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Designing Community: Residence Halls, Shower Facilities,
and Experiences of Community amongst Male Students

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business
Department of Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

by

Eric Moore

May 2018

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**Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Eric Christopher Moore

entitled

Designing Community: Residence Halls, Shower Facilities,
and Experiences of Community amongst Male Students

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of shower facility design on traditional men's residence hall floors. This research drew upon previous research in proxemics and residence hall design by looking at three shared shower facility designs in traditional residence halls at a small, liberal-arts, faith-based institution located in the Midwest. The selected shower designs were open showers with no dividers, partially-open showers with chest-high dividers, and divided showers with complete coverage. An online survey with both quantitative and qualitative questions was sent out to male students living in traditional residence halls, and the results were analyzed. This study looked for connections, or lack thereof, between privacy, community, and comfort. In addition, this study explored how shower facility design intersected with men's experiences with community, belonging, vulnerability, nudity, and conversation. This research provides valuable insight into the unique ways that design impacts community in a traditional residence hall.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us” (Hossack, 2016). This statement highlights a little-perceived, yet startling truth: the architecture of buildings shapes the way that people engage with each other inside of them (Devlin, Donovan, Nicolov, Nold, & Zandan, 2008). The impact of architecture and environment on social interaction is especially noticeable in residence halls on college campuses. In his research, Astin (2012) pointed out that "the environment encompasses everything that happens to a student during the course of an education program that might conceivably influence the outcomes under consideration" (p. 81) Residence hall design impacts many aspects of a student's experience in college, including his or her sense of community, academics, and on-campus involvement (Brandon, Hirt, & Cameron, 2008; Devlin et al., 2008; Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005; Palmer, Broido, & Campbell, 2008; Wang, Arboleda, Shelley, & Whalen, 2004). Based on research, the impact of architecture on social interaction applies even to the design of bathroom facilities in residence halls.

The study of the impact of residence hall bathroom design holds special relevance for all-male residence halls. Many all-male residence hall bathrooms feature either community showers or divided showers. Community showers, sometimes referred to as “gang showers,” are open shower facilities with a row of showerheads and no dividers.

In comparison, divided showers are separated by at least some degree of walls and/or shower curtains. Community showers were once prevalent in bathroom facilities at colleges and universities due to their economic advantages over separated shower stalls (Crawford, 1963). In recent decades, however, residence hall design trends have commonly forgone community showers and the traditional residence hall design. In addition, many community shower facilities were replaced by divided showers, such as single-stall showers or single-user bathrooms (Cover, 2003). When writing in 2004 about the recent changes in residence hall design, Don Fernandez sarcastically quipped, "Sharing bedrooms? Primitive. Community-style showers? Barbaric" (p. 1).

Shifting societal views surrounding nudity and a cultural desire for privacy are both often highlighted as reasons behind design changes of shower facilities (Cover, 2003; Fernandez, 2004). When serving as Vice President of Architecture and Planning with Niles Bolton Associates in Atlanta, Ray Kimsey noted, "People have an amazing amount of privacy growing up. A majority of students who enter college have never shared a bedroom with a sibling. The expectations are much greater now than anytime previously" (Fernandez, 2004, p. 2). Barry Stone, Director of Student Residences at the University of Manitoba, noted, "Students want privacy. The notion of having a community bathroom or shower doesn't seem attractive" (Tamburri, 2013, p. 3).

While design trends shifted towards divided showers, little research was done on the impact of shower facility design on the community in all-male residence halls or residence halls at large. Common phrases like "nudity is unity" or "nudity builds community" highlight the role of nudity in all-male residence hall communities, but how nudity and shower facility design intersect in their impact on sense of community is

unclear. Research on the impact of shower facilities fills a hole in current literature and helps inform future designs of residence halls. Brown (1974) noted the great need of further research on residence hall design and environment:

There is sufficient evidence already gathered which suggests that we can structure the residence hall environment in ways that facilitate student development and enhance students' educational experiences. We do not know everything nor do we know as much as we would like to know about how to best structure that environment, but I believe we know enough to start or to continue trying—wherever we might be on our own campuses... (p. 52)

In addition to the need for more research, learning how to best structure environments positively impacts student experiences.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

Since little research explores what role shower facilities play in the communities of residence halls, this research sought to fill the gap by directly examining the impact the design of shower facilities has on the community of all-male residence halls. This study was guided by the following research question: What, if any, is the impact of the design of shower facilities on the sense of community in traditional all-male residence halls?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

At its core, this study explored the relationship between architecture and community. Much research has examined these two factors, and this literature review highlights key studies on proxemics and residence hall design. Little research has been done, however, on how shower facilities impact residential communities. Because of this, literature on shower facilities, nudity, sexuality, and vulnerability was explored to provide context for the study.

Proxemics

Proxemics is the study of humankind's perception and use of space. Mainly, proxemics focuses on the way environments shape how people interact with each other and with the world (Hall et al., 1968). In proxemics, environment is defined as anything and everything surrounding an individual (Scott-Webber, 2004). Research shows the built environment heavily influences behavior. For example, Scott-Webber (2004) noted many potential benefits and consequences of designed spaces. Among other benefits, well-designed spaces have the potential to alleviate stress, increase learning potential, encourage social interactions, and improve productivity. In contrast, poorly designed environments can negatively impact community, learning, productivity, and health. As Webber emphatically put it, "Space matters!" (p. 4)

In addition to physical environments, proxemics research explores the concept of personal space. The idea of a "personal bubble" is familiar among laypeople, but what is not as well-known is that this concept has its roots in proxemics research. E. T. Hall, one of the most prominent researchers of proxemics, found humans have four bubbles of interaction surrounding them. He named his discovery "Proxemic Zones." These four zones are intimate, personal, social, and public. Each of these zones is characterized by behavior and interactions that are either acceptable or stressful. Hall et al. (1968) argued that understanding the situational needs of humans allows for the creation of environments that support these needs. The concepts of personal space and proxemics together provide a strong foundation to explore the design of residence halls.

Residence Hall Design

A residence hall is an on-campus living facility in which rent is paid to the university in exchange for living quarters (Paine, 2008). Two prominent design types of residence halls are traditional halls and suite-style halls, and both designs are frequently found on college campuses in the United States. A common architectural differentiator between suite-style and traditional residence halls is the location of the bathroom. In suite-style residence halls, smaller, single-user bathrooms are often located and shared between two or more dorm rooms. In traditional-style residence halls, bathroom facilities are larger and shared by an entire floor of students. For this study, a traditional-style residence hall was defined as a residence hall with double-loaded corridors, shared bathrooms and spaces, and predominantly double-occupancy rooms (Paine, 2008).

Residence hall facilities are a common location of social interactions for students on a college campus. Few other campus buildings influence the behaviors of students as

much as the residence hall (Brandon et al., 2008). The power of the residence hall in the social lives of college students lies in the unique purpose of residence halls. Unlike academic buildings or sports facilities, residence halls are the primary living space for students. On average, students spend around 70% of their time in their living space (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Because of the significant amount of time students spend in such spaces, residence halls are often the center of their social worlds (Brandon et al., 2008). Residence halls uniquely provide students with the opportunity to meet, interact, and live with other students from all types of cultures and backgrounds (Heilweil, 1973).

Connections and friendships play a significant role in a student's experience with his or her residence hall. Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, and Whalen (2003) found students involved in their living community reported higher levels of satisfaction with that community. Similarly, Thomas (2000) found peer relationships significantly indicated academic success and persistence in students. He noted the value of residential situations designed to encourage interactions, connections, and friendships among students.

The design of a residence hall impacts many aspects of student experiences including their academic performance, involvement on campus, and social interactions (Brandon et al., 2008; Devlin et al., 2008; Li et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2004). For example, same-sex residence halls have a positive impact on the academic performance of male residents (Wang et al., 2004). Factors such as the style of living quarters, number of entrances, location of laundry services, style of bathrooms, and size of community spaces all impact the frequency of social interactions in residence halls.

Studies have shown student interaction and sense of community are higher in traditional residence halls than in suite-style halls. For example, participants in a study

by Brandon et al. (2008) described suite-style halls as more “hotel-like,” while traditional-style halls felt more like a true “dorm.” One respondent claimed,

I found that just the way the suites are designed it's really hard to get to know people and to meet new people. We lived in [a traditional hall] the first year and we're not exactly the most social people in the world but it was kind of easy if you did want to get to know somebody because I mean your door would be open you'd be passing down the hall to do whatever and you'd just pop in and see what they're doing and with this setup you've got the suite doors open but the other rooms are out of line of sight . . . (pp. 68–69)

Other participants noted the design of suite-style dorms create separation, both physically and figuratively, in floor relationships.

Shower Facilities

While residence hall design impacts students’ social interactions within residence halls, researchers have not studied the impact of shower facilities on residence hall community. Community showers were once common features of residence halls in the past but have fallen out of favor in recent decades (Cover, 2003). Crawford (1963) provided a helpful historical perspective on the shifting designs of shower facilities. In *A Guide for Planning Indoor Facilities for College Physical Education*, Crawford noted, in contrast to today's trends, “[T]here is an increasing trend in the direction of gang showers for both men and women” (p. 72). He gave several economic and design factors for this trend: “Gang showers require less floor area, involve a smaller initial outlay, require less operational cost, and can be more effectively supervised, maintained, and cleaned than the same number of individual showers” (p. 72). Crawford believed community showers

made more economic sense than individual showers, but, in recent decades, community showers have slowly been replaced by individual showers in residence halls.

Nudity and Sexuality

Part of the diminished use of community showers links to society's shifting views of nudity and sexuality. In Western culture, community showers were almost always single-sex; one reason for separating bathrooms by sex was to diminish sexual overtones surrounding nudity (Cover, 2003). Cover (2003) noted that people tend to fear their naked bodies being seen in a sexual way unfitting for the given context. The hope behind the separation of sexes rested largely on the universality of heterosexuality and specifically the framework that people are attracted to those of the opposite sex. Within this framework, a man does not need to fear being looked at in a sexual way by another man while showering, and the same applies for women (Cover, 2003; Schipper, 2009).

This framework of separating people by sex for showering was generally accepted for quite a while due to cultural views on sexuality and gender. For example, homosexuality was widely viewed as negative or immoral in Western culture until recent decades, while large segments of the American population still hold negative views of homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2017). For men, "locker room talk" developed partially to enforce heterosexual norms in settings involving group nudity. Talking about women in sexual and sometimes aggressive manners reinforced expectations that everyone in the group was also sexually attracted to women (Cover, 2003).

Recent decades, however, have brought significant changes to social and cultural norms and laws surrounding sexuality. Fluidity of gender and sexuality has become increasingly normalized in the past several decades (Cover, 2003). In addition, the male

body has become more sexualized in media and advertisements (Schipper, 2009). These changes eroded several guiding norms in the bathroom context. Before, people in a community bathroom generally assumed all others in the bathroom were heterosexual. Now, a person in a community bathroom setting could encounter someone who is attracted to the same sex or identifies with a gender other than their birth sex. This possibility brings with it the increased potential for a person to be viewed in a sexual way in a single-sex environment (Cover, 2003; Schipper, 2009).

These changes are especially disruptive in an all-male environment, as Cover (2003) noted:

The proliferation of a sexualized male physique reliant on the display of flesh in advertising, combined with the collapse of “compulsory heterosexuality” and the heterosexual matrix increases the fear that communal nakedness among boys will be gazed upon in erotic or sexualized ways that have previously been protected by the gender segregation of communal showers on the presumption that all participants in the showers are heterosexual and can thereby only perform a sexual gazing at another gender. This “cultural concern” is augmented further as the stereotype of gay men as non-sporting is increasingly discredited. (p. 61)

Cover’s research consistently noted the increasing awkwardness of open shower facilities, and these concerns were echoed by Vivona and Gomillion (1972).

Shared Bathrooms

In 1972, Vivona and Gomillion conducted one of the few studies on the impact of a shared bathroom at a college. Their study, conducted in women's dorms on a large urban campus, focused on the situational morality of bathroom nudity. When asked about their

initial reaction to sharing a bathroom with others, several participants described initial awkwardness and how the situation forced them to consider other perspectives and views. Vivona and Gomillion then noted that residents felt less self-conscious about the bathrooms as time went on.

Subjects also indicated gender roles as possible factors around comfort with nudity (Vivona & Gomillion, 1972). Some female respondents noted many male students did not seem embarrassed to be naked around other men while women often felt uncomfortable. Different expectations surrounding modesty and body image were also highlighted: men were not expected to be modest, but women were. Several female participants also feared their gazes would be perceived as sexual. Though aging, this study provides helpful context for the impact of shower design on residence hall communities.

Nudity and Vulnerability

A basic but important component of showering is that it is almost always done nude. Participants in Vivona and Gomillion's (1972) research highlighted the connection between vulnerability and nudity with their experiences in a communal bathroom setting. Research by Dolezal (2017) and Brown (2012) supports this vulnerability-nudity relationship. According to Dolezal (2017), shame and vulnerability are often part of the experience of being naked. Naked bodies reveal human fragility and mortality. Brown's research on vulnerability also showed a connection to nudity; participants were asked to describe what vulnerability felt like, and a theme that arose from participants was that vulnerability felt like being naked. While not a full picture, Dolezal's and Brown's studies illuminate an interesting relationship between nudity and vulnerability.

LGB Students

When exploring the impact of shower design on residence hall communities, voices of traditionally minoritized populations must be considered. The role of nudity and community showers is referenced in research related to the experiences of LGB youth at faith-based institutions. In a 2010 study by Wentz, five male students identifying as gay or same-sex attracted were interviewed at a faith-based institution, four of whom lived in an all-male environment. For these students, navigating the all-male hall culture proved intimidating and challenging. One respondent expressed disapproval with the culture: “I can’t even describe how much I can’t stand the whole dorm lifestyle and attitude . . . it was just the whole assumption, like, ‘Yeah, we’re all guys, let’s wrestle naked, let’s all take showers together’ . . . I hated the immature attitude” (Wentz, 2010, p. 51). Many participants specifically noted contexts with nudity as challenging experiences.

Other studies conducted by Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean, and Brooke (2009) and Yuan (2016) corroborated the experiences of male same-sex attraction and gay students in the residence halls. In Yuan's study, 18 of 53 respondents reported nudity, immodesty, or humor surrounding nudity as reasons they did not feel comfortable among their peers in residence halls. Respondents in Yuan's study also voiced concerns over experiences involving nudity being used to encourage community on their floors.

Community bathrooms were specifically addressed by respondents in Yuan's (2016) study. These students expressed that community bathrooms were challenging experiences for them. For example, a male same-sex attracted student reported,

It was definitely harder last year in the freshman dorm where there were only communal bathrooms. It wasn't uncommon to see guys walking to and from the

shower in a towel or just walking around the dorm with their shirts off . . . (Yuan, 2016, p. 131)

Other respondents reported that they also did not like communal showers, and some said they changed their showering schedule to avoid seeing other men nude.

Conclusion

While shower facility design has not been studied in depth, significant research on the impact of design on a residence hall does exist. First, proxemics research has noted that environment influences behavior (Scott-Webber, 2004). Also, residence hall design has far-reaching implications on the students that it houses (Brandon et al., 2008; Devlin et al., 2008; Li et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2004). Research on nudity, sexuality, vulnerability, and shared bathrooms were explored to provide additional context for the study. In their research, Cover (2003) and Schipper (2009) noted the impact of shifting cultural and societal views and perceptions of sexuality and gender on group nudity situations like community showers. Further, Viviona and Gomillon (1972) pointed out that a student's view on community showers may change over time due to a variety of factors. Dolezal (2017) and Brown (2012) illuminated the relationships between nudity and vulnerability. Last, Wentz (2010), Yarhouse et al. (2009), and Yuan (2016) gave voice to the challenges that LGB students may face when using community showers. Each of these perspectives provided important context and insight for this study. Since little research on residence hall shower design was found, however, the methodology of this study was designed to reflect the exploratory nature of this research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

To gain a richer understanding of how community showers impact the community in all-male residence halls, an embedded mixed methods design was employed. In the design of this study, quantitative data served as the primary source of data, and qualitative data offered a more full picture of the impact of shower design. In embedded designs, one form of data serves as the primary source of data, while the other serves in a supporting role. An advantage of an embedded design is that it allows for the collection both qualitative and quantitative data. Further, an embedded design combines favorable aspects of both types of data (Creswell, 2015).

Measures

For this study, participants completed an anonymous online survey that asked several Likert-scale questions about their experience with their residence hall's showers in their residence hall. In addition, several qualitative questions were included in the survey to provide a more complete understanding of participants' experiences (Appendix A). This survey was designed to provide a robust and rich picture of the impact of shower design on students' sense of community. To allow for more transparent answers, the survey was designed to be anonymous. General demographic questions were included, but names and other information that would allow participant identification were not requested.

Procedures

Eligible students for the survey were identified using the institution's internal database. Eligible students were then sent an initial email (Appendix B) introducing the study and requesting participation. To encourage participation, six frozen pizzas were offered as prizes. The link to the online survey was included in this email, and students were given a week to complete the survey. After several days, follow-up emails were sent out to potential participants to remind them of the study. The survey was closed after a week, and the winners of the pizzas were randomly selected and contacted.

Participants

The survey was sent out to male students living in traditional residence halls at a small, four-year, faith-based institution located in the Midwest. At this institution, the communities of two all-male residence halls and the male floors of three coeducational residence halls were studied. Of these five residence halls, three categories of shower designs were studied: open showers, partially-open showers, and divided showers.

Initially, only two shower designs were to be analyzed in this study: open and divided. After strong feedback from one all-male residence hall, however, a third design was added: partially-open. Students in this residence hall emphasized their shower design was neither open nor divided but a separate design. The data analysis supported this assertion, and the distinct partially-open design category was created for this study.

The open category included 111 responses from an all-male residence hall with 257 occupants for a total completion rate of 43.19%. This residence hall's communal shower areas have no dividers and instead include a row of showerheads in a large room. The partial category included 49 responses from an all-male residence hall with 257

occupants for a total completion rate of 19.07%. This residence hall's communal shower areas featured dividers at the chest level, leaving occupants' heads in view. For the divided category, three men's floors from three co-ed residence halls were combined to form the data set. The divided category included 33 responses from 103 male students for a total completion rate of 32.04%. These residence halls featured separate shower stalls in their communal shower areas, with full wall and curtain coverage.

In total, 200 surveys were completed, and 193 surveys were used in the analysis. Two surveys were eliminated because the participants were under-age, and the remaining responses ranged in age from 18-24. Participants' education levels are noted in Figure 1. One residence hall's responses were removed from the analysis due to an especially low response rate (5%). This response rate was potentially impacted by a recent renovation in that residence hall. The initial number of eligible students for this survey was 703, but the removal of the outlier residence hall dropped the number of eligible students to 617.

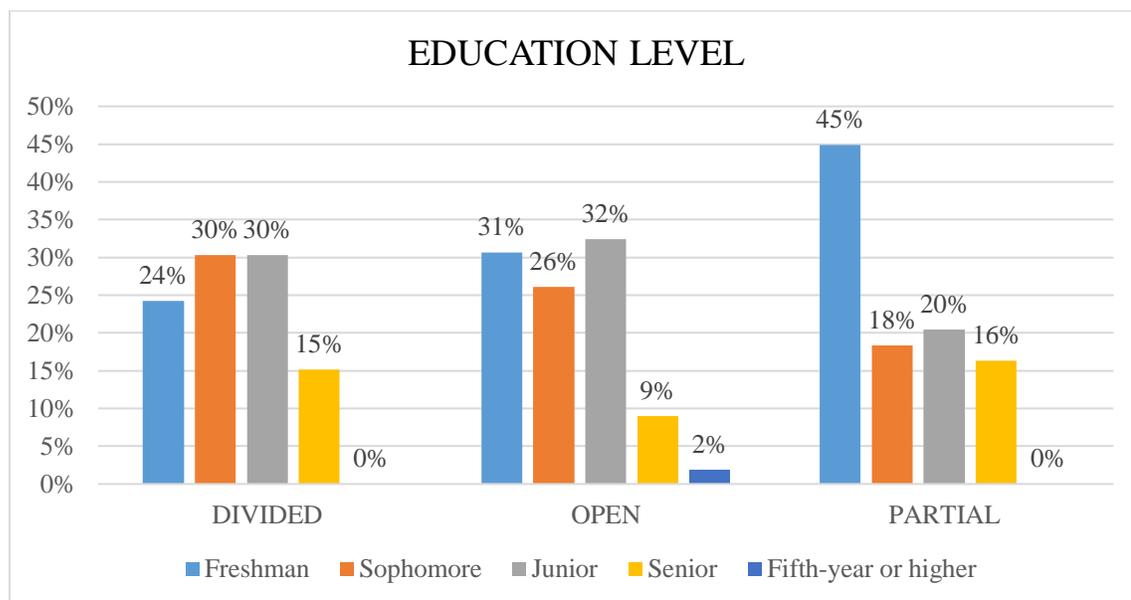


Figure 1. Education level of participants.

This figure shows the education level of participants separated by shower facility design. Fifth-year students are not shown to retain anonymity.

Data Analysis

After the data from the surveys was collected, the data was analyzed. The results from each building were first examined separately and later compared. The quantitative results were compiled and analyzed using Excel and SPSS. ANOVA tests were performed on each question, and post hoc Tukey Tests were used to identify statistical differences between the categories. In addition, graphs were created to visually and statistically compare the categories. The qualitative answers were read, and key words and phrases were identified in each response. These words and phrases were categorized into themes, and appropriate percentages were calculated to show what percentage of students reported each theme. After each data set had been analyzed, the two data sets were compared. After all data was analyzed, the results were compiled and reported.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introductory Questions

As introductory questions, students were asked to describe the communities and shower designs of their respective floors in three adjectives. These adjectives were categorized into synonymous themes, and a key adjective was chosen as the title of the theme. The adjective chosen as the theme title was often the most common word of the theme, but sometimes another word was chosen for clarity.

Table 1

Describe the Community of your Residence Hall Floor in Three Adjectives

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Divided</u>	<u>Partially-Open</u>	<u>Open</u>
Brotherly	15%	14%	22%
Loving	8%	11%	8%
Active	6%	11%	9%
Fun	10%	12%	32%
Friendly	12%	6%	8%
Diverse	11%	11%	
Lively		20%	8%
Inclusive			9%
Intentional			10%
Relaxed	13%		
Quirky	5%		
Other	15%	17%	8%

Note. Percentages shown were calculated from the respective shower design.

Responses to the question "Describe the community of your residence hall floor in three adjectives" are shown in Table 1. From the responses, 93 words from the divided group, 143 responses from the partial group, and 330 words from the open group were used for analysis. Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, with only 6 negative words identified among all three designs. Notably, five themes were universally found in each of the design types: Brotherly, Loving, Active, Fun, and Friendly.

Table 2

Describe the Shower Design of your Residence Hall Floor in Three Adjectives

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Divided</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Part. Open</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Open</u>
Private	32%	Open	27%	Private	29%
Lackluster	22%	Private	25%	Lackluster	18%
(words regarding) Size & Shape	17%	Other	13%	(words regarding) Size & Shape	11%
Efficient	11%	Clean	10%	Efficient	9%
Other	10%	Comfortable	9%	Other	9%
(words regarding) Cleanliness	7%	Fun	8%	(words regarding) Cleanliness	8%
		(words regarding) Size & Shape	7%	Open	5%
		Negative	6%	Fun	5%
				Clean	5%
				Comfortable	4%

Note. Percentages shown were calculated from the respective shower design.

Responses to the question "Describe the shower design of your residence hall floor in three adjectives" are shown in Table 2. From the responses, 99 words from the divided group, 126 words from the partial group, and 319 words from the open group were used for analysis. Adjectives to this question were also largely positive, though the theme "Lackluster" is notable for its negative overtones. While some were similar, most themes describing floor shower designs were unique to each shower design.

Social Atmosphere

Students were asked, "Describe the social atmosphere in the shower area on your floor," and "Describe your personal experience with the social atmosphere of the shower area on your floor." These questions were designed to differentiate between the experiences of the community and individual students.

Divided showers. When describing the communal social atmosphere, students using divided showers overwhelmingly viewed the shower area as a quiet place (39%) where students "[t]ypically just shower and then move on [with their day] . . ." (42%). Conversations did take place in their shower areas (15%), but most students described interactions with others as strictly small talk (27%). In addition, music and singing were noted as common occurrences (45%). One student shared,

Being in the shower is usually a time for me to either reflect about the day (when showering in the night) or mentally prepare myself for the day (when showering in the morning). At other times, I take a shower to relieve myself of stress. In which case I enjoy singing in the shower or simply being in silence and getting away from all the activeness of college.

When describing their personal experience with the social atmosphere of divided showers, most students shared they quietly showered without interaction (58%). Some considered the shower area a place to relax (15%), and others appreciated the chance to listen to music or sing (18%). In addition, smaller groups of students shared they engaged in small talk (12%) or full conversations (18%).

Open showers. When describing the social atmosphere of open showers, participant responses were quite positive. Students said their shower areas were largely filled with conversation (70%), music (32%), and hanging out (37%). Students noted the time of day impacted the social atmosphere (27%), with mornings generally quieter and afternoons much more active. Some respondents shared they quietly showered or used the time to be alone (14%). Other students appreciated the open and casual feel of the shower area (15%). One respondent particularly highlighted this environment:

The shower area is consistently a place filled with socialization and interaction between members of the [floor]. Whether it be filled with singing, deep laughs, or serious conversations between the group as a whole, it is consistently a place where honest opinions and conversations are taking place and one can be open to the fullest extent of the word.

When describing their personal experience with the social atmosphere, some students using open showers noted that the time of day was an important consideration (19%). While the mornings were quieter, students overwhelmingly shared that conversations were part of their experience (70%). Some students loved the social and lively feel of the open shower area (23%), while others preferred a quieter experience (17%). Some students (15%) also mentioned appreciating listening to music while showering.

Partially-open showers. When describing the social atmosphere of partially-open showers, participant responses and tones were also highly positive. Most students using partially-open showers viewed the shower area as a place of conversation (59%) and hanging out (22%). Some students appreciated a private, quiet atmosphere (16%), and several students shared the shower area could be both conversational and quiet (22%). Music was also named as a common occurrence (22%). One student responded,

It's a place of conversation where guys talk about some of the deepest thoughts or just thoughts of how their day is going to go. Sometimes it is full of games, fun, and laughter with a camaraderie among men. Being able to see each other's head is essential to keeping this atmosphere. After floor events, it becomes a communal space as we all come back together after a great bonding time. It's not always like that - there are times when it's a quiet shower, but that's only when there aren't others around, etc. (like a Tuesday at 8 am). There's also a stereo in our shower area. We jam out each morning to a variety of music.

When describing their personal experience with the social atmosphere of divided showers, students shared that, though mornings were quieter (10%), they often conversed with others (57%). Some quietly showered (16%), and other students had both quiet and social shower experiences (12%). Other students listened to music (16%) or socialized with others (16%).

Frequency of Interaction

Students were asked how frequently they interact with other students in their respective shower area. The responses are shown in Figure 2.

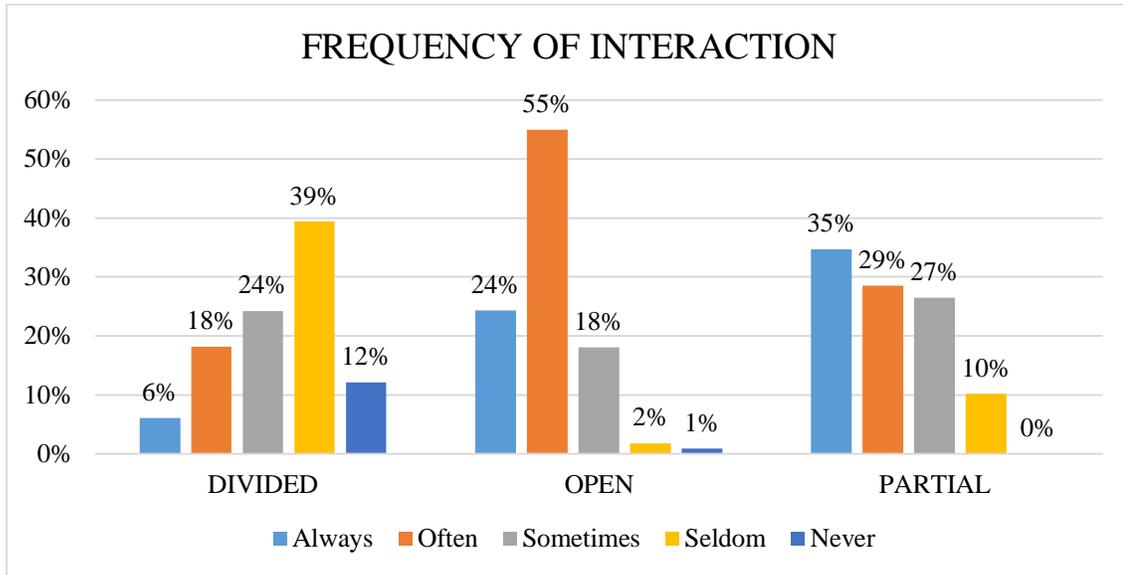


Figure 2. Frequency of interaction within shower areas.

For statistical analysis, the “never”-“always” scale was converted to a 1-5 scale. Students using open showers reported the highest frequency of interaction (mean: 4.00), followed closely by partially-open showers (3.88). In contrast, students using divided showers reported a notably lower frequency of interaction (2.67).

Comfort Level

Figure 3 shows how comfortable students were when they first used their respective shower design.

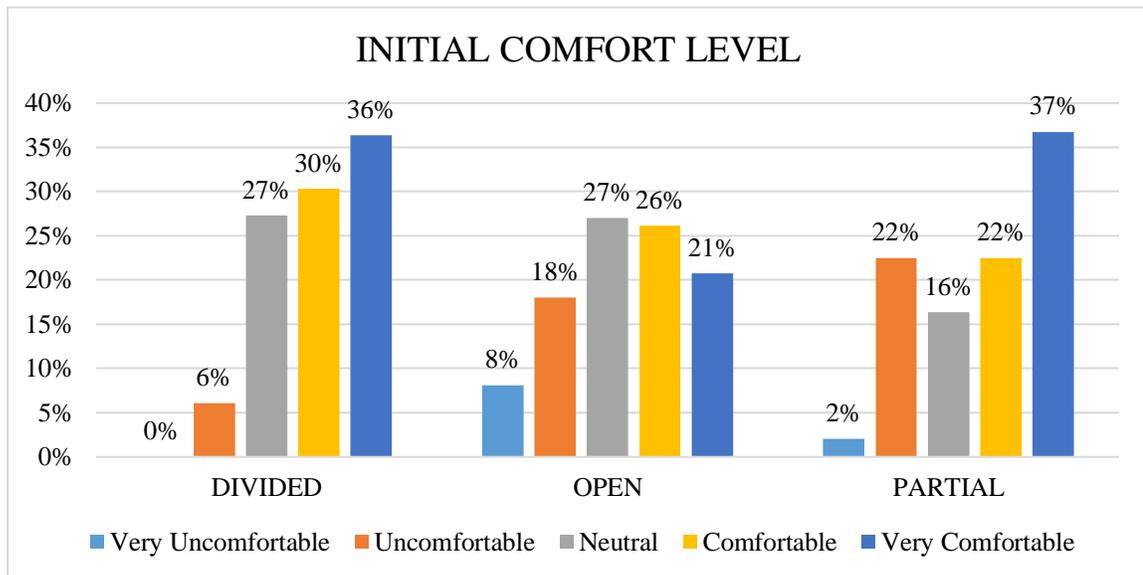


Figure 3. Initial comfort level of participants.

Using a Likert scale, students were asked to evaluate their agreement with the following statements: “Rate your initial comfort level with the shower design on your floor” and “Rate your current comfort level with the shower design on your floor.”

Responses shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 report mixed initial comfort levels across the board in the three types of shower designs. Students using divided showers had the highest initial comfort level (mean: 3.97), followed closely by partially-open showers (3.69). In contrast, students using open showers had the lowest initial comfort level (3.33). Figure 4 shows how comfortable students were with their respective shower design at the time of taking the survey.

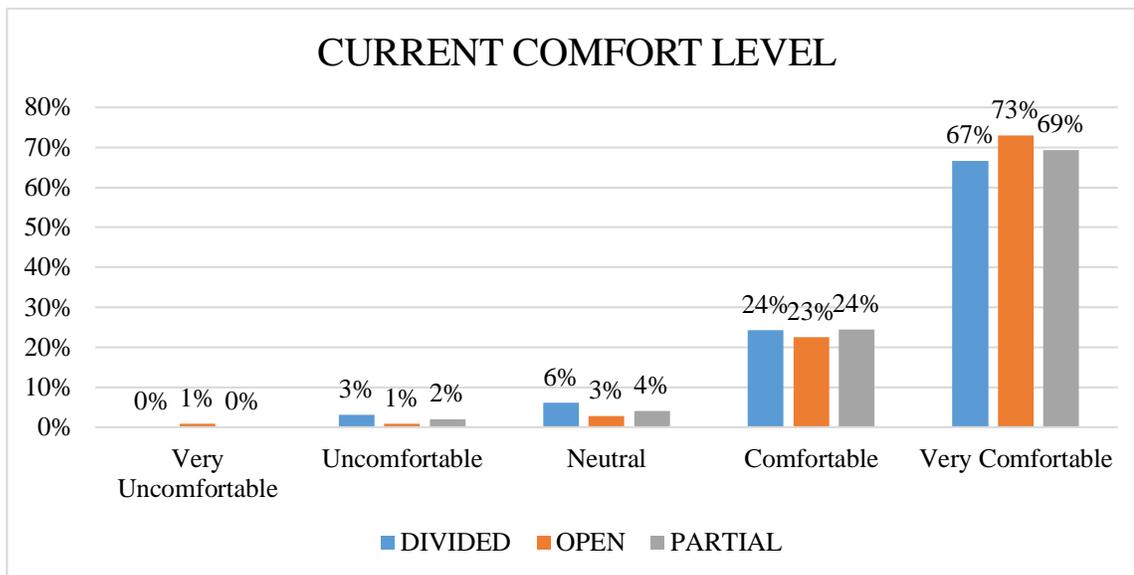


Figure 4. Current comfort level of participants.

Though initial comfort levels varied by design type, current comfort levels were consistent for open (4.66), partially-open (4.61), and divided (4.55) shower designs. At least 90% of students across all design types reported they felt either “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with their design type.

Change in Comfort Level

In a follow-up question, students were asked to describe reasons that led to a change in their comfort level with their respective shower design.

Divided showers. Many students using divided showers reported they already felt comfortable with their shower area (27%). Some students noted they simply needed time (15%) or a routine (12%) to get comfortable with their shower area. Other students were helped by the privacy (12%) and positive community of their floors (9%). One student reported, “The showers have always been comfortable for me. If you're a private person, they provide for those needs. If you are a social person, they also provide for those needs.”

Open showers. Many students using open showers spoke positively of their experience getting used to open showers. Students credited the community of their floors (50%) as the reason they grew more comfortable with open showers, and several students specifically pointed out the influence of upperclassmen as a positive factor (6%). Some students already felt comfortable with open showers (10%), while others pointed out specific previous experiences that helped them make the transition (8%). Other students reported they needed time to get used to them (21%). One student explained,

Time and how other people responded to it. I had never been in community showers before, so it was an adjustment for me that just took time to get used to. Also, seeing other people be totally okay with it helped me to understand that it isn't a place of judgment and such.

Partially-open showers. Students using partially-open showers also spoke positively of their experience getting used to their shower design. Some students using partially-open showers shared that the positive community (24%) and example of upperclassmen on their floors (6%) helped them grow comfortable in their shower area. Many respondents reported they already felt comfortable with their shower area (24%), while others simply needed time to adjust (22%). Some noted a positive mindset helped them make the transition (8%). One student elaborated, "I think I just got used to it. I was used to thinking of showering as a private time in my day, but changing that over to a time to possibly be with people wasn't hard."

Impact of Shower Design on Community

Using a Likert scale, students were asked to evaluate their agreement with the following statements: "The shower design on my floor positively impacts the community

of my floor" and "The shower design on my floor positively impacts my engagement with the community of my floor." Responses to these questions are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Shown in Figure 5, students using open showers agreed that their shower design positively impacted their community (mean: 4.50), while responses of those using partially-open (3.88) and divided showers (3.27) fell closer to neutral. To test for statistical significance, an ANOVA test and post hoc Tukey test were run on this question. Results from these tests showed a statistical difference between open showers and divided showers. Figure 5 shows student responses to "The shower design on my floor positively impacts the community of my floor."

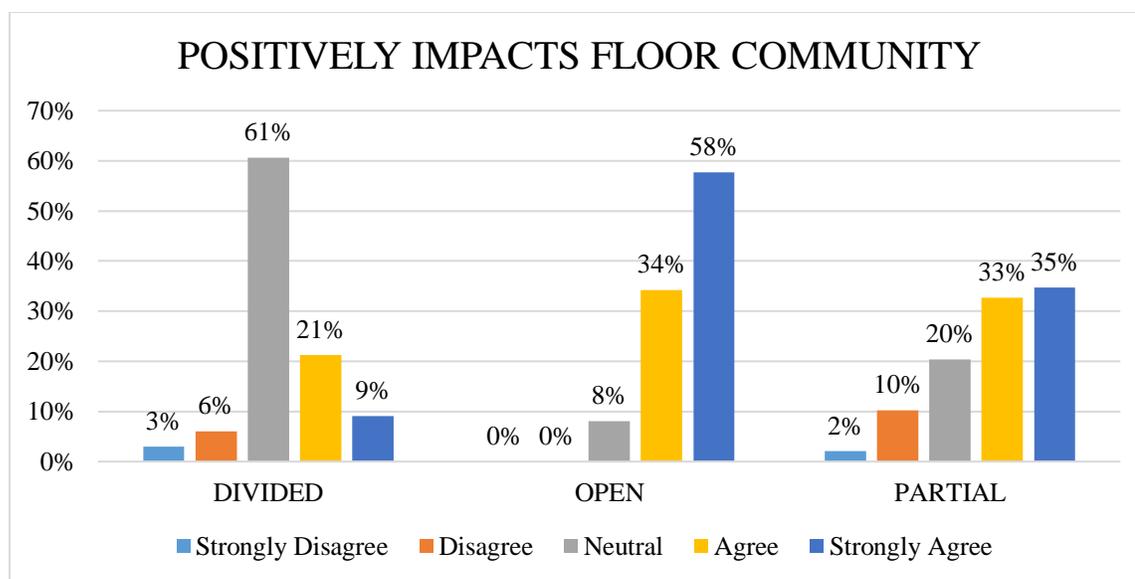


Figure 5. Shower design positively impacts floor community.

Shown in Figure 6, students using open (4.33) and partially-open (4.06) agreed that the showers positively impacted their personal engagement with their floor community. In contrast, students using divided showers were neutral (3.06) about their shower design's impact on their personal engagement with the community. Figure 6 shows student responses to "The shower design on my floor positively impacts my engagement with the community of my floor".

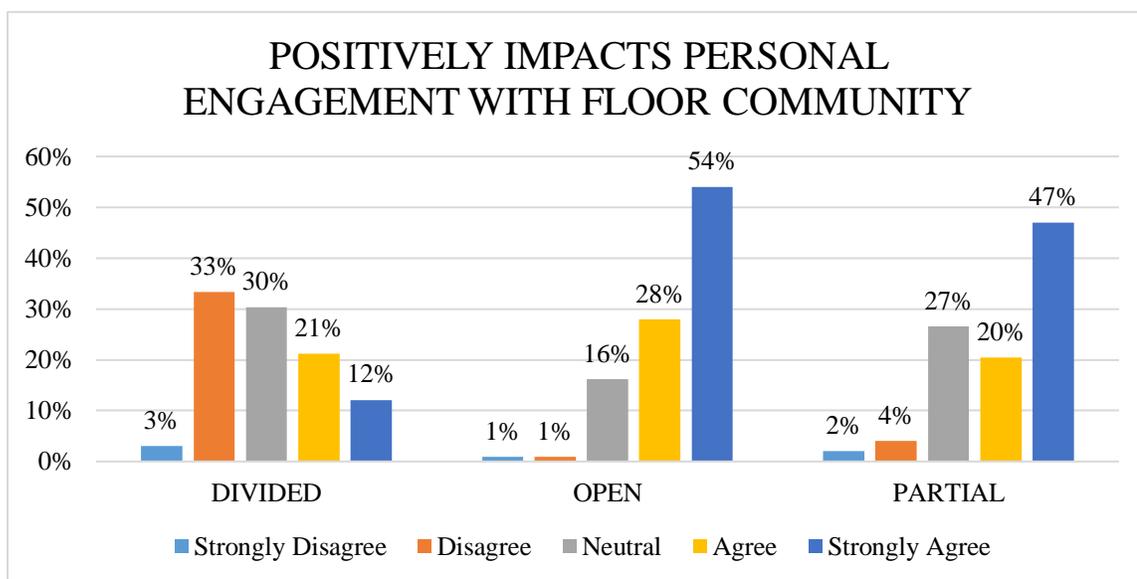


Figure 6. Shower design positively impacts personal engagement with floor community.

While responses to these quantitative questions yielded notably different results, responses to the follow-up questions "What, if any, are some of the ways that the shower design impacts the community of your floor?" and "What, if any, are some of the ways that the shower design impacts your engagement with the community of your floor?" yielded nearly identical results. Percentages given reflect answers to the question "What, if any, are some of the ways that the shower design impacts the community of your floor?"

Divided showers. Students using divided showers did not see their shower area impacting their community in any significant ways. Many shared similar feelings with this response: "It doesn't. Everyone just gets in and gets out" (36%). Other smaller themes were found, however. Some students highlighted the privacy of the divided showers (21%), and a few noted the positive impact of music in the shower area (9%). Some students thought conversations positively impacted their community (12%), while others preferred time alone to process (6%). A few students also noted that the small size of their shower areas led to conversations between students (9%). The student response below offered a more positive perspective:

I think the individual showers make everyone comfortable, thus they are more apt to "remain" and engage from a position of comfort a communal shower may not provide, especially for those more modest and introverted. At the same time, the tight walkway into the shower area often forces contact, . . . whereby people are led to communicate. Also, no matter where someone is in the bathroom, everyone in the bathroom will hear them when they speak, and may chime in.

Open showers. Students' responses describing the impact open showers had on their communities were very positive in tone. Students appreciated the social atmosphere (11%) and conversations (27%) that took place in their shower areas. Responses emphasized the vulnerability (35%), openness (14%), and community feel (18%) of the open shower design, and students strongly felt the open design helped bring the floors closer together (21%). Similarly, students wrote the open shower design broke down barriers and boundaries between men that might hinder community (14%). This student's response reflected sentiments echoed by many other students:

"Nudity is community," the old proverb goes. If you shower in the same room, then there is one less barrier to conversation and relationship. I think [the] openness in the shower room gives another safe space for sincere human connection.

Partially-open showers. Students' responses describing the impact partially-open showers had on their communities were also very positive in tone. Many students using partially-open showers highlighted the social atmosphere (14%) and the conversations that take place in their shower areas (61%), though some did not think their shower area impacted their community (10%). Respondents shared many examples of how their shower areas were a place of community and hanging out (16%). Students also noted that their shower areas were not awkward but, rather, provided privacy (12%) and a safe space where students could grow closer together (24%). The response below synthesized these sentiments:

One of the pluses about my shower design is that it doesn't make anyone feel awkward, but still facilitates conversation. If there were people who would be insecure about showering in a group style shower, the insecurity and awkwardness is eliminated by the dividers, which go from about shoulder height to the knee.

Most Positive and Negative

As final questions to the survey, students were asked to share the most positive and negative ways their respective shower design impacts the community of their floor. These questions illuminated what students considered most important about the shower designs they used.

Divided showers. Students using divided showers highlighted privacy and quiet time (30%) as the most positive impacts of their shower design. Conversation (18%), music (12%), and community (15%) were also themes. Several students stated that their shower design did not positively impact the community of their floor (12%). When asked what had the most negative impact on their community, students using divided showers noted the separation created in the shower areas by the dividers (30%). An equal number of students did not think the shower design had any negative impact on their community (30%). Other respondents desired more showerheads in their shower areas (18%).

Open showers. Students using open showers shared that the most positive impact of their shower design was the way it brought their communities closer together (41%). They also credited the showers as a place that inspires vulnerability (20%) and conversation (26%). When asked about the most negative aspect of their shower design, many students using open showers wondered if other students might feel awkward or uncomfortable with the open design of the shower area (41%). Many students did not think the open design had any negative effects on the community (23%), while some noted cleanliness (7%) and crowdedness (7%) as negative aspects. A smaller group of students desired more privacy in the shower area (6%).

Partially-open showers. Many students using partially-open showers responded that the conversations that took place in their shower area had the greatest positive impact on their communities (41%). Many students shared how the shower design brought their community closer (24%), and others noted the privacy of their showers positively impacted their floors (14%). When asked about the most negative aspect of their shower

design, most students using partially-open showers did not think that their shower design negatively impacted their community (35%). Some students desired more privacy (16%), while other students desired less privacy (8%). Smaller groups of students wished that the shower areas were cleaner (6%) and larger (12%), and a few students noted judgmental attitudes in the showers (6%).

Conclusion

The survey provided rich data for analysis. Student responses were consistent with the intended meaning of the questions, and responses were generally consistent within shower designs. In addition, quantitative questions provided helpful clarity and context to the qualitative responses. Some questions proved to be unnecessary. Questions meant to delineate between the experiences of the community and the personal experiences of students overlapped and provided little additional information. Despite some overlap, however, the survey provided a detailed and thorough look into the impact of residence hall shower facilities on men's floor communities.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Previous research has shown that the design of a residence hall impacts student experiences in several ways (Brandon et al., 2008; Devlin et al., 2008; Li et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2004). The results found in this study align with previous research. In this study, the design of residence hall shower facilities was shown to have a significant impact on men's floor communities. Several themes in the data were identified and explored.

Privacy and Community

In this study, a relationship was found between the privacy of the shower design and the experience of community within the shower design. When asked to describe their floor communities, students in every hall used overwhelmingly positive and similar words. When asked to describe their shower design, however, student responses differed significantly depending on the privacy or openness of the shower design. The more private the shower design, the less community-oriented the language and behavior students reported became, and vice versa.

Divided showers. Students using divided showers described their showers and their experience differently compared to students using partially-open or open showers. In responses to multiple questions, respondents were ambivalent that their shower design positively impacted their community and personal engagement. Little community-

oriented language was present in student responses. Instead, respondents consistently highlighted the privacy and quietness of divided showers. These two traits are certainly not inherently negative, and many students appreciated the quiet atmosphere of the divided showers. The prevalence of these themes, however, did correspond with a more negative and individual view of the shower areas.

This student's description of the social atmosphere of his floor's showers represents the kind of language used by many students: "No one talks to one another in the shower at all. We all do our own thing for the most part. On a rare occasion, someone may play a song on the stereo that everyone joins in on singing." Like this student, many respondents viewed the shower area as a place to quietly shower and go about their day. This perspective is reflected in the low frequency of interaction reported by participants. Conversation and social interaction were described as minimal, and some respondents considered it strange to talk in the shower. While music and conversation did appear in some responses, those themes were often counterbalanced by more prevalent themes of quiet and small talk.

Students using divided showers generally made positive remarks about their floor communities. However, they did not recognize divided showers as having any positive impact on their communities. Students appreciated the privacy and quiet of divided showers, but those aspects also corresponded with individualistic language and experiences. Divided showers seemed to create both physical and social divides in the shower areas, as noted by this student's response: "I think it negatively impacts our engagement because the walls between us in the shower remain, even when we go about our day metaphorically." Other student responses used words like "alone," "private,"

"secluded," "separated," and "distant" to describe their shower area. At best, divided showers offered no impact on the community of those men's floors, and, at worst, they hindered students from engaging with each other in positive ways.

Partially-open showers. Though different by only a few feet of material, divided and partially-open showers offered several clear differences in the ways their impact was perceived by men's floor communities. In many regards, partially-open showers seemed to hit a balance between privacy and openness. Students using partially-open showers lauded both the privacy and openness afforded to them by the chest-high dividers. Respondents believed that chest-high dividers allowed students to feel comfortable while still providing a social and communal atmosphere. One student shared, "The dividers cover your privates so you don't have to deal with seeing that, but they don't go all the way up so you can still see your friends and have a good conversation . . ."

Being able to see another student's face proved to correspond with the positive impact of partially-open showers. Because they could see one another's faces, students reported conversations became more natural, and showering together was more prevalent. Not every experience in the partially-open showers was social, however, and respondents had quieter experiences if they desired. The many positive aspects of partially-open showers were even recognized by a student using divided showers, who reflected,

I believe [that partially-open showers are] the best set up of showers because although there are walls that would make potential physical contact impossible, the walls are at such a height that one's upper third of their body can be seen and allows for unhindered conversation between floormates.

Partially-open showers impacted the community of floors in many ways that divided showers did not. While students using divided showers reported quietly showering with only some conversation and social interaction, students using partially-open showers reported high levels of interaction and conversation with others. Unlike students using divided showers, many students using partially-open showers agreed that their shower design positively impacted their community and personal engagement. Students highlighted the ability to see the faces of other students as a key positive element of their experience, and this added openness did not correlate with a drop in comfort with the design. Though a seemingly small design change, taking away the top few feet of dividers proved to have significant positive impacts on men's floor communities.

Open showers. Devoid of any kind of divider, open showers proved to have significant positive impacts on men's floor communities. Students did not view the lack of privacy as a negative aspect of their shower design. Instead, respondents highlighted the open design as a positive aspect of their floor community. Like students using partially-open showers, students shared that the open shower space was a place of conversation and socializing. In addition to the themes that arose in partially-open showers, however, several other positive themes arose in the responses of students using open showers. Students believed, for example, that the lack of dividers broke down barriers between men and allowed them to be more vulnerable. One student noted, “[It’s] interesting that the shower can actually help people get comfortable with each other, which impacts community engagement, because when people get comfortable with each other, they are more apt to engage.”

Compared to the other design types, respondents using open showers believed most strongly that their shower design positively impacted their community and personal engagement. No students using open showers disagreed with the statement “The shower design on my floor positively impacts the community of my floor,” and 41% of students believed the most positive aspect of their shower design was that it brought their floors closer together. These findings are exemplified in this student’s response: “The fact that the showers are open and a smaller space impacts the closeness that you have with people on the wing, whereas if it were private showers you would not have that aspect of closeness in those regards.”

Open showers impacted the community of floors in ways that divided and partially-open showers did not. While students using partially-open showers also reported high levels of interaction and conversation, additional themes emerged from the responses of students who use open showers. These themes include vulnerability, intentionality, lack of shame, communal aspect of the design, and the design’s tendency to break down barriers between men. Students highlighted vulnerability as a key positive element of their experience, and the lack of privacy of open showers did not correlate with a drop in current comfort with the design. By removing physical barriers between students, open showers removed social and emotional barriers between students and encouraged men to get to know each other better.

Privacy and Comfort

This study found no relationship between the privacy offered by the shower area design and the current comfort level of students. Instead, the data showed over 90% of students, regardless of the design of the shower area, were comfortable or very

comfortable with their respective shower design. While most students were comfortable with their respective shower design, the reasons behind their comfort sometimes differed depending on the design type.

Matching the noted relationship between privacy and community, only 9% of students using divided showers cited the community as a positive explanation for why their comfort level changed, compared to 24% of students using partially-open showers and 50% of those using open showers. Time, however, was a factor cited by students regardless of shower design. Across all three designs, many students said they simply needed time to adjust to their respective shower design, which echoed findings by Vivona and Gomillion (1972). Though it cannot be stated definitively, freshmen did not seem to need a significant amount of time to adjust to their respective shower designs. The survey in this study was sent out approximately three weeks after classes started, and the current comfort level data from freshmen closely mirrored the data from upperclassmen.

Perception Versus Reality of Open Showers

Student responses regarding open showers reflected interesting differences between the perception of open showers and the reality of student experiences. One student pointed this out in his final comments:

My parents ask sometimes why [my dorm] has community showers and it seems at times that they dislike it, but I am not sure how to explain to them that people seem to be able to ignore the discomfort of it all and no one is visibly bothered by the community showers. I personally wouldn't be too affected if we had them or if we didn't. It is interesting, however, how the one guys hall with the most open showers is the one known to have the best community.

As reflected in this quote, the initial perception of open showers was starkly different from respondents' actual experiences. Of students using open showers, 41% shared that open showers were viewed as initially uncomfortable or potentially awkward. One student stated, "The openness of [my hall's] showers occasionally makes people feel uncomfortable. It can be a weird and difficult transfer for freshman." The data on respondents' initial comfort levels supported this, as open showers skewed more negative compared to divided and partially-open showers. Vivona and Gomillion (1972) also reported that students felt initially uncomfortable with bathroom nudity.

While open showers may have stronger negative perceptions, the data from this study does not support perceptions that open showers are negative, uncomfortable, or awkward. Of students using open showers, 96% reported their current comfort level was either "comfortable" or "very comfortable," the highest percentage of the three designs. In addition, many students like this one described their experience with open showers in glowing terms: "Open showers are as close to Eden as you can get on a guys dorm." Students using open showers may initially think of them as awkward, but the majority of students quickly become accustomed to them, and some even grow to appreciate them.

Nudity and Vulnerability

A theme that arose in the open shower responses that was not found in the other designs was vulnerability. Respondents emphatically pointed out that the open shower design broke down barriers between men and helped lead to a shame-free culture of vulnerability. One student wrote that open showers ". . . [help] foster an atmosphere of vulnerability which is lacking in much male culture today," and another student reflected

that open showers “[make] us vulnerable and breaks down barriers that nothing else can.”

Shared nudity was viewed positively by several students, such as this perspective:

[Open showers allow] for people to be more vulnerable, if we can see each other in the shower without walls, we can also be more open with them and letting them see our true selves on the inside as well.

Students also believed open showers “[break] down shame, and allows for a place of vulnerability for most [students] . . .” The theme of vulnerability reflects the findings of Brown's (2012) research on vulnerability and shame. Brown asked her participants to describe what vulnerability felt like, and a theme that arose was that vulnerability felt like being naked.

For the men using open showers, they found that being physically naked with other men allowed them to be more vulnerable than they would otherwise. This student's reflection encapsulated these findings well:

I know that guys come in scared for whatever reasons about showering with others. I know it's not an easy thing for lots of guys. But community showers quickly break down those walls and if anything, give that person more confidence. Because they are able to walk in the showers and see that everybody is unique and different in the ways they are built. I know we had a couple guys in the past who came in scared because they were not circumcised. But those fears were put to rest once they were able to see that they are not the only ones. All because community showers created that space for confidence and vulnerability to come into the picture.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was that it was conducted at one small, liberal arts institution. While the study's results provide a rich picture of student experiences at this institution, it is unclear how universally the results might apply to students at other institutions. Several cultural factors, such as a shared cultural background, may influence the experiences of students at this institution. In addition, students at this institution learn about shower facilities when selecting housing. Thus, students may self-select into the residence hall and associated shower design with which they feel most comfortable.

An additional limitation to this study is a lack of demographic data reflected in the findings. This study was conducted at an institution with relatively small populations of students of color, international students, and students identifying as LGBTQ. To preserve respondent anonymity, demographic data regarding these populations was not collected. While no participants indicated that these facets of identity influenced their experience, research conducted by Wentz (2010), Yarhouse et al. (2009), and Yuan (2016) all noted the challenges LGB students may face when using community showers.

Future Research

Future research should first be done at similar institutions to test the validity of these findings. The role of institution demographics and culture should be considered. Research at larger public schools should also explore the impact of school size and culture on this study's findings. Larger studies should also include more demographic data to explore the experiences of students with different identities and backgrounds.

Future research is recommended to more deeply explore the themes found in this study. Future studies should explore the relationship between design and community.

Further, the role of privacy and its impact on community should be explored in future research. Studies could also explore perceptions surrounding shower facilities and public nudity as well as their impact on body image. Last, research could further explore connections between nudity and vulnerability.

Recommendations for Practice

Though this study was exploratory in nature, some lessons were learned that student development professionals can apply their work. The results found in this study contradict assumptions made about shower design and how it influences the community of men's floors. Further, the findings call into question the role of privacy in residence hall design. In recent decades, many community shower facilities have been replaced with single-stall showers or single-user bathrooms (Cover, 2003). These changes were made due to shifting societal views surrounding nudity and a cultural desire for more privacy (Cover, 2003; Fernandez, 2004). Today's students desire more privacy than previous generations (Fernandez, 2004; Tamburri, 2013), but this study calls into question the belief that more privacy positively influences student experiences.

A theme found in this study was the significant differences between the perception of shower designs and the reality of student experiences. A common assumption faced during the research process was that divided showers would be more comfortable and inclusive than other designs. In addition, several student development professionals expressed negative views about open showers and public nudity during the research process. The data found in this study challenges these assumptions. Divided showers had little positive impact on men's floor communities, while open showers had several positive impacts on men's floor communities in this study.

Student development professionals would be wise to compare their perceptions and assumptions of shower design to actual student experiences. As shown by this study, assumptions made about shower design and actual student experiences often differ. Since little research addresses the topic of residence hall shower facility design, assumptions made by student development professionals may be considered fact in daily practice. These assumptions can be especially problematic in the design of new residence halls because of the permanency of a new building. Student development professionals therefore should compare their assumptions about shower design to data concerning actual student experiences and make decisions accordingly.

Conclusion

As Winston Churchill lobbied and much research has confirmed, architecture influences how people interact with one another and the world around them (Brandon et al., 2008; Devlin et al., 2008; Hossack, 2016; Li et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2008; Scott-Webber, 2004; Wang et al., 2004). This principle was tested through this mixed-methods exploration of connections between shower facility design and the communities of men's residence hall floors. Though shower facilities seem inconsequential, their design has a significant impact on college males' engagement with each other on residence hall floors. An inverse relationship between privacy and community was found, and no connection was found between privacy and comfort level. In addition, this study explored how shower facility design intersected with men's experiences with community, belonging, vulnerability, nudity, and conversation. Last, the results found in this study call into question assumptions made about shower facilities and how they influence men's floor communities. To borrow a phrase from Webber (2004), shower facilities matter!

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Appendix A

Online Survey

Select the residence hall in which you live:

Age:

Sex:

Year in college:

Describe the community of your residence hall floor in three adjectives:

Describe the shower design of your residence hall floor in three adjectives:

Describe the social atmosphere in the shower area on your floor. (*For example, is it a place of conversation? Is it a place where guys shower and go about their day? What's the vibe you get when you walk in?*)

The shower design on my floor positively impacts the community of my floor.
Likert Scale: 1-5 strongly disagree to strongly agree (SD, D, U, A, SA)

What, if any, are some of the ways that the shower design impacts the community of your floor?

Rate your *initial* comfort level with the shower design on your floor.
Likert Scale: 1-5 very uncomfortable to very comfortable (VU, U, U, C, VC)

Rate your *current* comfort level with the shower design on your floor.
Likert Scale: 1-5 very uncomfortable to very comfortable (VU, U, U, C, VC)

If applicable, what were some factors that helped change (or not change) your comfort level with the shower design on your floor?

Describe your personal experience with the social atmosphere of the shower area on your floor. (*For example, is it a place of conversation for you? Is it a place where you quietly go about your business?*)

How often do you interact with other students in the shower area on your floor?

Scale: never, seldom, sometimes, often, always

The shower design on my floor positively impacts my engagement with the community of my floor.

Likert Scale: 1-5 strongly disagree to strongly agree (SD, D, U, A, SA)

What, if any, are some of the ways that the shower design impacts your engagement with the community of your floor?

What is the most positive way the shower design on your floor impacts the community of your floor?

What is the most negative way the shower design on your floor impacts the community of your floor?

Given the choice, what type of shower design would you prefer on your floor?

- Community-style bathroom with divided showers (shared bathroom facilities on a floor, separated shower stalls)
- Community-style bathroom with open showers (shared bathroom facilities on a floor, no dividers between shower stalls)
- Suite-style, single-user bathrooms (bathroom shared between small number of rooms, no shared bathroom facilities on the floor)
- Single-user bathroom for each room (bathroom attached to each individual room, no shared bathroom facilities on the floor)

Do you have any other related thoughts on the shower design or experience with community on your floor that you haven't been able to express yet? If so, please share.

Appendix B

Survey Introduction Email

TL;DR: help a MAHE student out, take a short (anonymous) online survey located at the bottom of the email, and enter to win a DiGiornio's pizza.

Hello all,

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Eric Moore, and I am a MAHE (Masters of Arts in Higher Education) student here at Taylor. Like other MAHE students, I've been working on a master's thesis this year. I'm doing a study on the impact of shower facility design on men's residence hall floor communities, and I would like your help in the research process. Could you take a short, anonymous, online survey for me? **You'll find a link to it at the bottom of this email.**

“Wait, Eric - why are you doing a study about showers?” Great question! There are a couple points of inspiration for this study, and many stem from my experience as an undergrad at Messiah College. Depending on the year, the shower area on the floors I lived on was a place where guys quietly showered and went on with their day or a place that was rowdier and filled with conversation. Some years, community seemed to be found in the shower areas, but in other years it wasn't. In addition, I took multiple design classes, which fostered a growing interest in architecture and how a room's layout influences the way people interact with each other. These experiences and more inspired many questions and a desire to better understand how design impacts communities. To that end, I designed my master's thesis around the following research question: what, if any, is the impact of shower facility design on sense of community on men's residence hall floors?

Important Details:

This study isn't about your actual shower habits. I don't care about what time you shower, how regularly you shower, or what brand of shampoo you use. Instead, I'm much more interested in your social experience, if any, in your respective shower area.

This study isn't about which dorm is better than the other. I'm not interested in a narrative of one-upmanship and unhelpful comparison. Instead, my hope is to gain insight

into the communities of each floor and report the experiences of men honestly and without bias.

This survey is anonymous. Your name or email won't be attached to your survey, and I'll remove any identifiable details from the results.

The survey should take you about 7-10 minutes.

There are prizes for completing the survey. I'll be selecting 6 participants at random to receive a DiGiornio's pizza. There will be an opportunity at the end of the survey to enter, and this won't be tied to your survey submission.

Other notes: At the beginning of the survey, you'll find an informed consent form for this study. Your feedback on this survey is valuable, so please be thoughtful and serious when completing it. Results will be presented at my thesis defense (I'll put it in the student announcements).

Here's the link to the survey:

Thank you in advance for your help with my thesis, and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Eric Moore

