First Year Chinese Student Engagement in Residence Halls: A Mixed Methods Study

Jamie Chong Brown

University of Dayton, stander@udayton.edu

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ABSTRACT
This mixed methods study assessed first year Chinese students' perception of racial climate and community in residence halls at the University of Dayton. The qualitative study indicated that the students' attitude toward floor acceptance and racial harmony correlates with their perceived ability in diversity and interpersonal learning outcomes. The qualitative analysis identified the impact of high school preparation for Chinese student assimilation into residential hall living, their perception of American peers and culture and factors attributing a positive social adjustment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1.) What are Chinese students’ perception of the residence hall living environment, community, and diversity? 2.) How do these perceptions impact their level of engagement on the floor? 3.) What are the social and cultural factors influencing Chinese student perception and attitudes regarding their living experience?

METHODS
Qualitative Study
A quantitative, cross-sectional research was conducted Chinese students living in residence halls in the Spring 2013 and Fall 2013 terms. The Mandarin survey instrument consists a demographics, satisfaction, and racial climate perception section. The questionnaire was presented in a Likert-type scale ranging from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The spring survey yielded 86 responses (57% response rate). The fall survey yielded a total of 47 respondents out of 101 Chinese students (47% response rate).

Qualitative Study
Seven first year Chinese students voluntarily participated in semi-structured interviews conducted in the fall of 2013. Volunteers were recruited through the residence life mailing list and participated in semi-structured interviews that lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Questions included students' high school living experience, and their perception of the floor community, environment, and racial climate in their current residence halls. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin in order to encourage participation.

RESULTS
RAs related well to students
People getting along
Peers are friendly
I feel accepted by peers

These factors...

And these factors...

...directly impact these...

...has little to do with these

Constraints contributing to positive living experience

Factors contributing to positive living experience

Attending floor programs and socials
Having a strong support system (co-nationals, parents)

Positive regard of American peers

Small rooms 'force' students to hang out in hallways

Table 1: Survey Respondents

Table 2: Interview Respondents

Table 3: What factors impact our students’ perception?

Table 4: What makes our students so happy?

SELECT REFERENCES


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