

CHANGING RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS OF FOREIGN  
STUDENTS IN A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNITY, 1974-83

An Abstract of a Thesis  
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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the residential patterns of foreign students at a midwestern university during the years 1974-83 and surveys the housing problems encountered by those students. The first part of the investigation identifies and maps the distribution patterns on the campus and the adjacent city of Macomb (population ca. 20,000) of the following ethnic groups: Iranians, Nigerians, Koreans, Japanese, Malaysians, and Taiwanese, while the second step interprets the relationships between segregational clusters and cultural affiliations, including language, nationality, and religion. Finally, the relationships between individual preferences and environmental sources of satisfaction--particularly with respect to perceptions of personal safety and neighborhood quality--are investigated.

More than 2,000 addresses of foreign students were plotted on maps of the campus and its environs and ethnic groupings based primarily upon nationality and geographical proximity were compared with residential clusters that emerged. Preferences and perceptions of residential desirability were gleaned from questionnaires mailed to a sample of currently enrolled students.

Among the nationalities whose numbers were sufficient to report upon residential patterns as they develop through time, geographical "channeling" was apparent; initially, newly arrived contingents were ensconced in particular residence halls, but subsequently dispersed to "clusters" in other neighborhoods. The mix of nationalities considered in this study, although dominated to some extent by those originating in East and Southeast Asia, changed greatly during the period reviewed. More

definitive results might be achieved if the experience of a number of similar universities could be combined.

It is concluded that ethnic considerations, even during the short runs of residence typical of foreign students (more than half of whom enroll for Master's degree programs), result in residential clusters, but that these affinities characterize some nationalities much more than others and was especially marked among Koreans as well as Malaysians who were both Muslim and Malay speakers.

Sixty-four percent (58) of a sample of 91 foreign students responded to a questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of housing quality as reported by both on-campus and off-campus students. Even though substantial numbers of foreign students chose to live off-campus at this essentially residential university, they overwhelmingly perceive the campus to offer superior neighborhood quality and greater safety. Off-campus choices appear to result from the wish to form ethnic neighborhoods that is in turn inhibited by higher costs for the more desirable university-owned buildings and their limited availability.

Not enough is known about the patterns of foreign student residential housing and only comparative studies of universities categorized by type could provide adequate bases for evaluating policies and practices that presently exist. The propensities for forming residential communities are probably universal and are in conflict with University policies prescribed by law that prohibit discrimination in housing. They may also conflict with sound education for foreign students. Another area of investigation should be that of analyzing the degree of relationship between housing choice and the accomplishment of defined and quantifiable educational goals.

As an "experienced" foreign student in America, I would strongly encourage residential designs that brought about increased interaction among nationalities, including that of the host country.