

One of the first observations that one can make about residence is that it appears to be a closed system. That is, that students living in residence tend to stay in residence for most of the time that they are not in class and that people that do not live in residence tend not to come into the residence buildings.

Residence is arranged so that its students may remain there to relax and socialize; there are dances, easy access to drugs and drink, television on each floor, and a coffee shop. But one must realize that if the students in residence did not want to remain in residence on their free time there would be fewer dances, less partying in the rooms, no television because nobody would want to watch it, and the coffee shop would shut down for lack of customers.

Since the structures do exist, we must say that, "yes the people living in residence desire to stay in residence on their free time." Now we must ask, "why?" It would seem that there must be some reasons why they want to.

Most residence students will explain this by saying that they are from the farm or small town and that they do not know anybody in the city other than the students in the residence, so that is where they spend their free time. All their friends in residence were not friends before they started living in residence, but became friends over the year.

It would seem that they could develop a social life and friends in the general university population. Most students who live in the city enlarge their social spectrum when they begin to attend university. Rather than being a reason for desiring to stay in residence, this is more likely an affect of living there and having their social life there. The reason for wanting to stay in residence on their free time is a different one.

So we are back to the same question. Why do the residence students desire to stay in there on their free time? The facilities for relaxing in residence are just not that great, as evidenced by the fact that not many people come in from the "outside" to enjoy them. Watching television, partying in small box-like rooms, and sitting in the coffee shop just becomes, to put it simply, boring, and many people in residence agree.

Since this kind of behaviour goes on from year to year, we could call this set of behaviour a custom and look at it in the way that one discusses a custom.

Marx once said that, "... men make their own history... not just as they please: they make it under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past." We can substitute the idea of "custom" in the place of history, remembering that a custom must be carried on for some length of time, generally from one generation to the next. A generation in residence can be thought of as the turnover in the population from one year to another.

The link from one generation in residence to another is the "seniors." They are the vehicles by which the past is transmitted. The "senior" is a person who lived in residence the year before and was elected by the others on the floor to serve as the next year's senior. Six such positions are elected.

A person is elected "senior" for the same reason people get elected to any office anywhere. He fits close enough to the "mean behaviour and aspirations" of the population to have enough friends' votes to elect him. Since the "mean" is held by the majority, and it takes a majority to get elected, the person closest to the mean gets elected.

Therefore, the people who are the seniors this year are the best copy and product of the situation and people of the previous year. It is the job of the seniors to integrate the first-year students into residence life. We will logically see that the residence way of life they integrate the first-year students into is the one they experienced last year. The seniors of this year were integrated as first-year students into the residence that the seniors of that year

had experienced. The first-year students who will best represent the mean of this year will then be elected seniors for next year, and so on.

In the light of this fact we can better see the "why" of the residence student's behaviour and how he relates to different groups, i.e. the people on his floor, people in residence, "outsiders", and the opposite sex. In the Politics of Experience, R.D. Lange states that:

"People may be observed to sleep, eat, walk, talk, etc. in relatively predictable ways. We must not be content with this type of observation alone. Observations of behaviour must be extended by inference to attributes about experience. Only when we can begin to do this can we really construct the experimental-behavioural system that is the human species."

We also say that we must examine the residence "experiential-behavioural" system in this light because of the fact that the experiences one has in residence are not essentially common to the rest of the society.

We can look now at what happens to the student in this process of integration which takes place. The process of integration begins as soon as the student enters the residence. This is the time when the conditioning can be most effective.

The new students have likely never seen the residence before, they probably have never seen the other people. They are in an uncertain situation, surrounded by strange people. On the other hand, the seniors know each other

and what is "happening." From this secure position they are able to influence the anxious first-year students.

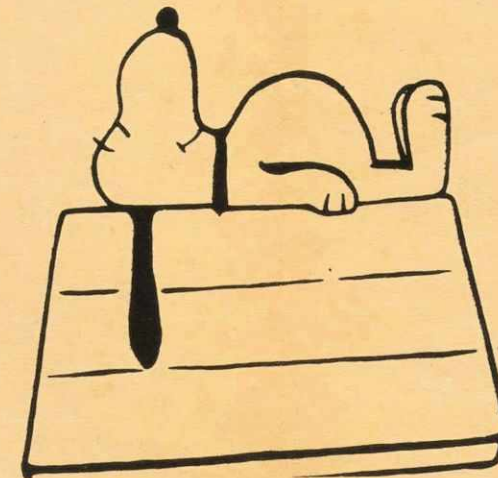
The seniors are looked up to and since every new student wants to make a successful start

Residence — the subtle destroyer

To remain true, one for all and all for one
as we plunge in brotherhood to our destruction

— ethic of the Gadarene swine

"HAPPINESS" IS LIVING IN A CO-ED RES
"SECURITY" IS KNOWING THE MEN
LIVE ON THE BOTTOM SIX FLOORS
and KNOWING THEY STAY THERE



in residence, they will try their best to imitate the only secure (or perhaps the only recognizable) social structure. From this secure position they are able to influence the first-year students in much the same way that the king in the castle, or the man who commands the army, can express his will on others. Even though their castle is more abstract, it does not mean that their power is any less in the given situation.

The behaviour of the residence students throughout the year can be, at least, partially explained as an effect of this initial experience.

The worst thing that can happen to a group is for it to dissolve. Nobody wants anyone to leave the group since it would cast doubt on the reasonableness of belonging to the group, and nobody wants anyone to have ideas which do not fit with the group because it shows they are not readily a part of the group. Ideas that are not common to the group are dangerous because they are not common to the group.

The ultimate punishment of the individual (if there can be such a thing) by the group is excommunication. This will happen when the group decides that the person cannot be "reformed", or even assimilated. The longer he is allowed the status of being a group member rather than a "Them", whose views

are negated because they are from a "Them", the more dangerous to the group he becomes, as he may influence others to join him and harm the group further. By excommunication the dissenting member is turned into a "Them".

Since the individual must eat, sleep and associate to some extent with the other students in residence, he is under great pressure to conform to those who believe that belonging to the group is an accepted way of behaviour, or rather not being in the group is a very unacceptable way of behaviour. He is one of "Them", among one of "Us".

This is seldom the case though. It is very seldom that a white student (I say white because the foreign students are excluded from the group from the start) is rejected by the group. If the group thinks that a person may drop out of the group, they do their best to reform him and try to reunify him with the group. This is done by threats of total excommunication, showing him how miserable they can make his life if he does not give up his offensive behaviour. Rather than resorting to these methods and the risk of losing him, it is better to make him feel that it is in his best interest to stay in the group. This is done so effectively that most people never think to question the actions of the group. It is actually a good thing for the group to excommunicate a person because it gives the other individuals in the group an idea of what they can expect should they entertain any thoughts or actions which would not be acceptable to the group.

The group's direction is established by the physical structures of residence and the rules and regulations forming the environment of residence.

You must live, eat and sleep with the group. You line up to get your food. You are shoved into one of the little box-like rooms with someone you don't even know. You must adapt to the group at all times. If you have a particular opinion that is contrary to the group's opinion, or wish to do something that the group does not think is correct, you will be attacked by it in its desperate attempt to negate any attitudes or values it doesn't hold. Failure to do this would destroy the group.

The segregation of the sexes is likely the most easily seen.

The physical structures of the residence and many of its rules are designed to segregate the sexes. Separate buildings, separate floors, structured times when you may or may not have girls on the floor. In an institution of the university which is supposedly trying to turn out well-adjusted persons, this is a definite contradiction.

Girls are not people, but are girls who can only be on the men's floors between six and midnight. The custom of having different hours for girls and being segregated from the opposite sex is the experience of first-year students in residence this year, and it will not likely change next year because of the perpetual nature of residence customs. Girls in the residence do not think of themselves as the same as other people, but as objects which must be unified with a male to be complete. This is evidenced by the fact that girls will sit in their rooms and cry Friday and Saturday nights if they do not have a date. They are badgered and ridiculed by the other girls on the floor, who may have been lucky enough to be asked out.

It is easily seen that residence is a closed system and that it is very difficult not to belong to the group. One's free choice is stifled as one attempts to adapt to the mean of the group. This will never change because each successive year is a copy of the year before.

When the individual must struggle against the group, whatever that group stands for, it is time to question the group's right to establish what one must be. Since the group is established by residence in this case, it is time to seriously question the structure itself.