THE RELATION BETWEEN DORMITORY CLIMATE AND ADJUSTMENT IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATION BETWEEN DORMITORY CLIMATE AND ADJUSTMENT IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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This study was designed to investigate the relationship between dormitory climate and college adjustment. College students (mean age = 18.85 years) who lived in the dormitories at a Catholic institution in a mid-west state appraised dimensions of dormitory climate (personal support, conflict, order, and group cohesiveness) and dimensions of college adjustment (full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment). Personal support was positively correlated with full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Conflict was negatively related to full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Order was positively related to academic adjustment. Finally, group cohesiveness was positively correlated with full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment. Further, gender was found to moderate the relation between dormitory climate and college adjustment. Specifically, for males only, order was

found to be positively related to academic adjustment; whereas for females only, conflict was found to be negatively related to full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. The findings support the conclusion that dormitory climate is related to college adjustment. These results indicate that universities could attempt to manipulate those aspects of dormitory climate that were found to correlate with college adjustment to try to increase the proportion of successful and adjusted students.

INTRODUCTION

College can be a very exciting and enjoyable time for students. However, because college life is novel and ambiguous to many people, it is also a very demanding and challenging time for them (Cowen & Owens, 1991). Many students have difficulty meeting the many demands of this new experience. The focus of this study is on factors that enhance an individual's adjustment to college. For purposes of this study, adjustment to college is defined as an individual's ability to cope effectively with the varying demands of the new college setting (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Adjustment to college is thought to be multifaceted and to include the following areas: academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment (Baker & Siryk, 1986). Thus, adjustment to college refers to how well an individual copes in all four of these areas.

Before the development of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ: Baker & Siryk, 1989), which views adjustment to be multifaceted, many researchers looked at college adjustment in a global sense. Most of these early measures of college adjustment were not published, and they were quite simple, concerned primarily with only one of the facets that are assessed by the SACQ. Furthermore, these early measures lacked evidence of their reliability and validity. Therefore, although these early instruments laid the groundwork for further

research and the development of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, they are now of little use in this area (Baker & Siryk, 1984).

Predictors of Adjustment to College

With the advent of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, interest in measuring college adjustment was renewed. Many studies employed this measure to assess the different facets of college adjustment. Recent research has focused on identifying predictors of these different facets of adjustment. Several of these studies that have used the SACQ are described below.

Several researchers have examined the relationship between students' decidedness regarding a major and their adjustment to college. Smith and Baker (1987) found that decidedness regarding an academic major was a stronger predictor of academic adjustment and institutional attachment than it was of either social or personal-emotional adjustment. They concluded that those who have no major may have a deficiency in their sense of educational purpose, in their capacity to apply themselves to academic work, to achieve success in those efforts, and to experience satisfaction with the academic setting. Similarly, those who have no major will probably have less commitment to academic goals and to the institution than those who have chosen a major (Smith & Baker, 1987). Baker and Siryk (1986) also found that academic adjustment was positively related to the students' level of commitment to an academic major and that institutional attachment was negatively related to student attrition.

Several researchers have investigated the relationship between intrapersonal factors and the facets of college adjustment. Both academic locus of control and self-esteem were positively correlated with overall college adjustment, which is a full-scale score that is also measured by the SACQ (Mooney, Sherman, & Lo Presto, 1991). Furthermore, Lapsley, Rice, and Shadid (1989) found that first year college students underwent a period of being psychologically dependent on both their mothers and fathers and experienced poorer social and personal-emotional adjustment to college than classmates who had completed more than one year.

Further, Rice (1992) found that greater dependence on one's father was significantly negatively related to social adjustment, whereas greater conflictual independence from mother, which is the amount of guilt, anxiety, anger, and resentment felt towards one's mother, was negatively associated with personal-emotional adjustment. Both of these findings only occurred for women, and not men, in their first year of college. However, by junior year, men's college adjustment had become more strongly influenced by their relationships with their parents. Specifically, sons who had less conflicted relationships with their parents reported better personal-emotional adjustment than sons who reported highly conflicted relationships with their parents. On the other hand, the findings remained consistent at different stages of females' college careers, except that junior class women who reported greater conflictual independence from their mothers also reported better social adjustment. Therefore, the extent of psychological dependency on

parents may be related to both personal-emotional and social adjustment to college (see also Lopez, 1991). However, the importance of student-parent relations shifts over time, and separation-individuation from parents, as a correlate of adjustment, varies for men and women (Rice, 1992). It should be noted that this psychological separation-individuation from parents did not appear to influence students' academic adjustment (Rice, 1992).

Finally, researchers have looked at characteristics of students' families to help predict college adjustment. Lopez, Campbell, and Watkins (1988) found that students reporting family experiences characterized by both marital distress and other forms of dysfunctional interactions, such as overinvolvement, appear to be at risk for lower personal-emotional and attachment adjustment. Also, following parental divorce, an angry, resentful relationship with one's father affects the overall college adjustment of females more than males (Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989). Thus, students' gender moderated the relation between marital conflict and adjustment (Lopez, 1991).

Thus, predictors of adjustment to college appear to be multifaceted. Furthermore, Cooper and Robinson (1988) proposed that adjustment is related not only to factors within the person, but also to factors within the institutional environment. Thus, colleges and universities may be able to affect the retention of students positively by providing programs and services that contribute to students' success in several areas of living, not just the academic area. This study

hopes to identify those institutional environment factors that facilitate adjustment to college life.

Climate and its Relation to Adjustment

One's environment plays a large role in the development of social behavior. The first environment that influences individuals' development is the family. In later years, individuals' environments enlarge to include neighbors, peers, co-workers, relatives, and others. When people enter college, their environment once again changes.

Family Climate. A factor that may have relevance for the adjustment of college students has been identified in the literature on children's development: family climate. Family climate consists of the extent to which the family system provides warmth, supervision, conflict, and order (Kurdek & Fine, in press). Warmth refers to the amount of love and respect an individual feels from his/her other family members. Supervision consists of the establishment and enforcement of rules in the family. Conflict refers to the amount of arguing and emotional/physical disruptions in the family that is experienced by the individual. Order encompasses the ability of the family to provide regularity and stability.

These four factors have been shown to be related to the psychological, academic, and health adjustment of children (Kurdek & Fine, in press), and to their overall adjustment (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Specifically, the more warmth, supervision, and order, and the less conflict that children experience in their families, the more positive their adjustment. Because these

four factors have been shown to relate to the adjustment of children in families, it is plausible that these factors will also be related to the overall adjustment of people in similar close-knit groups.

Dormitory Climate. College life in dormitories resembles family life in several ways. First, there are usually rules that are enforced to some degree in both settings. Second, there is a level of caring and concern for one another in both settings. Third, there is usually some type of schedule and items, such as books, toiletries, and clothing, are usually kept in an orderly fashion in both settings. Finally, whenever people live together for an extended period of time, there are bound to be some arguments and conflict. Further, it is plausible that dormitory climate variables that are similar to the previously tested family climate variables will predict adjustment to college.

An important factor to consider about college life is that approximately 75 percent of a student's time is spent in activities unrelated to formal academia. Furthermore, as much as 70 percent of what students learn during their college years is through out-of-class experiences (Kuh, 1981). Because many students live in dormitories, and thus, spend a great deal of their time there, the dormitory environment can have a substantial impact on their lives (Williams & Reilley, 1972).

Numerous studies have looked at life in college dorms and how this relates to a student's well-being in college. Moos (1987), after collecting data from national samples of over 10,000 college students from 225 living groups, concluded that, in general, educational settings influence students more than students influence the settings.

Specifically, aspects of the educational settings that influenced students were the physical setting of the university, such as the architecture and physical design; organizational factors, such as the size, faculty-student ratio, and affluence or wealth of the university; the aggregate characteristics of the students, such as age, ability level, and socioeconomic status; and the social climate of the university, which encompasses the overall atmosphere of the university and the style of life which is valued at the university (Moos, 1987). This conclusion led to the notion that person-environment fit is an important aspect of student well-being in college. The notion of person-environment fit refers to the consistency between an individual's needs and the resources or demands of the environment. Person-environment misfit is viewed as a stressor, and can cause social and physical problems.

Both the physical environment and social climate of educational settings, specifically dormitories, have been shown to impact students' well-being in college (Cook, 1987). With respect to the physical environment, Holahan and Wilcox (1978) found that the size of the dormitory building has an important effect on student social behavior, with those students living in smaller dormitories establishing more friendships than those students in the bigger dormitories. Also, in a review of the literature, Williams and Reilley (1972) concluded that aspects of the dormitory environment, such as the pairing of students in the same dormitory room that have the same major or pairing students

that are in the same classes, were positively correlated with the academic achievement of the students.

Because the focus of the current study is on the social climate of dormitories, those studies that looked at the social environment of the dormitories are reviewed in more detail. In a study conducted by Janosik, Creamer, and Cross (1988), the University Residence Environment Scales (URES) were used to assess students' perceptions of environment fit in dormitories. The URES assess three dimensions that resemble the dormitory climate variables. A relationship dimension assesses the extent to which residents are involved in hall activities and support each other, which resembles the warmth dimension of dormitory climate. A personal growth and development dimension assesses personal and social maturation, competition, academic achievement, and intellectuality, which does not resemble any of the dormitory climate variables, but would seem to correlate positively with order, supervision, and warmth. Finally, a system maintenance and change dimension assesses the structure of the organization in the dormitories and the processes for change, which resembles the order and supervision dimensions of dormitory climate.

Janosik, Creamer, and Cross (1988) found that students' perceptions of environment fit, as assessed by all three dimensions of the URES, were positively related to social competence, which resembles the social adjustment measure on the SACQ. Also, another study that employed the URES found that student-environment fit was related to the physical health of students (Tracey & Sherry, 1984).

Allen and Maimone (1989) used a measure that assessed students' perceptions of the social environment of their residence halls. Specifically, three variables related to the social climate of the dormitories were assessed: involvement, influence, and control. These three aspects are similar to the dormitory climate dimensions. Involvement refers to the degree of commitment the students feel towards the dormitories and other residents, and is related to the warmth dimension of dormitory climate. Order refers to the amount of structure and organization in the dormitory, and is similar to the dormitory climate variables of order and supervision. Finally, influence refers to the extent to which students believed they had control in the dormitory, and is not similar to any of the dormitory climate variables.

Allen and Maimone (1989) found that students' year in college (first-year vs. second, third, or fourth year) was significantly related to students' assessment of their social environment. First-year students do not choose their own living arrangements, whereas upperclasspersons do. First-year students in same-sex units rated order more favorably than first year students in co-ed units. Moreover, first-year women in same-sex units rated order and involvement as more favorable than men in same-sex units. Finally, influence was the least favorable aspect of the social environment, regardless of sex or housing type. Thus, not only where one lives, but also who one lives with may affect adjustment.

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between dormitory climate and college adjustment. If dormitory climate is found to be a relevant predictor of adjustment, colleges will be able to try to establish the type of environment that fosters adjustment. If such an environment can be provided, overall college adjustment will be enhanced and such things as higher grades, retention, and increased attachment to the university may be exhibited in the students. Thus, universities would have a higher proportion of students who are successful and adjusted.

This study advances previous literature in two important ways. First, although many studies have looked at the adjustment of students, few have used such a comprehensive measure as the SACQ. In fact, many of the studies looked at only one dimension of adjustment as defined by Baker and Siryk (1989), if any at all that coincided with Baker and Siryk's (1989) dimensions. For example, Williams and Reilley (1972) assessed academic achievement and Holahan and Wilcox (1978) examined social behavior. Thus, this study will consider a more comprehensive view of student adjustment.

Second, this study will examine a set of possible correlates of college adjustment that has not been examined in previous studies: dormitory climate. Although past research did look at some aspects of the dormitory climate, none of the studies assessed all of the four climate variables that this study will assess. For example, Allen and Maimone (1989) examined some aspects of the social climate that are

believed to be similar to this study's warmth, order, and supervision variables. However, we cannot be sure that the variables used in Allen and Maimone's study, or any other study, actually assess the same constructs as this study's dormitory climate variables. Thus, this study should aid in determining which aspects of dormitory climate facilitate college adjustment.

Although research has been conducted in the area of college adjustment, it is still unclear as to which climate factors are related to college adjustment. Once the variables that relate to adjustment are identified, universities may be able to design college life so that it is conducive to helping students adjust to college.

It is hypothesized that the dormitory climate variables of warmth, supervision, and order will be positively related to overall college adjustment, and that the dormitory climate variable of conflict will be negatively related to overall adjustment. Furthermore, predictions are made about how each of the climate variables will relate to each of the facets of adjustment.

First, it is hypothesized that warmth will have a positive relation to social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment, because warmth represents a level of caring and concern for others which would be needed to cope in these areas of adjustment. Second, because high levels of supervision will direct students to focus on their studies and not on social activities that may interfere with academic achievement, supervision is expected to be positively related to academic adjustment and negatively related to

social adjustment. Third, conflict is hypothesized to have a negative relation to all four facets of college adjustment, because whenever an environment is riddled with conflict it is hard to cope in any of the areas of adjustment. Finally, order is hypothesized to have a positive relation with academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. If high levels of order are present, students will have more time to devote to productive pursuits (e.g., academic work, social activities) rather than to having to struggle with an environment that is in disarray Moreover, if things are in an orderly fashion, students will feel more positively towards the institution on the whole.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 121 undergraduate students who were enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Their mean age was 18.85 years, 77 (64%) of the subjects were female, and 116 (96%) were white. Also, 116 (96%) of the subjects lived in co-ed dormitories, but 108 (89%) of the subjects lived on floors in the dormitories that were made up of persons of the same gender. Further, 84 (69%) were in their first year of college, and 33 (27%) were in their second year. Finally, 82 (68%) had declared a major of study.

Only those students who were living in the dormitories were allowed to participate, because dormitory life more closely resembles living at home with a family than does living alone or with friends. Participation in the study partially fulfilled course requirements.

Measures

Three questionnaires were administered to the participants. First, a demographic questionnaire was completed, which assessed the student's gender, age, race, and his/her parent's socioeconomic status (See Appendix A). Next, measures of dormitory climate and college adjustment were administered in counterbalanced order (see below).

Dormitory Climate. The family climate measure used by Kurdek and Fine (in press) was revised so that it was appropriate for college

students living in dormitories. Some of the items from this original measure were dropped (i.e., "I'm not allowed to be at home by myself" and "I almost always have clean clothes to wear") and some were added (i.e., "There are people who enforce the rules in my dormitory" and "There are times, in my dormitory, when it is easy to get homework done"). On this measure, students indicated how true (1 = not at all true, 7 = very true) each of the twenty statements is of their life in the dormitory. There were five items apiece on the warmth, supervision, conflict, and order scales (see Appendix B). Findings pertaining to the internal consistency of these subscales in this sample are presented in the Results section.

The measure of family climate from which this dormitory climate measure was derived was shown to have good reliability and validity by Kurdek and Fine (in press). Specifically, Cronbach's alphas for the four composite scores of warmth, supervision, conflict, and order were .83, .59, .78, and .57, respectively. Also, composite scores on this measure have been shown to be related to the psychological, academic, and health adjustment of children (Kurdek & Fine, in press).

College Adjustment. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire was administered to assess students' adjustment to college. This questionnaire is a 67-item, self-report scale which can be administered individually or in groups. This instrument, which is based on the premise that adjustment is characterized by multiple domains, takes about twenty minutes to complete. Each item is responded to on a 9-point scale from Doesn't apply to me at all to Applies very

closely to me. These items are "statements alluding to one of the many aspects of the experience of adjusting to college life, and the student is asked to assess in effect how well he or she is dealing with that aspect" (Baker & Siryk, 1986, pp. 31).

The SACQ addresses four facets of college adjustment: academic (24 items), social (20 items), personal-emotional (15 items), and attachment (15 items). The academic adjustment subscale asks the students to evaluate their perceived adjustment to various types of educational demands (e.g., "I have been keeping up to date on my academic work"). Social adjustment measures how well the student is adapting to the interpersonal and social demands of college life (e.g., "I am very involved with social activities in college"). The personal-emotional subscales measures the quality of the psychological and physical functioning of the student (e.g., "I have been feeling tense and nervous lately"). Finally, the institutional attachment subscale includes several items that pertain to the student's feelings about being in college in general and at the specific college of attendance in particular, especially the quality of the bond or relationship that is felt by the student towards the institution (e.g., "I expect to stay at...for a bachelors degree") (Baker & Siryk, 1986; Lopez, 1991).

There is no overlap of items on the academic, social, and person-emotional adjustment subscales. However, the attachment subscales contains one item that is on the academic subscale and eight items that are on the social adjustment subscales. These items were selected for the institutional attachment subscale because they were found to

correlate negatively with attrition from the institution. Although the subscales are moderately intercorrelated, the strength of these relations is low enough to suggest that they measure unique facets of college adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

In addition to scores for each of the four subscales, this measure also yields a full-scale score as an index of overall adjustment to college. The full-scale score is derived by summing the scores for all of the 67 items. Higher scores on this full-scale are associated with perceptions of better adjustment. Coefficient alphas were computed on the test to assess the reliability of the subscales and the full-scale in three samples in two universities. The subscales' alphas ranged from the high .70s to the low .80s, and the full scale alphas were in the low .90s (Kaczmarek, Matlock, & Franco, 1990).

In the present study, the full scale and four subscales of the SACQ had high levels of internal consistency. Specifically, Cronbach alphas for the full, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment scales were .93, .88, .87, .82, and .88, respectively.

Criterion-related validity studies were also conducted on the subscales and full-scale score of the instrument. The subscales correlated significantly with independent indices of related areas of adjustment that were used by other researchers. For example, grade point average was significantly correlated with the academic subscale, a social activities checklist (that assessed participation in social events) scores were correlated with social adjustment, requests for

services at the campus psychological center were significantly correlated with personal-emotional subscale, and attrition was significantly associated with the institutional attachment subscale (Baker & Siryk, 1989). These results suggest that the subscales and full scale of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire are both reliable and valid.

Procedure

Data collection did not begin until the second semester, so that the participants were allowed sufficient time to "settle in" to the college routine and so that they had engaged in a sufficient range of social and academic experiences to evaluate their dormitory climate and their adjustment (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989). The subjects filled out an informed consent form (See Appendix C), a demographic questionnaire, the dormitory climate questionnaire, and the SACQ. The dormitory climate questionnaire and the SACQ were administered in a counterbalanced order. Subjects were tested in groups in university classrooms.

Subjects were told that the purpose of the study is to identify factors that relate to college adjustment, and were asked to try to answer the questions as honestly as possible. Subjects were debriefed when all of the questionnaires were completed (see Appendix D).

RESULTS

Dormitory Climate Scale Development

The original four factors that were constructed to make up the dormitory climate measures yielded low reliabilities. Specifically, Cronbach's alphas for the warmth, supervision, conflict, and order composite scores were .53, .17, .72, and .36, respectively. Because these reliabilities were excessively low, with the exception of the conflict score, the items on the dormitory climate scale were factor analyzed to determine if there was a better way to group the items than the logical way that was first incorporated. This analysis (see Table 1) yielded four factors that accounted for 47.3% of the variance: personal support, conflict, order, and group cohesiveness. Items 4 and 6 were removed from the dormitory climate scales of personal support and group cohesiveness, respectively, in order to improve the internal consistency of these two scales. Also, item 8 did not load significantly on any of the factors. Thus, these three items were not included on any of the scales. Overall, the four factors of personal support, conflict, order, and group cohesiveness were made up of 5, 7, 3, and 2 items, respectively.

Composite scores were computed on each scale by summing the scores on all items whose factor loading equaled or exceeded .39. Cronbach's alphas for the personal support, conflict, order, and group cohesiveness

Table 1

Factor Loadings on the Dormitory Climate Scales

Item #	Personal Support	Conflict	Order	Group Cohesiveness
1	-.31	.37	-.12	.59*
2	-.22	.08	-.21	.72*
3	.77*	-.08	.04	-.07
4	.39	-.10	.12	.27
5	.68*	-.07	-.08	-.05
6	.27	-.13	.10	.47
7	-.02	.60*	-.23	-.09
8	.32	-.25	.18	.34
9	.73*	.04	-.02	-.05
10	.61*	.15	.06	-.06
11	-.11	.63*	.01	.00
12	-.06	.49*	.34	.33
13	.13	.66*	.02	.04
14	-.01	.69*	.18	.16
15	-.09	.68*	.11	-.01
16	.66*	-.06	.10	.04
17	-.01	-.16	.75*	-.15
18	.01	.14	.81*	-.02
19	.35	.04	.48*	.13
20	.02	.64*	-.20	-.13

* Item was included on the composite score for the scale.

composite scores were satisfactory: .74, .75, .59, and .58, respectively. Composite scores for these four factors were only moderately intercorrelated. Specifically, personal support was significantly positively correlated with order and group cohesiveness, with correlation coefficients of .17 and .29, respectively. Also, conflict was found to be significantly negatively related to group cohesiveness with a correlation coefficient of -.27. All other correlations were nonsignificant. As a result of the relative independence of these scores, the four composite scores were used in subsequent data analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

Correlations were computed between the demographic variables and the adjustment scale scores to identify variables that may moderate the relations between dormitory climate and college adjustment. Gender was found to be the only variable that was related to at least three of the five facets of college adjustment, with females reporting better adjustment than males on full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, and institutional attachment. As a result, separate correlations were computed for both males and females. These correlations will be presented in a subsequent section. Further, if gender was found to moderate the relation between dormitory climate and college adjustment, those findings will be presented by gender only, and not for the total sample.

For descriptive purposes, means and standard deviations on the four dormitory climate scales and the five SACQ scales are presented in

Table 2. To determine how the current sample compared to the normative sample on the SACQ, the means on the SACQ from this sample were compared to those from the normative data (Baker & Siryk, 1989) with a t-test for two independent samples. On the academic adjustment, social adjustment, institutional attachment, and full scale scores, this sample was not significantly different than the normative sample. However, on the personal-emotional adjustment scale, students in this study were less well-adjusted than were those in the normative sample, $t(323) = -2.86$, $p < .05$.

Relations Between Dormitory Climate and College Adjustment

It was hypothesized that the dormitory climate variables of warmth, supervision, and order would have a positive relation to college adjustment, and that the dormitory climate variable of conflict would have a negative relation to adjustment. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that warmth would have a positive relation to social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment; that supervision would have a positive relation to academic adjustment and a negative relation to social adjustment; that conflict would have a negative relation to all four of the facets of college adjustment; and that order would have a positive relation to academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment.

However, because the dormitory climate measures changed, some of these hypotheses are no longer testable. The conflict and order constructs were still assessed, and, thus, the original hypotheses concerning these variables were still tested. Also, the new personal

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations on the Dormitory Climate Scales and the SACQ Scales

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Dormitory Climate		
Personal Support	28.55	5.16
Conflict	25.88	7.67
Order	13.50	3.75
Group Cohesiveness	9.74	2.69
SACQ		
Full Scale	414.67 (427.9)	67.18 (70.4)
Academic Adjustment	139.59 (148.4)	27.38 (26.1)
Social Adjustment	137.58 (127.9)	22.55 (26.7)
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	80.58 (94.8)	19.39 (19.4)
Institutional Attachment	107.16 (100.1)	20.28 (21.9)

Note. SACQ = Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Values in parentheses are from the normative sample of the SACQ (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

support variable is thought to be quite similar to the original warmth variable, and, thus, the hypotheses espoused for the original warmth variable will be tested with this new measure. Although no hypotheses were posed for the group cohesiveness variable, and it is not similar to any of the original four dormitory climate variables, correlations between this variable and the college adjustment scales were computed and will be reported. Finally, the supervision measure was not reliable. Thus, the hypotheses concerning this variable cannot be tested.

Because preliminary analyses revealed that gender was related to college adjustment, separate correlations between dormitory climate and college adjustment were computed for males and females. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 3. Generally, the results were similar for males and females. For both males and females, personal support was positively related to full scale adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and institutional attachment. Also, for both males and females, conflict was negatively correlated with social adjustment. Finally, for both sexes, group cohesiveness was positively related to full scale adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment.

There were some correlations that were significant for one sex and not the other. For females only, conflict was negatively correlated to full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Further, for females only, group cohesiveness was positively related to academic adjustment and

Table 3

Correlations between Dormitory Climate and College Adjustment Scores by Gender

Males

	SACQ Scales				
	Full Scale	Academic	Social	Personal-Emotional	Institutional Attachment
Personal Support	.67**	.41**	.57**	.54**	.61**
Conflict	-.13	-.03	-.33*	-.10	-.24
Order	.25	.36**	-.18	.08	.19
Group Cohesiveness	.27*	.16	.35*	.07	.35*

Females

	Full Scale	Academic	Social	Personal-Emotional	Institutional Attachment
Personal Support	.30**	.07	.40**	.20*	.45**
Conflict	-.48**	-.31**	-.45**	-.35**	-.53**
Order	-.04	.03	-.13	-.02	-.07
Group Cohesiveness	.30**	.23*	.26*	.19*	.32**

Note. SACQ = Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

personal-emotional adjustment. Finally, for males only, personal support and order were positively correlated with academic adjustment.

In summary, the hypothesis pertaining to the relationship between personal support and college adjustment was generally supported for both males and females. The hypothesis that conflict would be negatively related to college adjustment was supported for females, but not males. The final hypothesis regarding the relation between order and college adjustment was supported only on academic adjustment for males. Although not included in the a prior hypotheses, group cohesiveness was generally positively related to college adjustment for both males and females.

Discussion

This study's purpose was to identify dormitory climate predictors of college adjustment. If the predictors of adjustment are found, this may enable colleges to establish the type of environment that fosters adjustment, and universities will have a higher proportion of students who are successful and adjusted. Further, this study advances previous literature in that it incorporates a new measure of dormitory climate that was derived from a reliable family climate measure.

Dormitory Climate Scale Development

The dormitory climate scale that was used in this study was derived from Kurdek and Fine's (in press) family climate scale, which was made up of four subscales: warmth, conflict, supervision, and order. The items on the scale were revised in such a way that they would be appropriate for college students living in dormitories rather than for people living in a family setting. Although the way this scale was developed was logical, the subscales were not internally consistent in this sample. Thus, a factor analysis was performed on the items of the dormitory climate scale to determine if there was a better way to group the items than the way that was first incorporated. This analysis yielded four factors that had satisfactory levels of internal consistency. These factors were: personal support, conflict, order, and group cohesiveness.

Overall, the conflict and order factors are quite similar to the conflict and order subscales of the original climate measure. Further, these two scales are comprised of many of the same items that were on the original scales. Although the personal support factor is not comprised of many of the items that were on the original warmth scale, this new scale is quite similar to the original warmth scale in that it assesses the level of caring and support that the students perceive from at least one other person in their dormitories.

A supervision factor did not emerge from the factor analysis. Two possible reasons are proposed for why this may have occurred. First, it could be that dormitories do not provide students with the same type of supervision as that which is found in families. Perhaps dormitories do not provide as many rules and regulations as families do, or perhaps rules are not enforced in dormitories to the degree that they are in families. Second, college students may no longer want or need supervision at this stage of their life. Future research is needed to examine the extent to which supervision is a relevant dormitory climate variable.

Finally, with regards to the factor analysis, a new factor emerged. This factor is believed to assess the amount of group cohesiveness that students perceive in their dormitories. Although this new factor was only comprised of two items, it was internally consistent. Although it could be construed that the group cohesiveness scale is similar to the personal support scale, it is thought that the personal support scale assesses the amount of caring and support that

students perceive from at least one person in their dormitory, whereas group cohesiveness assesses the connectedness of the students living in a particular dormitory. Thus, perceived group cohesiveness is based on the connectedness of a group of people, whereas perceived personal support is based on the support that one perceives from only one person.

Relations Between Dormitory Climate and College Adjustment

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between the five adjustment scales (the four subscales and the full scale) and the four dormitory climate scores separately for males and females. The results from these analyses are discussed below. For each dormitory climate variable, results that apply to both genders are initially reported followed by those that applied only to one gender.

Personal Support. Because, as stated above, the personal support factor was thought to be similar to the original warmth factor, the hypotheses concerning this factor were still tested. As predicted, for both males and females, personal support was found to be positively related to full scale college adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment, which means that as the amount of caring and support that students perceive from at least one other person increases, the more likely they are to feel more adjusted to college life overall, the more likely they are to engage in social activities with other students, the less likely they are to report any psychological difficulties, and the more likely they are to feel attached to the college institution.

The findings concerning personal support and college adjustment are consistent with past research. Specifically, these findings support those of Janosik, Creamer, and Cross (1988) who found that the URES, which seems to assess personal support, was positively related to social competence, which is similar to the social adjustment measure of the SACQ. Thus, an increased level of perceived caring and support seems to facilitate one's adjustment to college.

Conflict. As predicted, for both males and females, conflict was found to be negatively related to social adjustment, which means that as the amount of conflict that students perceive in their dormitories increases, the less likely students are to be socially active with other students. As stated earlier, the dormitory climate measure of conflict assesses the amount of arguing and emotional/physical disruptions that students perceive are occurring either between themselves and fellow students or among their fellow students in the dormitories. Because conflict, for most people, is generally upsetting, it makes sense that the presence of conflict would have a negative effect on students' perceptions of their social adjustment. Also, the presence of conflict could be quite distracting for students. Students may be focusing more on the tension and fighting that is occurring in their dormitories than on the social aspects of college that are reflected in the SACQ scale. However, rather than a conflict-ridden dormitory causing poor social adjustment, the direction of causality could be the opposite. Those people who perceive more conflict may be initiating the conflict. Thus, if they are the initiators, their social activities may be deterred

because others do not want to be with them. Future research is needed to determine the nature of the causal relation between dormitory conflict and college adjusment.

Also, for females only, conflict was negatively related to full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. These findings concerning females seem to be supported by some past research, which found that when females, at any point in their college career, are in conflicted relationships with either their fathers or mothers, their adjustment to college is detrimentally affected (Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989; Rice, 1992). However, this relationship between conflicted relationships with one's parents and college adjustment was not found for males.

The following explanation is proposed for why females seem to be more affected by conflict then men. It has been shown, by many researchers, that women are more interpersonally oriented, whereas men are more achievement oriented. For example, Parsons (1955) claimed that females are typically encouraged to assume a nurturant, expressive role, whereas males are encouraged to adopt an instrumental role, as provider and protector of the family. Further, it has been shown that men are more aggressive, forceful, and violent, whereas females have been shown to be more cooperative, socially sensitive, helpful, and understanding (Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986; Charlesworth & Dzur, 1987). Because these gender differences are well documented, researchers have progressed to trying to understand why women are more interpersonally oriented than men. Some believe that aggression in boys is learned and

is consistently encouraged by society, whereas girls receive no reward for aggression, but rather are socialized to be passive and dependent (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1978). Further, Gilligan (1982) and Chodorow (1978) who have looked at moral and psychosexual development, respectively, have both suggested that childrearing undertaken primarily by women produces men whose moral reasoning is abstract and legalistic and women whose moral concerns are defined in terms of interpersonal relationships.

Thus, overall, it appears that males have learned to be more receptive than females to conflict as a way to solve disputes. On the other hand, females are more likely than males to solve disputes in a cooperative manner, because they have learned to be more interpersonally oriented. Because women are used to dealing with disputes in this passive, non-conflictual way, they are likely to be more distressed than men by disputes that are handled in a conflictual manner. Thus, it makes sense that female college students would be more detrimentally affected by dormitory climate than males.

Order. Contrary to predictions, order was not found to be related to personal-emotional adjustment or institutional attachment for either males or females. These findings could indicate that students do not experience psychological distress or negative feelings towards their college institution simply because things in their dormitories are in disarray. Perhaps, they have reached a stage in their lives when such things do not bear so greatly on these aspects of their college adjustment.

However, for males only, order was found to be positively correlated with academic adjustment. Perhaps this is because males need more order in their lives than females in order to cope with the academic demands of college. Women may be better able to ignore disarray and still be able to do well academically, whereas men may need to have things in order before they can be academically proficient. Perhaps this is because men become distracted more easily than females. Further, women may be more disciplined then men, and thus, may be able to do well in school even if things are not orderly. It could also be argued that the order subscale may be assessing intrapersonal characteristics of people. Thus, rather than a disorderly dormitory causing poor academic adjustment, the direction of causality could be the opposite. People may be unorganized before even starting college, and this could be why things are unorderly for them during college. Once again, further research is needed to examine these hypotheses.

For males only, if order were to be related to only one dimension of college adjustment, it is not surprising that it was related to academic ajustment. The academic side of college life is the one that requires orderliness in order to do well. Getting good grades in college requires discipline and structure, which seem to be assessed by the order subscale. However, future research is needed to replicate this finding that order is only related to academic adjustment for males.

Group Cohesiveness. Because group cohesiveness was not one of the original dormitory climate variables considered, no hypotheses were

advanced for this factor. However, there were several significant relations between group cohesiveness and the facets of college adjustment. Specifically, for both males and females, group cohesiveness was found to be positively related to full scale adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment, which means that as the amount of perceived connectedness that students feel with others increases, the more likely they are to feel adjusted to college life overall, the more likely they are to engage in social activities with others, and the more likely students are to feel attached to their academic institution. Also, for females only, group cohesiveness was found to be positively related to academic adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment, which means that as the amount of perceived connectedness that women feel with others increases, the more likely they are to report being academically adjusted and the less likely they are to report any psychological difficulties.

As stated earlier, the dormitory climate measure of group cohesiveness assesses the amount of connectedness that students feel with others in their dormitories. Most people like to feel that they are a part of a group of people that will help them if they needed it. Further, if perceived group cohesiveness is high, students may feel that there are others that they can lean on, and, consequently, they have more time to spend in other pursuits of college life, such as social activities and school work.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

There are some important limitations of the present study. First, this study incorporated the use of a new scale of dormitory climate. Because this scale was developed for this study, its psychometric properties were unknown. However, it should be noted that no existing instruments were found that measured the same constructs, and the subscales used in this study were internally consistent. Future research is needed to further test the psychometric properties of this instrument and its subscales.

A second limitation was that the university that this study was completed at is extremely lacking in diversity. Almost all of the subjects were white (96%) and lived in co-ed dormitories (96%). Also, because this university is a private Catholic institution, it is likely that most of the students that participated in the study were Catholic. Consequently, the results from this study may not generalize to non-Catholic or public universities that are more diverse. Thus, it is recommended that this study be replicated at a university that is more diverse than the one that was utilized in this present study.

Third, all of the data were from self-report measures. This could be a problem because students' perceptions of dormitory climate may affect their feelings of college adjustment and vice versa. Further, social desirability responding may have occurred, which takes place when subjects respond to the questionnaires in the way that they think is socially "correct". To address this limitation in future research, dormitory climate ratings could be made by individuals who engage in

extensive observations of the climate in the dormitory. These observations, which might be made by either research associates or resident advisors, would complement the self-report data.

Fourth, there could be the problem of shared method variance because the same individuals answered both the dormitory climate questionnaire and the college adjustment questionnaire. Thus, the obtained correlations may have been inflated because of this limitation. This limitation could be addressed in the future by obtaining dormitory climate ratings from others in the dormitories and not only from the primary participants of the study. Further, it might be useful to have other individuals who are not living in the dormitories rate the dormitory climate on the dimensions assessed in this study. Coupled with the intensive observational ratings recommended to address the self-report limitation, these suggestions could yield a clearer perspective on the relationships between dormitory climate and college adjustment.

Fifth, this study utilized a correlational design. As a result, causality cannot be inferred. For instance, it cannot be concluded that the dormitory climate affects one's college adjustment or vice versa. Another type of design might allow one to draw causal inferences with greater certainty. For example, a longitudinal study might be undertaken in which dormitory climate is assessed in the first semester, and college adjustment is assessed in the second semester to see if dormitory climate predicts later college adjustment.

Finally, this study did not incorporate the use of a measure that assessed subjects' intrapersonal characteristics. Thus, it is impossible to determine if the subject's characteristics influenced their perceptions of their dormitory climate and/or college adjustment. For instance, perceived order may have been low for some subjects because they were already unorderly before arriving at college. Thus, increasing the amount of order in the dormitories may not facilitate these student's adjustment. Future research should try to measure such intrapersonal characteristics as orderliness and ability to manage conflict to determine if it is these characteristics or the dormitory climate that relates to college adjustment.

Implications of Significant Findings

The key implication from this study is that dormitory climate does indeed matter. Although it cannot be inferred, due to the correlational design, that the dormitory climate causally affects adjustment to college, it appears that dormitory climate should be viewed as an important factor in college life and one that college administrators should attempt to make as conducive to adjustment as possible. Specifically, to help students be better adjusted to college, those aspects of dormitory climate that were found to be related to college adjustment should be manipulated in an adjustment-producing way to whatever extent possible. Specifically, administrators should attempt to foster dormitory climates that are supportive, cohesive, and orderly. Also, conflict should be minimized if at all possible. Further, if the dormitories or floors of the dormitories consist of same-sex students,

it might be useful for administrators to try to foster order on the male units and to deter conflict on the females units, because these two aspects of climate were found to relate to college adjustment differently for males and females.

To provide an environment that fosters personal support, group cohesiveness, and order, and deters conflict, universities would have to be willing to make changes and to experiment with new ideas. For instance, in most dormitories there are probably few rules concerning the orderliness of the students' rooms. Although college life should be a time when students are increasingly treated like adults so that their autonomy can be fostered, residence assistants, or some other dormitory officials, could encourage students to maintain order in their dormitories. Further, conflict could be minimized by instructing students on how to solve disputes in a calm, rational way, rather than having arguments escalate into uncontrollable fights. Once again, however, it may be necessary for residence assistants to monitor situations and try to keep peace in the dormitories, especially in the male dormitories because men are more likely to try to solve disputes in a forceful, aggressive manner. Conflict could further be deterred by having some type of a "buddy system" in which two or more students are teamed to look after one another and help each other out. If friendships are promoted, conflicts should be reduced. This would also foster more personal support and group cohesiveness among the students.

Because it is not always easy to promote friendships, upper-class students should be allowed to pick their roommates in order to foster

the development of friendships that are based on similarities and liking (Allen & Maimone, 1989; Williams & Reilley, 1972). However, because first year students are not in a position to pick their own roommates, universities should place students together based on some similarity, such as having the same major. Because roommates who have the same major will be likely to have common experiences, this should promote friendships.

Once again, however, it is important to stress that changing the dormitory climate will not necessarily result in enhanced adjustment. Individuals are vastly different and bring a wide array of intrapersonal characteristics with them to college. Some students may be unorderly and others may be prone to conflict before entering college. Adjustment to college may depend more on these personal characteristics than on the type of dormitory climate that is fostered.

However, if a supportive, nonconflictual environment can be provided, overall college adjustment may be enhanced and retention, increased attachment to the university, higher grades, engagement in social activities, and less psychological distress may be more likely. Thus, universities may afford their students with what they need the most--successful adjustment to college.

Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you? _____ years

2. Circle the number of your sex: 1 Male 2 Female

3. Circle the number of your race or ethnic group:

   1 White 2 Black 3 Hispanic 4 Asian 5 Other

4. Circle the number that shows the highest level of schooling completed by your parents or stepparents that you lived with. Circle the "doesn't apply" number if you didn't live with that parent or stepparent.

	8 or less years of school	some high school	high school grad	some college	degree college graduate	after college	doesn't apply
a) mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) step-mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) step-father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Circle the number that applies to the type of dormitory that you live in:

   1 Same-sex dormitory 2 Co-ed dormitory

5a. If your dormitory is co-ed, circle the number that applies to the floor that you live on:

1 Same-sex 2 Co-ed

6. What year in college are you:

1 first-year student 3 junior

2 sophomore 4 senior

7. Have you declared a major yet?

1 yes 2 no

8. Circle the dormitory that you live in:

1 Founders Hall 2 Garden Apartments

3 Campus South 4 Marycrest Complex

5 Virginia Kettering Hall 6 Stuart Complex

Appendix B

Dormitory Climate Questionnaire

Below are statements about things that happen in dormitories. After each statement, indicate how true that statement is of your dormitory by circling the number you think is best.

	Not at all true						Very true
WARMTH							
1) The students in my dormitory generally help one another	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) There is not a feeling of togetherness among the students in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) At least someone in my dormitory takes time to talk about things that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) There is not always someone in my dormitory that I can turn to for help.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) Someone in my dormitory takes an interest in the things I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SUPERVISION							
6) There are certain rules in my dormitory concerning such things as curfew, alcohol,							

		Not at all true						Very true
	and school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7)	There are no people who really enforce the rules in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8)	There are meetings in my dormitory concerning the rules.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9)	Generally, someone in my dormitory knows where I am and what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10)	There really is not anyone that I can go to if I have a problem concerning fellow members of the dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CONFLICT								
11)	I am often interrupted and disturbed by some people in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12)	There is not very much yelling and fighting in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13)	Someone's always upset or angry in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14)	People really do not argue much in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15)	It's hard to settle problems in my dormitory without arguing or fighting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Not at all true						Very true
ORDER								
16)	In my dormitory, some of my friends and I usually eat meals at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17)	Things are messy and in disarray in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18)	It's easy to find things when I need them in my dormitory room.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19)	There are set ways of doing things in my dormitory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20)	There are never quiet times in my dormitory when it is easy to get homework done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a study concerning college adjustment. This study will take approximately one hour to complete. Questions will be asked regarding how you feel you are adjusting to college life, what life is like living in the dormitories, and some demographic information concerning you and your parents. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and you are not to write your name on any of the forms provided, if you agree to participate in the study. At any time during the study, you have the right to refuse to participate and you will receive full credit for your participation. For participating you will receive one credit.

I agree to participate: _____

Signature

_____

Date

Appendix D

Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study. This study's purpose was to try to find out what aspects of dormitories affect a student's adjustment to college. We believe there are four aspects of dormitory life, which are labeled warmth, conflict, order, and supervision, that we expect will relate to college adjustment in different ways. We expect to find that the more warmth, order, and supervision, the higher the college adjustment, and the more conflict, the lower the college adjustment. We measured college adjustment with Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, which was developed by Baker and Siryk. A journal article that describes this questionnaire can be found in the Journal of Counseling Psychology, Volume 33, pages 31-38.

Once again, thank you for participating in this study. If you would like more information about this study or have any questions, please call Kim Barthelemy at 253-6023 or Dr. Fine at 229-2165.

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