

-Introduction-

Living in a large university means something different to each individual student within a given campus; however, there is aspect of student life that first-semester undergraduates have in common at the University of Illinois: they are required by the University to live in dormitories. Private housing certified by the university exists, but the vast majority of first-year undergraduates live in public dormitories. There are eight different public residence halls on the campus- Allen, Busey-Evans, Illinois Street Residence (ISR), Lincoln Avenue Residence (LAR), Florida Avenue Residence (FAR), Pennsylvania Avenue Residence (PAR), Gregory Drive Residence and Peabody Drive Residence (the last two combined are known as the ‘Six-Pack’). There are several noticeable differences between the dormitories, one being an inconsistent and unequal distribution of students in terms of race and ethnicity. This difference is most noticeable when comparing the Six-Pack to the FAR/PAR dormitories: the Six-Pack has a seemingly higher population of white students than the other dormitories, and the FAR/PAR dormitories have a seemingly higher percentage of international and minority students. The University does not readily provide statistical documentation to confirm such claims, but the difference is apparent to any person willing to simply spend a bit of time in both areas and compare them. The claim is widely supported through a plethora of anecdotal and documented evidence (compiled and collected by the researchers), and is the subject of much controversy within the student population. There tends to be a visceral reaction of repugnance concerning the idea of a segregated public institution in modern society, but the University of Illinois itself cannot be held wholly responsible for a seemingly segregated situation. Undergraduate students have a choice in dormitory

residency preference, and documented student interviews done by the researchers-in addition to other research and sources-encourage the notion that students self-segregate, and choose to live with ethnically or socially similar students. The university and its sponsored interest groups are also better able to meet the needs or cater to the interests of international and minority student populations that are localized in the FAR/PAR area. Positive aspects of grouping like student populations are even more convincing when considering international students: foreign student populations are able to speak their native languages in a relatively large linguistic network, and cultural and living-learning communities promote a comfortable atmosphere for all. The implications of the said division in university housing to the student population are different for each student (as documented in interviews). Some view it as controversy, and others view it as accommodation. Regardless of student opinions, differences exist. The ways in which FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack differ ethnically and socially, the reasons why these differences exist, and the implications that the differences mean for the students, staff and university as a whole have been thoroughly investigated. The exploration of these factors will provide insight to the housing controversy existing within the University of Illinois.

-What Differences Exist between FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack?-

Differences include:

- location of the dormitories,
- racial/ethnic makeup of the dormitories,
- living-learning and special interest communities within the dormitories,
- advertisements and postings within and around the dormitories,
- the non-English linguistic networks of the dormitories,
- menus, dining services, and special meals offered by the dormitories
- and social aspects of student life within the dormitories,

-Location of the Dormitories-

FAR and PAR, as well as Gregory Drive Residence Hall and Peabody Drive Residence Hall have been grouped separately by the researchers as FAR/PAR and the ‘Six-Pack’ because of their separate proximities and the outlined differences between the groupings that the study seeks to discuss. FAR/PAR are grouped in this study because of the mutually higher populations of international and minority students, and the ‘Six-Pack’ is a common name for the two residence halls known by most at the University of Illinois (FAR/PAR are also frequently lumped together as a single location, most notably on MTD bus routes). FAR/PAR dormitories are at the furthest southeastern corner of the campus at the intersections of Lincoln Avenue and their namesakes Florida Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue. The Six-Pack is found in the interior of the campus, a few blocks west of the campus center. It is on the intersections of Fourth Avenue and the namesakes Gregory Drive and Peabody Drive. The relative positions of the dormitories are significant in regards to student social doings, campus activities, and to student attitudes towards and aptness to visit each dormitory.

-Racial/Ethnic Makeup of the Dormitories-

FAR/PAR houses a seemingly higher percentage of minorities than the Six Pack. The University of Illinois’ housing department has filed statistical demographics of the division of the dormitories in regards to race and ethnicity, but this university-funded research is not open to the public and was not made available to the researchers (even after multiple requests and attempts to obtain the said demographics). To make up for the lack of all-encompassing and objective demographics, the researchers interviewed

students from both halls to determine student perception of the said inequality. The results of FAR/PAR interviews were compared to the results of Six-Pack interviews, and student opinion overwhelmingly supported the notion that there was a great disparity between the two halls in terms of racial/ethnic diversity.

The researchers randomly interviewed 40 students in dining halls: 10 interviews came from the PAR dining hall, 10 from FAR, 10 from Gregory Drive Residence hall and 10 from Peabody Drive Residence hall. All first semester undergraduates living in public dormitories are required by the University to purchase a meal plan, so the dining halls of the public dormitories were the most reliable interview pool representing students residing in the given dormitory hall. To further randomize and validate the research, the researchers conducted interviews during all offered meals, at different times during the offered meals, during special weekly meals, and during various weather conditions (students are less likely to travel to a distant dining hall when the weather is poor). Interviews were not conducted during breakfast hours, however, because there are too few students that actually go to breakfast in dormitory dining halls. To further sustain a random and unbiased interview setting, every third populated table in each hall was selected. If there was more than one student at a table, the student that had the least amount of food on his or her plate was asked if he or she would agree to be interviewed; the researchers needed to have an unbiased standard to select an individual from a populated table, and also deduced that it would be impolite to interrupt a student who is just beginning a meal versus a student who is done or almost done eating. Also, it is easier (and much more pleasant) to conduct an interview with a student who is not chewing his or her food. IRB Consent Forms were explained to, read by, and signed by every person

who was interviewed. The two researchers truthfully and politely introduced themselves as freshmen of the University of Illinois conducting a random interview about dormitories (no mention was initially made to the aim of the research): interviewed students appeared to be comfortable and straightforward with the researchers. To augment this described setting, one researcher asked the questions as if in a conversation while the other recorded their responses. All interviewees initially self identified their race/ethnicity, gender, and residency before questions were asked. Each student was asked the same questions in the same way:

- 1.) When applying, did you have a dorm preference?
- 2.) If so, why did you choose that dorm?
- 3.) Are you happy with the dorm in which you were placed?
- 4.) Knowing what you have learned about the dorms, where would you prefer living now?
- 5.) What are some of the differences that you have noticed between the dorms?
- 6.) Some say that FAR/PAR has the largest concentration of minority and international students, whereas the 'Six-Pack' is predominantly white. What are your opinions on this statement?
- 7.) Do you believe that the dorms are segregated institutionally? By the choice of students? Both? Or neither? Briefly explain.

Throughout the interviews, the majority of students supported the idea that FAR/PAR has a higher concentration of minorities and that the Six-Pack is predominantly white. In fact, all but one of the students from FAR/PAR agreed with the statement in question six of the interview: the one student who did not have an opinion on the subject had never been to the Six-Pack and was therefore unable to compare the ethnic diversity (or lack thereof) between the two dormitories. Of the 20 interviews from the Six-Pack, 11 students supported the statement of question six, and 9 did not: as was found in the FAR/PAR interviews, the students that did not support the statement had never been to the opposite dorm. All of the interviewed students who had been to both

FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack held the view that there exist several racial and ethnic disparities between FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack. Most students from FAR/PAR and a few from the Six-Pack, when asked if differences exist between the dorms and what those differences are (question five), responded that the most obvious difference between the dormitories was the said racial and ethnic disproportion between-specifically-FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack. The open-endedness of question five, and the explicit differences mentioned in many responses, attest to widespread and strong perceptions of difference between the racial/ethnic makeup of FAR/PAR. During the interviews, the students did not see the questions of the researchers, and more specific questions (namely 6 and 7) did not sway any prior responses.

Staff/managerial opinions and observations were also taken into account through the interview process: when asked how FAR/PAR differs from the Six-Pack, a Resident Director or PAR declared “there are more students of color here (FAR/PAR)”, FAR/PAR has “higher diversity”, and mentioned that the Six-Pack is predominantly white in an earlier response to a separate question. By the responses provided, and the analysis of the collected anecdotal evidence from over forty interviews, the student population acknowledges the fact that de facto exists between the university dormitories.

-Living-Learning and Special Interest Communities within the Dormitories-

The researchers have noticed that several accommodations, interest groups, and special living communities are strategically located in different dormitory halls to appeal to specific groups of students. Through the locations and purposes of each of these programs, it is made clear that the housing policies of the University of Illinois attempt to

address and accommodate the specific needs and interests of the diverse populous of the university. Several living-learning communities are offered to undergraduate dormitory residents by the University of Illinois. A living-learning community, as defined in the university housing webpage, is “designed to give students the chance to become part of a unique experience, with programs and facilities to support the interests of the community members” (“Registered Organizations”: 2004). The six living-learning communities offered by the university are: Global Crossroads, Health Professionals, Intersections, Leadership Experience through Academic Development and Service (LEADS), Unit One, Weston Exploration, and Women in Math Science and Engineering (WIMSE). Of these communities, Global Crossroads and Intersections are both offered in the PAR dormitories and are the home to several dozen students each semester. Global Crossroads is a community that emphasizes “cross-cultural interaction with both intellectual and social dimensions” from a global perspective (Global Crossroads: 2006). Other reasons why international students would prefer to live in Global Crossroads may include a sense of home, a greater first-language community, and the fact that the university does not close their dormitories during fall, winter and spring breaks. From an interview with a Resident Director from PAR, it was discovered that in fact a high proportion of international students choose to live in Global Crossroads (particularly Indian, European, Korean, Chinese and other Asian nationalities). Intersections is another community that promotes positive “race relations through intergroup dialogue, scholarship, research, the arts, and social action” (Intersections: 2006). The intentions of the two communities in combination with their PAR locality are a verification of the notion that FAR/PAR has a higher proportion of an international student body than that of the other dorms. The Six-

Pack is home to Weston Exploration and LEADS, which are academically-based living communities without any focus or attention towards international consciousness or the concept of race (LEADS: 2006, Weston Exploration: 2006). All four of the living-learning communities are constructive organizations for different interested groups of students: the interests, and target audience of these groups are different, and represent the differences between FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack. Another excellent example of interest groups existing where there is interest are the Black Student Unions (BSU). Seven subgroups of BSU exist in seven different dormitory halls-six of which are public dormitories. 'Ewezo' is the BSU of FAR and 'Salango' is the BSU for PAR ("Central Black Student Union of the University of Illinois": 2006). The only two public dormitories that do not have a large enough population or interest base to support a BSU group are Gregory and Peabody Drive Residence Halls: the Six-Pack.

-Advertisements and Postings within and around the Dormitories-

Living-learning communities are not the only ways in which students are encouraged to participate in various activities provided by the dormitories or other organizations; through advertisements, announcements and postings within campus dormitories, students are given information about events, social issues, promotion of a positive living environment, special interest groups, etc. While interviewing a Resident Director of PAR, a special inquiry was made as to how and why differences exist between the advertisements of the dorms-namely FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack. The Resident Director mentioned that Resident Advisors are largely responsible for selecting

postings and advertisements on boards in the dormitories, but multiculturalism is a theme encouraged for endorsement throughout the university. The larger more widely visible poster-boards centrally located in the dormitories are utilized more so by special interest groups and campus event advertisements. The reason differences exist between the dormitory advertisements is simple; the differing cultural, social and/or ethnic populations of dormitories represent target audiences to differing advertisements, and this audience changes from hall to hall. FAR/PAR has a higher representation of multicultural postings encouraging tolerance, diversity and global awareness than does the Six-Pack. Both dormitories, however, display the Asian American student organizations, Latino student organizations and the controversial 'Hate Wall' which is covered with negative slurs, their definitions, and condemnation of their usage. Target audiences noticeably change between all dormitory postings, and this fact is not limited to FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack: Allen hall is widely recognized as the "liberal" or "artsy" hall, and displayed advertisements strongly support this notion. Social Issues Theater, benefit concerts, Shakespeare Theatre, poetry clubs, diverse/ethnic music, and Indian Dance Club are a few of such advertisements displayed during research that support the generalization that Allen hall residents are likely to be artistically inclined.

-The Non-English Linguistic Community within the Dormitories-

The differing intensity and prevalence of language diversity between residents of given dormitories are excellent gages of cultural, ethnic and national differences of dormitory populations. Throughout the weeks of research and participant-observation, special attention was paid to the larger non-English linguistic community (meaning the

summation of speakers of a given linguistic variety in a specific setting) in FAR/PAR (Finnegan, Rickford: 2004). Participant-observations of foreign language prevalence in specific areas is relatively simple to document in a campus setting: walking through both FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack and observing regularly peopled areas such as bus-stops, dining halls, computer labs or lounges, at various, random times each day for several weeks has provided the researchers with ample information to compare language diversity. Socialization among non-English speaking groups of students is commonplace in FAR/PAR: groups of Indian students joking in a shared Indian language at lunch, Korean chain-smokers telling stories while huddling together at the MTD bus stop, Latino students discussing an assignment in Spanish, etc. Even foreign dialects of English-such as British English and Scottish English-are often heard because of the European representation in Global Crossroads. Foreign languages have also been heard and documented in the Six-Pack, Spanish being the most common. The most noticeable difference between the non-English linguistic networks of FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack is the size of the groups that speak to one another: groups in FAR/PAR can be upwards of 15 students, while the largest documented group in the Six-Pack was 4 Spanish speaking students.

-Menus, Dining Services, and Special Meals Offered by the Dormitories-

In the interviews with students, when they were asked what differences they had noticed between dormitories (question five), and several students mentioned the food or dining services as the most evident disparity between dormitories. The only dining hall that was mentioned as noticeably better than others by interviewees from FAR/PAR and

the Six-Pack was ISR. The claim that any public dining hall is generally better than another is strange; the daily meals offered during regular meal times (excluding A La Carte Locations) are in fact the same between public dormitory locations. The few exceptions to universality of offered meals are the weekly specialty meals: 'Field of Greens'-health food and vegetarian cuisine- is open for lunch at LAR Monday through Friday, and there are five special meals offered at various halls throughout the week. Upon dining in ISR, alleged the best by a considerable part of interviewed students, it was noticed by the researchers that there were many more windows, higher ceilings and more open space in the lines and seating areas: unless ISR has an exceptional staff, the said interviewed students were likely won over by the aesthetics and comfortable atmosphere. The only other dining hall that was noticed by the researchers as significantly different from all of the others is that of Allen hall, which is perceived by many students (including several interviewed) as artsy and liberal: there were many more decorations and mirrors, the seating arrangements resembled a restaurant (booths and smaller tables), and the dishes, trays and silverware were colorful. The previously mentioned specialty meals served in public dining halls are as follows; Friday dinner at ISR is 'Cocina Mexicana'-Mexican and other Latino cuisine is served; Wednesday dinner at Peabody Drive (Six-Pack) is 'Fat Don's'-steak, chicken, ribs and other barbecue related foods; Tuesday dinner at Gregory (Six-Pack) is 'Cracked Egg Café'- breakfast for dinner; Friday lunch at Busey-Evans is 'Oodles'-exotic noodle dishes; and Thursday dinner at FAR is 'Soul Ingredient'-Southern soul food. 'Soul Ingredient' being located at FAR is most likely not a coincidence; the southern soul food that is served (including fried foods, assorted casseroles, collard greens and other dishes) are renown as

Southern/African-American cuisine, and FAR houses the seemingly highest percentage of African American students. Also, rap/R&B music is played in the largest dining room of FAR, and this music genre has a largely African American audience. Also, students in interviews often believed that ‘Soul Ingredient’ was located at FAR to appeal to the seemingly higher percentage of African American students.

-Social Aspects of Student Life within the Dormitories-

The differences between the physical locations of FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack are extremely relevant when considering social activities in which several students partake during their undergraduate years at the University of Illinois. FAR/PAR is the furthest dormitory from the center of the campus, and is also the furthest from classes, the commercial district (Green Street), the bars, and most of the fraternities and sororities (except the ones located on Lincoln Avenue and Sigma Nu on Pennsylvania Avenue). There are some businesses a few blocks from FAR/PAR on Dorner, a bus-stop directly in front of PAR, and the Campus Recreation Center East a block north, but when compared to the proximity of the Six-Pack to the majority of external social functions, FAR/PAR has very little close by. Several students from FAR/PAR complained during interviews about the undesirable location of their dormitory, and mentioned that other dormitories such as ISR and the Six-Pack have much better locations. Several interviewed students from the Six-Pack conversely expressed appreciation for their relatively central location. When all interviewed students were asked which dormitory they initially preferred to live in (question one), 20 preferred a Six-Pack location whereas only 8 students preferred an FAR/PAR location. In addition to a prime location on campus, reasons given for the

preference of the Six-Pack (question two) generally stem from siblings or friends recommending it, with claims or beliefs that the Six-Pack is the 'cool' dorm, the 'social' dorm or the 'party' dorm. In interviews the most common reasons given to select FAR/PAR as the dormitory of preference include recommendations from friends or siblings, with claims or beliefs that it is more diverse with higher concentrations of minority and international students (which is a draw for some minority, international, and even white students). Most students were perfectly satisfied with their placement, regardless of whether or not they received their first pick-only six of the interviewed students expressed discontent with their placement. Reasons given for this general satisfaction of placement include a developed sense of belonging to either the Six-Pack or FAR/PAR. Both the Six-Pack and FAR/PAR interviewees commonly mentioned that dorm-friends they have either made, or previously knew, improve the social situation of their dormitory life. The Six-Pack residents were more likely to mention the fraternity parties, bar scene, and other social or university sponsored activities that seem to constantly go on in the vicinity of their dorm, whereas FAR/PAR residents were more likely to mention a stronger sense of community and friendliness in their dormitories-as if it were a "home-away-from-home". One interviewed student accounts the friendlier mood to the relatively isolated location of the dorms-FAR/PAR residents are more likely to divert their free time inwards instead of outwards, creating friendships and connections with their neighbors. Open hall-lounges (often used as temporary housing units) are also located on every residence floor of PAR, forcing residents to see more of their fellow residents: this open construction is not found in any other dormitory hall, so the physical differences between the dormitories arguably account for some social differences. The

Resident advisor agrees with the “homey” atmosphere of FAR/PAR, and accounts much of it to a higher encouragement to reach out and connect with other residents and the highest percentage of like-aged freshman undergraduates among the dormitories.

-Institutionalized Segregation versus Self-Segregation-

Several factors are responsible for the controversy that is segregation within public dormitory housing in the University of Illinois. These factors can be grouped as either institutional segregation or self-segregation. Researchers spent much of their time attempting to locate and analyze university statistics documenting the social and ethnic makeup of each public dormitory. These statistics were not accessible to the public, but needed to be specially requested from the Housing Department located in Clark Hall. Frequent e-mails, inquiries and phone-calls from the researchers were either unanswered or redirected to someone else—all of whom were allegedly unable to help. The researchers were finally redirected to a cooperative Housing Administrator, Spencer D. Cole—who oversees assignments for the Housing Department. He sent a request to the University of Illinois Housing Marketing Department to obtain the said demographics for the researchers. The Marketing Department, however, has yet to respond. The inability for any persistent researcher to acquire publicly-funded statistics is shameful, and raises the question of why Housing is deliberately hiding this information: Housing is likely in fear of leaking statistics that could be interpreted as institutionalized segregation, which could potentially affect federal funding of the university. The University of Illinois does not have a very good record in terms of race related policies, especially notable in recent events; the mascot ‘Chief’ is a current example of sketchy race related policies of the

university. Black students and other minority students have been institutionally segregated in Jim Crow America in the past: black students were not even mentioned in housing policies until a 1945 civil protest, and all lived in the homes of black families surrounding the university. Champaign-Urbana as a whole has an ugly racial history. The story of Paul Hursey, Sr. is a testament to the segregated setting of the campus; he was a black student attending the University of Illinois in the early 1950's who was refused service in all area barbershops. In his memoirs, he documents his experience: "You're here at school, this allegedly is one of the greater universities in the United States or in the world and just being a student here be denied those kinds of opportunities" (Frank: 1990, p. 168). Upon interviewing a diverse student population about their opinions of segregation at the University of Illinois, ten of forty students believed that a certain amount of institutional segregation still exists. A stark contrast in ethnic makeup exists between the said dormitories, and it is a rational inference that university policies account for some of this. The interviews also showed that several Latino and black students living in FAR/PAR had requested the Six-Pack; this as an inference institutionalized segregation is not very substantial-the same was true with the majority of white interviewees from FAR/PAR and the timeliness of housing request submissions were not recorded.

Additionally, financial aide is awarded relatively late when compared to standard application submission, and students must be accepted before they apply for housing. FAR/PAR being one of the least desired dormitories, in combination with the fact that white students are less likely than other demographics to depend on (or be able to receive) financial aide may account for higher minority populations in FAR/PAR; other

dormitory halls simply fill up faster than FAR/PAR, so any factor that would stall acceptance or housing preference submission would increase the chances of being placed in the readily open FAR/PAR dormitories. Also, returning non-freshmen undergraduates are given priority when selecting housing: FAR/PAR has the highest percentage of freshman (leftovers), further supporting the notion that it is one of the least preferred dormitories on the campus (Legally Integrated but Socially Segregated: 2006).

Self-segregation is the notion that people choose to segregate themselves for various reasons: eleven of the forty residents that were interviewed believed that self-segregation is responsible for the segregation of the dormitories (eleven believed that both institutionalized and self-segregation exist, and the rest had no opinion on the matter). Interviewed white students were more likely than other demographics to prefer the Six-Pack, and conversely, minority students were more likely than white students to prefer FAR/PAR. The word segregation itself has a multitude of negative connotations is largely stigmatized, and rightfully so; but several student opinions point to the fact that allegedly segregated dormitories have several positive aspects (Parker: 97). As previously mentioned, non-English and linguistic communities being grouped together is responsible for a larger linguistic and social marketplace; localized groups of students from like backgrounds (ethnic, social, etc.) can provide students with a sense of comfort during their collegiate transition; and the localization of student groups and demographics concentrate a target audience for specific programs, activities, advertisements and dining options-making it easier for the university to accommodate the needs and interests of all students. Also, the existence of segregation within dormitory housing is not nearly as significant as other instances of segregation, such as the segregated housing policies that

have shaped American urban areas: there are no financial implications negatively affecting students in a segregated dormitory (there is no long-lasting financial investment in a dormitory), and all public dormitories are fundamentally equal in quality and access to resources.

-Conclusion-

Through the course of research, and with the investigation of dynamics surrounding the study, the researchers have provided an inquiry into one of the more controversial issues occurring at the University of Illinois. The main issue is racial, ethnic, and social disparity in public dormitory housing. A higher percentage of white students have been perceived live in the Six-Pack, and a higher percentage of minorities and international students have been perceived to live in FAR/PAR. Carefully and neutrally analyzing the implications of the collected data, the researchers deduced that a certain level of segregation is definitely existent within the housing setup of the University of Illinois. Locations, advertisements, special interest programs, and even the menus of the dormitories account for and help verify this statement. The residents themselves were also a key factor in the study: their interviews provided ethnographic insight to the social implications and general opinions surrounding the study. The fact that approximately half of the students interviewed initially requested to live at the Six-Pack, in addition to several other documented experiences from the interviewed residents, affirm marked social differences between student-life in both dormitories. These differences raise the question: what factors are responsible for this unequal setting? Natural preferences of students, accommodations to promote comfortable living, and

several other factors help provide answers to this question-these factors, however, do not carry with them controversial luggage that surrounds the few institutionalized factors contributing to the existing disparities in public dormitory housing. The multitude of differentiations between FAR/PAR and the Six-Pack are perceived in varying lights, both positive and negative. One thing that this study certainly proved beyond a doubt: differences exist.