Students are now required to live a minimum of their freshman year in the residence halls. This time spent in the residence halls is a time of transition; living on their own, for what may be the first time for many, can be a struggle. Students are adjusting to a new way of life.

These residence halls can have a significant influence on students’ perception of sense of community. If positive, this may help increase students retention rate after freshman year. It is important to understand this transition, what aids in the transition, and how the physical environment plays a part in this transition as to create a more positive experience for students to come and stay.

The purpose of this study was to explore university dormitory residents’ perceptions of common areas, and the role of these common areas in their sense of community and belonging. Sense of community is a strong indicator of a successful transition. This study addressed four research questions: Question #1: What are student’s general perceptions of common areas? Question #2: How do students use
the common space? Question #3: What are students’ perceptions of the function and aesthetics design of the common area? Question #4: How do students’ use this space to socialize with others?

The method used in this study consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted by the student researcher. The participants were recruited through an email listserv as well as in-person convenience sampling. These interviews were conducted in a private room, audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The data were coded for significant themes. These themes focused on the use of the common space; the aesthetics as well as the students’ overall perception of their transition.

We see a connection with the physical environment and the students place attachment in terms of experiences shared with other students, regardless of these experiences’ being in work or social situations. This membership is how we see the sense of community develop. The students contributed their successful transition to knowing not only the physical environment as well as in relationships formed on campus.

This information may aid student housing personnel as they work with students as well as students time on campus, specifically, the students transitioning to campus living. The data may be used in developing student evaluations as well as updates on the residence hall furnishing and equipment. Understanding more about the student experience and their perception of this experience may aid in creating a better student experience and thus result in higher retention rates.
STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THE DESIGN OF COMMON SPACE AND ITS ROLE IN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

by

Megan Michele Knight

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Presented July 17, 2015
Commencement June 2016
Master of Science thesis of Megan Michele Knight presented on July 17, 2015

APPROVED:

Co-Major Professor, representing Design and Human Environment

Co-Major Professor, representing Design and Human Environment

Associate Dean of the School of Design and Human Environment

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Megan Michele Knight, Author
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been completed without the help and support of many people. I would like to begin by thanking my major professors, Dr. Elif Tural and Dr. Marilyn Read. Without your help and willingness to stick by me, this would never have been completed. I would also like to thank Dr. Carmen Steggell for getting me started on this road and for guiding me along the way. Thank you to my entire committee, including Dr. Laurel Kincl, for giving honest and encouraging feedback.

There are so many people who supported me throughout this project; to my fellow graduate students who gave such hope and understanding, especially to those who helped me though the hard times, and laughed through the good.

Nick & Lacy, Pallavi & Jervis; you are my family and my rocks, without whom I could not stand.

To my mother and my brother, Mike, I thank you for your patience and positivity.

To Rohan, who has traveled alongside me through the chaos of this project, but who’s never failing support helped me cross the finish line. Thank you for being my sounding board, and my cheerleader.

Finally to my grandparents, my true inspiration, you showed me what it was to work hard and to love without judgment; I miss you both.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework: Place Attachment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics of the University Population</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Experience</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Dormitories</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corridor</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Houses</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public vs. Private Space</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite vs Corridor</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Dormitories on Behavior</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>CHAPTER 3: METHOD ..........................................................</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample .............................................................................</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment .....................................................................</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consent Process ..................................................................</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection and Instrument ........................................</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis ...................................................................</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .........................................................</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background .......................................................................</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Themes ..............................................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifestyle Change ..................................................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfort on Campus ............................................................</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functional Environment .....................................................</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Environment .............................................................</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Furnishings and Equipment ...............................................</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Functions ..................................................................</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social/membership Environment ..........................................</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic Environment .......................................................</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggested Changes ............................................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions ............................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .............................</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle Change</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort on Campus</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Environment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Environment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/membership Environment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Environment</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretic Framework Diagram Revised</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Guidelines for Place Attachment and Sense of Community</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Interview Guide</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Consent Form</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Theoretical Framework Diagram</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Typical room plan in a corridor dormitory</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Typical hall floor plan in a corridor dormitory</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Typical room plan in a suite-style dormitory</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Typical hall floor plan in a suite-style dormitory</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Typical cooperative house floor plan</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Typical cooperative house floor plan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Theoretical Framework Diagram Revised</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Residence Hall Demographics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THE DESIGN OF COMMON SPACE AND ITS ROLE IN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nearly one quarter (22%) of first year college students in public Ph.D. granting institutions in the United States drop out before their sophomore year. The dropout rate in public institutions granting only B.S. /B.A. is even higher at over one third, 34% (ACT, 2011). The increase of retention rates is a primary focus for administrators of higher education. As a result, the “first year experience” has come under intense examination by administrators and faculty.

Research suggests that two of the most important predictors of students’ continuation in college are a sense of belonging and sense of community (Jacobs & Archie, 2008; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). Further, residence halls have a significant and positive influence on students’ sense of community and their intent to return after the freshman year (Berger, 1997). As a result, many colleges and universities across the nation have mandated that first-year students live in university housing (Jamelske, 2008)

Living in a dormitory and transitioning into higher education can be one of the more difficult experiences of someone’s life. Ernest Boyer (1987) described the
transition into the undergraduate life in a university in his book, *College: The undergraduate experience in America*, as “haphazard and confusing”. Students are learning to move in a new environment and meet new academic expectations from faculty, and balance a life on campus (1987). Understanding how to help students accomplish this journey successfully has been a long standing goal of higher educators.

One of goals of the “first-year experience” and living in the residence halls is creating a connection to campus. This can be examined using place attachment theory, or one’s emotional connection to a place, or in this study, a common lounge (Atman & Low, 1992). In understanding the importance of the common area within the context of place attachment and sense of community, we strive to further understand how students use the common area and their perceptions of that space.

**Statement of the Problem**

Most students will spend a year or two living in residence halls, and the amount of time that the typical student spends living in a dorm warrants consideration and understanding. Understanding what student’s want, what they need, and how the university can support them in the best way. “[This]…must be fully understood to maximize the architectural potentials for the student and university’s general goals (Heilweil, 1973, p378).

The literature suggests that students want a higher sense of personalization and privacy (Devlin, Donovan, Nicolov, Nold, & Zandan, 2008; Heilweil, 1973; Kaya, 2004). However, it is important to encourage socialization in these facilities. There is a worry that students lacking spaces in which to socialize will be isolated in
their rooms (Devlin, et al, 2008). This is where the critical role of common areas comes into play.

As mentioned above, we can look into common areas as a location to develop sense of community. Time spent in common areas may result in shared experiences, aiding to the development of sense of community.

**Purpose of the Study**

“Given the considerable investment of time and energy that most students make in attending college, the student’s perception of value should be given substantial weight” (Astin, 1977). Strange and Banning (2001) discuss how the environment effects behavior, specifically student behavior in universities. They say that it is understood that the environment influences behavior; however, it is the “nature of that influence” that needs to be understood. The purpose of this study is to understand students’ use of the space and perception given the importance of the common space for sense of community.

A mid-size, public university in the Northwestern US has been selected as the study context. In order to aid in the transition into higher education, all freshmen at this university, as in many other universities, are required to live in university housing. The rule, mandated in fall 2013 as part of a new “first-year experience” program, is intended to aid in “increasing the current freshman retention rates” (OSU, 2013).

This study aims to explore student perceptions and experiences in the dormitory common areas. The findings will provide useful information to designers
and university administrators regarding the design of university common areas to attain the goal of improving student retention.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework: Place Attachment

Place Attachment is one’s emotional connection to the environment (Altman & Low, 1992). The emotional attachment can impact how one feels towards the space: positive, negative, or indifferent. Within this connection, Altman and Low (1992) identify three assumptions. First that there are many aspects that play into place attachment which are not mutually exclusive; they are intertwined. Second, the “origins of place attachment are varied and complex… emotion and feeling are central to the concept” (p.4). But these are also accompanied by conscious “thought, knowledge, and belief” as well as “action and behavior” (p.4). These are summed by Altman and Low as “cognition and practice” (pp.4-5). Finally, the third assumption of place attachment is that “place” is the environment that is shaped “emotionally and culturally” (p. 5) to which people are attached.

Scannell and Gifford’s tripartite framework defines “place attachment” as identifying three aspects that effect the attachment; the person, the psychological dimension, and the place. The “person dimension” refers both to individual and group level. The individual level refers to a personal attachment whereas the group level is “…comprised of the symbolic meanings of a place that are shared among members” (Low, 1992; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). In other words, the individual connection has to be established by something between the person and the space; a memory of a significant moment in life, or relating a space to something in your childhood; whereas the group level of connection has to do with a “shared experience”. For
example, cultural, religious, or ideology where a group can find a connection would be considered a “shared experience” (Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Low, 1992).

The psychological dimension, which is how people relate to the space, is also called an “emotional connection”. While the person and group connection was based in experience, this is based in the emotion (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Altman & Low, 1992). The “…psychological interactions that occur in the environments that are important to them” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

This connection can be difficult, as described by Morgan (2010), but “the word emotion like place, has an easy-to-understand, hard-to-define quality making place attachment if anything, more conceptually elusive that place itself” With that, the psychological dimension including cognitive aspects such as “…memories, beliefs, meaning, and knowledge that individuals associate with their central setting mak[ing] them personally important” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

Finally, looking at the place in place attachment is the physical location as well as the social aspect for these bonds to occur (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001, & Altman & Low, 1992). In understanding this ‘place’ dimension of place attachment; the physical location of where activities and memories occurred was not as strong of bond as the social bond but both should be considered in evaluating place attachment (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

**Sense of Community**

This social bond, as mentioned above, is the link to sense of community. As we examine the implications of place attachment in terms of university retention rates, look at how place attachment aids in sense of community. Sense of community
is defined as “...a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (Chavis & McMillan, 1986)

Within this definition, we see links to place attachment in emotions bonds as Chavis and McMillan describe the scope of this concept. They have identified 4 elements within sense of community: membership, influence, reinforcement, shared emotional connection. Each of these elements defines sense of community, as well as may contribute to a place attachment experience by users.

Membership is described as one feeling the right to belong in a particular group. Chavis and McMillan indicate that membership has “boundaries” in how people behave. These boundaries are known to those in the group and provide “emotional safety” (1986). This emotional safety creates and environment where the members know what to do, what not to do, and thus people create connections (Chavis & McMillan, 1986).

The second element, influence, identifies the interaction among members of a group; the influence of some member and not others, as well as the idea that there is group cohesiveness that occurs in reaction to this influence. The members have a sense that they matter.

Integration and fulfillment of needs is the third component in sense of community. Chavis and McMillan identify reinforcement and needs to summarize this part of their definition. This concept was also discussed by Sarason as “acknowledged interdependence” (1974, p157). Basically if things are done within
the group that meet a set of needs, these are reinforced by they members and they become integrated into the group as a norm.

Finally we look at shared emotion connection, the last piece of sense of community. They identify this as a possible “…definitive element for true community” (1986). This may also be a significant link between sense of community and place attachment. They break this concept into 7 parts; contact hypothesis, quality of interaction, closure to events, shared valent event hypothesis, investment, effect of honor and humiliation on community members, and spiritual bond.

But in understand sense of community and the shared emotional connection we should examine how communities interact. Chavis and McMillan indicate that… “strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively, opportunities to honor members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members” (1986). In looking at this concept in terms of the residence halls and how these communities are formed, there must be a change. These communities must be created.

Neither place attachments nor sense of community attachments are completely static (Altman & Low, 1992; Chavis & McMillan, 1986). Scopelliti and Tiberio (2010) identify the role of place attachment as a reason to predict homesickness in a new place. They concluded that the more attached one is to a place, that is, having formed “a positive bond,” they are less likely to be homesick. This study will explore new connections-- those that may lead to strong place attachment.
Scopelliti and Tiberio (2010) also consider the possibility of one being attached to more than one place. Altman and Low (1992) in a discussion of the disruptions of place attachment, state that place attachment seems to align with individual goals and aspirations. Together, these may imply that while students may be still attached to their childhood house or community, having aspirations or goals to attend a university may re-focus their attachment to the university setting. The idea of home and how it is established is important to discuss here due to the nature of a dormitory. A dormitory, as defined for this study, is a building to house university students during part or all of their time at a university. Homes as defined by Altman and Werner “… offer physical amenities that sustain and support the residents, and they are often essential to the very survival of their occupants. Furthermore, homes are important centers for the development and manifestation of central psychological meanings” (1985, p. xix).

“Persons are also linked to their homes by affective and emotional bonds; social relationships are manifested in spatial, psychological, and interpersonal terms, as people use objects and areas in the home to engage in social interaction, mutual succorance, and the like” (Altman & Werner, 1985, p. 4). This emotional bond, in establishment of a home, is known as place attachment, which is defined as such by Altman and Low (1992). The important links have been established between the similar definitions of home and dormitory, and the association between home and place attachment. Within this context, the study focuses on the importance of place attachment and how it plays into dormitory living. Given the conclusions of Scopelliti
and Tiberio (2010), one may link this positive bond to understanding dorm environments more completely.

Place attachment and sense of community allow us to see the importance of the common space. The question is how do we create a sense of community within a dormitory common space? Examining the student’s experience and looking for ways to improve positive experiences. The following figure shows the expected relationship among students’ perceptions, the resident hall common areas and our two main theoretic connections; place attachment and sense of community. Please note the arrows do not indicate causation merely that a relationship exists.

Figure 1

Theoretic Framework Diagram

Demographics of the University Population

In 2012, there were 20,949,000 university students in the U.S. This was a marked increase from the previous 10 years, when enrollment was just 16,612,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In fact, in those 10 years, enrollment increased in the state under study from 73,883 to over 100,000 (Oregon University System, 2012). At
the mid-sized, public university in northwestern U.S under study, there are 26,393 students. Of these, 16% lived in campus housing in fall 2012 (UHDS, 2012-h).

**First Year Experience**

The first year experience requires students to live on campus full-time for their first academic year. According to the first year experience website (OSU, n.d.-b), students living in university housing earn higher grades than those who live off campus and have a connection to campus with access to clubs and campus activities. Support is available when it’s needed; whether it is from the resident assistant and director in campus housing, or support centers in a variety of departments on campus. The housing provides a regulated expense as well as maintenance. The university hopes the first year experience will help students connect with their campus and community, and put them on the path to being a successful student (OSU, n.d.-b).

“First year interventions have grown dramatically in the last two decades with approximately 95% of U.S. 4-year institutions having some type of program” (Jamelske, 2008). In the university under study, all freshmen (with few exceptions) are required to live in campus residences. The university is implementing this in association with the First Year Experience Program which is meant to aid in “increasing the current freshman retention rates” (Fisher Communications, 2012).

**Design**

The need for dormitories arose from the need to have students live closer to their college. “In the colonial era the between students’ homes and the colleges, coupled with poor transportation systems, necessitated special living arrangements”
(Stewart, 1983, p.2). These facilities typically housed both students and teachers, and aid in not only providing shelter but also became a part of the education process.

One can describe student housing as fitting into one of three categories. The first of these are large dormitories or “dorm complexes” that can house between 100-1000 students. Typically, rooms accommodate one or two occupants. However, suite-style rooms may accommodate many more. The second category is called small group houses. Fraternities, sororities, and cooperative housing are examples of small group houses. According to Stewart (1983), these house 25-50 students, but some may be larger depending on the sorority or fraternity guidelines and space provided. The third housing category is an apartment or “self-contained unit.” While these have been operated by the university and populated by students with families on campuses, many apartments are off campus and managed by companies not associated with the university (Stewart, 1983).

**University Dormitory Designs**

Two main types of large dormitory design that have been used traditionally: corridor and suite. Corridor design typically consists of long rows of rooms shared by two people that open into a corridor. These may include one or more shared bathrooms, depending on the occupancy. Suite designs offer the environment of living with others in a unit. Suites typically consist of a several private or shared rooms and house between four and eight people. These rooms may include a bathroom, but usually do not have a kitchen. There is also access to a common space (Corbett, 1973).
In evaluation of dormitories in 1973, Corbett found that a common thread in student housing was the need for privacy. Given this, one could ask if it is necessary to have common space in the dormitory facility. However, other scholars (Devlin, et al, 2008; Heilweil, 1973) assert that even if students’ voice privacy as priority, common social areas are necessary to of a sense of community. The following is a brief description of the typical dormitory styles.

**Corridor**

Corridor dormitories are arranged with long hallways from which rooms open on either side. Each room consists of two or accommodates two or three people. Each person is provided with a bed, desk and chair, and a wardrobe or a place for storage. One distinguishing characteristic about corridor facilities is that there are shared bathrooms on each floor. This means these are not connected directly to private rooms; students must leave their room, and use the public hall space to get to the bathroom. Another distinguishing attribute to the corridor design is the use of lounge or common space on each floor. This is typically a type of living room or study space that can be utilized by students living in the facility; Corridor style dormitories are the setting for this study. Examples of this dormitory style are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.
Figure 2
Typical room plan in a corridor dormitory.


Figure 3
Typical hall floor plan in a corridor dormitory.

Suite

Another option for residence hall living is a suite-style design. Each unit has capacity for four students, in either four single or two double rooms, along with common space allocated within the unit. This includes two bathrooms, a living space, and (sometimes) a kitchenette. Examples of this design are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 4
Typical room plan in a suite-style dormitory.

Note: University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-c) Halsell Hall, room plans. Retrieved from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/halsell
Cooperative Houses

Finally, outside the defined residence halls, there are cooperative houses. These are set up to house students by providing study/personal space shared by two or three students, and a large, communal “sleeping porch where all the residents sleep. In addition to these areas, there are common living space and a full kitchen.
Figure 6
Typical cooperative house floor plan.

Figure 7
Typical cooperative house floor plan.


Public vs. Private Space

Public and private spaces differ greatly among the various university housing options. For the cooperative houses and the suite styles there is a shared common space with those who also share the private spaces. There is a low level of anonymity. However, in the corridor layouts, the private space is only shared among two or three people, and public space can be used by anyone who lives in the facility. One distinguishing aspect of the corridor style residence hall facilities is that the bathrooms may also be considered a semi-public space given that they can be used by
a large number of people. However, given the private nature of bathroom activities, the common space has been selected for this study.

**Suite vs Corridor**

The corridor style dormitory has been chosen for this study in coordination with the university housing and dining facilities. There is a trend among students at this mid-sized public university to prefer suite style dormitories given a higher level of personal space (Devlin, et al, 2008; Corbett, 1973). At this mid-size public university there are three reasons to use corridor residence halls for this study. First, 9 of 15 residence halls on this campus still remain in the corridor style.

Second, as mentioned previously, there is interest in understanding more about the socialization of student in residence halls. Devlin et al. (2008) examined students’ sense of community in residence halls; their data suggested that given a smaller personal space, students tended to interact with others rather than remain within their dorm room, “Thus, one can make a case that sense of community can develop out of the design of traditional corridors” (Devlin, et al., 2008, p. 513).

In terms of place attachment theory, corridor style residence halls are the ideal setting for this study to explore the sense of community and belonging among students sharing a public space. There is a concern for the amount of socialization and sense of community which can be examined with further information of not only the overall architecture style of the facility, but the interior design and amenities such as the common area (Devlin, et al, 2008; Heilweil, 1973). As mentioned by Scannell and Gifford (2010) the personal dimensions of place attachment can refer to a group, i.e. students living in a residence hall, thus a shared physical location in the residence hall
is ideal to better understand the impact on student’s shared experience in said residence hall. We can examine this place attachment in sense of community and belonging in corridor style residence halls.

The evaluation will be limited to the lounge study space provided on each floor to explore the association of the physical environment with the social assumptions of the space. That assumption being that the space is used to socialize, to contribute to a sense of community and belonging.

Impact of Dormitories on Behavior

Strange and Banning (2001) talk about three ideas of how the environment might impact one’s behavior. They discuss architectural determinism “direct link between the built environment and behavior within it” (2001, p.3). However, they suggest that this is too simplistic. In lieu of this, architectural possibilism is offered (Strange and Banning, 2001).

Architectural possibilism is guided by the built environment’s restrictions, while allowing behavior opportunities within them. This is what Strange and Banning call a passive approach. They give the example of a university without a sports arena; this may impact the student’s behavior and attitude toward the university. Finally, they discuss architectural probabilism. This goes beyond the possibilism’s passive approach, but goes to creating an environment that will provide the most probable chance to obtain the desired behavior. This may mean creating an environment to invite people in, or keep people out, or to create a space conducive to a specific activity. In terms of the common space, one might surmise that the size of the space,
accessible furniture, and hours of operation would impact the behavior taking place
within this space and extend to the level of socialization.

Summary

The transition into a university can be a stressful event (Boyer, 1987). However by factoring in a student’s built environment and their emotional bond to that space, we may be able to understand more about their transition (Astin, 1977; Hay, 1998; Strange & Banning, 2001). The university under study has implemented a new policy in the fall of 2013 which dictates that all freshmen must live in an on-campus facility; one of the goals of the dormitories is to foster a place of socialization and build the sense of community (Turner, 2012). Given this information, understanding more about every aspect of how the dormitory will influence students is even more important (Heilweil, 1973).
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The goal of this study was to explore university dormitory residents’ experience and perceptions of common areas. This study was based on the assumption that the common area in a university dormitory was a space to facilitate socialization leading to a sense of community for students. Aims of the study include: 1) to explore student’s general perception of common areas; 2) to understand how students use the common space; 3) to examine students’ perceptions of the functional and aesthetic design of the common space; and 4) to discover how they use the space to socialize with other students. The study employed semi-structured interviews and qualitative data analysis. The theory of place attachment was used to guide the development of the interview guide. Although there was no set methodological approach that is optimal for studying place attachment (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001), employing an exploratory approach and using terms that pertain to both tangible and intangible ideas provided valuable insights (Morgan, 2010).

Sample

The population targeted for this study was college students. The sample was recruited from students attending a mid-size, public university in northwestern U.S. Participants must be at least 18 years of age, and native speakers of English. Participants must have lived or be currently living in one of the four corridor-style, university owned dormitories during the 2012-2013 or 2013-2014 academic year to ensure that their experiences are as current as possible.

This was a non-randomized convenience sample; therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all those living in university housing. However, as
an exploratory study, it may be valuable in identifying issues to guide further studies among similar populations.

The corridor style of dormitories was chosen due to the style of space planning and how it influences sense of belonging and community. As discussed above, the common spaces are of particular interest in terms of socializing. As well as being a dominated percentage of the residence halls on this mid-sized public university, the corridor residence halls provide a common space lounge for socialization.

In terms of the place attachment theory, we see the justification of the importance of time spent in common areas. These locations allow us to examine the social aspect in terms of the people who spent time there. The theory indicates several aspects to be aware of as we examine the data. The person dimension, the interactions in that space, the psychological dimension, as well as the physical space, the place dimension (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The social space in corridor residence halls also allows us a larger number of students for possible subjects.

These facilities have hallways with two-to-three-person rooms opening on either side of long hallways (see Figure 1 and Figures 2). Each side has a common area lounge located approximately half way down the hallways. This common area is the closest space in which to socialize outside the personal dormitory room, and thus is an ideal target for this study.

For this study, four corridor-style dormitory facilities were selected that were the most similar in campus location, architecture, and interior design. All four were renovated within a few years of each other, providing spaces that are similar in style
and maintenance. These strong similarities also ensure participant anonymity and fully comparable data regardless of the participants’ dormitory residence.

**Recruitment**

Recruitment of the sample as detailed in this section was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This recruitment was facilitated by the university housing service and the assistant director of marketing and assessment, with whose help the appropriate dormitories were selected for the study. Students were initially contacted for participation via appropriate list serves for those who are living in the targeted dorms. A letter of invitation was provided to the housing service, including a description of the study and elements of the Informed Consent to be used in the recruitment e-mail. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were clearly outlined in the initial recruitment email. Potential participants meeting the inclusion criteria were asked to contact the researcher directly for possible inclusion in the study. The researcher then coordinated individually with those students who indicate interest to schedule a meeting for the interview. There could be up to 30 participants in this study. The optimal number of interviewees was 16, minimum number 12.

Unfortunately, this approach to sampling did only yielded two participants that were qualified, so the method of recruitment was altered slightly. The rest of the participants were collected by convenience, recruiting outside the library. They were approached by the student researcher and asked if they lived in one of the 4 residence halls identified. If they answered with yes, they would be given the details of the study and asked to participate immediately. All participants met the qualifications
described above and the interviews were conducted as described in the sections to follow.

**Consent Process**

All elements of Informed Consent were included as an attachment in the recruitment email distributed by the housing service. Prior to beginning the interview and before any audio recording initiated, the Informed Consent (Appendix 2) was reviewed, questions were answered, and a signature was collected.

To ensure comprehension of consent was obtained, open-ended questions were asked of each participant. Questions include:

1) What questions might you have that I can answer for you?

2) To ensure that you understand what the study involves, please tell me what you think we are planning to do?

**Data Collection and Instrument**

The data for this study were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews based on open ended questions (see Appendix 1). While the interview questions were not sent to the participant prior to the interview, the participants were encouraged to think and reflect upon their time spent in the dormitory, particularly the common space near their room. These interviews took place in a small private study room at the university library, and each would last approximately one hour. Photos of the participant’s common space lounge were provided for reference during the interview.

The interview questions were developed in mind of the theoretical guidance of Place Attachment as well as the physical environment. Questions having to do with
place attachment were supported by feeling questions that may allow the researchers to get a sense of how attached the students are to the space. In a study by Hidalgo & Hernandez, they evaluated place attachment by looking for key phrases such as “I would be sorry to move out” (2001). The physical environment questions were developed with the use of the space in mind; attempting to understand the built environment and how it encouraged or discouraged behaviors.

This space allowed for a quiet location for the interview to take place, without unwanted distractions or noise. The advantages to using a private space outside of the dormitory allowed the interviewee to answer without fear of being overheard by those who may pass by. The location also allows a quiet place for a high quality audio recording.

The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis; no identifying information was used on the transcription or on any of the records associated with the study. All recordings were stored on a password-protected computer until transcription has been completed. Once each file has been transcribed, recorded data files were destroyed.

**Data Analysis**

The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Given the exploratory nature of this project, the analysis of these data was relying on standard content analysis methods (Berg, 2012). The verbatim transcripts were analyzed and coded for prevailing themes. In an iterative process, the themes were discussed, and reconciled with another member of the research team. This consisted of a research team member
identifying themes through an initial review. Then, a second research team member reviewed the initial coding and verifying or negating the themes identified by the initial review.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This chapter reports the major themes found through the interviews, mainly the perceptions of the common areas overall as well as the function and aesthetics, how the students use of the common space, and finally how the space is used with other students in social ways. The data analysis section is followed by how these themes relate to the four main research questions.

Background

Thirteen undergraduate students participated in the study. Of these 13 participants, all were over the age of 18, were native English speakers, and had lived in one of the identified residence halls. Of the participants, 4 were male, 9 were female. The participants came from Oregon and California with one participant from Idaho. They had a variety of majors, but all lived within the residence halls during the 2012-2013 or 2013-2014 academic years. Each had a private semi-structured interview discussing their experience during that time.
Table 1. Residence Hall Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Buxton</th>
<th>Cauthorn</th>
<th>Hawley</th>
<th>Poling</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Total</strong></td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>100% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In State</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>69% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of State</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location Total</strong></td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>100% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany, Pre-Med</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise Sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Themes**

Among the many topics discussed during the interviews, certain themes emerged from the comments of the students. The participants often provided more information than will be described here, but this discussion is limited to the reasons the students provided of why the space impacted their behavior. These spatial impacts are discussed in relation to the following major themes and sub-categories: *Lifestyle*
change (Sub-category: comfort on campus), Work, Social/membership environment, Aesthetics (Sub-Category: suggested space changes), and Other functions.

**Lifestyle change**

Moving from a family home to a residence hall has been indicated as a strong influence for adjustment. The majority of students indicated that there was an adjustment period that needed to occur in order to be comfortable on campus. This adjustment period consisted of changes in their day-to-day lifestyle in order to adapt to their new environment. Membership was a key part of this adjustment; friends made in the residence halls, during classes, or those with similar interests.

Major changes in lifestyles were mainly focused on the difference between their home with their family and the residence halls. Lifestyle changes were diverse, many described basic life functions as having changed; things such as going to get their food at a cafeteria, and doing their own laundry. As this participant reveals, their lifestyle changed as their environment and the needs of that environment changed.

“Lifestyle change having to get your own food and your own laundry. There really isn't as much as when you live in an apartment like I do now. Back when you live in a dorm it was still a lifestyle change having neighbors and be concerned about noise levels and we were usually the ones who had to be aware of the sound levels. The RTC lived next door and was up early, different lifestyle change” (Interview #5).

Participants also highlighted the change in location that they spent time in, mainly the change in use of their bedroom. At their previous residence, usually their parent’s home, they would spend time in various locations of their house for the various activities. Some mentioned doing their homework in the kitchen, sharing time with their family. Others mentioned using their residence hall room as their dining room; very rarely eating in the dining centers. One student said he or she would eat,
sleep, and study all in one room. In the residence halls, many of these activities, and more, would be done in their private room. The private room was one they shared with someone they may or may not have known prior to their living together.

Participants identified a frustration in sharing private spaces such as their bedroom and bathroom facilities. They are now living with other students not only their immediate family: mother, father, and siblings. Many participants found it difficult to share a tight space with someone they did not know; others found an opportunity and enjoyed living with a large number of people their own age.

“I had to share a tiny ass room with another person I didn’t know. [And] I was used to having my own personal space, and being free to by me, and be comfortable in my environment. So it was definitely a lot different; a lot smaller, a lot more confined. I had to share a bathroom with a bunch of other girls. I basically was put in a little mini prison with people that I didn’t know, and maybe, didn’t necessarily like” (Interview #12).

Participants discussed how they had to adjust too many things on campus. Simple things such as taking a shower required taking items from their dorm room walking down the hall way and into a shared bathroom. Participants identified many changes in how they went about their daily routine that varied from their previous routine. And though they changed their lifestyle, there was an overwhelming feeling of comfort and campus affection. Participants were very honest that comfort on campus was not immediate. There were many lifestyle changes and effort put forth from the student to make that change that contributed to that level of comfort.

*Comfort on campus*

While students may have needed to adjust to a new lifestyle while living in the residence halls, students seem to adjust over time. While they found
issue with their private spaces and some of the amenities, they detailed many positives aspects of their overall campus experience. There were two major themes that came out of the data that contributed to that comfort. The first is being more familiar with the campus.

Participants described times when they were first on campus, and felt anxiety in navigating their way around campus. When students come onto campus, they are learning to work in a new environment, not just within the residence halls. 62% (8 participants) of the participants identified the physical environment as a contributing factor to their comfort on campus. This participant describes their time on campus and some aspects of being comfortable in this environment.

“Just getting to know more people, getting comfortable with where I’m at, knowing where I’m going. In the beginning I’d have to use the I OSU app and have to look on [the] map just to find my classes. And now it’s just, oh yeah, I know where to go. So I think that that’s a big change. Just knowing where you’re going” (Interview #11).

The second, more prevalent theme that is related to being comfortable on campus is the social aspect. The majority of the participants, 69% (9 participants), linked being comfortable on campus with meeting more people; the way in which the participants identified meeting these people varied from making friends in the residence halls to meeting other students in classes.

The participants used the physical location of the campus and the facilities to connect with other students. Participants identified getting to know other students in classes, a dining facility, at a sporting event, or just living in the same residence hall. Having a shared experience can create a connection. These participants identified having that connection with another student to be a major part of being comfortable.
“Meeting more people; I met people in my dorm and became friends, so just getting your friend group. And just going to classes because you could meet people with similar interests” (Interview #3)

These relationships were not just isolated to fellow students; they were also described as teachers and staff. Getting to know the support players on campus and being familiar with the processes “…eased the transition” (Interview #10). There was an outlier contributor to comfort on campus. A participant who identified an aspect of comfort on campus that others did not, but that was notable.

This outlier identified being around other students with similar purpose as a contributing factor for comfort. This is not to say they were friends, or connected with the other students, but rather that they were encouraged by an overall shared objective of furthering educational goals. These students seemed to be comforted by the fact the other students were experiencing the same thing they were. They may not have been experiencing them together, but just knowing that there were others going through the same thing helped them to feel like they were not alone. In fact, this participant found it inspiring to be surrounded by other likeminded students.

I felt free, I guess. I felt free, like a fresh start. You know, with thousands of people around me every day, people who are studying who have goals to do and be something more in life. That’s awesome being around those types of people everywhere you turn. It’s nice to be in that environment and I consider myself very lucky” (Interview #12).

As with most, this comfort was not immediate, it takes time for a comfort level to be reached, while there is no general timeline provided; timelines were alluded to within the data. Participants using terms like not until, or over time suggests that comfort was a lengthy process and may even be staggered. Being
comfortable in one aspect of living on campus may not mean they are comfortable with all aspects of living on campus.

“…I feel like I don’t belong here. I feel welcomed in some areas and not so welcomed in other areas” (Interview #2).

Transitioning onto campus can be a challenge, and the data provided by the participants gives us a good base to move onto other aspects of the data. Looking further into experiences students had in specific physical environments in the residence halls and how that impacted their sense of community.

**Functional Environment**

*Work*

The students were asked a variety of questions about the function of the space provided. Some questions were specific to how the space was used in terms of work; i.e. homework, studying, group work, collaboration, etc... The following section examines how the space was used in terms of work, the function, and how the space helped or hindered this type of behavior. Students were asked whether and why they chose to study there; and if they preferred an alternate location, where else they were studying and why.

There were three main locations where students chose to study; their residence hall bedrooms, the library, and the common area. The choice to use their residence hall room or the university library was usually a preference in comparison to the common area in terms of study environment. Those who preferred a quiet, less distracting environment and those who preferred not to be in public while studying versus those who would work with friends or with a study group in the same class.
“I think that the whole point of them [common areas] is technically to study there, but, I mean, I saw a couple of people studying there, but I personally need more of a study environment and people would use the lounge for multiple different things. So it just doesn’t really mesh” (Interview #12).

Those who preferred to study in the library were very clear that they preferred the working environment of the library in comparison to other options on campus. As mentioned above, those who tended to prefer the library cited things like noise levels or needing fewer distractions.

“I don't like that anybody can be in that lounge for any reason, whether it’s like to play sports like ping pong, pool, or just general conversation. So if I want to study with no noise that is not necessarily an option I could have using that space” (Interview #10).

The common area was open to be used for a variety of other functions, not only provided for work or group study. While this was not a common complaint within the data provided, there was an outlier who indicated that it would have been preferable for spaces to be separated, had options to provide designated time for specific activities, or able to be reserved so the space could be used with no disturbances by others.

For the participants who did use the common areas as a place to work, they often used them with other students. A positive aspect of the space was that it could accommodate multiple people as a work environment. We will discuss the specifics of the working environment in the next section furnishing and equipment.

The data suggest that students viewed this space as a place to work with people in a group. It has the capability of accommodating several people using various seating and work space options.

“There were tables you could do homework on. It was a big room; a lot of people could fit in there” (Interview #9).
Those who utilized the common area described studying as more of a social or a collaborative endeavor rather than as an isolated one. Thus, they talked about their time in the space as a place to study with friends, or a place to study with people in the same class. However, those who felt they needed private time, or a space away from activities in the residence halls, chose other locations to study.

**Furnishing and equipment**

In understanding why students did or did not use this space, we also looked at the furnishings and equipment that was used in the physical environment. Tables, chairs, couches, and white boards were all terms used in data provided by the participants. As described above those who used the space for work purposes did so as it worked well for group study.

“I would go in with friends I knew, or people I knew in the class. There is a white board on the wall so we’d draw problems and we’d talk about that” (Interview #14).

The data suggest that the space was well equipped with the necessities for a work space. But not everyone was satisfied with the bare necessities. Participants identified a few things that would have been *nice* to have in the space for work purposes.

One participant had suggested that having computer stations with printers would have been a plus. Students who do not have their own printer would be encouraged to use one of the computer labs or the library computer/printer facilities provided on campus. Having them provided in the common areas would have been a convenience.

Another participant had suggested more comfortable chairs for the tables. Students who use this space to study often spend several hours in one space. This
participant proposed having ergonomic chairs or the adding of some kind of cushion to retrofit the space to help with the comfort of students who use the space for an extended period of time.

“…maybe put cushions on the hard chairs next to the tables. Because most of the time people were sitting there doing homework were sitting there for a long time. And that could be uncomfortable or bad for their bodies to sit there for too long on a hard surface” (Interview #11).

“Maybe different chairs; those chairs are not comfortable for long periods of time, and a lot of people go in there to study. I’d get ansy and that I don’t want to sit there” (Interview #3).

The space was being used by only some of the participants for study purposes; however those who used it also indicated that it was sufficient for working purposes. They specifically cited things like the chairs and hard surface desks in the space as things that make it a suitable work space. However, there were also those who did found the furniture sufficient for work but for other reasons, looked for alternative locations to study.

“The beginning of the year I studied in the lounge, but the one on my floor was a loud lounge. People liked to hang out in there not study in there, so I did a lot of my studying at the library” (Interview #9).

Other functions

Many of the common areas would have a microwave and a small sink for food students would want in the residence halls. A common complaint within the data provided by the participants is the trash associated with having a “kitchenette” like space. This space consisted of a small set of cabinets, a small counter top with a sink and microwave. This space is limited in size and functionality was limited to things cooked in the microwave or washed in the sink.
Many felt as though people would throw away their food in the common areas and this trash was not discarded in a timely manner, and thus the odor in the common area would become an issue.

“Oh, I didn’t really like the kitchen that much, it was really small and I feel like the whole point of a kitchen to keep your food there and to cook it. And if you don’t want to eat at the dining hall- I hated eating at the dining hall- but I also hated that kitchen. I didn’t really want to cook food in it” (Interview #12).

With this in mind, some participants would have liked a larger area for this kitchen space. This would be a place for students who enjoyed cooking to do so and an area that would not affect the space for students to study or socialize.

**Social/Membership Environment**

Students used these spaces for more than just homework purposes. These spaces were also used as a social spot, a place for students to meet and socialize. The participants mentioned using the space for other activities such as *hanging-out* or playing games.

The participants of this study mentioned socialization as playing a major part in their transition onto campus. As discussed above, this relationship development plays an important part in a comfort level in a place.

“Yeah, we would like to play games sometimes, like cards against humanity, a lot of us would just like hang out there. I don’t know. Like, sometimes people would just watch movies in there. I’ve watched movies a couple of times in there… No, we used that space for dance party things, and for our hall counsel. And they showed movies before, so you could do it if you wanted to” (Interview #3).

The social interactions in the residence halls were not only in the common areas, we see them being mentioned also in other areas of the residence halls. Private
spaces, such as their room, or other public spaces like the hallway are also places that people would enjoy their time together.

“A lot of time, in my dorm room, watching TV or whatever; or a lot of us would sit in the hall way and talk; the group of people that I lived around” (Interview #3).

For the participants who did not use this space for social activities, it appeared to be dependent on if their friend group used the space. There are students who would meet there regularly after going out for the evening, or those who would use it for group activities. Then again, if their group liked to meet at someone’s apartment, or in someone’s private room, then they would be a lot less likely to use the space for social activities.

**Aesthetic Environment**

Overall, the student’s perception of the space was divided into two groups. 38% of the participants found the space to be fine with little input for aesthetic improvement, whereas 62% of the participants indicated they wanted it to be more decorated and more home-like. The most common thing discussed was to improve the color or décor of the walls. Many participants mentioned the lack of decoration and wanted more color or wall décor.

“It was not homey and sterile. I didn't like them so I didn't spend much time there at all, it felt weird, it was awkward… Super bland like it is not decorated so it doesn't seem very homey. It seems like very like square, just not warm like home” (Interview #6).

The aesthetics, for some, impacted how they utilized the common space. Some felt if the space was more aesthetically pleasing they would feel more comfortable utilizing the space. This space is a natural choice for someone looking
for alternative space to spend time while in the residence halls. Choosing to create a space that is more welcoming may encourage more students to use the space.

“Put some stuff on the walls I would make it more entertaining customizing to kids. Like posters but I suppose there could be some issues with customizing but it is just so plain and so bland. No one feels it is welcoming they only go there because they have a loud roommate or giving their roommate privacy because that has happened. So it is like wasn't my first option to go there because it just wasn't that welcoming” (Interview #5).

The perceptions of the aesthetic environment were very clear; the participants did not care for the aesthetic appeal of the common spaces. The data supports this claim with terms used by participants that were negative in tone; some such words included but were not limited to: boring, bland, not homey, or blank. With this in mind, the participants were asked what they might do to change the space so it was more appealing.

Suggested changes

Specific aspects of the common spaces were cited by the participants as opportunities for change or things to add. The primary aspect that participants wanted to change, as mentioned above, is the amount of decoration on the walls. The students felt it would make it more interesting, homey, or a place that would attract more students to use the space.

“I am one of those people who like things aesthetically pleasing. So I would probably make the rooms homier by adding colors to the walls and hanging some art on the walls” (Interview #6).

Other participants also cited updating the furniture so it felt more inviting; changing a space so it is more like a home and less institutional. Another such suggestion that was very popular in the data had to do with the cleanliness or lack thereof. Thus the participants suggested a deep clean of all the furniture.
“But, as far as the social lounges, some more decoration or something, like trying to… I know some RA’s in the past have like- they’ve like put sheets on like the couches to try to make them a different color so they’re not all the same monotonous blue furniture” (Interview #1).

The aesthetics of the common areas leave something to be desired by these participants. This has come through as a strong theme supported by the data. The participants have provided some suggestions as to what they feel would help the space better serve their needs. These suggestions largely have to do with the color of the walls and the “homey” quality of the space. Some even suggested they would be more likely to use the space if it was better designed.

In looking into reasons why students used this space, the data suggests it has to do with what they are using the space for; are they using it for work or for social activities? The data also suggests that the aesthetics are a negative association for the participants. We will examine further what the data provided by the students mean in terms of our original 4 research questions.

**Research Questions**

In terms of the findings of these semi-structured interviews and our original research questions we will now address how they relate. Each of the four research questions will be expanded with connection to major themes from the material provided by the student participants.

*Question #1, what are student’s general perceptions of common areas?*

The perception of the common areas in the residence halls as discussed by the participants of this study are based on what they think the space should be, or what they would like to use the space for. As detailed in the findings sections, students use
this space for a variety of activities, and thus, the participant’s perception will be
colored by their presumption of the function of this space.

In general, when asked the question “what are you general feelings about the common
area?” students responded with suggestions on what they wished the space was or
had. However, many still used the space regardless of if they felt like it could be
improved. Some cited furnishings kitchen facilities, aesthetics, or other equipment in
the space that they felt if altered, would improve their experience in the space. But
this all depends on how students use the space. Question #2, How do students use the
common space?

Students look at the common space with a variety of opinions. As discussed
above, the perception of the space really depends on what the students would like to
use it for. As for the function of the space the participants identified two main themes
for use: work and social activities.

In terms of work space, the students overall seem to feel as though the space is
sufficient. The perception of the furnishings (work space, tables, chairs, white boards)
is that they work well. That is, if the student is able to work in that environment.
Some perceive these spaces to be too distracting and noisy, thus they prefer to work
in other locations on campus, namely the library.

As far as using this space for social activities, again, students seem to perceive
these spaces in an overall positive light. They find that the couches and chairs are
sufficient for meeting with friends and hanging-out. However, this perception is
dependent upon their social group, or membership.
If a student’s social group spends time in the common area, the student seems to have a more positive perception of the space; they spend more time in the space and associate positive shared experiences with their friends. However, if their social group does not spend time in that space, it is less likely that they will spend their social time in that space, and, of the participants in this study, seem to have less of an opinion on the space as they do not use the space for those purposes.

Some participants indicated a want to utilize the space for the kitchen facilities, but these were considered sub-par by these participants. They also remarked on the lack of cleanliness. Trash was mentioned in more than one interview as an issue that needed to be addressed.

Question #3, What are students’ perceptions of the function and aesthetics design of the common area?

As discussed in the findings sections, the students’ perceptions of this space is based upon the use of the space. In terms of the function of the space, students felt like it worked functionally. It serves well for students to socialize as well as those who need work space for group study. The space provides furnishings that include tables, chairs, couches, and white boards, that students can use the space as they need. Therefore it appears to work functionally.

The perceptions of the aesthetics in the common areas are very clear. The students feel like the designed space needs to be updated. The students identify the lack of color on the walls as well as the lack of decoration overall in the space as problematic. The participants of this study also identify this space as not having a home like quality. The data suggest the student would prefer to have this space with
some of the aforementioned qualities. Some of the participants think this could encourage more use of the space.

Updated furnishings were also noted. Some described the furnishings as old, or bland. The participants, regardless of what they used the space for (social or work) indicated a want for updated furniture. New, more comfortable chairs for the tables, Clean, reupholstered couches and lounge chairs. They also wanted to vary the color; the standard blue was not enjoyed.

Question #4, How do students’ use this space to socialize with others?
There are many ways this space is used with others. Even when used for work purposes, many times this space is being used with others. Socializing is not just when students are hanging-out or watching a movie; socialization can also happen while studying. The data suggest these spaces were used with groups regardless if it is for work or play. These groups can be just two people, a pair of roommates playing on their laptops, or a large group utilizing the tables and whiteboard for some group study.

Socialization in the space is a main theme in this data. Every participant detailed time spent in the space with another person, even if not habitually. We see this in all aspects of the use of the space as well as in the suggestions for change. All point to a space being utilized for socialization and shared experiences.

These qualitative data look at how the students perceive these spaces and how this relates to our research questions. The next chapter will examine how this information relates to our theories described in chapter 2 and how this impacts sense of community.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to use semi-structured interviews to explore university dormitory residents’ perceptions of common areas, and role of the common areas in their sense of community and belonging. The study focused on four research questions: 1) to explore student’s general perception of common areas; 2) to understand how students use the common space; 3) to examine students’ perceptions of the functional and aesthetic design of the common space; 4) to discover how they use the space to socialize with other students. This research was conducted to have a better understanding of students’ experience on campus and, in particular, the residence hall experience.

This chapter is divided into 7 sections. The findings and the interpretations are described in the same major theme categories as seen in chapter 4 (Lifestyle change, work, Social/membership, & Aesthetics). Each of these will be discussed in terms of our 4 research questions detailed above. This is followed by the discussions of the study limitations and suggestions for future research.

Lifestyle change
The literature suggests that students adjusting to campus life will have lifestyle changes. Students have to adjust from home life to university life. With this adjustment, new experiences must be formed in understanding the new environment (Boyer, 1987). Place attachment research suggests that over time and experience an attachment may be formed. This attachment explains the connection students feel toward their new physical and social environments (Altman & Low, 1992; Scannell and Gifford, 2010).
The participants discussed how their daily routine and social aspects changed when they moved onto campus and into the residence halls. They adjusted to the norms of their new lifestyle. These included but were not limited to: less privacy in the residence halls, eating in a dining facility, going to classes, doing their own laundry. The data provided by the participants aligned with the three dimensions of place attachment that Scannell and Gifford (2010) use to define place attachment; personal, psychological, and physical.

The participants use their shared experience on campus as the personal dimension. Scannell and Gifford describe this dimension of place attachment both at an individual as well as a group level (2010). From this data there is a strong indication of group connection with descriptions of shared experiences and a common lifestyle. Participants detail their time spent with friends in the common space as well as other locations on campus. These descriptions lend themselves to the idea that these experiences help shape the attachment between student and physical environment.

The psychological dimension as described by Scannell and Gifford is, “...the way that individuals or groups relate to a place, and the nature of the psychological interactions that occur in the environments that are important to them” (2010). This data indicates that this relationship was emotionally based, as students adjust to a new place. Participants indicated a shift in how they related to the physical environment. The participants used descriptive words such as; *anxiety and nervous* to describe their early time on campus, but these soon changed in tone as the participants recalled their social interactions, as well as their familiarity with the physical environment.
Even at a group level, the shared experiences of this transition. As described in chapter 4, some participants found comfort in knowing other students were having the same experiences; regardless of their personal connection, it was a shared connection within this physical environment. In other words, just as Scannell and Gifford (2010) describe this dimension as a relation with the *place*, we see this relation and experience within this place as a common thread among participants.

Finally, the place dimension is the campus itself; not just the residence halls, but participants also indicated time spent in their classes, at the dining facilities, the library and other locations on campus. Scannell and Gifford (2010) describe this as the most important aspect of place attachment. Participants in this study, as described above, indicate a strong connection with people they have shared time with, the experiences shared during that time, and now the locations at which those experiences took place. This connection to place for the participants in this study is important as examination of this data and how the physical environment influences the time spent there. However, in this section it is just important to note there is a connection and an indication of attachment to the physical environment.

*Comfort on campus*

This new lifestyle and culture was reinforced by friendships establishing and membership formed. The participants identified making friends and social aspects to creating a comfort on campus. As Altman and Low describe, this place attachment is shaped emotionally and culturally (1992, p4-5). The participants identified this connection to the campus as membership found in both the familiarity with their surroundings and in friendships formed with other students.
This familiarity developed over time spent on campus. Both the acquaintance to the physical environment and their social connections were indicated as contributing factors to their transition onto campus. These students were new, as they learn how to live on campus; they find companionship with others who are doing the same thing.

This is where we begin to see this connection take place, an attachment is formed, and thus a sense of community is a by-product. Participants’ new lifestyle and actions are reinforced by others experiencing the same transition. Just as Chavis and McMillan (1986) described, as these students are successful in navigating their new surroundings, behavior is reinforced and a new normality.

Creating this new attachment with the university may make their transition into university lifestyle easier. Scopelliti and Tiberios (2010) identified homesickness as a negative aspect to this lifestyle transition; homesickness being a negative contributor to students’ well-being. Within their study, social relations were identified as a predictor of homesickness.

While this data does not identify or discuss the concept of homesick, students’ identified being initially uncomfortable with their surroundings. However, 69% (9 participants) identified relationships as a contributing factor in their comfort on campus.

In terms of the physical environment, Scopelliti and Tiberios (2010) indicate this as another strong indicator of homesickness. Again, while there is not analysis of homesickness in this study, there is a connection identified by the participants between comfort on campus and getting to know campus. 62% (8 participants)
identified the known physical environment as a contributing factor to their comfort on campus.

**Functional Environment**

Work Environment

As described in chapter 4, participants valued a variety of areas in terms of a work environment. Those who prefer the library, common spaces, private residence hall rooms, or other buildings on campus, created a positive experience, encouraged the participants to continue using the space for those activities and thus reinforced behavior for their study needs.

The purpose of this study is to explore university dormitory residents’ perceptions of common areas, and role of the common areas in their sense of community and belonging. As such, the discussion above determined that students created an attachment on campus with their transition to campus life, what the dimensions are of that attachment, and how the participants related to those dimensions. The data analysis shifts now from the broad campus to the specific common area, as is the focus of this study.

Common areas can be a place of work. This is where students come to study; long hours may be spent here, usually with others of similar goals, many times those working together or in a group study session. These shared experiences can create a place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992). If this is a habitual, or recurrent, then the culture of these members may be helped by this space. Again, as the framework described above, we see the development of an attachment as described by Scannell and Gifford (2010).
The data suggests that the participants who found value in the common space, in terms of a work function, found the space to be more or less sufficient. A positive experience influenced the decision to study in that space a second time, and then a third, an attachment formed as this becomes a part of their culture study experience (Altman & Low, 1992).

While this study is focused on common spaces, work place attachment is not isolated to the common areas. Attachment with other study preferences developed in a similar manner; those who prefer the library, reinforced behavior for their study needs, and perhaps an emotional attachment to that space.

**Social/membership Environment**

Just as with the work environment and place attachment, social environments have the same basic structure. Time spent in a place, shared experiences, a positive reinforcement and location where one’s group can create somewhat of a cultural norm, may result in students having a place attachment.

The development of an attachment is very much done in the same manner as described above in the work section; a particular location, membership in a group of people, and shared emotional connection through experiences (Altman & Low, 1992; Low, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

This community has had a positive experience within that space, and will continue to use it for social activities. These activities may create a shared emotional connection as they have experiences together in the common area. Chavis and McMillan discuss this in their 4 part framework for *sense of community*: membership, influence, reinforcement, shared emotional connection (1986).
In terms of sense of community, however, there is strong association with community and membership as participants detailed their time spent in the common area in social circumstances. As discussed in chapter 4, time spent in the common area seemed to be dependent up whether or not ones social group spent time in the common areas. This membership and cultural norm leads to being an influence within the group.

“… It is pretty fun, every Sunday we watch the Walking Dead so that is pretty fun. People set up cool looking events, last Friday we had little haunted houses and stuff. So there is fun stuff in the lounges” (Interview #7).

Reinforcement occurs as the participant discusses their positive experience in the space. The habitual nature of the participant in their group of friends and the time spent in the space and that shared positive emotional connection. Participants often use the words fun, glad, or nice in reference to time spent in the common areas (Chavis & McMillan, 1986). This data helps view this space as a positive contributor to sense of community as well as place attachment for students on campus.

**Aesthetic Environment**

Participants in this study overwhelmingly felt that the common spaces lacked a homey feel. As detailed in chapter 4, terms used by participants that were negative in tone; some such words included but were not limited to: boring, bland, not homey, or blank. “Persons are also linked to their homes by affective and emotional bonds; social relationships are manifested in spatial, psychological, and interpersonal terms, as people use objects and areas in the home to engage in social interaction, mutual succorance, and the like” (Altman & Werner, 1985, p. 4).

In order to help create a more positive emotional bond and thus a place attachment, the participants offered suggestions as to what they might like to see in
the space. They highlighted things such as the wall color as well as the décor. A less common suggestion lied with the furnishings in the space. Some would like to see updates in terms of style, color, and cleanliness.

These suggestions would all be in hopes that this would create a more welcoming environment. In the previous two sections (work and social environments) time spent in the common area does seem to support some sense of community. As such, creating a space that may be more attractive to bring in additional students may help enhance a sense of community in the residence halls. The Revised Theoretical Framework

**Theoretic Framework Diagram Revised**

In chapter 2 we discussed the framework that was driving this study, looking at the relationship among the students’ perceptions, the residence hall common areas and the two main theories. The diagram has changed to include the major themes found in the data as well as their relationships with the student experience/perception and the theories.

Figure 8

*Revised* Theoretical Framework
Design Guidelines for Place Attachment and Sense of Community

The common space provided by the residence halls have been discussed as a place for students to work and socialized. The aesthetics of this have been analyzed by the participants of this study, but there is more to the space than the aesthetics. The following ideas are based on the data provided by the participants of this study, but these will need further verification in future research on residence halls, place attachment, and sense of community.

Alternative desk space would be helpful. In addition to the tables and chairs already provided, standalone laptop tables that can be used while sitting at a couch or on a chair would provide additional areas for work. If they were adjustable heights, these may be used at a couch or chair, for a standing workstation, as well as practicing presentations. This flexibility may increase the usability of the space and thus the student’s use of the space. This additional use and experience in the space may encourage a place attachment.

Couches and chairs that can be altered to one’s liking, perhaps with removable cushions that could be used as floor seating or back support. This may encourage social space, adding additional seats when needed. This social behavior would enhance membership and sense of community among students who used the space together.

The data suggest that a separation of kitchen and common space is wanted. The addition of a door separating the two spaces would mean that students would still have access to the kitchen facilities while in the common space, but the smell of
cooking food or noisy activities would not disturb others while in the common space. Eliminating this negative aspect of the common space may encourage additional students to use the space for work or for social activities. The data also indicates students wanting to use the space for cooking, additional food storage and appliances would be helpful in encouraging cooking. The activity of cooking may also help encourage a sense of community as students may be able to cook together and socialize.

Time spent in these common areas as with other students, as supported by the data helps encourage membership and sense of communities. These shared experiences lend to developing a place attachment and a comfort on campus as students transition to university life. This is space that students can find joy in using.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. These were related to the sample size, the restriction in the type of residence hall, the number of halls in the study, and where the sample was collected. The sample was a convenience sample done with willing participants outside the library. This should be acknowledged as questions pertaining to study location preferences would have been skewed toward preferred the library. The sample was also small, due to this; these findings cannot be generalized, rather used as a jumping off point for development of a more complete interview guide.

As a relatively new researcher, and interviewer, further pursuit of some of the answers would have been preferred. Questions answered yes or no should have been encouraged to explain *why* or *why not*. This may have provided a more complete view of the data.
Due to the time and location of this research project, observations were not possible, however observing several common areas as well as tracking traffic patterns would have aided in more substantial findings. Watching students come and go, as well as using these opportunities for more feedback from students may produce more thorough, or even different results than those reported from the small sampling.

The interview process was time consuming, a such limiting the architectural style of the residence halls was necessary; however, again as in the sample size, these findings cannot be generalized to the rest of the campus, only to the four residence halls.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This research, as discussed in the previous section, should be taken as place to start. While the participants gave some helpful insight into their perceptions of the common areas and how it relates to *sense of community*, further development of the interview guide would be recommended. Using the findings in this study and tailoring a survey to be distributed campus wide would yield more generalized, comprehensive data.

This information is helpful for student housing personnel as they work with students on transitioning; using information about community and aesthetics for common areas in future remodeling or any updates on current spaces. Knowing how the students use these spaces can help in terms of how to allocate these spaces.

Taking into consideration the types of activities done in the space, as discussed in the limitation section, future research may focus on tracking traffic
patterns and observations in the common areas would be helpful in gaining a more comprehensive view on how the space is used.

Further studies should also take into consideration other types of on-campus living. Broadening their research scope to include suites, sororities and fraternities, and co-operative housing may also yield some insight into how sense of community is fostered in common areas. These spaces are all occupied by students from the same university, this large-scale research project would help gain a comparative approach to different types of architectural styles and may provide more details into ideal student housing.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to explore university dormitory residents’ perceptions of common areas, and role of the common areas in their sense of community and belonging. This study aims to explore student perceptions and experiences in the dormitory common areas and examine whether and to what extent the space affects students’ sense of belonging and sense of community. This study focuses on the participants to lead to a greater understanding the built environment within a residence hall.

This study finds that the participants have a strong connection to the campus as a whole, but depending on their needs, may or may not have a strong connection to the common area in the residence halls. The participants utilize the space for a variety of things. Many times they will be connected with a membership with a group of like-minded students; those who use it for study and work or those who use it for social activities, or those who use it for a bit of both.
Place attachment focused this study on the transition onto campus and how the student’s perceived the space. The participants tend to have a sense of community in the space, however find the aesthetics uninviting. The participants suggest changes to the space to create a more inviting area for students to use.
References


Turner, H. (2012, August 22). *New osu dorms to attract all students.* Retrieved March 7, 2013 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=888g0OCkWUs


University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-a).

*Azalea House floor plans; first floor.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/azalea-plans

University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-b).

*Azalea House floor plans; second floor.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/azalea-plans

University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-c)

*Halsell Hall, room plans.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/halsell

University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-e)

*Hawley hall, room plans.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/hawley

University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-d).

*Halsell hall floor plans; first floor.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/halsell-plans

University Housing & Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-f).

*Hawley hall floor plans; second floor.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/hawley-plans

University Housing and Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS]. (n.d.-g):

*Residence halls & cooperative houses.* Retrieved May 9, 2013 from http://oregonstate.edu/uhds/halls-cooperatives

University Housing and Dining Services, Oregon State University [UHDS] (2012-h).

*Fall 2012 quarterly report.* . Unpublished raw data, University Housing and
Dining Services, Retrieved May 9, 2013 from


http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0219.pdf
Appendices
Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Eligibility Screening Questions

• Are you above the age of 18?
• Is English your native language?
• Which residence hall do you/ did you live in?
  o During which academic year?

1. Demographics
   a. What is your major?
   b. Where did you go to high school?

2. What residence hall did/do you live in?
   a. Can you describe a typical day on campus?
      i. Where do you study?
      ii. Where do you eat?
      iii. Where do you spend *free* time?
   b. Where do you spend your time when you are in _____(hall name)?

3. Where did you live before moving into the university residence hall?

4. How does living in the residence hall compare with where you were living before you attended this university?

5. What are your general feelings about the common area in your residence hall?
   a. Is there anything particular that you *like* about this space?
   b. Is there anything particular that you *dislike* about the space?

6. When you spend time in the space;
   a. How long do you stay there?
   b. What activities do you do?
c. Do you spend time in the common area with other people?
   i. What kind of activities do you do together?

7. How do you use the space when others are also present?

8. Please describe your home, using feeling or emotional terms,
   a. Would you use any of those words to describe the common area in
      your residence hall?

9. If you could, what is the most important change you would make to the
    common area? (prompt with 2nd and 3rd most important?)

10. How do you feel about the design aesthetics of this common space?

11. How does the space work (functional)
   a. Furniture
   b. Color
   c. Work space

12. If you could, how would you change the design?

13. Is there something different you wish you could use this space for?

14. Have you considered other living opportunities?
   a. Other types of residence halls on campus?
   b. Off campus?
      i. Why, or why not?

15. In general, how do you feel on this campus?

16. How did you feel when you first moved onto campus?

17. How has this changed? What do you think contributed to this change?

18. Describe your experience of living on campus in 5 words.
19. How would you feel about living on campus again?
Appendix 2

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Students’ perceptions of the design of common space and its role in sense of community and belonging

Principal Investigator: Marilyn Read

Student Researcher: Megan Knight

Co-Investigator(s): Elif Tural

Version Date: 4/2/14

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

2. WHY IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this research study is to understand students’ perception of the residence hall common area, whether it facilitates sense of community and belonging among university residents.

This study is for Megan Knight’s thesis work at Oregon State University.

Up to 30 participants may be invited to take part in this study.

3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because the student perception is a valuable part of creating a successful residence hall experience.

This study is focused on those who are at least 18 years of age, and native speaker of English. You have lived or are currently living in one of the 4 university owned residence halls (Hawley, Buxton, Poling, and Cauthorn) during the 2012-2013 or 2013-2014 academic years. Students also need to have lived in the same residence hall building during this year.

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

If you take part in this study, you will participate in an interview sharing your perceptions of residence hall common space, design, how you use this space, and if you use this space to socialize with others.

The study activities include one individual semi-structured interview. This interview will take place in a private, quiet study room in the Valley Library at Oregon State University. This interview will be audio recorded for later transcription. This transcription will then be coded for emergent themes and then evaluated for reliability.

If you do not wish to be audio recorded, you should not participate in this research study.
Study duration: The interview will last approximately 1 hour.

**Recordings and photographs:** The participant’s interview will be audio recorded.

**Significant new findings:** Any significant findings will be shared with the university housing and dining services, however no identifying information will be shared.

**Storage and Future use of data or samples:** All audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet in a password protected external hard drive for the duration of the study. No identifiers will be used. The audio recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed after study is completed.

**Study Results:** study results will not be shared directly with the participants.

5. **WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?**

   The foreseeable risks and discomforts associated with this research activity are minimal.

   There is a chance that the interview questions may make you uncomfortable, and may possibly lead to fatigue, embarrassment, or unforeseen emotional reactions. You may also experience side effects from the study procedures that are not yet known to the researchers.

   We seek to be sensitive to your needs. If at any time you need a break or want to decline answering any question, please let us know. There will be no repercussions for rescheduling visits and/or declining participation in any aspect of the study.

6. **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

   This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, we believe designers and researchers focusing on university environments may benefit from the findings of this study to improve university buildings and common areas.

7. **WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

   You will be paid for being in this research study. You will receive $10 cash after the interview has been conducted.

8. **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

   The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.
If the results of this project are published, your identity will not be made public. Photographs that illustrate various aspects of accessibility may be included in published work, but no identifiable aspects will be provided.

Audio recordings will only be accessible to the researchers throughout the study. They will be used to ensure accuracy in interview responses.

To help ensure confidentiality, we will not identify any participant by name, but rather by identification code that will only ensure the data from both visits will remain together. Notes taken on paper will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, and audio recordings/photographs will be stored on a password-protected computer. Any photographs taken will require your approval and will not include any identifiable information, including you or any other people. Only the researchers listed on this form will have access to any of the notes or recordings used in this study.

All confidential records will be destroyed after three years, per requirements of Oregon State University. However, unidentifiable data may be kept indefinitely. Because it is not possible for us to know what studies may be a part of our future work, we ask that you give permission now for us to use your responses without being contacted about each future study. Future use of aggregated answers will be limited to studies about accessibility, usability, placemaking, or aging in place. We will not pay you for the use of your responses or any products, patents, or licenses that result from these responses. If you agree now to future use of your aggregated answers, but decide in the future that you would like to have them removed from research tests, please contact Elif Tural, Oregon State University, elif.tural@oregonstate.edu, 541-737-0992.

9. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Elif Tural, Assistant Professor, at (541) 737-0992 or elif.tural@oregonstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

10. WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?

Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

**Do not sign after the expiration date:**

Participant's Name (printed):  _________________________________________________

_________________________________________ _______________________________

(Signature of Participant)       (Date)

_________________________________________ _______________________________

(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent)  (Date)