

M E T H O D S

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research questions addressed in this exploratory study are the following:

- How are the edges being used?
- What influences the use of these edges?
- What messages are the use of these edges communicating?
- Does the use of these edges affect residents' perceptions of the setting?
- Does the use of these edges influence socialization?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study compares four different care settings located within two Continuing Care Retirement Communities. Both retirement communities are accredited CCRCs with multiple levels of care located within interconnected buildings. These communities were also selected for the study based on positive philosophies towards personalization. This study focuses on the assisted living and independent apartments within each community. The four settings offered opportunities to compare how the use of the unit's edge differs between levels of care, as well as within different architectural frameworks. To address the research questions, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The focus of the study was the treatment of the entrance area to the dwelling unit, since this area is typically under resident control and has been the focus of most architectural manipulations.

Photographic Data

A total of 102 photographs were taken of representative unit entranceways from both settings. Doorways were photographed based upon the following: a) presence of some personalization and b) to represent a variety of styles of personalization. The following table summarizes the data gathered at each community.

TABLE FIVE - PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA QUANTIFIED

	<i>Community One</i>		<i>Community Two</i>	
	<i>ALF</i>	<i>APTS</i>	<i>ALF</i>	<i>APTS</i>
Number of Units	30	141	24	48
Number of Units Photographed	15	43	12	32
Percent	50.0%	30.5%	50.0%	66.7%

These photographs were analyzed for:

- Total Number of Items Used.
- Types of Items Displayed (e.g., plants, photographs).
- Size of Items (e.g., furniture, small mementos).
- Placement of Items, (e.g., shelves, floor).

Each doorway photograph was coded and entered into a computer database. Frequency and crosstabulation counts were generated using the statistical analysis program SPSS.

Interviews

A total of nineteen residents were interviewed indepth to assess the meaning behind each of their personalized displays. Residents were selected to be interviewed using a convenience sample in that

they were willing to participate and their doorways had some form of personalization. Residents were asked to sign an informed consent form before participating in the interview. In the assisted living setting, staff were informally questioned to determine if the resident had any cognitive or health concerns that would keep them from participating. The following table summarizes the interview data collected.

TABLE SIX - INTERVIEW DATA QUANTIFIED

	<i>Community One</i>		<i>Community Two</i>	
	<i>ALF</i>	<i>APTS</i>	<i>ALF</i>	<i>APTS</i>
Number of Households	30	141	24	48
Number of Interviews	5	7	3	4
Percent	16.6%	5.0%	12.5%	8.3%

The interviews were unscripted, but the key content questions covered during the interview included the following:

- The resident's life history.
- What did the resident choose to display?
- Why are these items significant to the resident?
- How does the resident feel about the use of this edge?

Each of the interviews were full text transcribed and analyzed for thematic content. The life-histories were converted into short biographical sketches for this monograph.

Apartment Survey

A total of 62 surveys were returned from the 122 surveys distributed at both communities. A convenience sample was employed at both communities. At Community One, the self-addressed stamped surveys were distributed into the residents' mailboxes using every other box with the remaining twenty surveys being left for interested parties who lived in the apartments. In order to have a reasonable comparison in Community Two, self-addressed stamped surveys were issued to all apartment residents except for those who were interviewed during the study due to the request of administration. Administrative staff felt completing the interview and the survey would be burdensome to the residents. One apartment unit was empty and another was being used by marketing as a demonstration unit, so both were excluded from the survey. Although the patterns of distribution were not consistent due to administration and research team constraints, it should be noted that both response rates for the survey are quite high and provided valuable data for this exploratory study. Table Seven summarizes the survey data collected at the apartment settings.

TABLE SEVEN - SURVEY DATA QUANTIFIED

	<i>Community One</i>	<i>Community Two</i>
	<i>Apartments</i>	<i>Apartments</i>
Number of Units	141	48
Number of Surveys Issued	80	42
Number of Surveys Returned	37	25
Percent Returned	46.25%	59.52%

The survey is included in the appendix portion of this report. The survey questions were oriented to the following topics:

- How significant are these displays for the residents?
- Do these displays contribute to socialization?
- Do these displays contribute to a positive image of the facility?
- What do these displays communicate to others?

Survey data was entered into a computer database and coded. Open ended question responses were grouped into themes and counted. Statistics from the survey data were generated using the statistical analysis program SPSS.

Participant Observation

Spending time in the four different settings helped to establish rapport, build trust and provided numerous opportunities for cross-checking data. While visiting both communities, informal interviews were also conducted with residents and staff about the use of the unit's edge. These encounters often clarified issues or provided more information to be followed up on during the indepth interviews.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

This exploratory study used multiple methods to answer the research questions. The following table shows the relationship between the methods and the primary research questions.

**TABLE EIGHT
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS**

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Photographic Data</i>	<i>Resident Interviews</i>	<i>Participant Observation</i>	<i>Survey</i>
How are unit edges being used?	Items used	Resident attitudes Relationship between items and life history	Resident attitudes Staff attitudes	Resident attitudes
What influences the use of these edges?	Architectural impact	Resident attitudes	Administrative attitudes	Resident attitudes and patterns
What messages are the use of these edges conveying?	Use patterns	Resident attitudes and patterns	Resident attitudes	Resident attitudes
Does the use of these edges affect residents' perceptions of the setting?		Resident attitudes	Resident and Staff Observations	Residents attitudes
Does the use of these edges influence socialization?	Similarities and differences	Resident attitudes	Resident and Staff Observations	Resident attitudes and patterns