

# Dormitories at UC Berkeley

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During my freshman year at the University of California at Berkeley, I lived in a triple room in Unit One, one of the older high-rise dorms close to the UC campus. For two people there was enough room for it to be bearable. However, for three people and their furniture, the room was quite cramped. I suppose what we lacked in space we made up for in savings because a triple in Unit One was the least expensive housing option available through the University dormitory system. When I visited a friend at the Foothill housing complex, one of the newest and most expensive residential facilities, I immediately noticed the difference in the facilities and accommodations between my place of residence and this more expensive dorm. Unit One, built in the late 1950s, was obviously much older and the furnishings had seen many more years of use. At Foothill, everything was virtually brand-new.

When asked where I lived, I would admit that I lived in Unit One yet was quick to clarify that it was by no means my first choice. Had I not made a mistake on my housing application, I would be living in Foothill or Clark Kerr, another more expensive modern residence hall. I wanted to make it clear to others that I could afford to live in the more expensive dorms if I so chose. My living arrangement in Unit One did not reflect my economic background and status. Like others, I quickly began to regard where one lived as an indicator of one's economic background. Nevertheless, I wanted to establish that I was on a financial footing comparable with those in the nicer dorms despite the fact that I lived in one of the least expensive residence halls.

While that may have been my situation, my participation in Professor Laura Nader's Dormitory Project as an undergraduate led me to consider the dilemmas facing those for whom the cheapest dorms, Units One and Two, were the only options. Did they share the slight inferiority complex that I experienced while living in the most run-down dorms, often called by residents and nonresidents the "projects"? In implementing a system of differential pricing in which the housing costs for the least and most expensive accommodations differed by as much as \$2000, the University had apparently set up a hierarchy that stratifies people economically and socially. Although rooms are assigned on a lottery basis, only the order in which a person's given choices are considered is random. The student's choices themselves are limited to what options she or he can afford. What results is a situation in which the wealthiest students occupy the most expensive dorms with the most modern amenities, while the students with more limited means must settle for the Spartan, less desirable residence halls. More often than not, the economical option means living in the oldest, least spacious dorms characterized by stark institutional architecture. How

does this situation affect a student's view of him/herself in relation to others, and how does it work in a way to normalize segregation hierarchy?

In the fall of 1992 I enrolled in a small undergraduate research seminar, which undertook the Dormitory Project. In conducting research, each person focused on a different aspect of the dormitories at UC Berkeley and the ways in which they contribute to a process of controlling dormitory residents. The topics of study varied widely. They included: the disorienting aspects of dormitory living (coed living, lack of privacy); issues of safety as conveyed to students through dorm policies and programs; and the way in which the University promotes dorm-based programs to initiate a discourse among students about diversity and cultural differences. I chose to focus on the way in which the university housing system, through the differential pricing of the various residence halls surrounding the Berkeley campus, has institutionalized a system of economic stratification and social segregation.

The differently priced dorms with their various architectural styles and levels of maintenance implied corresponding stereotypes. Two years ago I was interested in how these factors affected the attitudes of the dormitory residents and the way they interacted with other people. In this paper I explore these issues further but also investigate to a greater degree the rationale behind UC Berkeley's housing system. What are the historical roots of such a policy of differential cost? How does the University rationalize these policies? I argue these policies and their rationalizations are part of a progression in how the University reflects a social structure as a microcosm of our larger society and at the same time provides a structure for the organization of people. In essence, what I hope to arrive at is a "vertical slice" (Nader 1980). The idea is to see how the different levels are linked together and interconnected from top to bottom. How is the market economy of our capitalist society related to the way students are housed and ultimately how they interact with one another, the campus community and the wider world?

To summarize, I begin with a historical setting of the dorms which will give a brief general description of some of the residence halls and illustrate how differential pricing has been justified by the University. I will then provide a setting for life within the dorms to illustrate the influential nature of the residence halls drawing upon my own experience and the research of Ben Gertner, Ben Stock, and Grant Michaelson, all of whom participated in Dr. Nader's Dormitory Project seminar. This section will be followed by an examination of the effects of the differential cost system on students, what it teaches them about segregation and hierarchy and its normalization. Finally, I will compare the system at UC Berkeley with those at other UC schools and private schools. I will consider how these differences might be reflective of more general differences in philosophy and attitudes towards students between public and private institutions. What I intend to illustrate is the way in which the housing system of the University, in mimicking the differential pricing of the

private market, has also adopted a system of social and class differentiation which is viewed as both natural and fair by the University as well as the students.

### **Historical Setting**

The University of California was founded by a statute passed on March 21, 1868, which is now called the "Organic Act of the University of California." The Act established California's first public institution of higher learning on land granted to California by the federal government expressly for the establishment of a college which would provide instruction in the agricultural and mechanical arts. As expressed by the Charter, this new university was to be the place where any citizen residing in the state of California could receive instruction in a variety of fields. Equally important, it was to be a place where one could interact with others who likewise had been drawn to this public institution to educate and better themselves:

Any resident of California of the age of fourteen years or upwards of approved moral character shall have the right to enter himself in the University as a student at large and receive tuition in any branch or branches of instruction at the time when the same are given in their regular courses on such terms as the Board of Regents may prescribe. The said Board of Regents shall endeavor to arrange the several courses of instruction that the students of the different colleges and the students at large may be largely brought into social contact and intercourse with each other by attending the same lectures and branches of instruction. [Organic Act: Sec. 3]

The original sentiment and philosophy of the University of California at its founding set out to make it financially accessible to any resident who wanted to attend. Also explicit is the intended purpose of the University to serve as a meeting ground and forum for social interaction for people who might not otherwise get a chance to meet. Many of the funds used for the support of the University in its early years were from private foundations and endowments. The main reason for this arrangement was to relieve the student of the financial burden of attending the University of California.

For the time being, and admission fee and rates of tuition such as the Board of Regents shall deem expedient may be required of each pupil; and as soon as the income of the University shall permit, admission and tuition shall be free to all residents of the state; and it shall be the duty of the Regents, according to population, to so apportion the representation of students, when necessary, that all portions of the State shall enjoy equal privilege therein. [Organic Act: Sec. 14]

This goal was never achieved. In fact, fees were raised, and a tax was instituted for residents of the state to help pay for the operation of the expanding university system. However, it must be noted that the original philosophy expressed by the charter was that the University, as a public institution, should be accessible and within the financial means of every resident regardless of economic class and status.

The University was established for the admirable task of providing an area of equal opportunity where any resident (male and later female) should have the chance to receive a high-quality education. Perhaps Daniel Coit Gilman, the third president of the University, best articulated these high ideals and expectations for the then-fledgling University:

This is the University of California. It is not the University of Berlin, or of New Haven which we are to copy. It is not the University of Oakland, or of San Francisco which we are to create: but it is the University of the State. It must be adapted to this people, to their public and private schools, to their peculiar geographical position; to the requirements of their new society and their underdeveloped resources. It is not the foundation of an ecclesiastical body or of the private individuals. It is 'of the people and for the people,' not in any low or unworthy sense, but in the highest and noblest relations to their intellectual and moral well-being...It opens the door to superior education to all without regard to price. (Kantor 1968)

### *Original Aims of the Dormitories*

University-sponsored housing at UC Berkeley also started out with intentions of providing a means by which to provide everyone with access to equal educational opportunities. Before WWII the University had no real plans for student housing. In fact, most housing intended for students was funded by private donations. After the war, the University made an attempt to house students returning from life as soldiers in the war, but these plans remained relatively small-scale. With the passage of the University of California Dormitory Revenue Bond Act in 1947, the University had a way to raise the funds for the construction of university run student housing on a larger scale. In 1955, the Regents approved the "Report to the Legislature on the Desirability and Necessity of the Resident Halls in California state colleges and the University of California." The report stated roughly that by providing adequate, reasonably priced housing close to campus, dormitories are "necessary to provide equality in the field of higher education to all qualified students" (Fink 1979: 18).

The dorms were originally intended as a means to an end. Residence halls were seen as equalizers by providing qualified students the opportunity to study at the University regardless of the area of the country or part of the state from which they originally came. The dormitories were to contribute to the unity and cohesiveness of

the University, and would help make the campus community more diverse by opening access to housing to people who might not have been able to attend the University for lack of affordable residential alternatives in the private market.

In the late 1950s apartments accounted for most of the housing provided by the University because a large proportion of the students who required housing were married. However, during the 1960s and early '70s, the proportion of married students enrolled in the University decreased dramatically while the enrollment of single younger undergraduate students rose steadily. With the exception of Bowles and Stern Halls, the two oldest dormitories (currently Bowles is all-male and Stern is all-female) there were no large-scale accommodations for the increasing numbers of single students. In the early 1960s, Units One and Two opened and were soon joined by Unit Three. All three seem to follow the philosophy of cost-effective efficiency. Because low-rise housing is too wasteful of land, "housing should be provided in elevator type multi-story buildings which embrace social functions along with shelter and which have ample free ground for recreation, parking and amenities" (Fink 1979:20). All three residence halls reflect these principles. The Unit Complexes, which house over 800 students, each consist of four high-rise eight story buildings (housing about 200 students), organized in a rectangle enclosing a large open-air space. The entrances to the four buildings all open to the inside of the rectangle. In the middle of the courtyard is a central building that houses the dining commons, the mail area, study areas and now some computer facilities. The high-rise buildings which actually house the students also exhibit a relentless uniformity. Each has a main lobby with an adjoining lounge area which serves as the only exit and entrance to the building. An elevator and stairs provide access to the seven remaining floors which each consist of long corridors with about six double- and triple-occupancy rooms on either side of the hall. Each floor also shares a communal bathroom and either a lounge and balcony or laundry room.

Although these residence halls appear impersonal and standardized in form (including their nondescript names: Units One, Two and Three), they reflect a philosophy that is consistent with reasons for which the dormitories were originally intended: to provide adequate, reasonably priced housing close to campus. The Units succeed on this count. The philosophy embodied by these high-rise dorms is a purely utilitarian one of providing the maximum amount of livable room in the least amount of space. As one of my student informants stated in referring to Unit One, "We had all we needed, I mean what else was there?" The most important aspect of these dorms at the time of their construction was their proximity to campus. Even now, it is this location close to campus and the activities along Telegraph Avenue which remains the main selling point for the Units rather than the actual facilities and accommodations. Because of the strict uniformity of the Units and the fact that they were all built at around the same time, there was little reason for differential pricing and all the rooms cost the same. The desire represented by these dorms was not to provide students with a choice of living accommodations. The goal was simple to

provide housing close to campus. By making it possible for a wider variety of students to attend UC Berkeley, the dorms were intended to enrich the entire campus community and contribute to its general cohesiveness.

*A Shift in Philosophy: From Housing as a Means to Housing as an End*

During the late '60s and through the '70s, there was an increasing awareness on the part of the University regarding the students' own opinions of the dorms in which they already lived and what kinds of features they thought would be an improvement in future dorms. Reports from private consulting agencies like the Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC) and the Educational Research Facilities (ERF) concluded basically that students wanted a wider variety and a choice in the housing being offered to them. Sterile hallways with rooms on both sides, typified by the Units, were accommodations low on the preference list of students. Referring to the high-rise standardized dorms like the Units:

Physical layout resembles turn-of-the-century prisons, monoliths of concrete and brick. A relentless corridor cuts each floor separating double occupancy rooms. Gang baths bedeck either end of the corridor. Dining halls and impersonal lounges that look like bus terminals complete the picture. [RERC 1972:12]

As early as 1965, the same year that Unit Three opened, in a report for the entire UC system, the Real Estate Corporation concluded that 'the University must offer a wider variety of housing facilities to its single students by 1975 if it wishes to attract a high proportion of them on campus voluntarily.' [RERC 1975:30]

Among the suggestions for increasing the variety was offering single rooms, suites designed for four or more students, and better furnishings and amenities. In 1972, the Educational Facilities Laboratory concluded: It is no longer enough for planners to consider the number of beds per square foot in a dormitory; now they must give equal weight to the quality of life per square inch. [RERC 1975:30]

The opening of the Clark Kerr Campus (formerly the California School for the Deaf) in the early 1980s and construction and subsequent opening of the Foothill Residential Complex and the Haste Channing Complex in 1990-91 and 1992, respectively, meant an expansion of the University housing system and marked a shift in its housing philosophy. Choice had become the priority in housing at Berkeley. Perhaps this shift in priorities can provide us with a historical and ideological context to the current system of differential prices for the dorms. Previously, the dormitories

were seen as a practical means by which to provide equal access of educational opportunities to students without other nearby housing options and this in turn would promote a greater sense of unity throughout the campus community.

The philosophical shift in the approach to housing had its roots in the late '60s and '70s with the growing attentiveness to students' own desires and needs. The change was realized with the addition of the newer modern residence halls like Clark Kerr and Foothill. The focus now is not on housing as a means to the University's stated goal of providing equal access to education. Housing students instead became an end in itself. Evidently the University has taken on a considerably more business-like approach in the way it runs its residential system. In the past, the dorms were intended to supplement housing in the private market. Now the aim of the dormitories is to compete with the private market by offering a wide variety of choice. Harry LeGrande, an official with Housing and Dining Services, informed me that the Housing Service, in formulating room rates for the dorms, tries to remain sensitive to the growing costs of attending Berkeley. As he put it, the University must be mindful of cost so that it "doesn't price itself out of the market and drive people into the community." In developing the price system for the increased choices in housing, the University has followed the recommendation made back in 1965 by the Real Estate Research Corporation, which reads as follows:

Charge different prices for different types of units involved. Such pricing will cause some added administrative burden in the short run but will allow the University to provide higher amenity units without forcing lower-income students to subsidize the superior amenities involved by means of a uniform fee imposed upon all students.  
[RERC 1975:8]

In seeking to compete with the private housing market, the University's residential system has basically become, in structure and form, an extension of the private market though it is run and organized by a large public institution. Housing in the private market operates on a system of differential pricing in which what you get (e.g. the number of rooms, quality of space and amenities, location, etc.) corresponds with what you pay. Logically this results in a situation where the highest quality housing is more or less reserved for only those who can afford it. Differently priced housing in which various levels of quality correspond to the budgets of different people produces a system of stratification where the different levels of housing fall along lines of economic class differences. This is a fact of the private housing market in a capitalist society such as our own. In modeling itself after the private market, the University has officially instituted a system of class stratification; a system which is considered to be natural if the University is to provide a variety of choices in living arrangements for its students. The way the dorms are financed also fits into the capitalist mode of fragmentation and compartmentalization because each residence

hall is viewed financially independent. Harry LeGrande, an official at the Office of Housing and Dining, summarized the financial structure of the dorms:

Basically, Housing and Dining Services gets no money from the state so we're self-supporting. We have to cover the debt service on the buildings when they are constructed. For instance, Units One and Two were built in the late '50s at a cost of I think \$8 million for both of them. Unit Three we renovated in 1987 at a cost of I think \$22 million. We just did Foothill at I think \$72 million. When we start to add the debt service, which is like a mortgage payment, there is some stratification just based on people living in the newer environments with the more expensive rates should pay a greater part of the cost.

According to the University, the differential cost system presents the most natural and fair option given the financial background of the dorms. Moreover, this system is considered necessary if the housing office wishes to provide affordable housing to students unable to afford the newest and nicest dorms. In instituting the system of differential prices for dorm rooms, the University pursues a bottom-line philosophy while also justifying the system by saying it preserves affordable housing for those who need it. Curiously, there is little acknowledgement that the most affordable housing is also the most crowded, noisy, and undesirable. LeGrande continued:

I know we're conscious of the prices which is one of the reasons we had initially said when we start building more housing [that] we're going to get rid of the triple rooms (the cheapest rooms), but we found that for some people that's a real cost-effective way. So we're thinking now we'll probably still need to keep some of them because cost will be factor for some folks.

Through this system and its justification, we see how far the current housing policy has diverged from the original aims of the dormitories. Rather than a means of providing equal educational opportunities, the aim of the dorms now is to house as many students as possible. With the importance placed on housing the students and competing with the private market to accomplish this, the overriding priority has been to ensure that students are getting what they pay for, as they would in the private housing market. While this idea caters to an idea of equality in the capitalist sense of receiving goods and services commensurate with what one pays, it ignores the ideal of equality among students as peers and members of the campus community and their rights to equal educational opportunities (which previously included the dorms). While "affordable" housing is preserved, so to speak, the "superior" accommodations remain out of reach for students who cannot meet the higher price.



With differential pricing firmly in place, the residential system functions much in the same way as the screening process does on an archaeological expedition. The size of the object corresponds to the economic status of the individual and the different-sized screens are like the differently priced dorms. The cheapest dorms are the largest screens which allow the greatest amount of varying sizes or economic backgrounds through. The most expensive dorms are the smallest screens which are the most limiting and allow only those students with adequate financial resources through the holes. Differential pricing results in a housing system which corrals students into groups which become increasingly homogenous with respect to economic class, the more expensive the dorms become. In essence, the sense of campus-wide community which the dormitories were supposed to help promote, has given way to fragmentation and segregation. Such a result comes inevitably with the adoption of the capitalist ethic, by which better conditions are accorded to those who can pay for them.

### **Life in the Dorms: Providing a Setting**

To understand how segregation and hierarchy may be experienced and taught within the dorms, it is first important to understand the general nature of the dormitory experience and the way it influences the attitudes of the individuals living in the dorms. For the most part, the dorms at UC Berkeley are inhabited by first-year undergraduate students. Most are recent graduates of high school and the year in the dorms is the first time many have spent a prolonged period of time away from home. In addition to homesickness, students are confronted with a living situation quite different from anything they have ever experienced. Distributed brochures describe the dorms and give a cursory summary of students' experiences. There are also workshops conducted by CalSo, a campus organization concerned with providing students with guidance and counseling to orient them to life in the dorms. However, these are often inadequate preparations for the actual reality of living in the dorms.

#### *Destabilizing Aspects*

As a resident of the dorms, each student is assigned a room which is to be shared with either one or two others. Most likely these people are complete strangers. While they may not become the best of friends, they are expected to at least get along for the duration of the school year. Depending on the residence hall, an individual may live in coed halls, which for some residents represents the first living arrangement in close proximity to members of the opposite sex who are not close family members. In the high-rise dorms the bathrooms are also coed, a situation which for many can prove unsettling. One must not only share a limited amount of living space with people of the opposite sex, but must also share bathroom space which is often where they need the most privacy.

A new student living in the dorms is dropped into a situation in which s/he is living in rather crowded conditions with a large number of equally inexperienced fellow students. This can be one of the most exciting and stimulating times of the college experience, yet it also has its drawbacks and challenges. With doors left open and music blaring late into the night, noise remains a constant factor. There is a general lack of privacy and disregard for the basic need for personal space. The food in the cafeterias is notorious for its blandness, limited variety, and poor quality. Regularly scheduled meal-times become social events where, judging from experience, more time is spent complaining about the food than actually consuming it.

The dormitory experience inevitably becomes a social one in which a person is able and encouraged to make a large number of friends in a relatively short period of time. The situation brings together a large group of new students, all adjusting to a new environment and housed in a building where they interact daily. While most students readily form friendships independently, the University takes an active role in trying to create a real sense of community within the dorms. As stated in a University brochure about its housing system:

Residence Programs is committed to developing close-knit communities in the residence halls so that students feel "at home" during their stay at Berkeley. This is achieved through social and educational programming, student hall associations, various student leadership opportunities, and staff who are available to serve residents in many different capacities. [Residential Programs Brochure]

Simple activities like dorm field trips, intramural sports teams, competitions between floors, and other social functions are designed to fulfill the role of community-building. If all of one's friends are in the dorm and if there is enough to keep them occupied, students do not necessarily have to venture out to seek a social life elsewhere. The aim is to conflate one's residential life with one's social life.

### *Safety and Security*

Safety is an enduring and pressing issue on the Berkeley campus, one about which many people are understandably concerned. Within the dorms, information is regularly posted regarding personal safety, including advice about avoiding dangerous situations and information about self-defense workshops. To meet the need of protecting students, the residence halls take various security measures. In the high-rise dorms a student must have a key to the main entrance and elevator, in addition to the key for his/her room. Likewise, a resident at the other residence halls like Foothill and Clark Kerr must have extra keys to enter the complex and building. In the evenings, each high-rise dorm has a security monitor who sits at the front desk and checks the identification of everyone who enters the building, resident or nonresident,

controlling access to anyone who does not live in the dorms. At some of the other dorms, there may not be a person physically present limiting access to outsiders, but the architectural design and the system of locked gates and doors serves in this capacity to keep out potentially threatening people. The effect of all this attention to safety and security makes the student aware of the potential dangers s/he could come across. Yet, it may also produce in the resident a sense that the only place where an individual is completely safe from the dangers of the campus and the surrounding urban community is within the walls of the dorm.

### *Residential Introversion*

In comparing the high-rise dorms to the more modern low-rise halls, one could speculate that the differences in structure reflect a real difference in the philosophy of housing students. However, there is one quality which almost all the dorms share in common. Architecturally, all of them seem to foster what I term "residential introversion." They are structured to direct the student's attention inward, towards the center. As mentioned previously, the Units each consist of four buildings set in a rectangle at the center of which are located the dorm commons (dining room, mail boxes, etc.). The entrances to the buildings face inward so that even when exiting, one is still within the bounds of the complex. The buildings themselves, with central lounges, bathrooms and laundry rooms, encourage students to perform everyday chores and social interactions within the confines of the building. Each building has three balconies which jut out towards the center of the complex facing the dining commons and the other residential buildings rather than facing outward towards the streets of Berkeley, where there are often the most interesting views. Thus, even moments of relaxation, conversation, or quiet reflection, which the balconies afford, must be passed within dormitory space.

The suite orientation in a more modern residence hall like Foothill, while offering more personal space and privacy, also limits the number of people to which one has immediate access. One of the main complaints about Foothill is that one meets fewer people than in the other dorms. At the units, a single building can house up to 200 residents while a suite houses anywhere from eight to twenty students. The entire complex is enclosed by fences and gates so that access is limited only to those who live in the dorm. All patios, courtyards and common areas are within enclosed bounds. Understandably, this structure reflects a desire to provide for the safety and security of students, but it also has the effect of giving students in a sense of confinement or isolation from the surrounding community.

In *Discipline and Punish*, French philosopher Michel Foucault cites a change in the philosophy of architecture which corresponds to the arrival of the modern period. Buildings are no longer constructed for sheer ostentation or basic shelter. Architecture has become a means by which to alter the people it houses and "carry the

effects of power right to them" (Foucault 1979:172). The residence halls can be seen as fulfilling this function to a certain degree. The residence hall becomes the student's world spatially as well as socially. It seems logical for the University to favor a system of residential introversion whereby attention is drawn towards the residence hall rather than away from it. The student would be more susceptible to the structures and ideologies of the University as filtered through the dorms. These structures of control and discipline will in time become normal and unnoticed. Connections with the outside community and other residence halls are limited as a student's attention is focused inward. Perhaps in this way, the University conditions students to an idea that it is natural to feel disconnected from the larger community and other students who are not a part of the residential community. While these dorms were not constructed with the intent of controlling students during these turbulent times of the Free Speech and Anti-War movements which sparked student activism from the mid-1960s to early 1970s (they were opened in the early 1960s), I speculate that the University learned some important lessons about control which they have implemented in present-day dormitory policies and in the construction of later residential complexes. For example, both Foothill and Clark Kerr are located apart from the hubs of social activity in Berkeley (e.g. Telegraph Avenue) and both are, though quite pleasant, entirely self-enclosed and contained.

The dormitories were originally intended to foster and encourage a sense of community among students of the entire University. Within the dorms the bonds formed between students are quite tight. The architecture of the dorms encloses students in a space apart from the outside and the wider campus community. This relative isolation provides a setting for the establishment of fresh, new relationships with others. The opportunity to make new friends is often pointed to as the main benefit of living in the dorms. In this respect, in promoting connections between different people in the same dorm, the residence halls are quite effective. However, this might come at the expense of fostering a general sense of community between all members of the campus. With the dorms situated as they are at various locations around the campus, this is to be expected and no doubt similar to the arrangements at other universities where residence halls are spatially separate. However, because of the differential pricing of the dorms at UC Berkeley, it is more likely that the different tightly knit communities formed within the residence halls will converge along lines of economic class. With interactions between residents of different dorms rather limited, the residents are segregated into groups which are rather homogeneous with regard to economic status.

### **Education within the Dorms: What the Residential System Teaches Students about Hierarchy, Segregation, and Acceptance**

College becomes more than just a classroom for about two thirds of all freshmen each fall. It becomes home. Most freshmen live away from parents and siblings for the first time when they move into the residence halls; they also begin an important part of the college learning experience.

—Simpson and Frost (1993:138)

Clearly, the residence halls are seen as not only a way of housing students, but in themselves have become an important aspect of University life. Residential life is a part of the “collegiate way—the belief that college is more than curriculum, library, faculty and students” (Simpson and Frost 1993:138). For many residential life is as much a part of the learning experience as classes and lectures, and in fact, a person learns more about independence and adjusting to a new environment than one could learn in a classroom. However, aside from learning how to live and interact with new people and maturing in a new environment, residents in the Berkeley residential halls learn about and experience directly and indirectly a system of institutionalized hierarchy and fragmentation.

The dormitory is a stage for a rather interesting drama. A large group of students away from the constraints of family and home for the first time and exploring their independence and new-found freedom are housed together in a building sponsored and maintained by the University. Compared to the rules and the tight security structure of the family, dormitory life is for many rather free and easy to cope with because the rules and regulations are clearly spelled out. However, by accepting the structure of the residential system, they give themselves up to a more subtle form of institutional control which does not overtly control their actions, but which may covertly affect their attitudes and naturalize a system of segregation within the University.

#### *Socializing Within the Dorms*

The segregation which results from the differential pricing of the dorms is not just a theoretical situation unrelated to everyday life. It is a reality which every resident experiences at some level. I interviewed eight students, all of whom had lived in the dorms. Three of the informants lived in different dorms two years in a row, so each had experience living in one dorm that was more expensive and one that was less costly. Generally speaking, their experiences in the dorms did not vary too widely from my own, and I was not surprised by what they had to say. The residential

experience encompassed their social lives so that most of their friends lived in the same building if not in the same hall or suite. This was to be expected by the students and looked upon as one of the positive aspects of the dorms. The fact that they didn't meet too many people from outside the dorm was seen as unavoidable, attributable to the nature of living in the dorms. As David who was living at Unit Two put it, "Basically, I hang out most with people in my own dorm because obviously they're closer and you can see them everyday." Sharon lived at Foothill her first year and felt that, while very nice, social interaction was rather limited in the suites. She chose to live in Unit Three (a high-rise) her second year:

You got to know the people in the suite really well, but you hardly knew the people upstairs. You had a few friends here and there, but mostly you did things with your suite.

### *Learning a System of Hierarchy*

Fragmentation and departmentalization abound at the University. One merely has to look at all the departments and sub-departments on campus, and it is clear that some departments barely get by, while others have money for the construction of new facilities. Rather than comprising a large cohesive and integrated community, the University is made up of many small units. The various factions have differing loyalties and interests, and the sense of connectedness between the departments, especially economic connectedness, is virtually nonexistent. The Art Department must fight to keep its graduate program while the Haas School of Business has just finished construction of a massive new building to allow for the growth and expansion of the school. The residence halls are no exception to this rule. Although each shares the same maintenance and dining services, as mentioned previously, financially, each is considered to be its own self-sufficient entity. As it is organized, the residential system reflects the same type of philosophy inherent in the campus organization.

Offering housing at different rates for different levels of rooms conditions students to a situation of hierarchy due to differences in price; a situation which they would come across in the private market. In a sense, the University is putting forth the idea that there is really no separation between a public institution and the private sector. The consumer ethic of getting what you pay for makes hierarchy a fact of life, unavoidable if one wants a choice as to where to live. Separations along economic lines are normal. Living in the residential system, students come to accept the basic disparity of living accommodations as merely a by-product of cost-efficiency, a concept whose logic cannot really be challenged. As David, a resident at Unit Two, remarked:

Well, basically you get what you pay for, and obviously since we are paying \$2,000 less [at Unit Two], than Foothill, [Foothill rooms] are a

lot more spacious. The restrooms are a lot nicer and their equipment and furniture [are] relatively new compared to ours. Their dining room is a lot brighter, and actually we don't even have a dining hall on the weekends and that's very inconvenient for the students.

From this perspective, supplying certain amenities or conveniences such as comfortable furniture or computer facilities is considered to be contingent on the students' willingness to pay, rather than viewed as a basic duty of the University to foster an environment conducive to learning and interaction without regard to cost.

It was acknowledged though not really questioned that there is a system of stratification due to the differential pricing of the dorms. It was generally accepted and expected that residents from certain economic backgrounds would congregate in certain dorms which had rooms consistent with their budgets. The more expensive dorms like Clark Kerr and Foothill were inhabited by the most homogeneous group, students with the financial resources to pay the higher rates. The lower-priced dorms housed a more diverse group made up of a variety of student groups and organizations. Increasingly, the membership and appeal of the organizations or associations are linked to specifically designated student populations where ethnicity and race play an important role (Diversity Project 1991:12).

A student who moved into Foothill during his second year had this to say about its residents:

The majority of them, from what I've seen, are wealthier. Let me put it this way: the very first thing I noticed on the fifth floor (of Cheney, a building in the Unit One complex) last year was that I was one of the only people with a computer. But in Foothill, in my suite alone, of eight people, there are like six computers and four of them are like \$5,000 work-stations. "I mean in all of Cheney you saw only one like that, but in Foothill every suite has at least one. You know, those 486 systems with those awesome screens and a laser printer on the side. In my suite everyone is pretty well-off, well one gets a lot of financial aid, but he has a nice computer too. That's just an example with computers. You see a lot of people who are like yuppies, suburban, middle-class types.

At Clark Kerr, the student population was also viewed as being relatively wealthy. As Chrissa who lived there her first year put it, "A lot of them are pretty rich. You would think that everyone who lived there had parents who made over \$100,000."

Conversely, the perceptions of students living in the least expensive dorms was that they did not have quite as much money as residents of the other dorms, but on the whole, were more diverse ethnically and economically. They were viewed as

either hard-luck cases or people who really could not afford anything else. Referring to residents of Units One and Two, Sharon remarked, "They either get really unlucky or they just couldn't afford it, because a lot of people are on financial aid or they have to work within a certain budget."

### *Nicknames and Stereotypes: Stratification Internalized*

One merely has to listen to some of the terms used to describe certain dorms and the nicknames given to others to understand the way students internalize the disparity between the dorms and differentiate them from one another. Describing Unit Two David said, "I think the structural integrity of the building is far lacking, and I think improvements could be made to make the buildings a little less stoic and more cheerful." Warren informed me that his suitemates at Foothill referred to the Units as "slums" or "shitholes." Referring to Clark Kerr and Foothill, my informants used words like "modern" and "luxurious." Sharon's reaction when she first moved into Foothill was, "Wow, I'm living here? It's really nice." My reaction when I first arrived at Unit One was something to the effect of, "Wow, I can't believe I have to live here for the whole school year."

During my first year I too called the Units One and Two the "Projects." The nickname implied the general run-down nature of the facilities, which resemble public-housing projects, in comparison to the newer residence halls. I learned that this nickname was well-known and used by other students before me and after me. Through others, I learned of some other nicknames for the other dorms. Suggesting the alpine motifs of its architecture, Foothill is often called the "Ski Resort" or "Ski Lodge." Clark Kerr, with its open patios, athletic facilities and Mediterranean-style buildings, is often referred to as the "Resort" or the "Country Club." Unit Three, with its recent renovations and modern, neon-decorated dining hall, is most often termed the "Sizzler," referring to a moderately priced steakhouse franchise known for its all-you-can-eat dinners and buffet.

Whether it is acknowledged consciously or not by the residents, these nicknames have a certain amount of cultural baggage attached to them. Each term has certain connotations and meanings within our society and culture. The "Projects" as it applies to public housing is associated with poverty and those unable to afford housing in the private market, thus dependent on the government for affordable housing. The "Sizzler" is a middle-class establishment where the moderately priced simple food is served in mass quantities. The terms "Ski Lodge" and "Resort" or "Country Club" connote the higher class because a person must have a relatively large amount of money to afford these places. If one subscribes to a psychological analysis, one could argue that the nicknames mirror the way in which the residential system is a microcosm of a larger capitalist society replicates a system of class division. I think the dorms would have had these nicknames and associated stereotypes regardless of



who lived in them, but the differential pricing of the dorms casts those distinctions in accordance with the actual divisions of economic class among residents. Thus referring to Foothill as the “Ski Lodge” or to Unit One as the “Projects” really does imply that the residents of those dorms are either wealthier or of more limited means.

### *Differential Pricing and the Formation of Class Divisions*

As mentioned above, socializing and building a support network of friends are key aspects of dormitory living. Often one’s closest friends reside in the same residence hall. A person’s interactions are shaped by where s/he lives in that one will not meet many people from outside of the dorm without making considerable effort. Sharon, who lived at Foothill her first year and at Unit Three when I interviewed her, stated, “I really don’t have too many interactions with people at the other units. Most of my friends are here [at Unit Three] or at Foothill, so I’m not really exposed to [other] views.”

When the system of differential cost is factored into the equation, the creation of distinct economic classes within the residential system becomes clear. The dormitories become a means by which people from similar economic backgrounds are grouped together and encouraged to bond and connect with one another. Meanwhile, living in the dorms limits their interaction and socialization with people at other dorms who might have very different backgrounds (economic or ethnic), beliefs and ideas. Taking the original aims of the dorm into account, as a mechanism for promoting unity and cohesion among the entire campus community, and comparing it to the reality of the differential price system, a basic contradiction arises. Despite its founding principles of providing equal access to education and a form for interaction between people of varying classes and backgrounds, the University currently operates a housing system which economically segregates people into homogeneous groups limiting their access somewhat to different people and differing points of view.

In response to the question of how things would change if all dorms were equally priced and assigned on a lottery basis, Andy, who lived at Unit One his first year and in Unit Three his second, felt that most likely all the dorms would get a broader range of different types which would be beneficial to all residents. “Because you always end up getting to know and making friends with people you live around, if you lived with a more diverse group of people, I’m sure you’d be more open-minded.”

### *Ideology of Acceptance*

In conducting interviews with the students, what struck me as interesting was their general awareness of the stratification and segregation which results from the differential pricing of the dorms. What surprised me even more was the level of acceptance these students exhibited of this system which segregates them and limits

their access to other people. When I asked them whether they thought this system was fair, most of them felt that indeed it was. It seemed difficult for them to even conceive of an alternative system for pricing and assigning dorm rooms.

As many of my informants see it, the current system of differential pricing does give them a range of choices. They say that they can pay more and receive better amenities, or save money and put up with the older facilities. Warren, who lived in Unit One his first year and in Foothill his second, felt that while neither was worth the cost, he was willing to pay the higher price to live in the nicer place. It must be noted that most of my informants come from economic backgrounds which allow them to view this system as one which provides a choice. However, I do not think it is only students from privileged economic backgrounds who subscribe to this belief that choice is contingent upon price. Anyone who has been raised in this capitalist society has been constantly socialized to one of the tenets of the consumer culture: there is always a choice if you are willing to pay for it. In mimicking the private housing market, UC Berkeley's dorms have been organized to reflect this sentiment. Harry LeGrande, an official at the Office of Housing and Dining, remarked that the University considers it is more fair for people in the more modern dorms to pay more than those in the older facilities. For the most part, students also hold this idea of fairness in a market economy. Fairness is individualistic in nature. Getting what you pay for is more important than everybody having access to equal quality housing. Even when I asked if things might be more fair in the democratic sense, most of my informants found it difficult to abandon the present system. David, who lived in Unit Two, one of the oldest dorms, displayed a great sensitivity to the financial interests of the University when he responded:

Well, that would be really interesting, but I don't that would ever happen though because some dorms are just nicer than and cost more for the UC and they [University officials] have to make their money back. I think it is better to leave it the way it is because you have a choice of what dorm you want. I think the present system is all right. I do wish some things could be equaled out, but I guess you get just what you pay for.

The irony of the situation is that as a public institution which should not be held accountable to the private sector, the University has reproduced a housing system based on the capitalist ethic, rather than on traditional democratic principles. Equal access to choice no longer exists. The range of choice corresponds to what one is willing to pay. Despite the widespread acceptance of the system of differential pricing and the ideology which normalizes it, the system is not necessarily the most "natural" or the best way of assigning housing. Later in the paper I plan to explore some alternatives to this system of differential cost which other universities have implemented and which serve as evidence that there are other methods of organizing student housing which do not result in segregation and hierarchy.

*Other Lessons in Segregation: Personal and Ethnic*

Through the differential pricing of the dorms, students are conditioned to and learn a system of institutionalized hierarchy and group segregation. Through the actual experience of living in the dorms, I believe students are conditioned to the normalcy of personal segregation as they are encouraged to embrace their independence and responsibilities as adult members of the campus community. Through workshops put on by CalSo, parents of new students receive support and help in “letting go” so that their children may better realize their own independence. Students already have it well-ingrained that going to college means a whole new level of independence. This new independence is indeed a reality for most students and many wholly immerse themselves in it. However, as a concept or an ideology, it becomes a controlling mechanism which makes the University’s task of disciplining students a bit less direct, yet equally if not more efficient.

From the 1950s until the mid 1960s, the University followed a policy of *in loco parentis*. In other words, the University basically had all the responsibilities and control of a parent over students residing in the dorms. During the time of the Free Speech Movement and later the anti-war movement and counter-culture of the mid ‘60s and early ‘70s, students became more aware of their rights as citizens and demanded a freer forum for speech and the free flow of ideas. At this time the University abandoned *in loco parentis* as a security policy within the dorms. Around this time also, the dormitories became mostly coed. What could the connections be? Perhaps implementation of coed dorms has its roots in the retreat away from the policy of direct control over the actions of residents. Many students will admit that they tend to act differently in the presence of the opposite sex and hold themselves to a higher level of etiquette than if they were with only members of their own sex. Coed residence halls take advantage of the behavior-modifying effects of being with the opposite sex to harness the self-monitoring of the students themselves. In his ethnography of the dorms at Rutgers University, a state university in New Jersey, Michael Moffatt noted that residents thought the “coed floors were quieter and cleaner, ‘because of the girls,’ and they were more amiable and relaxed, ‘because of the guys’ (Moffatt 1989:47). In the Foucaudian sense, this is where discipline goes from being externally exerted to something exercised internally by the very subject in need of discipline.

The ideology of independence could have similar effects in motivating the student to monitor his/her own behavior to conform to what is normal. In accepting the independence of the individual student, the University concedes to the student who has a growing sense of his/her own autonomy, yet also equips itself with a more efficient means by which to handle problems and control students without the same amount of direct responsibility.

Judging from my own experiences and from talking to others, this new sense of independence and individuality apparently has the effect of sometimes stifling the reactions and responses of residents when confronted with a problem or a situation which bothers them. As mature adults it is no longer appropriate to act childishly and impulsively. I remember when I first moved into my triple in Unit One, I sat on the bed and was rather surprised at the poor quality of the mattress, which sank down about half a foot. As a new college student and an adult of eighteen years, I was prepared to accept this mattress and the future back problems it would cause, as my fate and just part of the college experience to which I had to adjust. Fortunately, my mother was present helping me to move in. She took one look at the mattress, and went down to the maintenance office to demand that they provide a new mattress for her son. A few hours later, a brand new mattress was delivered. This is just a small illustration of how students like myself, by virtue of an ethic of independence and self-reliance, might be discouraged from voicing dissatisfaction or even acknowledging problems or situations which cause them discomfort for fear of appearing immature and unable to handle the little rough spots that come with college life. As de Tocqueville astutely observed: "The citizen of the United States is taught from infancy to rely upon his own exertions in order to resist the evils and difficulties of life" (1945:199).

The belief in an ideal of individual independence carries with it certain ideas of what that independence encompasses, such as certain modes of thinking and behaving. Ironically, the ideal of individuality can foster group conformity because people often have set and standardized ideas of how individuality is defined. One resident of Unit Three complained that his roommates didn't understand that he didn't like to get "ripped" (i.e. drunk) every night on the weekends. When asked if he could approach his RA (Residential Assistant) about the problem, he replied: "It wouldn't do nothing because my RA gets drunk with me sometimes" (Stock 1992). It seems that if one does not want to appear awkward or uncomfortable, one must constantly regulate him/herself so that personal attitudes and practices don't stray too far from what is considered normal.

Interestingly, although the ethic of individuality and independence reinforces group conformity to a certain degree with respect to social attitudes and practices, it also may work to alienate students from one another. The ethic of independence and self-reliance tends to individualize problems so that what could be a social problem with the people or policies in the dorms becomes personalized. The individual must work things out and adjust before anything changes to accommodate him/her. Problems are seen as originating and existing internally, in the head of the individual, rather than actually existing externally and affecting other people. Take the example of the coed bathroom. It is one of the most difficult aspects of the dorms to get used to, yet students don't question why they have to share their bathrooms with members of the opposite sex in the dorms while in public spaces the sexes are separated. They are expected to adjust as they would to any new situation in the dorms. Some may

actually suffer from physical and emotional discomfort, but few ever challenge a feature which they are supposed to view as normal. An RA in Unit Three had this to say about the predicament of residents:

Nobody looks out for you and if you are having any trouble with anyone or anything from grades to roommates, it is up to you to take care of the problem because nobody will hold your hand. [Michaelson 1993]

Students living within this residential system are socialized to accept and even embrace an ethic of personal independence, individuality and maturity, which they probably already value. However, the ethic is a form of discipline which could deter them from questioning or challenging policies and situations which make them uncomfortable because they have gradually come to believe that it is they as individuals rather than the system which needs to adjust and change.

The ethic of individuality, self-reliance and maturity could be considered to be a mechanism of discipline which conditions residents to a system of personal fragmentation under the philosophy of independence and individual autonomy. It is a rather subtle and indirect method of control. While explicitly promoting an ideology rooted in the democratic ideals of our society, the University's role in simultaneously perpetuating an implicit process of control probably has a great deal to do with the University being an extension of the larger society. However, there are rather more overt and direct methods by which the University creates a discipline which "orders human multiplicities" (Foucault 1979:219).

An example of this is Project DARE (Diversity Awareness Resource Evaluation) which is a workshop put on by the Office of Residential Programs. As it is facilitated in the dorms, the workshop consists of two main segments which are designed to encourage attitudes of tolerance and acceptance in the increasingly diverse campus community. The first segment is a structured discussion in which each participant is required to describe him/herself in terms of two cultures or subcultures, one visible and apparent and the other not so apparent or obvious externally. The main aim of this discussion is to implant the idea that each individual is basically unique and one cannot judge another on appearances alone. There are always different ways in which people categorize themselves and differentiate themselves from others. However also implicit within that message is another:

Though people look similar, they may be quite different and students have less in common than they previously thought. Thus if students' peers are really more different from them, as the Project DARE contends, then their concerns and problems are probably different too. [Michaelson 1993]

The second part of the workshop is a labeling game in which each student wears a label on his/her head and is asked to treat people in a stereotypical manner in accordance with the character type they have printed on the labels stuck to their foreheads. Each person is then expected to guess what is printed on their label by how people treat them. The labeling game is designed to make people aware of their stereotypes of others and also make them aware of how dehumanizing it is to be perceived and treated as a specific type rather than a person. It is an admirable attempt to bring stereotypes to a more conscious level and to explore the experience of being on the receiving-end of these stereotypes. However, perhaps this exercise works primarily to eliminate prejudice only at the linguistic level without examining the roots of the stereotypes and prejudices and the motivations for their use. Although I may have become more conscious of my prejudices, there was no examination of why I held certain prejudices.

Project DARE is a well-intentioned program which does get people thinking about some of the issues that come with living in an increasingly multi-cultural campus community. However, it is most effective as a way for the University to formulate and structure a discourse of diversity: a means of talking and thinking about diversity. Rather than students classifying themselves, the University has taken control of this process. It has ordered the multitudes, so to speak. The creation of this discourse has given the University the power to define what diversity is and how a student can think about it. It is debatable how much value students place on Project DARE and how much influence it has on the way they view others, yet perhaps it does work at some level to condition the residents to the University's discourse of diversity. At the core of this discourse is the idea that people are increasingly diverse and belong to a growing number of groups and subcultures that one must learn to accept and tolerate. The focus, then, is on the toleration of difference rather than the importance of similarities.

The program serves as a public message that the University desires a unified and integrated student body, but its content intentionally fosters fragmentation so that students are left confused and dependent on the University for a frame of reference. [Michaelson 1993]

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that it is only through the structure and the policies of the University where students learn and experience segregation. Students themselves take an active role in formulating their own social groups and imposing on themselves certain limitations in their interactions with other people. Understandably, most of a person's social circle consists of people with whom that person shares something in common, be it ethnic background, political beliefs, social and cultural ideas, activities, etc. In the last decade, there has been a huge increase in student awareness of their cultural and ethnic heritage on Berkeley campus. For many, college has become a place to invent and reformulate their identities:

A visitor to Sproul at the entrance to the University of California is instantly struck by the large number of card tables with their posterboard signs which have been set up to advertise and promote a wide variety of student groups and organizations. Increasingly, the membership and appeal of the organizations or associations are linked to specifically designated student populations where ethnicity and race play an important role. [Diversity Project 1991:12]

From this example it is clear that students do feel the need to be with people with whom they share ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This is highly evident within the dining rooms of the residence halls. A student at Unit 3 described the situation: "Don't sit on the left side unless you're black. I don't sit with whites because they don't want me there. I like sitting with other people of color where I'm accepted" (Michaelson 1993).

Students exercise a great deal of personal choice in their interactions. It seems that while students are quite open to socializing with people different from themselves, most time is spent with people who are more similar. The fragmentation which results is more or less a consequence of people exercising a choice of those with whom they wish to socialize. Perhaps this is the type of mind-set which leads students to view the segregation resulting from the differential price of the dorms as also normal and unavoidable. However, there is a difference. In the case of self-segregation, it is the students who choose with whom they will and will not socialize. In contrast, in the residential system, the students' decisions are made for them and, most often, separations between people are made along economic lines, something over which students have little control.

### *The Normalization of Contradiction*

What is interesting to note is that this general acceptance of segregation comes at a time when the Berkeley campus is the most diverse than it has ever been and will most likely continue to increase in this respect. Diversity has become part of the official slogan or motto. "Excellence through diversity" is written in many a campus publication. What is implied by this slogan is that, with growing diversity, ideally the University should become a forum for the increasing flow of ideas and experiences as people from various cultures, backgrounds, and ethnic identities interact with one another, learning from others while managing their own specific identity. What is important to this concept is that interaction take place. However, it seems that the residential system and other school policies as well as the students themselves are working counter to this stated aim. The excellence-through-diversity motto, while "widely used, is not widely believed" (Diversity Project 1991:49).

I believe that this is one of the most subtle yet powerful lessons that students learn living in the University residence halls and being a member of the campus community. One can be fully aware of the official ideology and the ideals behind those ideologies and believe in them while experiencing a reality that is in opposition to it. A process of “double think” is formulated in the Orwellian sense, in which contradiction becomes normal and thus unchallengeable, and is thereby being taught indirectly to students. In this case there is no challenge to a system which perpetuates segregation and hierarchy while nonetheless claiming to stand for ideals of equality and unity.

Let me take this point further. How is it that a public university founded upon principles of equality and unity can produce and perpetuate a system of segregation and hierarchy? In *Learning to Labor*, Paul Willis puts forth the idea that institutions must be studied at three levels: the official, the pragmatic and the cultural. If we look at the University and its policies in this way, we can see that as a public institution in a society which prides itself on its democratic ideals, the University will also reflect these ideals and, at least officially, will work towards equality and the equal access to educational opportunities. At the same time, the public institution is an extension of the capitalist private market system which is dependent on class division. Thus at the pragmatic level, the University will work in such a way as to perpetuate and reinforce the system of stratification. “Since social reproduction of the class society in general continues despite the intervention of the liberal state and its institutions, it may be suggested that some of the real functions of institutions work counter to their stated aims” (Willis 1977:177). Perhaps at the cultural level, the constant awareness of an ideal of diversity, equality and unity, combined with the daily experience of fragmentation and hierarchy, primes students for their entrance into the larger capitalist society where democratic ideals of egalitarianism flow freely and readily in a reality of class division, social disparity and segregation. In other words, the University primes for this contradictory system until it becomes normal for political ideas and rhetoric to have little to do with life in a fragmented society. This could be the most important lesson of all: that it is completely normal to experience hierarchy and segregation while talking about equality and democracy.

### **Comparative Analysis: A Brief Summary of Housing at Other Schools**

By examining the residential systems at a number of other schools, UC and non-UC, I hope to shed light on how the housing system in Berkeley is similar and different to the housing systems at other schools. More importantly, I hope to show how these systems are structured and organized to reflect certain philosophies towards education and attitudes towards students as individuals. In order to gain a better perspective of the housing system in place at Berkeley and explore some alternatives to this very normalized approach to housing, I checked the school catalogues of a number of other schools and then wrote to many of them, asking for housing brochures and any information they could give me regarding housing assignments and



room pricing. I received brochures from UC Los Angeles, UC San Diego, Boston University, San Francisco State, Yale University, and Stanford University. I also learned valuable information concerning these schools and others in conversations with friends and other alumni who had attended the universities under consideration.

### *UC Schools*

For the most part, almost all the UC campuses operate on a system of differential cost to varying degrees with the exception of UC San Diego. UCSD is divided into five small residential colleges which, from the brochure, have relatively new and modern dormitories which are all suite-oriented. For the 1993-94 school year, the approximate cost for all the dorms was \$6,400 with board rates varying depending on which meal plan is ordered. It seems that because all the rooms are standardized or at least very similar in quality, there is little need to charge different prices. Choice has more to do with where one wants to live as it pertains to location rather than the quality of amenities and accommodations.

Undergraduate student housing at UC Santa Cruz operates on a differential price basis but on a much smaller scale than at Berkeley. The largest price difference between the least and most expensive accommodations is about \$800, from \$4,989 to \$5,805 for the 1993-94 academic year. The price difference corresponds to two entirely different types of housing: the residential hall or the apartment. If a student lives in an apartment his/her rent will be cheaper because s/he won't have to purchase a meal plan. If one lives in the residence hall, one has to purchase a meal plan which varies in price depending on how many meals one gets a day. The meal plan is really what determines a difference in price among the dorms. UCSC is made up of a number of residential colleges, each with its own core curriculum and academic focus. Although UCSC is a relatively new and modern campus, there are some colleges and dorms which are older than others. However, between the colleges, all the dorms are the same price. A friend of mine who attended UCSC informed me that if there was a differential price system between the different colleges, then a person would often choose the college they wished to inhabit and attend on an economic basis rather than basing the decision on what kind of academic and social setting s/he wanted in a college.

Of all the UC campuses, UCLA is the closest to Berkeley in both size and housing policy. Rooms in the traditional corridor-type residence hall are the cheapest as is the case at Berkeley. Likewise, housing in the suite-oriented dorms is more expensive. However, a room in the residential complex called Sunset Village is the most expensive. The complex is made up of big houses which combines the extra living space of the suites with the larger social atmosphere of the corridors. As at UC Berkeley, choice at UCLA revolves around the type of living accommodation one wants and is basically a luxury only for those who can afford it.

The system of housing assignments also varies within the UC system. UCSD, whose dorms are all equally priced, assigns housing on a first-come first-serve basis. UCB and UCLA both employ a lottery to assign housing after all applications are submitted. Theoretically this lottery acts as an equalizer so that no student has special privileges, but due to the differential pricing the lottery does not improve a person's chances of getting the nicest room if s/he can't afford it.

*Private Universities: A Difference in Philosophies*

Although by no means indicative of all private universities, none of the private universities I surveyed (Yale, Stanford, Columbia, Reed) had a system of differential pricing when it came to student housing. At Yale all first-year students pay a lump sum and live in an area reserved for freshpersons called the "Old Campus." While these students are affiliated with different residential colleges around campus, they all live together their first year. A friend who attended Princeton informed me that there all the dorms cost the same and are assigned on a lottery basis so that one would get a small dilapidated room only out of sheer bad luck. Nobody argues with the system. Furthermore, none of the schools surveyed has student populations that can really compare to UCB in terms of size. Perhaps differential pricing is dependent on the size of the school. However, I argue a system of equal pricing of dorms is rooted in a certain philosophy towards the student and the institution's role in educating the student, just as the differential price system has its roots in capitalist philosophy.

At this point I would like to limit the examination to a comparison primarily between UC Berkeley and Stanford as a way of extrapolating some of the core differences in ideology and philosophy between a large public institution and an elite private university. Of all the schools to which I sent letters, Stanford was the most forthcoming in providing me with all the information that I had requested. In addition to an information brochure, I received a personal letter answering my specific questions written by William C. Georges, the Director of Housing at Stanford. Although it was probably not difficult or time-consuming for him to write a short letter, I was struck by the basic level of consideration on the part of Mr. Georges to write me a personal response to my rather mundane questions. After reading the contents of the letter and the brochure and learning of the importance placed upon housing and roommate assignments, I realized that the bit of personal attention I experienced is an integral part of Stanford's housing policy. As Mr. Georges pointed out in his letter, "Stanford's residence program is based on the concept that education is not confined to the classroom and that living and learning and social and intellectual life should be integrated, not separate." While this is similar to the stated intention at UCB, Stanford's housing application, in which a large amount of personal information is asked, reflects a much more active approach in making this a reality on the part of the private school. Like UCSC, a student's preference for where s/he wants to live is

tied to the preference for a required first-year academic course which is often residence-based. The housing office then considers the student's preference for a cross-culture theme house and whether or not a student wants to live in an all-freshman or four-class house, in coed or single-sex corridors.

Just looking at the Berkeley housing brochure and comparing it to the Stanford brochure, I noticed a basic difference in the concept of choice. At Berkeley one can choose between a number of different housing accommodations if one wants to pay the price. In the Stanford brochure, there is a very brief mention of the different facilities and various accommodations but much more text is devoted to describing the various theme houses like the African American and Asian American theme houses. It seems that choice at Stanford, as it pertains to student housing, is more an issue of the type of experience one wants rather than the type of amenities one wants. As the director informed me, all first-year students pay the same rate for housing (about \$3,000 for 1992-93, not including board). So price should not enter into the decision process. From reading the brochure and the director's letter, I got the feeling that Stanford takes a more personal approach to housing and is really trying to incorporate residential life as part of the educational experience. I believe this housing policy reflects certain attitudes towards respecting the individual student which are quite different from the attitude one receives at UCB. At Stanford, by having individual desires and needs acknowledged by the housing office, each student's uniqueness is affirmed. This is illustrated by the actual assignment process. While the order in which students are assigned rooms is random, the University claims it does all it can to provide the individual student with her/his top preferences.

"Roommate assignment is perhaps the most important decision a college makes for an entering freshman, because the decision can affect the quality of life for the students for one and may determine whether they stay or leave" (Simpson and Frost 1993:219). The way Mr. Georges explained it, there seems to be a great deal of importance on pairing people who are compatible and who will also gain a different perspective from living with each other.

In making roommate assignments we try to pair students who have different geographic, cultural, and academic backgrounds so that they can learn from each other and value and explore their differences. At the same time we try to ensure that they share some common interest in athletics, music, writing, or some other activity, so that they have a foundation upon which to build a friendship.

The housing application for Stanford has a full page for incoming students to list personal information like music preferences, hobbies, computer skills, community activities and others. The Berkeley application has a small box entitled "Resident Information" where the only questions asked are whether one wants to live in a coed

or single sex floor and if one smokes or would object to a roommate who smokes. That is all the information the Housing Office in Berkeley uses in pairing roommates.

How do these differences in housing policies reflect different philosophies towards the student and the institution? As a large public institution, I believe that UC Berkeley teaches something quite different to its students compared to what students at elite private colleges and universities learn at those schools. I've heard many people say that at Berkeley, compared to a school like Stanford, a person is not sheltered. S/he gets a taste of the real world. I think there is much truth to this belief. It has been my experience that, at Berkeley, one is basically on one's own. Help from others is not forthcoming unless you make a real effort to search people and resources out that will offer assistance. The housing system as an extension of the University is also highly impersonal and fragmented so that one is on one's own even when living with a group of people. The separation between the private sector and the public institution is nonexistent. People are treated as they would be in the outside world, often as numbers rather than as individuals with specific needs. The ethic of individualism and independence is perpetuated not only by the people themselves who feel like they must carve out their own niche in the impersonal environment of the university, but by a system which benefits from the fragmentation and separation of people.

Like many private schools, Stanford takes a different position in its role in the students' lives. A private school with very high tuition and fees and extremely tough admission requirements, Stanford is unquestionably an elite institution. Clearly, inclusion within the walls of the institution is very difficult and those who do gain admission and acceptance are the cream of the crop. Once accepted, students are treated well. It seems to be the case that students at these universities do feel a tighter bond with one another precisely because they are members of such an elite campus community. The housing policies at Stanford seem to be reflective of a system intent on fostering the sense of community between students and also intent on helping the student realize his/her full potential as a Stanford student. The focus is on the individual student rather than on the ethic of individualism which seems to be the case at UC Berkeley. This is what it means when people say that private colleges and universities take care of you to a much greater degree than a public school. A friend who attended Princeton informed me and two other Berkeley undergrads that for all tests, midterms and finals the University supplied all the blue books. We were astounded to hear this because it would be unheard of in a place like Berkeley where the student must buy everything.

While these are quite elitist institutions, private universities might promote a stronger sense of equality among their students, because they have all been held to the highest standards and gained entrance. Students may have a heightened sense of superiority in relation to students of other universities but among members of the same campus community, there is the feeling of egalitarianism, because everybody

must be equally talented to gain admission. Perhaps the sense of equality has something to do with the general level of homogeneity of the student populations at these private universities where tuition can be many more times the rates at Berkeley. Stanford cannot match Berkeley in student diversity: ethnically, culturally or economically. It seems rather counter-intuitive that elite private universities teach students more about equality, while a public institution like UC Berkeley, with its official aims to provide equal opportunities in education to a diverse population, teaches its students more about hierarchy, segregation and how they are natural factors of life.

How is it that this public University came to reflect and perpetuate this ethnic of fragmentation? Why is it that the elite private school fosters more of an ethic of equality? I believe that this dichotomy is a rather recent development. From the time of the UC's establishment in the 1860s up until the mid-1960s, the student population remained fairly homogenous, economically, and ethnically. Perhaps this is due to the fact that during this span of time, a college education even at a public institution was largely reserved for the elite. It was also during this time that the aim of the dorms at Berkeley was to provide housing to foster a sense of community throughout the University. However, with the increase of minority groups and a more economically and ethnically diverse student population during the 1970s and '80s, the public institution was no longer the haven for the elite. I believe this was also when the reasons for housing students began to change, the system of differential cost was implemented, and the University as a whole began to reflect the hierarchy and fragmentation of the private sector. Perhaps this can help explain the difference in mentalities between public and private schools. The private schools, with their exorbitant tuition and tough academic standards, still serve as havens for the elite where student populations are basically as homogenous as they have ever been. Increasingly, public schools become the domain of the middle-class. Although this goes beyond the scope of my research and data, hypothetically, it is possible that most of the middle-class students will enter a job market of middle- and upper-management where departmentalization and hierarchy are part of the working environment. Having gone through a public school like Berkeley, they will already be prepared for this system. The elite at private schools, inhabiting a system of relative equality within the walls of others outside, will perhaps enter a working environment where they are already near the top management positions and a well-tuned acceptance of hierarchy is not as necessary if one is already at the top.

## **Conclusion**

While conducting research for this paper, I was struck by how little anthropological and ethnographic data had been previously written about dormitories. Most of the books and articles I found took a more psychological perspective where the focus was primarily on how the individual reacted personally to the residence halls and college in general. There was little attention to how the culture of college is

constructed and no attention paid to who and what is behind its construction, whether it is the students or the institution. However, in *Coming of Age in New Jersey*, Michael Moffatt, an anthropologist at Rutgers University, makes the attempt to describe anthropologically what goes on within dormitories at Rutgers. Taking his title from Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Moffatt studies students living in the dorms as if they too were on an island with their own distinctive cultural norms and beliefs regarding individuality, friendship, sexuality, etc. Of course in constructing this culture, they bring with them all the baggage of experiences and ideas which they accumulated growing up where they did geographically, socially, culturally and ethnically. In this way, Moffatt shows how this dormitory culture whose foundation has been laid down by the University, has been created and recreated by the very students who dwell in the dorms and is in fact a reflection of the greater American culture from which these students come.

Moffatt raises some interesting and valid points in his discussion of dormitory culture and its dialectic nature in which residents contribute to and are also controlled and influenced by it. However, aside from the brief mention of the impersonal and bureaucratic nature of the university and how this might help students grow accustomed to the "real" world, Moffatt leaves unaddressed the university's role in contributing not only to the dormitory culture directly, but also the way in which the university influences the students in their construction of residential culture. According to Moffatt, making friends within the dorms is one of the last ways to exercise one's autonomy fully, because "your friends were freely chosen, mutually egalitarian, others whom you trusted the secrets of yourself" (Moffatt 1989:42). While this may be true of friendship, I do not necessarily agree with the belief that within the dorms, friends are chosen freely. At a university like UC Berkeley, which operates a system of differential pricing that has the effect of corralling certain students into various dorms, the people whom one interacts with is largely determined by the University's policies.

At this point Moffatt and I diverge in our approaches. He is interested in studying the dormitory culture as its own entity, an autonomously functioning unit which he argues can also tell us something about the larger American society. Moffatt is interested in how the dormitory as an enclosed microcosm of American society reflects certain ideals and beliefs specific to this culture. I am more interested in how the residential system reflects the structure of this society. I have tried to show in this paper how the larger society, through institutionalized mechanisms, influences students in constructing a reality which duplicates that larger society. According to Moffatt, the "fundamental sociological dichotomy in the daily lives of the students at Rutgers is the strong contrast between the personal world of the students and the impersonal qualities of the official college" (Moffatt 1989:5). While there is a distinction in the personal culture of the dorms and the bureaucratic culture of the university, I do not believe that there is a sharp separation where one operates independently of the other. The residential experience must be viewed in relation to

its connections with the policies of the University which itself is intimately tied to the larger capitalist society.

UC Berkeley is one of the most prestigious public universities in the country. Some of the most talented students from California and throughout the country come to receive a top-ranked education in the sciences, liberal arts, and humanities. However, I also believe these students are schooled in a system of hierarchy, stratification and segregation. Many say that Berkeley gives one a taste of the real world. If that world is a society where compartmentalization, hierarchy, and fragmentation are unavoidable factors of the market economy, then there is some truth to that sentiment. I have tried to show how the housing policies and the differential pricing of the dormitories at Berkeley not only put students in an actual system of stratification and social segregation, but also conditions them to accept it as a natural fact of universal life.

Ruth Benedict believed strongly that a given culture has a certain ethos or an underlying principle which gives a certain consistency and continuity to the various aspects of that culture: a specific "cultural configuration" (Benedict 1934:55). While I don't subscribe whole-heartedly to Benedict's idea of absolute cultural integration or an easily definable pattern within a culture which determines the nature and structure of its various institutions, I do see value in the idea of a cultural ethos. In this capitalist consumer culture, one of the guiding principles is that of fragmentation and social division. At the institutional level this is manifested by the large numbers of departments which are often economically and socially disconnected. At the personal level we are all socialized to believe in the importance of individualism and independence, which, as an ideology, limits our connections with and dependence on other people. The residential system at Berkeley reflects both of these aspects of fragmentation. Living in the dorms, students experience social and economic stratification as the differently priced dorms pool students of one economic status into one dorm and students from a different economic background in another. Within the dorms students are conditioned to an ideology with which they are already quite familiar: the need to be independent and self-reliant. In the context of the University and the dorms, this ethic can work in a way to individualize problems and make students believe that it is they, not the institution or its policies, who must adjust and accommodate.

Recently, Unit One was renovated and seismically upgraded so that now the rates for its rooms are the same as Unit Three, on the average about \$500 more than the previous rates. Over the next academic year (1994-95) Unit Two will also be renovated so that its room rates will also increase to the level of Units One and Three. Not only are fees being raised constantly, but housing rates in University dorms are also on the rise. Hypothetically speaking, perhaps the University, with its ever increasing fees and growing dependence on private funds for its expansion and maintenance, is moving in a direction of privatization. The public university is

becoming more and more elite as the cost of attending increases year by year. More than an academic standard, it will be an economic standard which determines whether a person is able to attend or not. As a public institution, the ideals of equality and equal access may be preserved in the ideology and rhetoric of the University, but the reality tells a different story. Perhaps the university will become like that smallest of screens, allowing only a select few to pass until the student population becomes economically as homogenous as that of a private institution.

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