In this paper, I discuss the results of an ethnographic project about the issues that affect residence halls' safety at the Illinois State University. Using interviews with two resident assistants, one night operations worker, and two professional staff members, as well as participant-observation at the night operations desk in Manchester Hall I was able to study this issue. I show that safety issues are caused primarily to the layout of the buildings, the lack of information that is getting to the residents, and residents not taking the policies seriously. Based on these preliminary findings, I argue that the university needs to take steps to ensure that the floor layouts are more conducive to safety and that this issue is taken into account during remodeling, and that there needs to be a better way of getting information to the residents in case of an emergency or to ensure their safety proactively.

The first page that I read was the night operations section of the UHS website. This relates to my project as it is one of the main safety precautions of UHS. The opening page of the website appears to be geared toward parents as it explains how night ops help to improve the safety of the housing for students. The rest of the site is geared toward students and those that are prospective employees. The site is then broken-down into FAQ for students and explains the procedures for checking in after midnight and what is needed to check in a guest. However because it is a night ops page it only explains the rules of limited access as it affects the position. This continues to explain how it increases safety without explaining how or describing any statistics to prove safety changes after the launch of night ops. The website under the section explaining limited access has a picture of an Illinois State ID with a picture of Reggie to foster a feel of community especially because of the level of animosity of students for limited access and night ops. Also along the same point is the fact that the rest of the housing website uses the red and yellow color pattern the night ops portion uses the red and white pattern as they are the school colors.

I also reviewed the Sexual Assault Prevention page on the SHS website. The website not only explains what the services are available at ISU but also what is possible to obtain medical services, criminal charges, how friends can help those who have been victims of sexual assault. The website is directed at students who are victims of sexual assault or that know someone who has been sexually assaulted, but even further it is
directed at females as there is an additional portion directed specifically for males. The portion for men tends to minimize the possibility of sexually assault against men and explains to men how to help stop sexual assault rather than provide them the same resources that are listed under the non-male link. What seems to be the major focus of the site as most of the flyers that are by sexual assault prevention, is that there are specific measures that you can do to prevent sexual assault from happening to you. The site also has two brief videos that provide information geared to decrease your likelihood of sexual assault by explaining the effects of alcohol and sexual assault. The videos also make the point that sexual assault is often ignored on college campuses due to the fact that they do not want to been seen as an issue at their school. The website also has statistics that are available all of the cases reported occurred at a private residence or a residence hall. The most important thing that I noted was the separation of incidence of rape for males and females, which makes it seem as though it is two different issues.

Hewett and Manchester Halls ↓

Felmley Hall ↓ Moulton Hall

Schroeder Hall

My Houses ↓

Bio Building ↓ Transcript Office or the tree w/ the bunnies

Anthropology Building (Schrader Hall)

Life in Manchester particularly on the eighth floor is pretty social. Between 6:40 and 6:45 pm there is a large number of girls in the hallway and many of them have their doors open and are yelling across into each others rooms. There is a girl with her parents and they are carrying a large number of groceries from the hallway into her room. They are arguing about the state of her room and how cluttered it is and the fact that the chair they appear to have just bought does not fit in the room. A girl walks out of the bathroom in a towel starts to walk down the hall sees the parents and turns to walk around the hall the long way. There is an ongoing conversation in the hall about the Bears game and the fact that they have just won. The other major conversation that appears to be going on is that of rushing. The part I manage to catch is a girl saying she didn’t rush because she doesn’t need a sorority to tell her whether or not
being herself is good enough for them.

Basso talks about how the name of a place allows you to see a picture of it, which is very important in the map aspect of this assignment. I have walked the same way to Schroeder Hall every day for the past 3 years and I know exactly what I am going to pass and I can only picture the buildings that I pass in the terms of what it looks like when I walk past them. The next thing that I didn’t really think about is the weight that the names, ideas, and layouts of the buildings that you have in your mind directly affect the way that you are able to comprehend the stories that other people tell you about those places. Finally in addition to the physical buildings there are stories that you assign to the different buildings that shape the ideas that you have about them.

Interview on Friendship at ISU

“Ok I am just going to ask you about friendship, who your friends are at ISU and how you qualify friends.”

“OK.”

“OK first would you say that you have a lot of friends that are outside of what you would consider yourself being either ethnically or racially?”

“Uh, I wouldn’t say that I have a lot of friends that are outside of my ethnic group, mostly acquaintances.”

“OK and like who would you consider those friends or acquaintances to be?”

“Like what ethnic people or what group of people?”

“No like who are they like the specific friend?”

“Oh geez, um Marcus um Steven uh geez I used to have a lot but it is hard for me to think of them now.”

“And how do you know Marcus?”

“Oh I know him through another friend of mine that went to the same high school as him. We hung out a couple of times.”

“Ok and how do you know Steven?”
"He was on the Moraine Valley Speech Team with me."

"Ok and who would you consider your closest friends at ISU to be?"

"Um Emma, Elyse, Renee, and Eric, and that is pretty much it all of my other friends from here have already graduated."

"Who would you qualify as a friend? Who would you consider a friend versus an acquaintance?"

"A friend is probably someone that I would talk to on a regular basis and hang out with every so often, you know that I would actually engage in conversation, we would call each other and see what each other is doing."

"Which friends would you say you hang out with the most?"

"Uh Emma and uh Elyse a lot too."

"And how did you meet them?"

"I met them through like classes and school and SOSA."

"Ok thank you very much."

"You’re welcome."

**Question:** I am interested in the incidence of sexual assault on the ISU campus. This idea is important to me after I learned how much it was hidden on campus. This first came to my knowledge when I was an RA and I saw the extent to which the issue was silenced in the residence halls. From speaking with someone from sexual assault services I learned that the incidence of sexual assault that did occur on campus occur in either private housing or residence halls. After learning this I asked her to come speak to my floor during her presentation she talked about what sexual assault was and what does or does not constitute as sexual assault but never its prevalence in the residence hall. The next major issue that helped to shape my decision was when I was working as an RA and found that I was constantly being reminded that there are certain things that should not be talked about with residents and that there is a proper way to convey information to them and that there is a wrong way. This ultimately led to my advice being ignored as it was deemed as unimportant.

What I plan to look at is the incidence of sexual assault in the residence
halls, how the university tries to promote safety and to stop further incidence, and if other RAs have had experience dealing with the occurrence of sexual assault either on their floor or on rounds. This is interesting because it focuses on the university as a product that they are trying to package to students. This seems especially important in light of the fact that they are redoing the residence halls, and are promoting any changes based on safety. I would be interested to see if there are any such improvements in the recently renovated residence halls or if there are plans to do so in the subsequent renovations.

The best way that I think to go about this is to talk to residence hall coordinators about safety measures, talk to residents about how safe they feel in the residence halls, current RAs about their experiences, and to attend renovation of Hewett Hall meetings to see if they address the issues of safety. As of right now these are the best ideas that I have to go about looking at the issue of sexual assault on the ISU campus. I may change my focus after I begin to gather information and will continue to try to find other possible avenues of research.

http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1858

This ethnography looks at the job of the resident assistant from the standpoint of an RA and it also looks at the position with a skeptical eye. This student also tried looking at the role of RA and how that role is contingent on the part of campus that you are working in, which I would argue relates directly to the hall coordinators that you are working with. This student is looking at the specific event of the death of Adela and the effects that it had on the position. This is a specific case of safety at the university where students were forced to question that safety. I think that post V-Tech you can look at similar events to question safety in the residence halls. While this is looking at the events through an RA eye rather than an ex RA eye I see that there is the opportunity for many similarities between the two projects.

http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1794

This ethnography looks at the hate crimes that occur at U of I and how the police handle such crimes. This student spoke with police which I think would add an important aspect of the project on sexual assault which I had not thought of. This project deals with hate crimes specifically and how the police handle them but I see that the main ideas could be related to my topic of sexual assault and still maintain the same process of interviewing. I think that I would be able to speak with police, residence hall coordinators, students, and Sexual Assault Services to determine how the issue is prevalent and hidden on campus. I may also be able to
speak with health service workers to see if people are going for assistance that have not reported it which may allow for a more accurate idea of the issue at ISU.

I plan to look at the safety issues on campus, especially as they relate to the residence halls. I will be looking at the process that occurs at night operations, talking to staff in residence halls on their view of the issue of safety, and by talking to residence about how safe they feel in the residence halls.

M 16

For my research I plan to look at the safety issues that are involved in the university housing system and what is being done to remedy these issues. I will speak with RAs and find out if they have seen any specific safety problems and what they feel is their responsibility as far as safety is concerned; and to see how frank they are with their residents about safety and what determines that. I will then speak with the residence hall coordinators about whether there are any implicit or explicit rules to determine how residence are informed about safety issues and I will also speak with them about what they see to be safety issues. I plan to meet with the first RA interview on 10/12 and I have sent an email to one of the residence hall coordinators that has worked in 3 of the residence halls on campus for a meeting.

Plan:

Data: Police Crime Report Information

Information on the Campus Crime Report

Rape

Dorms ‘99 5; ‘00 9; ‘01 4; ‘02 7; ‘03 1; ’04 3; ’05 3; ’06 6

Campus ‘99 2; ‘00 0; ’01 0; ’02 1; ’03 0; ’04 1; ’05 2; ’06 3

Break Down of assaults

Campus Includes Residence Hall Areas Walker Mini-Quad and Outside Waterson. This is an issues because of the number of incidents occurring in the halls versus the rest of campus and where there is perceived danger and actual danger.

Burglary
Dorms ‘99 11; ‘00 19; ‘01 23; ‘02 23; ‘03 13; ‘04 16; ‘05 12; ‘06 15

Campus ‘99 31; ‘00 21; ‘01 41; ‘02 39; ‘03 15; ‘04 19; ‘05 10; ‘06 16

Theft *new category beginning in 2007 police report

Dorms ‘04 43; ‘05 51; ‘06 51

Campus ‘04 128; ‘05 165; ‘06 157

Hate Crimes *Between 1999-2006 there are only cases in the dorms and not on Campus

Dorms 2001 Anti-Male Homosexual 1 case
Dorms 2002 Anti-“Other” Nationality 1 case
Dorms 2004 Anti-Homosexual 1case

Times of Reported Crimes

The majority of incidents occur between 10pm-12am and 12am-2am. During both of these times it would be possible for people who were not checked in or did not need to check in for these issues to occur.

RA Talk

I am interested in working on this project because students are not aware of the safety issues that exist in the residence halls as residents the same way that they are aware of them as RAs. I worked as an RA in Hewett Hall for one year and found some very disturbing things. While on duty I saw a girl passed out drunk with someone she checked in that she didn't know, someone try to commit suicide, someone fall down a dock and then walk up nine flights of stairs and people walk into other's rooms and get into bed with them. These are all important because the major issues involve the idea of "other." The idea that it is safe and you know everyone on your floor so you don't need to lock your door even though there are other people in the building. I think that this is related to the idea that RAs are warned that they are not to share all information with their residence and so they are not fully aware of their consequences. For example, constantly warning students to lock doors because things could be stolen and the hall is not responsible versus lock your door because drunk people may wander in. I think that a lot of this goes back to packaging the residence halls and selling the university.
Observation

I will be observing from the night operations area of the building to determine the safety that they provide for the check in process. I think that I will be observing a large number of students that are intoxicated either extremely or mildly and I believe that there will be many students that will be checking people in either of the same or opposite sex. I am also interested in how the interaction between the students and the night operations workers will be playing out.

I will be observing the night operations process on Sunday morning after 12 am. I will try to observe as much of the process as possible from the point of view of an onlooker trying to record information on both the students checking in and the night operations workers.

I begin at midnight when night operations and limited access begins. There are two student workers and one manager that work between different a building who comes and goes. The night operations workers are dressed in black pants a white shirt and a red tie the official dress. One of the night operations workers is an African American woman the other student is an Indian man. The young woman and man were in charge of checking guests in and the night operations manager was in charge of letting in those that lived in the building that were not checking in a guest.

Four people walk into the building there are 3 girls all of whom look like they were dressed to go out to a party and a boy who is dressed in jeans and a t-shirt he walks off to the side and waits by the door the. The one girl is not a resident, she is checked in by one of the other girls. The third girl walks over hands over her key and ID and says nothing and continues walking to the elevator. The girl that is checking her friend in only says she needs to check someone in and begins the paper work. The female night operations worker gives them an overview of the guest policy. A girl in pajamas comes down to check in the boy that was waiting off to the side. She tells the female night operations worker that she needs to check someone in and fills out the necessary paperwork.

After these people are done checking in there is a brief halt in the action. The night operations workers don’t say anything to each other and just seem to complete the check in paperwork that they began when guests came in.

Two girls come in together both of them seem a little intoxicated one of them doesn’t have any identification. They call a friend and ask someone to check them in she also asks the girl to bring down the purse that she
left in her room because it has her ID in it. They stand and wait next to
the door for a little while and decide to wait outside for her after deciding
that it is probably colder in the lobby than it is outside and that it will take
their friend awhile to come down.

A girl and a guy come in both look like they were dressed up to go to a
party. The girl seems mildly intoxicated but the boy does not. She signs
him in as a guest, the night operations worker gives them a rundown of
the guest policy, the girl keeps flipping her hair in front of her face and
letting it fall back down clearly not listening to the guest policy.

A second group of a girl and a guy comes in; they both live in the building
and check in without saying anything to the night operations workers.
They continue on their way and go into the building and on to the
elevators.

The two girls that went outside to wait for their friend come back in, and
are still waiting on their friend, but decide to wait inside for her.

The night operations manager comes back and stands next to the table
and waits for someone to check in.

The two girls that are waiting decide to call their friend again to find out if
she is coming down. As soon as they get a hold of her she appears in the
doors way with a large purse to check her friends in. She explains that she
had been waiting for an elevator and that is what took her so long. The
resident tells the night operations workers that she needs to check the
two girls in and fills out the paper work. The night operations worker tells
the girls the policy on checking in a guest.

The night operations manager tells the two workers that he is going to
lock up the front desk and leaves.

Two girls come in they look like they were dressed to go out to a party.
The two of them are residents they walk in without saying anything to the
night operation workers but see people that they know in the lobby. They
start yelling to him about when he can stop using his crutches, after they
swipe in they meet him and they take the elevator up.

A pizza delivery man comes in and calls the resident to come to pick up
her pizza. The delivery man walks over to where I am sitting next to an
ATM and places the pizzas on the ATM machine. He asks me if I know
where Walker hall is and I explain to him where it is located. The girl that
ordered the pizza comes over and apologizes for not seeing him and
pays for the pizza. The delivery man leaves and the girl walk over to the
night operations table to check in.

A boy sticks his head in from the lobby and hands the night operations manager a slip of paper for checking in a guest (which the guest is supposed to have in their possession at all times in the building). The boy says, “Hey night ops, someone lefts this.” He then disappears back to the lobby and takes the elevator up. The night operations manager laughs and then puts the slip in the envelope with the IDs.

Two guys come in and step off to the side. They are having a conversation about work (they are using such general terms that I cannot surmise where they are working or even what line of business they are working in or even if they work together or at separate jobs).

Two girls come in one is checking in her friend as a guest. They tell the night operations worker that they need to check someone in and then fill out the paper work without saying anything else to the workers or to each other until they are in the lobby and waiting for an elevator.

A young man comes down to meet his two friends that were waiting off to the side. The three of them then leave the building together the boys that were waiting make fun of their friend for taking so long to get ready to go out.

The male night operations worker leaves the building and talks to someone on his cell phone. The female worker begins a conversation with her manager about the short cuts that she has found to filling out the paper work for checking someone in and how it allows them to get the maximum number of people checked in with the minimal amount of time. She also talks about the other residence halls that she has worked in as a night operation worker, she prefers Dunn-Barton.

Five girls walk in together all of them seem mildly intoxicated. Each of them is wearing extremely high heels and appears to be in great pain because of it. They are all residence they swipe in and continue into the lobby.

Two guys come in to the building one of them is a guest and wants to check in. His friend asks what forms of ID he needs to check in the worker explains that he needs either a state ID or a drivers license. The guest explains that he has a ticket and that his license was revoked he shows her the ticket. The date on the ticket is from August 28th and she tells him that the ticket is too old to use it to check in and that he had time to get a state ID. She apologizes to him for not being able to check him in and he tells her that he understands that it isn’t her fault and that she is
just doing her job. One of the girls that checked in from the group of five asks if she would be able to check the guy in to help out the resident but the night operation worker explains that it is the guest and not the resident that is without an ID.

At 12:23 am someone sets off an alarm and the manager runs to go check it out. Someone walked out of the wrong doors. The male worker comes in from outside and runs over to the doors at the opposite end of the building where they were set off. The female worker stays at the desk and is laughing about the response that it has caused. Two residents come in and ask the worker if it is the fire alarm, she explains that it is the door alarm and the girls swipe in and go to the lobby.

The night manager comes back and asks the girl working who the RA on duty is she tells him who it is and that he is being contacted by cell phone. The night manager calls the room number of the RA on duty and doesn’t get an answer. He then calls the pro staff that is on duty and tells them that the RA on duty disconnected their phone and that they cannot contact them by cell phone because it is a long distance number. He tells the hall staff that they need to give the RA a radio or he needs to answer his room phone. The night manager gets radioed by RA that they can be contacted that way. After the male night ops worker comes back the manager tells them that he will leave shortly to go to another area of campus.

Two girls come back from WalMart with several bags of groceries the two of them check in and go to the lobby.

A girl comes in with two guys both of them seem slightly intoxicated. She tells night ops that they are both her guests and she checks the two of them in.

A group of people come in all of them seem rather intoxicated. They stop outside so that they can smoke one of the girls continues into the building sees that the rest of the group is outside, tries to leave through a locked door, looks confused and keeps pushing on it, then she turns and leaves through the other door.

After a half hour of observations I walk over to the night operations desk to check in for the night. I hand one of the workers my ID with the picture facing down, they swipe it without looking at the picture or to see if the ID was accepted, and without checking my key code. I continue past them and into the lobby to take the elevator up.

After reviewing the notes that I took I realized two very interesting things
which may or may not be related to the topic. I found that the people that were checking someone in were always girls, but they checked in both guys and girls. I also thought that it was interesting that no one really seemed to talk to the night operations workers. The only thing that they said to them was that they had to check someone in. Even if they were talking before they got to the desk they stopped as soon as they came into contact with the workers. I wonder if this is a response to authority, an elitist attitude, or simply a cover up for some level of intoxication. I also noticed that all of the people that I saw come into the residence hall all of them were non-minority.

All of my notes were about the people that were coming into the building. I took note of the number in a group, the gender of those people, if they appeared intoxicates, if they said anything, and I also tried to pay attention to how the people were dressed, where they could be going to or coming from.

Moodle #18

Me: How safe do you think that the residence halls are?

Female 1st semester RA: I think that they are very safe. I mean compared to other schools ours is very safety oriented. Some schools don’t even have a program like night ops. We were talking about it the other day in the RA meeting about how safe our school is compared to other schools. They don’t even have night ops. I don’t really know about the programs at other schools but they were saying that ours is really safe.

I took this from an interview with a 1st semester RA in Manchester hall. This is related to my project because ensuring safety on the floor is a large part of the RA position. It is also an important aspect of the ethnography because I can speak with RAs about how frank they are with residence and whether this is censored by the professional staff in the halls. She focused a lot on the safety at other universities compared to ours, and keep going back to the idea of night operation programs at other schools. Apparently this issue had come up recently at an RA meeting. I think that this is very interesting because she didn’t know what other schools had in place of programs like ours just that they didn’t have the same programs. It seemed that she kept saying how safe our school is in comparison to others without really knowing about other schools programs. I think that this is a small example of the idea that there are some things that are discussed openly, what our schools do that others don’t, while the contrasts are not openly talked about. During the rest of the interview she kept talking about how night ops don’t really prevent things happening as well as they should and often shirk responsibilities,
and that there needs to be something during the day to stop issues and not just waiting till midnight. She also kept defending ISU’s safety program and trying to explain the downfalls of other schools programs that may seem safer but really aren’t. Finally an interesting take that she had on information getting to RAs but not to residents was the idea that there is so much that RAs are exposed to that the residents never see but may help them to think about things more seriously.

Assignment 20

My picture is of the night operation table and the way that the residence hall is blocked off during limited access hours. I also have a picture of the main entrance before limited access hours start to show the contrast of the flow of people in and out of the dorm. This is relevant because it shows one of the major safety precautions that the residence halls take. It is also relevant because it shows where my participant observations occurred. This is important because even with the people that are working present I have witnessed people sneak in before. These pictures also allow people who are unfamiliar with the layout of the residence halls, or the night operation system to see how the process works. These pictures allow you to understand the process around checking in and the responsibility that is put onto students that are working these jobs.

I have collected some of the “tents” that are left on the cafeteria tables over the past few weeks. I also have a toilet talk and a picture of bulletin boards related to safety. These express many important issues regarding safety. They send the message that if you are careful and take certain steps that you can avoid situations. This creates fear without giving actual constructive help about how to avoid situations in a realistic way. These are available in the residence halls and dining centers which keeps them within the broader idea of my topic.

Assignment 21

This link is to an article explaining the beginning of surveillance cameras, limited access policy, night ride, and the emergency lights in the residence halls and on campus.


Based on information from Elyse’s moodle i found this

i also found a link that described the student code of conduct which furthers the idea that safety on this campus is intended to be placed on
the students and the expectation that they are to protect themselves.

Assignment 24

I used visual data to help substantiate the claims that were being made by the people that I was interviewing that believed that night ops were essentially the main aspect of safety in the dorm. I took pictures both before and during night ops so that those that were unaware of the system could visualize the process. I think that the before and after pictures are important especially for the interviews that I had in which people recognized that prior to midnight the dorms are not as safe as they could be. I also found this to be important after interviewing one of the pro-staff employees who explained that on more than one occasion she had seen people soliciting entrance from residents; and then residents would check strangers in. Before night ops start the major issue is how open the hall is and easily someone could come in that doesn’t belong in the hall. This has been seen in halls as on more than one occasion fights have started between exes and is especially important post V-Tech to be aware of entrance to the halls. During an interview it was brought up that there needs to be some additional safety precaution taken like doors that need to be unlocked prior to the elevator to ensure safety. It was also brought up that central campus is the ideal for safety and yet these dorms are going to be torn down and not replaced. Many of the safety concerns that have been voiced to me during interviews are not being adopted during reconstruction efforts. I also found that there are very few community notices or bulletin boards that express this issue of safety outside of the idea of theft, and even after issues of safety occur in the halls residents are still reluctant to do what they are asked to improve their safety.

Interview with a pro-staff member

- safety is a high priority, if I were to rank it on a scale 1-5 safety is a 5 for me. Safety is a big priority when choosing a school for my child.

- I think that the halls are very safe. Between 12-6 am it’s one of the safest places on campus because of night ops.

- Due to the nature of my job I don’t feel that I can comment on that: answered in regard to are some halls safer, what can the university do to improve safety, how frank are you with residents about safety, what are the particular issues of safety, the police warning on south campus, restrictions of information either implicit/explicit to residents.

- My job has everything to do with safety; I program to educate students
about safety. It is also important that I educate students about night ops and the check in process and to make sure that they make the best decisions about checking in students.

-To improve their safety residents need to have a better understanding of policies and do what is needed to make them successful and safe.

- Are there any safety improvements to the Hewett redesign? I am sure that there were but that is not something that they would discuss with me.

- After the interview the following points were brought up: Students stand outside of the halls after night ops and ask people that they don’t know to check them in and they do. And “if you lose the business aspect of the job, you will lose your job”

Interview with prostaff two:

- Residents halls here have a very open format, in other schools students have to swipe in to get into buildings, halls become notorious for not locking doors so they have walk-ins and not break-ins. It is vital that students do what they are asked and to keep their eyes open for things that don’t seem right or people that don’t belong on their floor.

- The halls are safe but the residents need to be responsible they need to check in people that they know and not random strangers.

- Central campus is ideal in the way that it is set up. Every door needs a key to get in. In all of the other buildings you can just get on an elevator and go to any floor. It’s something that we joke about in meetings that the safest buildings on campus are the ones that are going to be torn down and not replaced.

- In order to improve safety they need to somehow refigure the halls so that you need a key to get to the elevators, like a locking door or a keyed elevator.

- My job is directly related to safety because it is my job to educate the RAs who then pass the information to their floors and community. The floors need to work as a community and watch out for each other and watch out for safety issues.

- In order to improve their safety residents need to attend programs to create more of a community so that they feel responsible for each other. You need to know who does and who does not belong on the floor. Students need to stop coming back drunk. And most importantly you
need to do what you are asked. When the theft started I posted community noticed to let students know that they needed to lock their doors. The thefts were all over and over on the same floor and the residents had this naïve attitude that it wouldn’t happen to them. A resident told me that she didn’t feel like she needed to lock her door and I told her that was fine but that she needed to understand that then people would break in.

-I am very frank with RAs and residents. I always tell the RAs what is going on on all of the other floors so that they can be more successful on their floors. I try to let all of the residents know what is going on in the building and post all of the important information for them.

-I don’t think that there are any blocks in the flow of information if something happens that I am aware of it goes straight to the AC and then to the directors and then to the vice president and I am sure that it may even go to Bowman.

These two interviews show a very important difference that exists in the way that the residents halls are managed. While these two differences do exist both of them focus on the idea that there is a lot of responsibility needs to be placed on the residents. I think that this is important because they both also look at the way that residents consistently don’t do what they are asked which means that there is some disconnect that needs to be bridged to ensure safety that is not happening.

Condensed information from Cassi Garcia's Moodle RHC Interview

-R.A’s have all the information they need.

-“And I think that a community is not necessarily everybody being best friends, that’s not going to happen and we all know that, but watching out for each other and being respectful the R.A.'s fault, and it is not the hall coordinators fault, it’s not the students fault, it’s the buildings fault.

-like in West campus; great buildings, it is very pretty, the problem is that the doors shut automatically. You have to prop them. aren’t opening their doors as much because they have to prop the doors. And truthfully they are not supposed to prop the doors. But if we want to have people welcoming, and having people in their rooms… so…

-So if they would want to use it as a study space they would have to go through the R.A. because we had such high proration in the building and so many damages in the building, that if we open up a space to anybody, then people are going to get charged constantly. I remember people
punched holes in the walls. We had tables and chairs in there too, and those if they get stolen. I mean eventually Waterston will be renovated and if they take that into account how are we going to open that up to the students so they can have that space so we can at least see them and see whoever is doing whatever and have space for the R.A.'s to program and stuff like that.

-I mean they come in, they try to find a way to come in and they always do. We have a huge problem with escorting those guests. And we've had a few guests who get a little crazy and we have to kick out.

-We've had some theft, theft is always an issue because people don't lock their doors and you have to lock their doors and things happen, they are too trusting sometimes.

-The students who may not have gone to college because of mental health issues are now taking medications where they can concentrate and be in college and so we are seeing an increase with that. No, it's definitely that they come in with these and they take their meds and maybe they don't take their meds and then things go wrong.

-And we call them hate crimes. When we say hate crimes what we usually mean is that there is someone who has written something derogatory towards a person or a group on a public space. Like on a bulletin board or a door.

Interview with RA

-I think that this school is much safer than others. They were just telling us at a meeting about how safe our campus is. Some schools don't even have night ops. (what they had instead was not discussed)

-Issues of safety are that prior to night ops there is no way to monitor who comes in and out of the building. I think that it is obvious that some buildings are safer than others like look at Dunn/Barton versus Hewett/Manchester.

-Also night ops don't always check to make sure that people should be there or pay enough attention to people. I know that drunk people go on the elevators and go to every floor and try the doors to see if they are open to look for people to talk to or whatever. And I know that in a few halls that there have been people that passed out in the wrong beds. There was also an issue of an ex-boyfriend coming into the building before limited access and they got into a fight. I know that those are the
specific issues but I don’t know like the overlying issues of those.

-RAs have a lot to do with safety like if someone sees someone on the floor that doesn’t belong or if they see a problem they will come get me. Also in the case of a fire it my job to make sure that people get out and that during the drill people actually participate.

-I have never felt that I was supposed to censor any information from residents. The only thing that I know is somewhat limited is telling students what they can do. Like that they don’t have to open the door if you are on duty. Like there were KKK recruiters that were coming into the hall and we were encouraged to tell the residents (this was the first that I had heard of it) and to report anyone who came in. I feel like I need to tell residents what is going on or I would feel like I was lying to them.

-I think that the campus, or at least the residence halls are safe. We have night ops but at other schools like that use a swipe card it could be like an ATM robbing where you could force someone to swipe for you. And with limited access you have to check people in and they need slips. Compared to other schools ours is really safety oriented.

-To improve safety the university could have something similar but less severe of night ops during the day. They should have something that could stop someone from mbeing able to get on any floor. Allow residents opportunities and anonymity to report things so that issues don’t continue. The school focuses so much on diversity that it is like 85% diversity and 15% for everything else including safety. There should be more of the aspects of RA training available to residents so that they are as informed as the RAs are. They should focus more on sexual assault for girls because it is an issues on this campus. More communication and less implementation. Show residents the same videos about fires in the halls so that they might take the fire drills more seriously. A lot of issues are because of boys being stupid and if they saw some of the videos like the one about Bradley they might not do such stupid things, like with fireworks.

Interview with RA two:

-I think that ISU is safe but I think that compared to other schools some are better about safety programs. I know that Eastern there are keys that you need to unlock the elevator to get onto your floor in some of the buildings.

-I think that the issues with safety in the halls are prior to limited access and how open the hall is. I think that there is an issue of people who don’t
belong in the building getting in and then wandering around the building even if they did come in with someone. I also think that people make bad decisions when they are drinking and that a lot of the residents drink too much and for most of the week. The weekend now is like Wednesday-Sunday night.

-I think that there are some issues with information getting to the residence because it is hard to get the information to everyone on the floor because there are some people that are like never there. I also feel like there are some things that we are discouraged from talking about.

-I think that being an RA has a lot to do with safety especially on duty nights because if there is an issue you are expected to go and to help the resident. I also feel like there was always something that happened on my duty weekend.

-I don't remember every being told not to tell residents things but I know that at business meetings if there was an issue on a floor it wasn't talked about at the meeting. So I got the idea that there were things that you weren't supposed to talk about.

-I think that to improve safety the halls should adapt a system like other schools like U of I has those swipe cards to get into the building. If we had something like that it would be less open before night ops starts.

Interview with Night operations worker:

-I think that the residence halls are very safe. Between midnight and 6am there is only one door that is opened for residents to use and is directly in front of the desk. There is also a night operations manager that comes to make sure that everything is running smoothly. Some schools just have those swipe cards. Here we make sure that everyone comes in is a resident or a guest of a resident and keep better track of who comes into the hall.

-My job relates to safety because I make sure that everyone who checks in has a key and ID and if they don't they are reported. I also make sure that everyone that comes in is checked in by a resident and that they have a valid ID. Also if there is an issue that occurs from someone that checks in as a guest their name is sent out and they are no longer allowed to check in to any resident hall.

-I think that night operations is very effective. Students know what they need to do and when they get to the table they already have their key and
-I am not sure how the university could improve safety. I think that it is really safe.

(At this point a student comes to check in without an ID she is asked her name, room number, her home zip code, and her student ID number. After this her key is checked against the master list and she is allowed to go in, but her name is recorded and she is going to be sent a letter that explains that this is not acceptable and that next time disciplinary action may be possible)

-I think that the major issues of safety is that people try to check in guests that don’t have the right ID and then they try to sneak them in. If people become belligerent at this point we don’t even deal with it we just call ISUPD.

-In order to improve their safety residents need to lock their door, make sure that they have their key and ID at all times, never walk alone at night, you know just common sense things.

-Residents can help by realizing that night operations is for their own benefit and that we are here entirely for students safety.

-(process for checking in someone who is intoxicated) If someone is intoxicated and they are trying to check in a guest they have three chances to try to write their names on the sign in sheet. If they fail to do so they cannot check that person in. If someone is clearly intoxicated and they are not checking someone in we still ask them to try to fill out a check in card and if they fail three times they can’t come in to the hall.

-Residents may think of night operations as being kind of a pain in the butt but if they remember that it is for their benefit and that we are willing to call the PD if necessary for altercations everything will run smoother.

Quick chat with a front desk worker

Interview with the front desk worker

-I don’t think the halls are safe people come in all the time I don’t know who they are or if they live here. And before midnight there is no way to tell at all. I could be a murderer and I run the front desk they don’t know.

Assignment 26
Introduction

I am focusing on safety in the residence halls looking at what are the issues that affect safety and where the university places priority and responsibility in that regard.

Literature Review

Setting and Background

Reasons for the ethnography working as an RA, talking to other RAs, knowing the restriction of information for the residents, knowing the shortcomings of the systems for safety.

Methodology

I based my work on my background with housing and knowing who to talk to and where to observe. I did observation at night ops to determine how affective their work was, I spoke to pro-staff members, and I interviewed other RAs.

Findings

I found that the issues of safety fall into three categories: residents not having the information that they need, the physical layout of the building, and the residents not doing what they are asked or recommended.

Conclusion

I found that there is a great deal of responsibility placed on the residents and little consequences for those that do not do what they are supposed to, this I feel leads for the need of more intervention on the part of the university to ensure that students do what they need to do.

Discuss:

My interest in the topic of university safety came about due to my experience as a resident assistant. During duty nights you ran into issues ranging from alcohol in the hall to people passing out in rooms that they did not belong in; or from hate speech on dry erase boards to fights with significant others. These were only the issues that I dealt with during my duty nights which lead me to the question am I that unlucky that everything happens on my nights or are the halls not as safe as I believed that they were as a resident. After looking at the trends from the Campus Crime Report I found that the issues were much larger than I had anticipated. The major issues that I came across occurring in the halls were theft, sexual assault, and some cases of hate crimes (all anti-
homosexual). These issues are extremely important because of the increase in the number of theft and robbery over the past six years. Also the issue of sexual assault is prevalent due to the percentage of cases in the dorms versus the campus and looking at the fact that campus includes areas directly outside of the dorms making it even more staggering. Looking at when these incidents take place is also a problem because the majority occurs during two two-hour periods either from 10pm-12am or 12am-2am. This is distressing information because during these times would be either directly before or directly after the limited access process begins. In order to determine the issues that are involved with the quality of safety in the residence halls I observed the night operations process; and interviewed resident hall coordinators (RHC), resident assistants, and night operations workers. I will also be focusing on the level that packaging the halls plays into the rarely recognized issues of hall safety.

How do the residence halls as product affect the issue of safety?

At Illinois State University students are required to spend their first two years living in the residence halls. This leads to the need to make the residence halls appealing to students currently in their first two years and to their parents. Part of this is done through the mission statement, slogan, and tours that are given to perspective students. I was able to review a copy of the tour binder, which is available at every front desk, to look at the “tour guide cheat sheet”. This is a sheet of paper telling what to talk about when you give tours and what to stress. You are expected to discuss the job of the front desk, that you can get mail there if you have packages and how to get a key if you are locked out, but no discussion that you can call the desk for help and they will call the RA on duty. You explain that a night operation exists and that you need your key and ID to check in at that time but not why we have night operations. The other things covered are the lay out of the room and to stress what is included in the room. These all seem like very broad things that can be found on the housing website but it is delivered to in person by a smiling ISU student that really gives the added packaging idea to the process. This furthers the idea that there is a disconnect in the information passed along to students, and whether this is done intentionally or not.

Safety issues and the flow of information

One of the major issues that came up in all of the interviews is the lack of information that the residents have and how that affects the choices that they make. The resident assistants that I talked to believed that it was due to the fact that information is not easily accessible to the residents, whether that is due to there being no good way to let everyone know what is occurring, or if it is due to the perceived secretive information of
some issues. When talking to one RA she recalled that she often felt that due to the lack of discussion of information, specifically incidents on her floor, during business meetings she felt that it was in some way classified and so she felt uncomfortable talking about these same issues with residents. She also discussed how hard it was to get information to all fifty of her residents and making sure that they were making decisions based on the best information possible. When talking to one residence hall coordinator she focused on information being passed on on a need to know basis and explained that she tries to focus on the business aspect of the job including restriction of information. The second residence hall coordinator that I talked to was much more liberal with the information that he was willing to share, and he explained that he felt that it was the job of the resident assistant to take all of the information from business meetings and from other floors and to share that information with their floors. This goes back to the idea that it is almost impossible to get the information to everyone on the floor especially those who do not come to meetings or are rarely in their rooms. This leads to the question that if the university cannot get the information to the residents are the residents then able to ensure their safety or make the best decisions regarding safety.

Residents uncooperative, naïve or uninformed

When talking to people I found that there are not only different ideas about how the residents can improve their safety but also differing ideas about residents on whole. One RHC said that one of the ways that residents can improve their safety is to make sure that they have a better understanding of the university policies and why those policies exist. This is pretty idealistic that residents that you cannot get to walk down the hall to go to a meeting are going to take the initiative to go online to find the housing policies and interpret them and the greater implications that these policies exist and why. Knowing that residents are uninformed leads to the expectation that they are not going to take the policies seriously. The second RHC felt that the way that residents can improve their safety is to attend programs so that they can create a community and then look out for each other. He also felt that residents are naïve and think that nothing bad is going to happen to them, which leads them to ignore what they are asked to do. In an interview done by Cassi Garcia with an RHC she also brought up the idea of residents being to trusting and so they keep their doors open and unlocked. The idea of unlocked doors is very prevalent in the halls especially with the increase of theft that has occurred in the halls. In an official sense there is this idea about residents needing to lock their door for their safety but in an unofficial sense they are encouraged to leave their doors open to promote community which creates an interesting paradox for the residents.
Residents, based on talking to the pro-staff in various buildings, seem almost to be responsible of their own safety and that of their floor. There is this constant idea that they should watch out for each other, which creates self-sustaining safety in the areas that the halls are lacking.

Safety and building layout

The residence halls, with the exception of central campus, all have a similar lay out of a rectangular hall with rows of rooms. While this is great for community, it also allows someone to come off of an elevator onto a floor with around twenty-five rooms. The layout of the building is an interesting obstacle to overcome and with the majority of the halls going through reconstruction would be a great time to work on solving these problems. Talking to RHCs I found that not only are some buildings believed to be safer than others but there is common knowledge as to which are safer. One RHC told me that it is joked about at meetings that central campus are the safest buildings and they are going to be torn down and will not be replaced (hilarious). The buildings are being improved in response to fire safety with the new renovations, but it seems that basic ideas are still being left out. The RHC told me that the best thing that could be done would be to put a door in between the lobby and the elevator that you need a room key to unlock. The best explanation that I have heard in regards to the building layout and residents looking out for each other came from Cassi Garcia’s interview with an RHC who said that it was not the RA’s fault, and it is not the hall coordinators fault, it’s not the students fault, it’s the buildings fault. One RA described the system used in some of the U of I buildings that require an ID to swipe you into buildings and described how prior to limited access this would allow some way to tell who is coming into the buildings and ensure safety prior to midnight. Based on the campus crime report there have been issues between 10pm and 12 am so prior to night operations there is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Night Operations rants and raves

Night operations was an interesting topic in the research that was done. In every interview it came up as both the cause and solution to many of the safety issues. Based on the interviews it seems that people believe that night operations have the goal of being the line of defense for students but that it frequently is not played out that way due to various reasons. Residents need to check in guests but one RHC pointed out that people stand outside and ask people they don’t know to check them in. This leads to the person coming into the building and then wandering around to do whatever they want. She also described that between 12am and 6am the residence halls are probably the safest place on campus.
The RAs that I talked to agree that it is safer in the residence halls after midnight but question the safety of the hall prior to night operations beginning. One RA questioned the efficiency of the night operations process and believes that they often let people in without actually paying attention to whether or not they belong in the hall. Another issue that was brought up was the idea that drunk people consistently check in and then go on to floors in their hall and wander around checking to see if doors are unlocked. Alcohol consumption and safety brought up an interesting issue I asked a night operations worker what the process was for someone who appears intoxicated. She explained that if you are checking in a guest you have to fill out a check in form on that form you have to write your name. You then have three chances to fill the form out with your name printed reasonably legibly. If you are too drunk you cannot check that person in. She also explained that if someone seems drunk and is not checking someone in they may ask them to go through this same process, and if they are unable to do this they are not allowed to enter the hall. This creates a very limited protection from residents checking in guests.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From my research I found that there are many shortcomings of the ISU safety program. I think that a large part of this issue is due to the lack of information that is given to the residents and that if they were more aware of the things that are going on in their halls they would be more willing to do what they were asked. One of the major issues that I found comes from the night operations process. Residents only have to write their name legibly on one of three tries in order to qualify as being sober enough to check in a guest. When looking at this as the way to get into the hall and comparing it to the number of incidents of sexual assault in the halls according to the campus crime report perhaps there should be some other process. Based on the interviews that I have done I find that the issues of safety at ISU fall under three major problems. The first problem is the way that information is passed between the university and the students. Some of the pro-staff members tend to look at their position in a purely business aspect and feel that information should be passed only on a need to know basis. Others have more of a student oriented view and feel that information should be passed to RAs who then pass the information to their residents. This again presents a problem as there is a disconnect between information that the students receive making it so even with the intention to give out information it doesn’t necessarily get to students. If there is important information I think that it should be the job of the pro-staff to get the information to the residents to ensure that they can make the best decisions possible. The second major issue is the way that the halls are physically set up. People are able to walk into
the buildings get on elevators and then go to any floor. The suggestion that was given in one of the interviews that I had was that there should be a locking door that needs to be opened with a room key between the entrance and the elevators. This seems like something that would be easy to do especially with the fact that the halls are undergoing renovation.

EUI Links:

Reflect: So far I have done participant observation of the check in process at Manchester hall. This has allowed me to see some of the issues that are involved with safety many of which involve alcohol in some way. The other major issue is that there is only a limited time, midnight to 6am, that there is some process for evaluating who is coming into the building. I have only been able to interview one RA so far and gained a lot of information about what the perceived issues and solutions there are for dealing with safety in the residence halls. I have emailed several pro-staff members none of which have gotten back to me yet. I have also started collecting safety concern fliers that are left on the tables in the dining centers. This has allowed me to see not only what the perceived problems are but also what the perceived solutions should be. I have been looking at information about issues that occur in the residence halls the most prevalent is the Daily Vidette and the policy blotter which lists events in the residence halls. The majority of the issues that I have been made aware of all involve alcohol in some capacity and the fact that people can come into the halls prior to midnight that do not belong there, and safety issues involving people leaving doors unlocked. These are the same issues that I listed in my assumptions as what I believe the issues were. At this point I think that the most important interviews lie in talking to additional RAs and at least one pro-staff member.

Recommendations: Based on the interviews that I have done I find that the issues of safety at ISU fall under three major problems. The first problem is the way that information is passed between the university and the students. Some of the pro-staff members tend to look at their position in a purely business aspect and feel that information should be passed only on a need to know basis. Others have more of a student oriented view and feel that information should be passed to RAs who then pass the information to their residents. This again presents a problem as there is a disconnect between information that the students receive making it so even with the intention to give out information it doesn’t necessarily get to students. If there is important information I think that it should be the job of the pro-staff to get the information to the residents to ensure that they can make the best decisions possible. The second major issue is the way that the
halls are physically set up. People are able to walk into the buildings get on elevators and then go to any floor. The suggestion that was given in one of the interviews that I had was that there should be a locking door that needs to be opened with a room key between the entrance and the elevators. This seems like something that would be easy to do in southside and could be taken into account for rebuilding in east campus. Finally the third issue is that residents are not doing what is asked of them and do not take many of the warnings and rules of the hall seriously. The way that this can be fixed is either through information so that students can understand the affect that it has on the hall to not take warnings seriously, or be making sure that the staff actually enforces the rules that they are supposed to and having actual consequences for their actions.