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PREFERRED PLACE OF STUDY FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS LIVING IN UNIVERSITY APARTMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines factors influencing the usual place of study for students living in family apartments at colleges and universities. The sample is composed of 305 residents who returned questionnaires, representing a 60 percent rate of return. A regression analysis of usual place of study on control, independent, and intervening variables is performed. The control variables include sex, classification, citizenship, area of residence, number of children, and size of home community. The independent variables are satisfaction with amount of space in the apartment, consideration of neighbors and quality of social atmosphere in comparison to educational atmosphere. The intervening variable is quietness of the apartment for study. Several of the variables are shown to have significant relationships with the usual place of study. A further analysis of "library" and "apartment" as usual place of study demonstrates some differences in the relationship of the variables.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine factors that may influence the usual place of study for residents of student-family apartments in colleges and universities. There are two hypotheses: 1) The independent and intervening variables as a group have a significant relationship with the usual place of study; 2) There is a difference in the relationships of the independent and intervening variables with "library" and "apartment" as the usual place of study.

Lattore (1975), Greenberg and DeCoster (1976) and Frierman (1981) note some unique characteristics of family students and the challenges to meeting their needs as residents and students. Family students include married couples, at least one of whom is a student, or single-parent students. Some of the challenges of housing for family students center around the high-density living situation. Problems with noise, pets and children are some of the more frequent problems (Frierman, 1981). Van Vliet (1983) notes the aversion to apartment housing by many students, particulary when children are present. Sebba and Churchman (1983) find that most parents feel there is a place, however, where no one will disturb them in the home. This is usually identified as the bedroom. Riker (1965) suggests that the bedroom is good place to study in the apartment and states that a desk and shelves in one corner of the bedroom or alcove would be beneficial.

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High on the list of concerns for family students is academic success. Mayes and McConatha (1982) note that academic success is a first-ranked concern for both men and women, single and married. Academic success and the factors that contribute to it are often very different between single and family students. The living environment, in particular, contributes to this difference. Falk (1964) notes that finding a suitable place to study is less difficult for married than for single students because of a calmer "domestic living situation" in an apartment compared to residence-hall living. Arp (1978) says that a supportive spouse is important to the success of the family student. This paper examines the role housing plays in providing a place to study for family students in university apartment housing.

In a study of students living in on-campus apartments, students living in off-campus apartments, students living in residence halls and students living at home, Coldfelter, Furr, and Wachowiak (1984) find that students living in on-campus apartments and residence-hall students rate the location of the library and research facilities and access to faculty more favorably than do students living in off-campus apartments or live-at-home students. When considering the impact on academic performance, students living in on-campus apartments rank noise level first and availability of a study area second. This paper lists some constraints affecting where residents of family-student apartments study.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE AREA

The University Student Apartment Community (USAC) at Iowa State University, Ames, consists of 1460 one- and two-bedroom units. It is divided into four distinct living areas located on the north edge of the campus: Pammel Court, Hawthorn Court, University Village, and Schilletter Village. Pammel Court is the oldest living area. It accommodates families and single students in World War II-vintage corrugated metal units.

Hawthorn Court has 196 single-story, two-bedroom wood-frame units housing only student families. University Village houses 500 student families in predominantly two-story, two-bedroom brick townhouses built in 1965 and 1968. Schilletter Village consists of 260 two-bedroom apartments located in 65 four-plex units with basements. Both single students and families reside in these apartments built between 1973 and 1977. Pammel Court and Hawthorn Court are the closest to campus. A student-subsidized bus system services the community at 20-minute intervals providing convenient access to the campus and the city.

The USAC, with its 3800 inhabitants, is a sub-community within the larger community of Ames, Iowa. The USAC population is diverse. Over 40 percent of its inhabitants are international students, coming from over 70 different countries. The population includes married couples with and without children, single parents with children, extended family members, and single students. The differences in age and marital longevity between families are considerable.

The residents of the community tend to be very career- and goal-oriented. Almost half of the student population are graduate students. About half of the families have both spouses enrolled as students at the university.

Monthly rent in the apartments ranges from $90 in Pammel Court to $204 in Schilletter Village. This range allows apartment accommodations for the wide range of income and financial situations within the community.

PROCEDURES

A questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of residents of the University Student Apartment Community. The sample included approximately one-third of the 1460 apartments. Three hundred five questionnaires were returned, representing a return rate of over 60 percent.

The variables used in the analysis are illustrated in a model shown in Figure 1. Of the control variables, respondent's sex was coded 0 for females and 1 for males. Classification was coded 1 for freshman, 2 for sophomore, 3 for junior, 4 for senior and 5 for graduate student. Citizenship was coded 0 for U.S. citizen and 1 for non-American. Area of residence was indicated by three dummy variables: Hawthorn Court, University Village, and Schilletter Village. Pammel Court remained as the constant. Number of children in the apartment was included as a continuous variable; most respondents responded "Zero", "One" or "Two" to the question. The size of community variable asked for information regarding the size of the community in which the respondent grew up.

Three independent variables were selected. Satisfaction with the amount of space in the apartment was asked with responses coded from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). In a similar manner, the questions concerning the consideration of neighbors asked for responses with an agreement scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The third independent variable, quality of social atmosphere in relationship to educational atmosphere, had responses coded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The question regarding the intervening variable, quietness of the apartment for study, asked if the respondent felt the apartment was "quiet enough for you to study when you want to."

The dependent variable, usual place of study, was recoded twice to reveal a dichotomous variable each time. First, apartment as choice of place to study was coded 1 and other responses were coded 0. The other responses included somewhere in the university student apartments, the campus library, the Pammel Court study hall, an academic building on-campus, and off-campus. The Pammel Court study hall is a designated quiet facility for study in the student apartments. In the second instance, the library was coded 1 and the other responses were coded 0.

A regression analysis was done on each of the dependent variables: the apartment as usual place of study and the library as usual place of study. In addition, the intervening variable, quietness of the apartment for study, was added in each regression. No difference was noted, however, by adding the intervening variable. The results of these two regressions appear in Tables 1 and 2.

RESULTS

The full regression for apartment as usual place of study (see Table 1) shows a significant relationship with one variable, sex of respondent, at the 0.01 alpha level. R^2 for this full regression is 0.147. In addition, classification of respondent, citizenship of respondent and the number of children in the apartment are significant at the 0.05 alpha level. Each of these variables has a negative effect.

Sex of respondent has a −0.148 correlation showing that women are more likely than are men to prefer to study in the apartment. Classification of respondent correlates −0.057 showing that freshmen and sophomores are more likely to study in the apartment than are juniors and seniors. Citizenship of

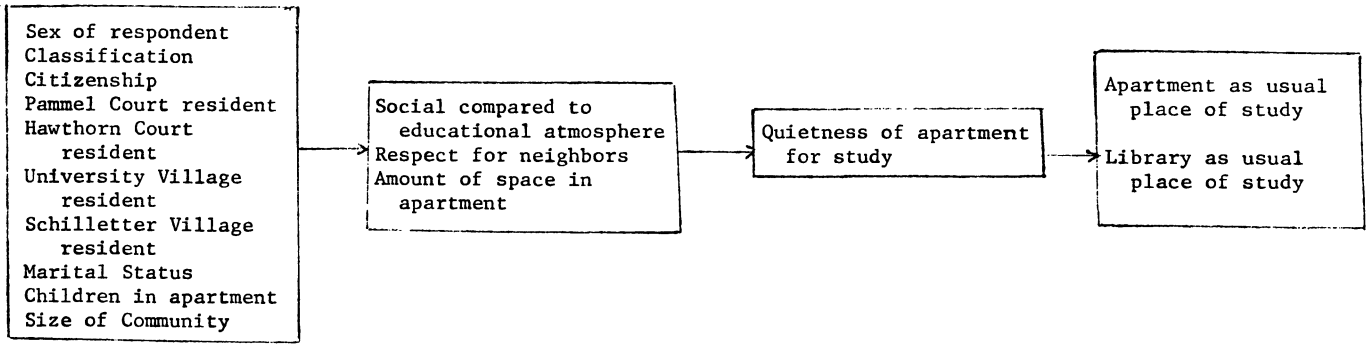

Figure 1. The model.

Table 1. Regression of apartment as usual place of study on the control variables, independent variables and intervening variable

	Full			Reduced		
	B	beta	t	B	beta	t
Social compared to educational atmosphere	-.028	-.060	.299			
Respect for neighbors	.009	.022	.696			
Amount of space in apartment	.036	.084	.148			
Sex of respondent	-.148	-.144	.010**	-.156	-.156	.005***
Classification of respondent	-.057	-.113	.069*	-.038	-.075	.210
Citizenship of respondent	-.131	-.126	.089*	-.168	-.161	.004***
Hawthorn Court resident	-.003	-.002	.974			
University Village resident	.106	.100	.161			
Schilletter Village resident	-.112	.087	.181			
Marital status	-.003	-.006	.923			
Children in apartments	-.084	-.143	.040**	-.094	-.161	.004***
Size of home community	-.007	-.032	.617			
Quiet enough to study	-.017	-.040	.520			
Constant	.866		.000***	.839		.000***
R^2 .147			R^2 113			
df 13			df 4			

* p <0.10
** p <0.05
*** p <0.01

Table 2. Regression of library as usual place of study on the control variables, independent variables and intervening variables.

	Full			Reduced		
	B	beta	t	B	beta	t
Social compared to educational atmosphere	.005	.014	.818			
Respect for neighbors	-.007	.020	.722			
Amount of space in apartment	-.041	-.119	.053*	-.044	-.127	.027**
Sex of respondent	.047	.056	.339			
Classification of respondent	-.045	-.109	.093*	-.042	-.101	.098*
Citizenship of respondent	.113	.134	.089*	.123	.145	.017**
Hawthorn Court resident	.058	.049	.454			
University Village resident	.041	-.048	.531			
Schilletter Village resident	.109	.103	.129	.113	.108	.064*
Marital status	-.010	-.023	.710			
Children in apartments	-.003	-.007	.992			
Size of home community	-.002	-.008	.905			
Quiet enough to study	-.009	-.026	.694			
Constant	.494		.009**	.470		.000***
R^2 .054		R^2 .044				
df 13		df 4				

* p <0.10
** p <0.05
*** p<0.01

respondent has a −0.131 correlation suggesting that American citizens would prefer to study in the apartment and that non-American students would prefer to study elsewhere. Children in apartments has a −0.084 relationship indicating that residents with fewer children prefer to study in the apartment. The relationships are not strong negative relationships, but they are significant.

A reduced regression demonstrates a continued relationship for the variables showing significance. For the regression on apartment as usual place of study,

three of the four variables increase their strength. The R^2 is 0.113 for this reduced model. Sex of respondent, citizenship and children in apartments all increase their significance level to 0.01 alpha level. Each of the variables maintain the same approximate negative relationship: sex of respondent (−0.148); citizenship (−0.131); and children in apartment (−0.084). The fourth variable, classification of respondent, loses its significance for the 0.10 alpha level.

A calculation was done to ascertain whether the difference in R^2 for the full and reduced model of the apartment as place of study is significant. The computations show that there is not a significant difference. The equation used to test the difference between the two R^2's is

$$F = \frac{[R^2 - R^2]/df_f - df_r}{[1 - R^2]/df_R}$$

The full regression of library as usual place to study is shown in Table 2. R^2 for this regression is 0.054. Table 2 shows that three variables are significant: amount of space in the apartment, classification of respondent, and citizenship of respondent. All three are significant at the 0.10 alpha level. Amount of space in the apartment has a negative correlation of −0.041, indicating that those who are less satisfied with the size of their apartments prefer to study in the library. Classification of respondent has a negative correlation of −0.045 suggesting that freshmen and sophomores are more likely to study in the library than are juniors and seniors. Citizenship of resident has a positive correlation of 0.113 indicating that non−Americans prefer to study in the library.

The reduced regression of library as the usual place of study maintains the same three significant variables. All three are still significant at the 0.10 alpha level. The R^2 for this reduced model is 0.044. Amount of space in the apartment (−0.044) and classification (−0.045) maintain their same approximate negative relationships. Citizenship of respondent (0.113) also keeps the same approximate positive relationship. A fourth variable, Schilletter Village resident, was added to this equation because it previously was so near the 0.10 alpha level. This variable then becomes significant at the 0.10 alpha level with a positive correlation (0.109). It suggests that Schilletter Village residents prefer to study in the library.

A calculation was once again done to check for differences in R^2 in the full and reduced models of library as the usual place of study. The computations show that the difference is not significant.

Table 3 lists the results of another regression done with an intervening variable (whether the apartment is quiet enough for study) as a dependent variable. In the full regression results, three variables demonstrate significance: respect for neighbors, amount of space in the apartment, and residence in Schilletter Village. All three variables are significant at the 0.01 alpha level. Respect for neighbors has a positive correlation of 0.288 indicating that those who feel residents of their building show respect for others in the building also feel that their apartments are quiet enough for study. Amount of space in the apartment relates positively (0.233) showing that those respondents who feel their apartments have enough space tend also to feel that it is quiet enough for study. The Schilletter Village variable has a negative correlation of −0.550 meaning that Schilletter Village residents do not feel their units are quiet enough for study.

A reduced regression run was done on whether the apartment is quiet enough for study. again using only the variables that demonstrate significance. The three variables (respect for neighbors, amount of space in the apartment, and residence in Schilletter Village) maintain a very similar significance at the 0.02 alpha level. The three variables change little in the intensity of their relationships.

Table 3. Regression of quiet enough for study variable on the control variables and independent variables

	Full			Reduced		
	B	beta	t	B	beta	t
Social compared to educational atmosphere	.087	.082	.134			
Respect for neighbors	.288	.298	.000**	.299	.310	.000**
Amount of space in apartment	.233	.239	.000**	.218	.223	.000**
Sex of respondent	-.139	-.017	.753			
Classification of respondent	-.011	-.010	.869			
Citizenship of respondent	-.113	-.047	.501			
Hawthorn Court resident	.216	.065	.273			
University Village resident	-.069	-.028	.673			
Schilletter Village resident	-.550	-.186	.003**	-.474	-.160	.002**
Marital status	.079	.078	.256			
Children in apartment	.101	.076	.253			
Size of community	-.026	.049	.423			
Constant	2.310		.000**	2.390		.000**
R^2	.181		R^2	.169		
df	12		df	3		

* p<0.05
** p<0.01

Table 4 shows the regression of amount of space in the apartment. Three variables demonstrate significance at the 0.01 alpha level: Respect for neighbors, citizenship of respondent, and children in the apartment. Respect for neighbors shows a positive relationship (0.182) indicating that those who feel that neighbors in their building show respect for other building residents are satisfied with the amount of space in their apartment. Citizenship also correlates positively (0.571),

indicating that non-Americans are more satisfied with the amount of space in their apartment. Children in the apartment correlates negatively (-0.402) indicating that residents with fewer children in the apartment are more satisfied with the amount of space in their apartment.

A reduced regression was run on the amount of space in the apartment. utilizing only variables previously showing significance. Little change occurs except that the citizenship of respondent variables drops its significance level from 0.01 alpha level to the 0.05 alpha level. The variable does, however, maintain a positive relationship, even if it is not as strong (0.331). Respect for neighbors continues having a positive relationship (0.187) while children in the apartment continues having a negative relationship (-0.309).

Table 4. Regression of amount of space in apartment variable on the control variables and independent variables

	Full			Reduced		
	B	beta	t	B	beta	t
Social compared to educational atmosphere	.073	.067	.247			
Respect for neighbors	.182	.183	.001**	.187	.189	.001**
Sex of respondent	.056	.023	.679			
Classification of respondent	-.089	-.074	.231			
Citizenship of respondent	.571	.233	.002**	.331	.136	.015*
Hawthorn Court resident	.009	.003	.966			
University Village resident	.279	.111	.119			
Schilletter Village resident	.323	.106	.102			
Marital status	-.103	-.100	.173			
Children in apartment	-.402	-.293	.000**	-.309	-.225	.000**
Size of home community	-.047	-.087	.182			
Constant	3.260		.000**	2.86		.000**
R^2	.130			R^2 .094		
df	11			df 3		

* p<0.05
** p<0.01

FINDINGS

The findings indicate that residents with fewer children in the apartment prefer to study at home while the residents with more children prefer to study elsewhere. Having fewer children would make the apartment quieter for study. Similarly, residents who are satisfied with apartment size seem to find the apartment quiet enough to study. This finding suggests that they do not find the need for additional apartment space in which to study. That residents who feel neighbors in the building show respect for other residents find the apartment quiet enough for study is another example of the consistency of the data. More courteous neighbors would probably mean that neighbors would not be noisy enough to interfere with study.

The findings reinforce some basic concerns about students who have children. These students find it difficult to study in the apartment, yet family considerations and responsibilities often prevent them from leaving it.

While students tend to prefer lower rents, even at the cost of space in the apartment, the results indicate that it may be better for them to seek apartments with more space. Similarly, institutions providing family housing for students should provide an option for apartments with more space. It would be desirable that future apartment construction include more space in the apartments for study and privacy. If this is not possible, then study rooms located in or near the apartment should be provided.

Freshmen and sophomores are more ɘly to prefer to study in both the apartment and the library than are upper–class students. These locations appear to be the two main preferences, with other locations probably not used by underclassmen. This can probably be explained by the fact that at ISU most underclassmen live in the far northern area of campus. Since this area is further away, it is understandable that these students would not want to return to the apartment to study during the day nor would they want to leave the apartment to return to campus in the evening.

Women are more likely to prefer to study in the apartment than are men. This may be due to proximity and safety concerns. It may also be explained by the presence of children in the family.

International students are more likely to prefer to study outside their apartments than are American students. The results indicate that international students prefer to study in the library. This may be explained by previous academic orientation or cultural traditions. It may also be explained by the fact that many international students at ISU live in residence areas that are closest to campus.

SUMMARY

This study shows that there are significant indicators of preferred place of study for student–apartment residents. It is evident that sex, classification and citizenship are factors in determining place of study as is the presence of children. Perception of neighbors' respect for others also influences satisfaction with quietness in the apartment and size of the apartment.

This information can be valuable for student apartment staff. When residents feel that neighbors show respect for others, it increases satisfaction for the study environment of the apartment as well as for size of the apartment. Programs that increase mutual neighbor understanding and respect could provide

excellent returns in resident satisfaction.

Knowledge that women students, American students and freshmen and sophomores prefer to study in their apartments provides useful information in resolving neighbor disputes as well as providing academic support for residents. It may also provide good information in planning for future apartment construction.

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