

C. THOMAS SKAGGS,
University of Maine at Orono.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

ABSTRACT: The main concern of this paper is the influence of place of residence on the performance of behavior patterns which contribute to the individual answering questions about himself in terms of what he is and what is important about him (Erikson, 1959).

Each place of residence is shown to have advantages and disadvantages for the developmental process. However, it must be emphasized that whether or not an aspect of residential environment is advantageous must be determined according to the needs and developmental level of *each* particular individual. For some students their developmental patterns can best be satisfied through the experiences allowed in a residence hall environment, while others may require the experiences to be had in off-campus housing.

Educators are acutely aware of the "total" development of the students in our colleges and universities. Commitment to a program of higher education no longer means to a student that he may expect professional concern only with his academic progress. He will now encounter a professionally administered program designed to aid in developing both his academic development *and* his personal development.

The educating institution provides a variety of experiences and situations in which the student functions. These opportunities aid the individual in those developmental tasks which must be accomplished during the college years. It is this period of the maturational scheme during which an individual is seeking answers that will bring him closer to the ultimate goal of answering such questions as "Who am I, *really*? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behavior? How can I become myself? (Rogers, 1961)." In essence, this period of development may be characterized as a period of searching for the "real me." The means by which an individual arrives at the answers to these core questions is one of trial and error. The college student is constantly effecting different behavior patterns in his somewhat liberal environment. He is testing for himself those ideas and mores to which he has been exposed during his "controlled living" experiences within the family institution. It is no longer sufficient to behave in a specified manner without some personal acceptance of this manner as being appropriate. He is seeking to develop his *own* system of personal ethics in such areas as sexual modalities, ethnic prejudices, and liberalism in self-expression. It is through his *experiences* in these areas that the individual will adopt those behaviors which are most rewarding in terms of reducing his internal conflicts about himself (Maier, 1965). Through his varied experiences the individual will synthesize for himself those perceptions which may be internalized to facilitate his development toward the "true self."

An average student will probably spend from 10-18 hours per day within the immediate area of his "campus home." It is here that his interaction with people will be most frequent and of the greatest intensity. The immediate environment of the living unit contains a represen-

tativeness of both the familial home in which the student lived prior to his enrollment and an indication of the independence which is to be achieved now that he has become removed from the physical confines of the primarily parent dominated "life style." In most cases, the student is not completely divorced, however, from the influence of a "home type setting," but there is a considerably greater opportunity for behavior experimentation during this dynamic developmental period.

Colleges and universities typically have three types of student housing available: the *home*, *off-campus*, and the *residence hall*. Each of these environments will be considered with respect to the freedom or latitude of experiences it allows the resident.

Home: The single college student who lives with his family and commutes is operating under a very special set of developmental circumstances. The parental control which existed during his high school experience is basically the same now as it was then. If he was not allowed to have members of the opposite sex as guests in his room during his senior year in high school, it is unlikely that such behavior would be tolerated during the freshman year in college. In essence the student is living within a "closed system" of behavioral expectancies and tolerances. The parents continue to have the same expectations of their son (or daughter). He is still expected to continue the same religious practice, dress in the usual manner, date the "nice" girls, etc. For him to disavow his religious belief, become very unconcerned with physical appearance, and to become involved with promiscuous members of the opposite sex would be intolerable. Experimenting with behavior which is deviant from what has been "taught" in the home is not acceptable. For all intents and purposes the individual is operating in an environment which is closely supervised and may be a detriment to his development. Unless the individual wishes to contend with a conflict between himself and his parents, he is forced to operate within the confines of the situation.

It should be pointed out that not all individuals require the same amount of deviance from the "norm" behavior pattern established for them during the early years of adolescence. Each person's developmental tasks are basically the same. However, though great similarity exists in objective (task), the means by which the objective is obtained is unique for each individual. One person may feel the need to try out a specific behavior quite different from his "norm," while another may not deviate very much from his consistent pattern. For the latter persons, the home environment is not so restrictive.

The home environment does offer some advantages to the developing individual. The familiar way of life of his particular family institution offers stability during this trial-and-error period. The person knows what is acceptable and what is not. This knowledge is conducive to dependency, but also provides security.

It is important to note that some persons are ready for "venturing out to develop their own attitudes" during the college experience and others are not. For these individuals the home environment may be quite satisfactory and even desirable, since it usually exerts no pressure for and allows little or no change.

Off-Campus: The person residing in off-campus housing has the fewest obstacles to the trying out of new and different behaviors. His circumstances free him from immediate supervision by an adult. His behavior may be influenced by their value system, but only as he perceives it to be. He has the choice of being incongruent with their system because they are not there to "enforce" the "moral laws." To use a trite expression, "he is his own man." Thus the individual may avail himself of as many experimental opportunities as he wishes and receive a minimum of external familial criticism.

It is often desirable to seek adult guidance during the developmental sequence. Within this perspective the off-campus student is lacking, for there is no adult figure with whom he is closely associated and through whom the need for guidance can be satisfied. There probably are adult figures outside the living unit which are appropriate, but the lack of immediacy of interaction may be of some consequence.

Also of importance to the type of personal development we are considering here is the influence of the peer group and their reactions to specified personal activities. The peer group often determines what specific behaviors will be "tried out" in a circumstance and also exerts an influence over the recurrence of a particular behavior pattern. The reaction of the peer group becomes a measuring stick for our own evaluations of what will be assimilated into our personal "self" and what will be rejected. Within this framework the off-campus student and the student who commutes from home is functioning within a very small peer group. For all practical purposes the immediate peer group for the commuter is nonexistent, while the off-campus student may have an immediate group of five or six depending upon the house or apartment size in which he lives. Emphasis is given to the living-unit peer group because of the amount of time which these individuals usually spend in the company of each other, not only within the confines of the unit itself, but also elsewhere in the college community.

Residence Hall: Throughout the preceding paragraphs much attention has been given to the amount of external control placed on an individual and its influence on his experiences. In this respect the residence hall is somewhat like the home environment. The institution provides professionally trained adults to supervise the development of the residents. These supervisors are trained to be acutely aware of the difficulties encountered during the development of the college student. While this professionally trained adult may serve as a resource person for guidance purposes he is not as threatening an evaluator as the student may perceive his parents to be. The residence-hall staff does not take the role of "the enforcer of normative behavior." This should be true for but one exception, and that is when one person's actions infringe upon the rights of others. For example, to attend a party and drink excessively is not reprimanded in and of itself, but to have done the same thing and to return to the residence hall noisy and uncontrollable is to impinge upon those residents trying to study in the immediate area.

Although the residence hall does not impose a moral code on the students which may restrict him in answering questions about himself, there are certain rules of the institution which must be enforced, such as women's hours and intervisitation policies. This is the extent to which the authoritative figure (the institution and its representatives) allow themselves to be controllers of individual experiences.

There is, however, a phase of residence-hall influence that is often very rigid in the behavior patterns which are acceptable. This aspect of residence-hall living is the peer group. Unlike the home or off-campus environment, the peer-group relationship here is extremely intense. The residents usually develop a very tight togetherness on the basis of the physical proximity of their sleeping and study area. These groups also eat together, participate in sports together, and relax together. This ever-present association provides for an ever-present evaluation of a person by other members of the group. No implication of the desirability of this phenomenon is intended; the discussion is merely to point out that it does exist and must be contended with by all group members.

Associated with the large peer-group situation is an opportunity to learn by observation. Without actually personally experiencing an event, an individual may observe others and infer whether this behavior and/or its rewards are desirable from his own frame of reference.

SUMMARY: Throughout this paper the main concern is the influence of residence on the performance of behavior patterns which contribute to the individual answering questions about himself in terms of what he is and what is important for him (Erikson, 1959).

Each place of residence is shown to have advantages and disadvantages for the developmental process. However, it must be emphasized that whether or not an aspect of residential environment is advantageous must be determined according to the needs and developmental level of *each* particular individual. For some students developmental patterns can best be satisfied through the experiences allowed in a residence hall environment, while others may require the experiences to be had in off-campus housing.

RESUME: Cet article traite de l'influence du lieu de résidence sur les schèmes de comportement qui permettent à l'individu de répondre aux questions concernant ce qu'il est et ce qui est important à son sujet (Erikson, 1959). Chaque lieu de résidence possède ses avantages et ses désavantages. Cependant, il est à propos d'affirmer que pour qu'un aspect du lieu de résidence soit considéré comme avantageux ou non, les besoins et le niveau de développement de *chaque* individu particulier doivent être déterminés. Pour certains étudiants, leurs schèmes de développement peuvent être mieux satisfaits par les expériences réalisées à l'intérieur des résidences d'étudiants, tandis que pour d'autres, c'est au moyen d'expériences vécues à l'extérieur du campus qu'ils peuvent le mieux se développer.

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