional Social Orientation, Competition, Academic Achievement, and Intellectuality. Students of color rated their communities higher in the area of diversity of activities without regard to conformist behavior. This finding is important for practitioners working with student staff, such as resident assistants. It would be essential to develop training that assisted staff to understand and value different activities.

Another item to focus on, as a result of this finding, would be policy enforcement. Students of color were found not to worry about conformist or socially proper activities; instead they sought out diverse activities. Caucasian staff may struggle with behavior they consider rude or disrespectful, even though such behaviors may be seen as acceptable in other cultures (e.g. louder conversations). Some of this may be culturally based. It is essential that staff receive training around how to create communities that support students of color and Caucasian students.

Personal Growth or Goal Orientation dimension also focuses on how students view their academics. As a result of students of color rating this dimension higher than Caucasian students, they view their current community as competitive around academics. It is also important to comprehend that this dimension focuses on the value of cultural and artistic academic activities, instead of traditional academic accomplishments. This knowledge can assist staff in understanding how to engage, motivate, and support students of color around academics. Part of the shift on colleges today is to create transformative learning environments, which focus on learning in all parts of the campus. This finding allows residence life staff to understand how to work with students from different ethnicities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study created more questions than answers. The main question remains: Does parental educational attainment makes a difference in a student's perception of his or her residence hall environment? This study found that it did not, but those results are contrary to numerous other studies. The first recommendation would be to recreate the current study but increase the number of participants whose parental educational attainment was either high school diploma or less. This would allow I to gain a better understanding of the impact of parental educational attainment. In addition, the study should be administered during the fall semester, instead of the spring. This would allow I to catch students shortly after they arrived on campus, which may yield different results.

Another area to further explore would be to recreate the study over a broader range of institutions of higher education. The study could be implemented at different types of institutions of higher education (e.g. private, religious affiliated, public, small, mid-size, or

large). This approach would allow me to compare not only across campuses but different types of campuses.

An additional recommendation would be to recreate the current study but focus on a specific population. It might be of value to focus on only first-year students, because that is a year of great transition. It would also be vital to expand the number of respondents, similar to what was suggested in the first recommendation.

The fourth recommendation would be to use the parental educational attainment spectrum with another assessment instrument, instead of the URES. The URES consists of 100 true/false statements. Many of the participants did not understand all the statements using wording such as *academic grinds*. The length of the URES also could have caused participants to not fully read the statements and simply circle true or false.

Conclusion

Current literature indicates that first-generation students experience college life differently than their counterparts (Barry et al., 2009). This study sought to understand this notion utilizing parental educational attainment as a spectrum instead of simply first-generation and non-first-generation. This approach was undertaken due to the lack of research on a spectrum approach to comprehending first-generation college students. The residence halls were selected as the appropriate venue for assessment because of Astin's (1993) I-E-O model. Astin's model examines the importance of the environment (e.g. residence hall), as well as the input (e.g. students' attributes).

The results of this study were that parental educational attainment did not have an effect on how students perceived their residence hall living experiences. The only independent variables that had a main effect were gender and ethnicity. It is vital for practitioners not to

simply take the conclusion of this one study and make major policy and programming decisions. Because this study found what other studies did not, it is imperative to replicate this study to see if the results are the same.

It is important for practitioners to understand that residence life plays an important role in a student's life. For many students, it is the first time they will have to share a room or be away from their parents. Students do not arrive at the residence halls as empty slates, but with 18 years of experiences and values which have shaped them as persons. It is important to understand how these experiences impact the community development, along with the students' ability to do what they came to college to do, which is to graduate. As practitioners in the field of higher education, we must not ever forget our work is to serve as partners along the student's journey. In order to be this partner, we must understand how students' experiences impact their ability to be successful in higher education.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

Demographics Information

Please place a check mark in the circle that best answers the question. Please only select one answer for each item, unless asked for multiple answers.

Age: 0 18 0 19 0 20 0 21 or older

Gender: 0 Male 0 Female 0 Transgendered 0 Choose not to answer

What is your racial or ethnic identification?

American Indian/Alaskan Native

African American/Black

Asian or Pacific Islander

Hispanic/Latino(a)

Caucasian/White

Multi-racial

Other _____

How many semesters including this one have you attended this university?

1 semester

2 semesters

3 semesters

4 semesters

5 semesters

6 or more semesters

What is the highest level of education that your father completed?

Less than a high school degree

High school degree

Some college, no degree

Associate's degree

College 4 year degree

Graduate degree

What is the highest level of education that your mother completed?

- Less than a high school degree
- High school degree
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- College 4 year degree
- Graduate degree

Are you the first in your immediate family (Mother, Father, Siblings) to attend college?

- Yes
- No

What type of grades do you believe you will have for this semester at the end of this semester?

- A average
- B average
- C average
- D average
- F average
- unsure

What activities have you been involved with since enrolling at this university?(Check all that apply)

- Residence hall floor programs
- Hall Council events
- Residence Hall Association
- Other: _____

Do you plan to return to this university next semester?

- Yes
- No, if no why:_____

Where do you plan to live next year?

- On campus
- Off campus
- Commute from home
- Plan not to attend next year
- Unsure

Do you plan to graduate from this university?

- Yes
- No, if no why:_____

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Students' Perceptions of Residence Hall Living

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Joshua Lawrie, who is a doctoral student from the Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations at Indiana State University. Mr. Lawrie is conducting this study for his doctoral dissertation. Dr. Will Barratt is his faculty sponsor for this project.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are living in a residence hall at Eastern Illinois University, Indiana State University or Western Illinois University.

• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand parent's educational attainment on students' perceptions of living in the residence halls.

• PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. You will be asked to fill out a demographic informational sheet.
2. You will be asked to complete the University Residence Environment Scale Survey, which contains 100 true and false questions.

• POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study other than what is normally associated with filling out a survey about your experiences in a residence hall.

• POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefit you may receive from this study is minimal, although the knowledge gained from this study may contribute to a better understanding of the experiences in your residence hall.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your name will never be attached to your survey or demographic information. Only the researcher and his faculty sponsor will have access to the raw data. All surveys will be destroyed three years after completing the study.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact

Mr. Joshua Lawrie
Principal Investigator
University Housing and Dining Services
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave – MLK Union
Charleston, IL 61920
217-581-7832
jdlawrie@eiu.edu

Dr. Will Barratt
Professor
Department of Educational Leadership
Bayh College of Education, Room 318C
Indiana State University
Terre Haute, IN 47809
812-237-2869
will.barratt@indstate.edu

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

APPENDIX C: UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE ENVIRONMENT SCALE

Mind Garden, Inc.

www.mindgarden.com

December 8, 2011

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant permission for the above named person to use the following copyright material;

Instrument: University Residence Environment Scale

Author: Rudolf H. Moos and Marvin S. Gerst

Copyright: 1974 by Rudolf H. Moos

for his/her thesis research.

Five sample items from this instrument may be reproduced for inclusion in a proposal, thesis, or dissertation. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material.

Sincerely,
Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD CONSENTS

Eastern Illinois University – IRB

February 22, 2012

Joshua Lawrie
University Housing and Dining Services

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, “Examining the Impact Parental Educational Attainment has on Students' Perception of Residence Hall Living” for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has reviewed this research protocol and effective 2/22/2012, has certified this protocol as Exempt from Further Review. The protocol has been given the IRB number 12-060. You are approved to proceed with your study.

The classification of this protocol as Exempt from Further Review is valid only for the research activities and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any proposed changes to this protocol must be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Thank you for your cooperation, and the best of success with your research.

Richard Cavanaugh, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 217-581-6205
Email: recavanaugh@eiu.edu

Indiana State University – IRB

*Institutional Review Board*

Terre Haute, Indiana 47809
 812-237-3092
 Fax 812-237-3092

DATE: March 21, 2012

TO: Joshua Lawrie

FROM: Indiana State University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [309159-1] Examining the impact parental educational attainment has on students' perceptions of residence hall living.

IRB REFERENCE #: 12-092

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: March 21, 2012

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The Indiana State University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations (45 CFR 46). You do not need to submit continuation requests or a completion report. Should you need to make modifications to your protocol or informed consent forms that do not fall within the exempt categories, you will have to reapply to the IRB for review of your modified study.

Informed Consent: All ISU faculty, staff, and students conducting human subjects research within the "exempt" category are still ethically bound to follow the basic ethical principles of the Belmont Report: a) respect for persons; 2) beneficence; and 3) justice. These three principles are best reflected in the practice of obtaining informed consent.

If you have any questions, please contact Thomas Steiger within IRBNet by clicking on the study title on the "My Projects" screen and the "Send Project Mail" button on the left side of the "New Project Message" screen. I wish you well in completing your study.

Western Illinois University – IRB

From: Angela J Tee [mailto:AJ-Tee@wiu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 2:00 PM
To: Joshua Lawrie
Subject: Re: IRB Question

Dear Joshua Lawrie:

Thank you for your interest in conducting research at Western Illinois University. I will do my best to answer your questions, if clarification is needed let me know. In regard to your first item, it appears that research will be occurring on the WIU campus. The question I have for you is whether WIU will be engaged in the research or if you are only recruiting from our student population. If an affiliate of WIU will be interacting or intervening with human subjects or their identifiable private information for research purposes or obtaining informed consent then you will need to receive WIU IRB approval. If you are only recruiting from our population and no affiliates of WIU will be engaged in the research then you do not need to go through the IRB review process, we will accept the review from your University IRB. Regardless, I will need a copy of the IRB approval from your University. I highly recommend that you contact the appropriate administrators at WIU to coordinate your research. If you need help identifying who that may be I can point you in the right direction.

Please let me know if you need any other information at this time.

Thank you,
Angela Tee

Angela J. Tee
Compliance Specialist
Western Illinois University
Office of Sponsored Projects, SH 320
1 University Circle
Macomb, IL 61455
(309) 298-1191

APPENDIX E: DIRECTORS' OF HOUSING APPROVAL



February 7, 2012

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I am writing to grant my approval for Joshua Lawrie to collect data for his dissertation study using Eastern Illinois University residence halls. I am aware he will be utilizing floor meetings or building meetings to administer the University Residence Environment Scale to students living in our residence halls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Hudson", written over a horizontal line.

Mark Hudson
Director
University Housing and Dining Service
Eastern Illinois University

Email from Rex Kendall, Director of Housing at Indiana State on April 10, 2012

April 10, 2012

Hello Joshua:

Thank you for the email. My apologies, I thought when I was communicating with Dr. Barratt yesterday that was all the permission that was needed. Yes, you have permission to proceed. Please work with your Res Life contacts, Jessica and Audrey, to work out the details. We are in the process of collecting data from three different surveys for our own departmental purposes. There might be a little survey fatigue going-on with our residential students. However, please proceed.

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Rex

Western Illinois University Director of Housing Permission

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WESTERN
ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY

February 7, 2012

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I am writing to express my approval for Joshua Lawrie to collect data for his dissertation study entitled: *Examining the Impact Parental Educational Attainment has on Students' Perceptions of Residence Hall Living*. I am aware he will be utilizing floor meetings or building meetings to administer the University Residence Environment Scale to students living in our residence halls at Western Illinois University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JH".

John Hjertogum
Associate Vice-President
Western Illinois University