

Face to Face: Does Residence Hall Design Make a Difference
in Student Interaction?

By

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(Abstract)

Student persistence has long been valued by higher education administrators (Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003). Persistence rates are significantly impacted by student interaction (Tinto, 1975). The environment can have a major influence on how students interact with one another (Lewin, 1936). One way in which the environment can influence interactions is by a building design (Strange & Banning, 2001), including residence hall building design. Despite theories that building design impacts interactions, there is little research that explores how student interaction is influenced as a result of residence hall building design.

The purpose of this study was to understand how residence hall spaces that differ by architectural style impact college student interactions. Specifically, this study examined the interactions that took place among residents in traditional and suite style residence halls. For purposes of this study, an interaction was defined as face-to-face contact between two or more individuals that was more significant than a simple greeting.

The results of the study first revealed that residents of traditional and suite style residence halls have mostly social interactions in their hall. Secondly, the results revealed that students in traditional style residence halls have an easy time meeting other people in their residence hall environment. Lastly, the results showed that students who live in suite style residence halls have a more difficult time meeting other members of their community.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Appendices	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Significance of the Study	7
Delimitations	9
Organization of the Study	10
Chapter Two: Literature Review	11
Research on Student Interaction	11
Research on Residence Halls	15
Summary	22
Chapter Three: Methodology	24
Sample Selection	24
Instrumentation	27
Data Collection Procedures	28
Data Analysis Procedures	31
Accuracy of the Data	33
Chapter Four: Results of Traditional Style Data	35

Demographics of Traditional Style Participants	35
Types of Interactions in Traditional Style Halls	36
Interactions by Type and Location in Traditional Style Halls	40
Interactions by Type and Number of People Present in Traditional Style Halls	42
Interactions by Type and Duration in Traditional Style Halls	44
Chapter Five: Results of Suite Style Data	46
Demographics of Suite Style Participants	46
Types of Interactions in Suite Style Halls	47
Interactions by Type and Location in Suite Style Halls	51
Interactions by Type and Number of People Present in Suite Style Halls	53
Interactions by Type and Duration in Suite Style Halls	55
Chapter Six: Discussion	59
Discussion	59
Interactions in Traditional Style Halls	59
Interactions in Suite Style Halls	68
Difference in Interactions between Traditional and Suite Style Halls	74
Relationship of the Findings to Prior Research	77
Implications for Future Practice, Research and Policy	80
Limitations of the Study	83
References	86
Appendices	90

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of Traditional Participants	37
Table 2: Frequencies of Types of Interactions in Traditional Style Halls	39
Table 3: Interactions by Type and Location in Traditional Style Halls	41
Table 4: Interactions by Type and Number of People Present in Traditional Style Halls	43
Table 5: Interactions by Type and Duration in Traditional Style Halls	45
Table 6: Characteristics of Suite Participants	48
Table 7: Frequencies of Types of Interactions in Suite Style Halls	50
Table 8: Interactions by Type and Location in Suite Style Halls	52
Table 9: Interactions by Type and Number of People Present in Suite Style Halls	54
Table 10: Interactions by Type and Duration in Suite Style Halls	56
Table 11: Differences in Interactions by Type and Location/Type in Traditional and Suite Style Halls	57

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Advertisement for Participant Recruitment	90
Appendix B: E-mail Screening Protocol	91
Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire	92
Appendix D: Small Floor Plan	93
Appendix E: Focus Group Directions	96
Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter	98
Appendix G: Participant Reminder E-mail	99
Appendix H: Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects.....	100