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FRESHMEN RESIDENCE AND GPA

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FRESHMEN RESIDENCE AND GPA

A Thesis

Presented to

The College of Graduate Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

Rebecca F. Gibbs

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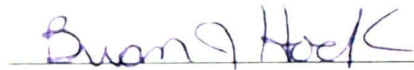
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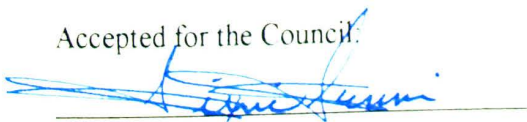


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my
family, friends, and the faculty
of the Austin Peay State University
Psychology Department who have supported
me in my academic as well as personal
journey in life

ABSTRACT

REBECCA F. GIBBS. Freshmen Residence and GPA (under the direction of DR. NANCY S. WOODS.)

The purpose of this study was to see if differences existed in the grade point averages (GPAs) of students residing in different types of environments during their first semester of college. Past research has been inconsistent about which type of residence is most beneficial to the academic performance of students. The groups in this study were students that lived in a dormitory on campus and students that lived off campus with parents, relatives, or guardians they had as minors during their first semester as an undergraduate in college. Participants completed a survey about their experiences as freshmen. The participants were also asked to give their student identification numbers in order to verify their GPAs as well as other demographic information that was relevant to the study. A between subjects t-test was used to analyze the results. No significant differences existed in the GPAs between the groups. Perhaps, then, some other factor such as motivation is responsible for high GPAs of college students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first few years after high school for recent graduates are a unique and challenging time in their lives. These individuals are in a transition between adolescence and adulthood, otherwise known as emerging adulthood. During this time of life, many choose to go to a traditional four-year college or university (Arnett, 2000). An important part of that college experience is choosing where to reside. Students can stay at home or move away from where they resided as minors. When students move away, options usually include dormitories on campus, although a few might reside in fraternity or sorority houses or in off campus apartments. The decision that students make about college residence might be the result of several different factors.

Research has shown that prior to entering college, several different variables may influence where students initially decide to reside during college. These variables include socioeconomic status, the level of education of parents, American College Testing (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, high school extracurricular activities, race, sex, as well as many others (Astin, 1973; Bozick, 2007; Enoches & Roland, 2006; George, 1970; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lantz & McCrary, 1955; Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hilton, 2007; Pascarella, 1985, and Welty, 1976). Those that live on campus and commute to college usually have less financial resources than those living on campus (Bozick, 2007; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lantz & McCrary, 1955; Welty, 1976). However, some might not necessarily be of lower socioeconomic status but are interested in saving money (Lantz & McCrary, 1955; George, 1970). Students who have parents with higher levels of education live on campus at higher rates (Welty, 1976). As far as the

perceived future academic abilities of the students themselves, those that reside on campus have higher ACT and SAT scores than commuters (Pascarella, 1985; Welty, 1976). Students who participate in many extracurricular activities during high school are more inclined to living on campus in college (Pascarella, 1985). African Americans and others traditionally labeled as minorities live at home during college at higher rates than Caucasians (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993). However, other research has found contradictory findings (Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hilton, 2007). Women live on campus at greater rates than men (Astin, 1973; Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hilton, 2007; Pascarella, 1985). In addition, Enoches and Roland (2006) believed that men had better adjustment to all aspects of college more so than women. Therefore, choosing where to reside during college is not necessarily a process that is independent of other factors. However, these findings are merely descriptive statistics and correlations. They do not determine cause and effect relationships but that does not mean that the topic is not worth exploring.

One might wonder what all of these variables mean and why even consider residence during college as important. What is most important during college is whether a student is able to succeed, particularly in an academic sense. Good grades are what enable a student to continue being enrolled in a college or university. Students need to live in an environment that does not interfere with academic achievement. Therefore, by being able to stay enrolled at the college or university by maintaining satisfactory grades, students will be able to grow in other aspects as well such as socializing with their peers. Residence, therefore, may directly or indirectly help or hinder academic success.

Prior research on how residence affects academic performance has been inconsistent. The research is also outdated. The bulk of college residence research

focused on academic performance was done in the 1960s and 1970s. Obviously, times have changed since then. More and more college students are choosing to remain at home and society is accepting of this to a certain degree. Part of this exception is using the excuse of not being able to afford college without living at home. Interestingly, though, more and more people are going to college. Even those that are of lower socioeconomic status go to college nowadays, therefore that might justify living at home as acceptable. Financial issues have been an excuse in the past but people were skeptical about believing this monetary excuse. Immaturity was believed to be the real issue (Lantz & McCrary, 1955). That may or may not be the case. When examining different types of residences during college, the majority of studies produced two different results. First, that living on campus in a dormitory was most beneficial to students. Second, that no differences exist among the different types of living arrangements of students.

It seems interesting that these studies were done around the same period of time. Perhaps it could be a problem in the methodology and analysis of the data. Some studies match participants in each group being studied while others do not. Also, academic performance was defined differently by researchers. Some used GPA to measure academic performance while others used achievement tests or other assessments. Updated research is needed to see if any of these findings are still true for the twenty first century college student. The prior research that examined a myriad of aspects for the freshmen research will be reviewed first. Then studies that assess the impact of residence on GPAs will be reviewed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Adaptation to College

Many people might think that whether or not a student decides to live on or off a college campus starts with the ideologies of his or her parents or guardians. Research conducted by Lantz and McCrary (1955) asked 70 mothers or fathers of traditional fresh out of high school males about why their sons chose either to live on campus in a dormitory or to commute to college while still living in their household. These parents were asked a variety of questions concerning their parental practices, how they felt about their children making decisions, and how concerned they were about their children. Using qualitative methods, several different reasons were found regarding college residence. According to their parents, the students who chose to commute did so for financial reasons as well as to be close to their families. Parents of students who resided on campus did so because they believed this made their sons more independent, helped them focus on their studies, and they did not have to worry about the hazards of commuting. However, perhaps more existed in these reasons besides the views of these parents. It might be more to do with the individual characteristics of that particular student.

Some people enjoy socializing on a Saturday night while others prefer to enjoy a quiet evening at home. The reason for these behaviors might simply be the result of different personality characteristics. Perhaps, then, personality characteristics might factor into where students decide to live during college. Using a sample of 418 first time freshmen, George (1977) examined this assumption. Personality was measured using the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. This assessment measures a total of 15

personality characteristics. Sex and socioeconomic status were also added to the list for the purpose of this study. Using a correlational analysis, several different findings emerged in this study. Personality, directly, did not seem to be related to college residence. However, socioeconomic status did in this study. Apparently, students whose fathers had higher level occupations were more inclined to live in dormitories and had higher respect for authority figures. Students who were of lower socioeconomic status were more inclined to commute to campus and had higher levels of aggressive tendencies. However, on a more positive note, the students had higher levels of independence and consistency. These results do not seem to be the result of personality characteristics but more so on environmental characteristics. Maybe interplay exists between personality and environmental characteristics.

A study conducted by Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) examined if certain variables were related to how well 286 college freshmen from mostly traditional White, middle-class families were able to adapt to college life. A variety of measures were used in the study including demographic information, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-III) which measured how well a family gets along, the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) which measured the attachment of a child to a parental figure, the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA) that assessed teenagers developing autonomy from their parents, the Home Leaving Cognitive Scale that assessed how college students feel about moving out of the residence of his or her parents or former guardians, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire which measured personality characteristics, the Adaptability to Change Questionnaire which assessed how well an individual is able function if changes occur in his or her life, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem

Scale (RSE) which measured self-esteem, the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List which measured social contact, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) which assessed depressive symptoms, the State-Trait Anxiety Scale (STAI) which measured current emotions, and the Wahler physical symptoms inventory which measured somatic complaints. This seemed to be an overload of assessments making the findings more difficult to interpret and possibly statistically suspect. However, results using a canonical correlational analysis found relationships in differences between the genders. College males tend to stay away from their families when they are having a hard time adjusting while females do the opposite and spend too much time with their families. These individuals seemed to be in a state of identity crisis not being able to find the proper balance in their lives.

Research conducted by Jordyn and Byrd (2003) examined the effects that identity development had on the residence of 278 undergraduate college students. Students lived on campus, lived with their parents, or lived off campus without their parents. Several measures were used in this study to assess these individuals on several variables. The Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status was used to measure the four identity statuses which are diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achieved. A diffused identity means that the individual has not done any identity exploration and has not formed a solid identity. A foreclosed identity means that the person has not done any identity exploration but has formed a solid identity based on what others have wanted of him or her. Moratorium identity means the individual is in the process of identity exploration but has not formed a solid identity yet. Finally, an achieved identity means that the person has explored his or her identity and found a solid identity. The College Students' Recent

Life Experiences Scale examined how all aspects of the lives students were presently. The University Students' Well-Being Scale was used to measure the overall health of students. The Coping Strategies Scale was used obviously to examine coping strategies of students. An analysis of variance showed that those who lived on their own away from campus had more time management issues and were annoyed in most situations at greater rates. Those that lived at home were more prone to have someone to talk at home about issues they were having in their lives. These individuals might have benefited from having someone to talk to on campus as well.

Stereotypes suggest that men prefer to keep to themselves while women prefer to talk about their emotions. Research by Enochs and Roland (2006) examined how being male or female affected the living experience during the first year of being an undergraduate. These students either lived in dormitories that were specifically for freshmen or those with students of mixed academic status. This sample consisted of 511 traditional first year college students from a university in the South. The sample was given the College Adjustment Scales. This measure looked at a variety of variables facing new college students such as mental health concerns, school concerns, and relationship concerns. A t-test was used to compare males to females in general, then males and females in freshmen dormitories. Also, students overall in freshmen dormitories were compared to those in traditional mixed academic class status. Males, in general, had an easier time adjusting to college than did females. However, when only freshmen dormitories were examined these gender differences disappeared. Therefore, dormitory life does seem have benefits for students.

Benefits of Living on Campus

Research by Chickering and Kuper (1971) examined the assumption of whether college personnel should pay attention to the residence of college students. Up to this point, data had been sparse on this subject. However, a small data set was discussed with the sample consisting of 13 small liberal arts institutions with less than 1,500 students. This data was part of a research study called the Project on Student Development. Comparisons and contrasts were discussed among students living in dormitories on campus, living with their parents, and living off campus. However, the exact number and demographic characteristics of these students were not reported. Measures used in this study included the Experience of College Questionnaire (ECQ), the College and University Environment Scales (CUES), and the Omnibus Personal Inventory (OPI). The details of what these measures were supposed to assess were left out of the study. Also, statistical analysis was not discussed or reported in the research. However, the study reported that those who lived on a college campus seem to benefit the most. These students grew more intellectually and not only in an academic sense. They became more open to various ideas such as religion. Overall, the study laid insight on a topic but it could have gone more in depth about demographic characteristics of the sample and the reasoning behind residence choice in college.

A study conducted by George (1970) explored the reasons behind why students live where they do during college. The sample included students from two University of Missouri campuses who had graduated from high school in the St. Louis area in 1967. Students either attended the campus that was close to their high school and home or moved away to the other campus. The measurements in this study included a

questionnaire that obtained demographic information from the students and questions about the perceptions students had about college. Data was analyzed using a chi-square analysis and an analysis of variance. Results showed that those that did not live on campus seem to come from families of lower socioeconomic status. Also, they do not aim to earn advanced degrees. However, those that lived further away from home seemed to have a greater ability to succeed academically which is definitely an important aspect of college adjustment. However, dormitories differ in their composition with some being better than others.

A study conducted by Taylor and Hanson (1971) examined the effects living arrangements had on Institute of Technology (I.T.) freshmen engineering majors. An experimental situation was created in which a residence hall was created for specifically freshmen engineering majors and where tutoring was also available. This group was compared to those scattered throughout dorms and those living off campus. Measures included the Strong Vocational Interest Blank for MEN (SVIB), Minnesota Counseling Inventory (MCI), and Minnesota Study Habits Blank (MSHB). A chi-square analysis found that no differences existed between the groups before starting college. This was true after college had started although those living in a homogeneous environment had a slight advantage in adjustment to college. However, students need to be exposed to new stimuli to grow as people.

Research by Welty (1976) examined how undergraduate residence affects the development of college students. A sample of 126 freshmen students from a public four-year university were used in this study. Students were assessed using the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI), the liberalism and social conscience scales of the College

Student Questionnaire (CSQ), and demographic information. Students were tested on these scales before they started college and after their first semester of college. In addition to the second testing round, students were given the College Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). Not all students in the sample chose to participate in this second round of testing. Using a t-test, results showed that students living on campus seem to benefit the most with particular emphasis on social situations as well as becoming a more open to an array of new intellectual stimuli. This may include giving their opinion about what they find to be beneficial on campus.

Research conducted by Selby and Weston (1978) examined if living in a dormitory versus living in an apartment resulted in different experiences by a sample of 200 freshmen at the University of Southern California. After completing a questionnaire that assessed their freshmen experiences, an analysis of variance, Pearson correlation, and chi-square showed findings and relationships in which those living in dormitories seemed to be more satisfied overall. They seemed to have had more success with socializing, using various campus resources, and feel that their safety needs are being met more so than those living in an apartment. Interestingly, though, these apartments were located next to the campus. Perhaps, students grow more when surrounded by people and have strong positive relationships when they start to college.

Research by Astin (1973) examined the relationship between living arrangements and college experiences in undergraduates. What was of interest to Astin (1973) was how living in dormitories, living with parents, and living in apartments during the freshmen year affected the educational and social aspects of students. This study was part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the American Council on Education. This

particular project included 25,455 students from the freshman class of 1966 which a 5,091 sample was drawn from 213 colleges and universities. When students in the three groups were matched on characteristics, the study found that living on campus in a dormitory benefited students the most. As it pertained to academics, students who lived on campus had a greater success rate at obtaining their academic aspirations. In other words, they kept up their grades, finished their undergraduate degrees, and had a better chance at pursuing their education further. Relationships with parents also affect the college experience.

A study conducted by Sullivan and Sullivan (1980) examined how living with parents or away at college affected the relationships that male students had with their parents. Both the male students and the parents completed a list of questions related to affection, communication, and independence prior to the boys starting college and after they had actually started. A chi-square analysis showed that those who chose to live away at college seem to have higher intelligence measured by the SAT and came from wealthier families than those that choose to reside at home. Also, the males that lived on campus seem to think that their parents were more affectionate towards them. However, only mothers felt this same way. As it pertained to communication, the males that left home felt that they communicated better with their parents. The parents however did not feel this way. As far as independence goes, those who left home felt more independent. Fathers, however, felt the opposite. Also, the relationship between the mother and father did not change as a result of the males students staying or going away to college. Positive interactions in various relationships seem to be the continuing theme of the benefits college students get out of living in a dormitory on campus.

Research conducted by Pascarella (1984) examined the effects of living on a college campus versus commuting to college. The sample also came from those who were participating in the 1975 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). Both public and private universities were assessed in this study. A total of 4191 participants were used in this specific study. Measurements used were preexisting demographic characteristics of college students. A correlational analysis showed residents and commuters differed on background characteristics such as academic aptitude and have parents with larger amounts of education compared to commuters. As far as experiences in college, the study found that residential students interacted with their peers and professors more so than commuters. Similar results were found in a follow up study using the same data sample.

In another research study conducted by Pascarella (1985) basically the data from the previous research on 4191 students was examined for a second time. Again, the measurements used were demographic characteristics before entering college which do have a correlation with where a student resides during college. After screening for preexisting characteristics a correlational analysis found that those who lived on campus interacted more with their peers and professors than those who lived off campus. So, therefore, it seems that students that live on campus become more engaged with their surrounding environment.

A study conducted by Wilson, Anderson, and Fleming (1987) examined how undergraduate college residence was related to the relationships that students had with their parents and how well they adapted to college life. A sample of 115 students were tested using the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS) to

measure how intertwined students were with the lives of their parents, the College Maladjustment Scale (MT) which measures how well students integrated in to the college lifestyle, and the Ego Identity Scale which is based on the psychosocial stages of Erik Erikson. A two-way analysis of variance was used for each of these measures. The independent variables were residence and student class. The results from the PAFS show that first year students living at home were the most fused with their parents. Results from the MT showed that overall those living at home had a harder time adapting to college life. Results from the Ego Identity Scale showed that commuters had more trust issues and had a harder time making decisions than others. Some of these decisions might require great levels of critical thinking to make a choice.

A study conducted by Pascarella et al. (1993) examined the differences between residences and commuters on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). This assessment includes reading, mathematical, and critical thinking sections. The sample included 210 freshmen from what appears to be a predominantly commuter campus in Chicago. An analysis of variance showed that those that lived on campus had higher scores on the critical thinking section. However, no differences existed in the reading and mathematical sections. Apparently, then, critical thinking is much more than simply being able to process academic material. One may wonder, though, if these findings apply only to White, middle class students.

Little, if any, research has been done on how college residence affects primarily African American students. A study conducted by Flowers (2004) decided to examine this population. Data was collected from the responses of 6,092 students on the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ). These students were from 212 higher

Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ). These students were from 212 higher education institutes and were enrolled in these colleges and universities between 1990 to 2000. The CSEQ examines an array of experiences that college students typically face. Using a correlational analysis, results showed a relationship in which African Americans seemed to benefit by residing in dormitories because it allowed them to have more positive and beneficial interactions with their peers. Even though the benefits of dormitory life are enormous, an African American or student in general will say that their family is important too in influencing positive behaviors in college.

Benefits of Living With Parents

A study conducted by Valliant and Scanlan (1996) examined alcohol use in 94 undergraduate students who were enrolled in introductory psychology at the same university. Variables looked at included sex, self-esteem measured by the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, personality characteristics measured by the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory Form 168, and where the students lived during college. In addition to sex and residence, other demographic variables were collected as well. Descriptive statistics showed that males drank at higher rates than females. A chi-square also noted that these higher rates of alcohol consumption put males at a higher risk for developing alcoholism. A Pearson correlation found a relationship in which students who drank more had higher self-esteem. A chi square, then, examined the personalities and residence of students. Males that lived with their parents seemed to have more personality problems such as being depressed than those that were not. However, all students in general, seemed to have the lowest levels of risk for becoming an alcoholic when they

lived with their parents. Other research, however, has found that it does not matter where a student resides during college.

No Differences

Research conducted by Baird (1969) examined the characteristics of 5,129 students from 29 higher education institutes living in different types of environments while being an undergraduate. Students either lived on campus in a dormitory or apartment, in a fraternity or sorority house, with their parents, or off campus in an apartment. Information about students was obtained at the beginning of college and again at the end. This information included the beliefs of students and their goals pertaining to college as well as life in general. A one way analysis of variance showed that besides a few differences such as socialization level with students living in the Greek community being higher, the students living in different types of residences did not differ. This does not seem surprising since many people think similarly about what they want out of the college experience and life. They also probably have the same types of problems as well.

Research conducted by Stark (1965) examined the reading skills, study habits, and personal problems of students living on campus versus those living off campus. A sample of 140 students from a private higher learning institute were given the Cooperative English Testing-Reading Comprehension assessment, the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, and the Mooney Problem Check Lists. Data pertaining to working hours and extracurricular activity participation were also collected at the time of the study. Results of the data collection stated that overall women had better reading skills than men regardless of their residence. As far as study habits and personal problems overall no significant differences existed between the different types

of residences. However, some scales on the assessments were higher for a particular group. Similar no significant differences results were found pertaining to working hours and extracurricular activities. Details of the statistical analysis procedures were not reported for this research. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Research conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) examined how different types of dormitories affected the undergraduate college student experience. A total of 1,905 students from the freshmen class of 1976 at a private university were asked to fill out a questionnaire pertaining to demographic information as well as their expectations about college. However, the sample ended up being narrowed down to 1,457 students for this portion of the study. All freshmen, at this particular university, were required to live on campus. Therefore, students had two options on the kind of residence they could live in during their first semester. An experimental dormitory called a “Living-Learning Residence” was created to bring educational opportunities into the actual dormitory. This included classes and study space. This condition was compared to a traditional dormitory that basically only had living space for the students. During the second semester of college, a second questionnaire was given to the sample pertaining to their experiences during their first semester. However, only 773 students responded to this questionnaire. Using correlational analysis procedures, results showed a relationship in which the “Living-Learning Residence” gave students more opportunities for academic stimulation but no significant difference existed when being compared to the traditional dormitory in GPAs.

Research conducted by Inman and Pascarella (1998) studied critical thinking levels of undergraduate students living on and off campus. The sample was part of the

that were enrolled as freshmen in the 1992-1993 academic year. Before entering college, demographic information was collected from participants. Then students were also given the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) before starting college to measure critical thinking levels. They were given a different form of this assessment at the end of their second semester of college. Also, the students were given the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) that measured experiences that typical college students are inclined to have at the end of their second semester. A correlational analysis found no significant differences in critical thinking skills between the two types of college residences. GPA also is considered by some to be a measure of critical thinking levels.

Grade Point Averages

A study conducted by Noble, Flynn, Lee, and Hilton (2007) examined the effects of a freshmen experience program at the University of South Alabama. The university is a public institution and has predominately commuter students. The program was called ESSENCE or Entering Students at South Engaging in New College Experiences. This freshmen experience program included freshmen only dormitories, classes to introduce freshmen to the college, as well as various activities to integrate the freshmen into the campus. The sample included 2,915 students from the freshmen class of 1998 and 1999. ESSENCE was compared to those in traditional dormitories with students of various class rankings and those that lived off campus. GPAs and graduation timing were examined for these groups. Demographic variables particularly sex and race were taken into consideration. A correlational analysis found a relationship in which ESSENCE students had the highest GPAs and also graduated in the expected time limit of four to five years.

Research conducted by Simono, Wachowiak, and Furr (1984) investigated how college residence affected the GPAs of 448 undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. A one-way analysis of variance found that those living off campus had significantly higher GPAs than those living on campus. Interestingly, of the students that were living off campus, those that were married had the highest GPAs.

Research by Prusok and Walsh (1964) examined the academic potential of freshmen males trying to be initiated into fraternities versus those who lived in dormitories, with their parents, or off campus without their parents in 1961 during the fall semester at the State University of Iowa. Also, different fraternities were compared with each other. Using an analysis of variance to compare the different residential settings, no significant differences in GPAs existed in this study. This applied to the comparison of fraternities to other residential settings as well as when different fraternities were compared with each other.

A study by Grosz and Brandt (1969) examined how residence affected the GPAs of freshmen. The group of students being studied were 87 undergraduates of the freshmen class of 1965 at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks. These students were grouped into three residential categories: locals living in dormitories, non-locals living in dormitories, and those living off campus. The GPAs from both the first and second semester of college were collected as data. An analysis of variance found that no significant differences in GPAs existed among the groups at the end of both semesters.

Research conducted by Graff and Cooley (1970) examined the adjustment of undergraduate college students after one semester of college in addition to their grade point averages. A comparison was made between 301 students living on and off campus.

The two groups were divided into academic ability levels which was based on their scores of the verbal section of the SAT. So, therefore, a total of six groups existed. The participants were given the College Inventory of Academic Adjustment. This assessment obviously measures how well a student adjusts to different variables that are part of college life. An analysis of covariance found that students living off campus in general seemed to have more psychological disturbances pertaining to adjustment to college as well as have lower expectations about their time in college. However, no differences were found in skills related to academic careers and GPAs.

Another research attempt by Pugh and Chamberlain (1976) examined how residence during college affected the GPAs of students of different class rankings. The resident groups examined were living on campus, living in a fraternity or sorority house, or living off campus. Class rankings included freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. Also SAT scores were taken into consideration as measuring academic abilities. The sample was taken from Indiana University which had about 20,000 students for the academic year 1973-1974. Approximately 10 percent were selected for participation in this study. A correlational analysis showed that no significant differences existed among the groups in their GPAs.

A meta-analytic research study by Bliming (1989) examined the GPAs of undergraduates in dormitories as they compared to three other types of living arrangements. This included living with parents, fraternity and sorority houses, and living off campus without parents. After an extensive and well thought out search, a total of 34 peer reviewed articles from between 1966-1987 were found for the meta-analysis. For the comparison of the GPAs of students living in dormitories versus those living with their

parents, no differences existed when students were matched on preexisting characteristics. However, when students were not matched difference could be found in GPAs. These differences were probably due to these differences in preexisting characteristics instead of college residence. As far as the comparisons for dormitory students with those living in fraternity and sorority houses and living off campus without their parents, results showed that dormitory students had GPAs that were higher but not to the level of statistical significance.

Research definitely is varied on the topic of residence in college. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to update information regarding residence and academic performance. The GPAs of students during their first semester of college were analyzed as well as where they lived during that time period. The prediction for this study was that those who lived in dormitories on campus during their freshmen year of college would have higher GPAs.

CHAPTER III.

METHODS OF STUDY

Participants

A convenience sample was taken from undergraduate students enrolled in general psychology courses that were taught on campus during the spring semester of 2010 at a Southeastern four-year public university. Students had to be freshmen in the fall semester of 2009 and had entered college within two years of completing high school. Freshmen status for this study meant that as of the fall semester of 2009 students had less than 12 hours of transfer credit or credit from the university. A total of 166 students opted to participate in the study. However, 99 students were included in the final sample. Participants were disqualified from the study because of failure to sign the informed consent document, having more than 12 transfer or university credits during the fall semester of 2009, not entering college within two years of completing high school, or not being enrolled during the fall 2009 semester. No students lived in fraternity or sorority houses. Also, three students that qualified for the study lived off campus without parents, relatives, or guardians they had as minors. However, this was not a large enough number in this category to conduct statistical analysis. Of the students participating, 54 lived in dormitories during the fall semester of 2009 and 45 lived with parents, relatives, or guardians they had as minors.

Measures

The *Effects on GPA in the Freshman Year in College Survey* was created as a measure in this study. This survey included 13 items related to residence and demographic characteristics of freshmen. This included age, sex, race, ACT scores,

student athlete, marriage, children, and hours worked per week. Age was defined by how old the participant was at the time of the study and was looked up in their student records. Sex and race were defined by the students. ACT scores were also looked up in student records. Students simply answered yes or no as it applied to being a student athlete, marriage, and children. Students stated the average number of hours that usually worked per week (See Table 1).

Procedure

Students were recruited on the basis that they were enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Those that were considered first time freshmen in the semester Fall 2009 were the only ones eligible for participation in the study. First time freshmen status was defined as a student has 12 or less credit hours of college credit from either the university, another university, or a combination of both. The research took place during a designated class period time in the general psychology classes. Students were given informed consent information about the study, an opportunity to ask questions, and were asked to sign an informed consent document. Then students were given the *Effects on GPA in the Freshmen year in College Survey*. Students were asked to give their student identification numbers to verify their age, ACT scores, and GPA. After students completed the survey, then the researcher looked up the ages, ACT scores, and GPAs of eligible students. Students were given extra credit for their participation at the discretion of the instructor of the general psychology course that they were enrolled in the spring of 2010. Results were then analyzed using a between subjects t-test.

Table 1

Demographics

(N=99)	Dormitory (n=54)	Parents, Relatives, or Guardians (n=45)
Age Range	18-21	18-21
Sex	Male (n=16)	Male (n=13)
	Female (n=38)	Female (n=32)
Race	Caucasian (n=37)	Caucasian (n=31)
	African American (n=15)	African American (n=7)
	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=0)	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=4)
	Latino(a) (n=1)	Latino(a) (n=1)
	Other (n=1)	Other (n=2)
ACT Composite	20.98	22.16
Work	4.9	5.04

Marital Status	0	0
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Children	0	1
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Source: Effects of GPA on the Freshmen Year in College Survey

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This statistical analysis was done using the t-test assuming equal variances function in Microsoft Excel 2007. One independent and one dependent variable were presented in the study. The independent variable was residence during the first semester of college for those classified as first time freshmen at a four-year public university. Residence was defined as either living on campus in a dormitory or living off campus with parents, relatives, or guardians that a student had as a minor. The dependent variable was GPA at the end of the first semester of college. GPA at the university was based on a 4.00 scales. Now the findings from this analysis will be revealed.

The t-test compared the mean GPA of those that lived on campus in dormitories ($M= 2.86$, $SD=0.74$) to the mean GPA of those that lived off campus with parents, relatives, or guardians that a student had as a minor ($M=2.81$, $SD=0.94$). This analysis found that no significant differences existed in the GPAs of those that lived on campus in dormitories versus those that lived off campus with parents relatives, or guardians, $t(105)=.007$, $p>.05$, two-tailed (See Figure 1).

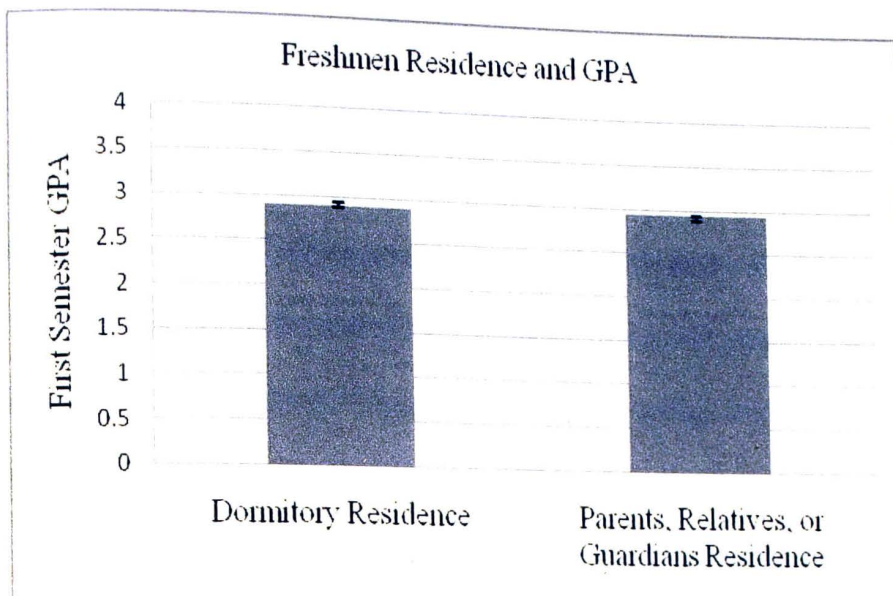


Figure 1. Difference in the mean GPA of first time freshmen living on campus in a dormitory versus the mean GPA of first time freshmen living off campus with parents, relatives, or guardians they had as minors.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that students that live in dormitories would have the highest GPAs during their first semester of college was not supported in this study. No differences existed between freshmen in dormitories and freshmen living with parents, relatives, or guardians that they had as minors. Apparently, then, future college students should not worry about how residence will affect his or her GPA during that first semester of college. The results of this study are not surprising. Similar no difference results were found in several studies pertaining to the experiences of freshmen (Prusok & Walsh, 1964; Grosz & Brandt, 1969; Pugh & Chamberlain, 1976; and Bliming, 1989). Apparently, much more exists to achieving a high GPA in college besides the resident of a student.

Perhaps having higher GPAs is more involved with other factors such as motivation. Perhaps, what does matter is whether or not the student cares about doing well in school and making good grades. College is not about where a person goes to school or where he or she lives. The effort that one puts into their academics in college is what counts. One should not necessarily be considered a responsible adult because he or she moves out of their residence from high school. On the other hand, because someone has not moved out of their high school residence does not mean that person is lazy, immature, and irresponsible as stated by some research (Lantz & McCrary, 1955). Hopefully, all students are able to succeed in college regardless of their circumstances.

Further research should look more in detail at other variables that might interact with residence during college and affect the GPAs of students. Larger samples could be

included from within the university as well as expand to other universities. Also, further research could expand more so culturally. As with many studies, the majority of the sample was Caucasian. Also, when students were classified as living with parents, relatives, or guardians, relatives could have been more clearly defined. For most people living with strictly siblings would be different from say living with strictly grandparents. Another factor that was not taken into consideration was learning disabilities. Perhaps, if these individuals were identified or eliminated from this particular study then results would have been different. Remedial classes and transfer credits were included in this study. Perhaps, these should have been excluded from the study. Hopefully, one day, the puzzle will be solved as to what equates an appropriate environment to promote academic success in college.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Effects on GPA in the Freshman Year in College Survey

Directions: Fill in the blank or circle the answer than pertains to you.

1. A# _____ *You're A# will be used to verify your GPA, ACT scores, and age through the faculty banner system at Austin Peay State University.
2. Sex _____
3. Race/Ethnicity _____
4. Did you enter college within 2 years after graduating from high school? Yes
No
5. Were you enrolled as a full time (12 or more credits) student at the time? Yes
No
6. Are you a student athlete at the university? Yes No
7. Where did you live during your first semester of college?
 - a. Dormitory on campus
 - b. Fraternity or sorority house
 - c. With parents, relatives, or guardians
 - d. Off campus without parents, relatives, or guardians
8. Where did or are you living during the second semester of your freshmen year?
 - a. Dormitory on campus
 - b. Fraternity or sorority house
 - c. With parents, relatives, or guardians
 - d. Off campus without parents, relatives, or guardians
9. If you lived or are living off campus during your freshmen year did you live in Clarksville or Montgomery County? Yes No
10. How many hours did you or are you working per week during your freshmen year of college? _____
11. Are you married? Yes No
12. Do you have any children that live with you? Yes No
13. Time and Instructor of General Psychology _____ *Needed if extra credit will be given by the instructor.

Thanks for your participation in this survey.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent for Participation in Effects on GPA in the Freshman Year in College

Hello, my name is Rebecca Gibbs and I am a graduate student here at Austin Peay State University. I have chosen the option of completing a master's thesis under the primary supervision of Dr. Nanci S. Woods. Dr. Brian J. Hock and Dr. Charles B. Woods are my secondary supervisors. My topic I have chosen for my thesis has to do with examining residence and GPA of freshmen college students. Therefore, I want your help by participating in this survey. However, before you can participate in the study, you must understand the procedures that will be happening in the research process as well as the rights you have as a participant.

- You must be 18 years of age to participate in this study.
- Participation in the research is completely voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Data will be treated in a confidential manner. Only the graduate researcher and the three faculty supervisors will see the raw data.
- If you chose to participate in this study you will be asked to provide your student identification number otherwise known as your A# for this study. Some may not feel comfortable with this.
- Your A# will be used to collect or verify information. The following provides a detailed analysis of how it will be used in this study.
 - The primary supervisor of the graduate researcher will log on to the faculty banner system.
 - The graduate researcher does not have the primary supervisor log on information and therefore cannot access the data without the supervisor being present.
 - Three pieces of information will be collected in the banner system: freshmen year GPAs, ACT scores, as well as verification of your age.
 - The information will be strictly looked up electronically and will not be printed out.
 - This information will be entered into a spreadsheet which will not include any information that will identify the data as belonging to you. The data will be stored on a USB storage device (otherwise known as a jump or flash drive) and not on the computer. The USB storage device then will be locked up in a secure cabinet in Clement 223A when not be used by the researcher and faculty supervisors.

- Your informed consent documents as well as your survey will also be stored in Clement 223A in that secure locked cabinet. The informed consent documents and surveys will be divided into separate piles after the data has been entered into the spreadsheet so names and A#s will not be seen in the same document.
- The informed consent document and survey will be destroyed after a certain period of time.
- The results of this study may be published.
- By participating in this study, you will help advance research that may be beneficial to future freshmen.
- Extra credit may be given for participating in this study. However, that is up to the discretion of the instructor of the class in which the study is taking place.

If you have any questions about your participation in the study that you can contact the

following:

Graduate Researcher:

Rebecca Gibbs

Email: rgibbs@my.apsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Nanci S. Woods

Phone: (931) 221-7236

Email: woodsn@apsu.edu

Institutional Review Board Chair:

Dr. Charles Grah

P.O. Box 4537

Phone: (931) 221-7231

Email: grahc@apsu.edu

I have read this document fully and understand what my participation in this study entails and what my rights are as a participant.

Participant Signature

Date

Graduate Researcher Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS

Please read the entire application before completing.

TITLE OF PROJECT: Freshmen Residence and GPA

TITLE ON CONSENT FORM (If different than above):

Informed Consent for Participation in Effects on GPA in the Freshman Year in
College

FUNDING SOURCE: None

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Name: Rebecca F. Gibbs

Status:

Faculty ____ Staff ____ Graduate Student X Undergraduate Student ____

Department: Psychology

Email Address: rgibbs@my.apsu.edu

FACULTY SUPERVISOR

Name: Dr. Nanci S. Woods

Department: Psychology

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4537, Clarksville, TN, 37044

Phone: (931) 221-7236

Email Address: woodsn@apsu.edu

All of the questions below should be answered using lay language. The IRB is comprised of individuals from diverse scientific and nonscientific backgrounds. You should avoid all jargon and assume that IRB members have no prior knowledge on the research topic, theoretical or methodological approaches, or measurement techniques or instruments.

The best way to avoid unnecessary delays is to provide the IRB with as much information about your study as possible. **You will need to attach a copy of all demographic forms, survey instruments, and other data collection systems.** If you are unable to attach the above please contact the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs for advice. It is important to remember that informed consent is a process not a document. Informed consent begins with recruitment and ends only after a study is completed.

1. **Describe the purpose of this study.** Be sure to clearly indicate the research question being asked.

The primary purpose of this study is to see if a difference exists in the grade point averages (GPAs) of undergraduate freshman college students who live in different types of environments. These environments include dormitories on campus, fraternity or sorority houses, with parents or guardians (who was responsible for you before you reached the age of 18), or without parents or guardians (who was responsible for you before you reached the age of 18).

2. **Briefly describe the research that has already been conducted in this area.**
The IRB needs to understand how this study adds to the knowledge on this topic in order to be able to judge the risks and benefits to participants.

The majority of research done on residence during the undergraduate years in college was conducted in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of the studies did not elaborate enough on their findings to validate their data. Therefore, updated research is needed for the twenty-first century college student.

3. **Describe the population from which your research sample will be drawn.** Be sure to indicate if subjects are from a vulnerable population such as infants, children, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, prisoners, employees, students, economically or educationally challenged persons etc...). What additional safeguards will be included to protect the rights and welfare of these participants?

The sample will be drawn from college freshmen enrolled in general psychology courses on the main campus at Austin Peay State University. Data will be collected by graduate students.

4. **Explain the inclusion and exclusion criteria that will be used (e.g., age, race, gender, language, academic abilities, academic major, pre-existing conditions, etc....).**

The criteria for participation in this study are to have entered college as a freshman within two years of graduating from high school. Others will be excluded because their developmental level is different from those that are fresh out of high school. An example would be an 18 year old is experiencing life differently than a 40 year old.

5. **Indicate how many potential participants will be approached.** The APIRB needs to know the maximum number that might be asked to participate, NOT the minimum number needed to adequately ask the research question. It is recommended that you choose a number higher than you expect to need because once the number is approved you will need to apply to the IRB for permission to recruit additional participants. Do not choose an unnecessarily large number however, because sample size may affect the risk/benefit ratio decision that the IRB must make. Please break down your maximum numbers by category (e.g., child, adult, male, female, depressed, non depressed etc...) such that the board can evaluate the risks for different types of participants.

Participants will be recruited from general psychology classes ranging from 50 to 110 students. The total number of participants will not exceed 350 though is likely to be less.

6. **Describe how participants will be identified, approached, recruited and consented.** Who will make the first contact and when and where will it occur. All materials used to recruit participants need to be submitted for review (e.g., media advertisements, brochures, email, poster/signs or sign-up sheets, etc...). If verbal announcements will be made for recruitment purposes please provide a script of how the study will be described or a list of the points that will be made.

The subjects will be recruited based on the fact that they are enrolled in a general psychology class. The participation will be verbally announced similarly as follows: Hello, my name is Rebecca Gibbs and I am a graduate student here at Austin Peay State University. I have chosen the option of completing a master's thesis under the primary supervision of Dr. Nanci S. Woods. Dr. Brian J. Hock and Dr. Charles B. Woods are my secondary supervisors. My topic I have chosen for my thesis has to do with characteristics of freshmen college students and how those characteristics affect their GPA in their first and second semesters. Therefore, I want to ask for your help by participating in this survey.

7. **Specifically identify all individuals who will describe the study to potential participants. Also, specifically identify all individuals who will obtain consent from potential participants.**

Do these individual(s) have a dual relationship with potential participants (e.g., instructor, mentor, employer, caregiver, etc...) that might create the potential for the perception or actual existence of coercion or undue influence? What procedures will you put in place to reduce or eliminate potential/perceived coercive situations?

The researcher will explain the study and recruit participants without the instructor of the course present.

8. **Describe your research procedures.** We need to know all of the procedures that will occur, but in particular we need a description of what the participants will experience. For example, a description of the instructions that will be given to them, activities in which they will engage, the length and timing of involvement, and the circumstances under which they will provide data (i.e., group assessments, one-on-one interview, videotaping, audio taping, phone calls, spending time in an uncomfortable position, etc...).

First, the researcher will explain the purpose of the study and pass out informed consent forms. Then, the surveys will be passed out. The students will be asked to provide their A#s.

9. **If this study involves deception, describe and justify its use.** Deception will require that subjects be debriefed following data collection. The purposes of the debriefing are to explain the true purpose of the study, reduce any negative consequences participants may experience from participation and to provide a clear, easy opportunity for withdrawal of consent. You must include a copy of the debriefing statement in your application. After the participants have submitted their informed consent as well as their surveys, they will be told that residence and GPA are the primary variables being studied.

There is no deception in this study.

10. **Describe any form of compensation that participants will receive (e.g., money, extra credit, toys, food, etc...). If so, please describe amount, type, when they will receive it. If withdrawal from the study will change the amount or type of compensation please describe how (i.e., prorated, elimination, etc...). Note that academic extra credit can only be awarded at the discretion of the instructor, not the principal investigator.**

Extra credit will be offered to those who participate at the discretion of the instructor. A standard form is provided to the student that can be turned in to instructors who offer extra credit.

11. **Explain if this research might entail psychological, legal, physical, or social harm or discomfort to the subjects.** What steps have been taken to minimize these risks? What provisions have been made to insure that appropriate facilities and professional attention necessary for the health and safety of the subjects are available and will be utilized? How will the participants be informed of these procedures? If an information sheet describing these resources will be provided to participants, please submit. If university or community professionals agree to provide their services, please submit a letter of cooperation from the individuals/agencies that describes the agreement.

Some participants might be uncomfortable with the graduate researcher having access to their information on the banner system. However, they will be notified that the graduate researcher does not have access to this information unless the faculty supervisor is present and supervising her activities.

12. **Describe how the potential benefits of this activity to the participants and humankind outweigh any possible risks.**

This opinion is justified for the following reasons: If certain types of living environments foster academic growth, then this information may benefit students and university administrators in their decision making.

13. **Describe how the confidentiality of data about participants will be protected.** What steps and procedures will be used? How (hard copy, electronic, etc...) and where (e.g., locked file cabinet in PI's campus office) will data be stored? If data will be destroyed please indicate when and how.

All data will be stored in the major professor's campus office. Recorded data remain confidential because the data sheet will not include the student's name or A# but rather a created (unique) number that links the GPA and survey data. The form linking the A# and unique number will be stored separately in the major professor's office.

14. **If data will be anonymous, explain how this anonymity will be achieved.** Note that anonymity requires that at no time can the data be connected to the participant by anyone involved in the research, even the PI. If data will be anonymous, explain how and where the consent document will be stored.

N/A

15. **Explain how any data collected relate to illegal activities.**

There is no information related to illegal activities involved or accessible any time during this study.

16. **Please indicate by marking Y(es) or N(o) whether the attached informed consent document includes each of the following elements as required by the Code of Federal Regulations: Title 45, Part 46.116.**

Y A statement that the study involves research,

Y an explanation of the duration of the subjects participation,

Y a description of the procedures to be used;

Y A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;

Y A description of any benefits to the subject or others which can be reasonably expected from the research; (*Note: compensation is not a benefit*)

Y A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;

Y An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject; (*Note: should include APIRB, PI and if applicable, students' faculty sponsor*)

Y A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. (*Note: this statement should be written in language at an appropriate level for the subjects in your study*).

The following may or may not apply your study. Please carefully read and mark each one Y(es) or N(o).

N An explanation of whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject;

N A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;

N For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;

N A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject which are currently unforeseeable;

N Anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent;

N_____ Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research; (*Note: This is not limited to monetary costs*)

N_____ The consequences of a subject's decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject;

N_____ A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject; and

N_____ The approximate number of subjects in the study.

17. **If your study includes children please provide the committee with information about how you will obtain the child's assent to participate.** Children older than 12 are expected to be provided the opportunity to sign to indicate their assent to participate. Children 7-12 should be provided with a written document, which may or may not also be read. Depending on the research to be conducted children 6 years and younger may be read an assent script (please submit). In addition to your procedures to obtain assent, please indicate what dissent behaviors will lead you to decide a child is not providing or has withdrawn his/her assent to participate. Note: child assent can be solicited only after parental consent has been obtained. N/A

18. **If you are requesting a waiver of the documentation of informed consent please explain how you would meet the requirements of 45 CFR 46.117. N/A**

I have read the Austin Peay State University Policies and Procedures on Human Research (00:002) and Research Misconduct (99:013) and agree to abide by them. I also agree to report to the Austin Peay Institutional Review Board any unexpected events related to this study. I also agree to receive approval before implementing any changes in this study.

Signature

Date

Jan. 19, 2010

Rebecca Gibbs

RE: Your application regarding study number 09-050 Freshman Residence and GPA

Dear Ms. Gibbs,

Thank you for your application for the study above. The Austin Peay IRB has reviewed your application and has approved it pending the following modifications:

- Add IRB contact information to your consent form
- Store data in a secure, locked filing cabinet. Store computer data files on a jump drive kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- Unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise, indicate on the consent form that you are looking at the relationship between student housing and GPA during the freshman year, rather than "characteristics of freshman college students."

Once you have provided documentation to the IRB that the modifications have been made, you are free to conduct your study. Your study is subject to continuing review on or before Jan. 19, 2011, unless closed before that date. Enclosed please find the forms to report when your study has been completed and the form to request an annual review of a continuing study. Please submit the appropriate form prior to Jan. 19, 2011.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. If you have any questions or require further information, contact me at (221-7231; fax 221-6267; email grahc@apsu.edu).

Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APSU IRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study!

Sincerely,



Charles R. Grah
Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board

Cc: Nanci Woods, Department of Psychology