

# **Dorm Drama: An Analysis of First-Year Roommate Relationships at St. Olaf College**

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## **Abstract**

To better understand the dynamics of first year roommate relationships at St. Olaf College, we interviewed thirteen first year students about their roommate experiences. In our analysis, seven common conflict themes emerged on the private level. They include: appealing alternative roommates, living habits, significant others, daily schedules, disrespect of property, disrespect of person, and personality and values. On an institutional level, Residence Life has several methods of preventing and addressing these conflicts. While these methods are generally effective, we recommend that improvements be made to the Housing Preference Form, the Roommate Contract, and Roommate Mediation to address the "public issue" of roommate conflict.

# **Dorm Drama: An Analysis of First Year Roommate Relationships at St. Olaf College**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Abstract**

To better understand the dynamics of first year roommate relationships at St. Olaf College, we interviewed thirteen first year students about their roommate experiences. In our analysis, seven common conflict themes emerged on the private level. They include: appealing alternative roommates, living habits, significant others, daily schedules, disrespect of property, disrespect of person, and personality and values. On an institutional level, Residence Life has several methods of preventing and addressing these conflicts. While these methods are generally effective, we recommend that improvements be made to the Housing Preference Form, the Roommate Contract, and Roommate Mediation to address the "public issue" of roommate conflict.

- To frame our analysis, we employed C. Wright Mills' theory of "private troubles, public issues," W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas' symbolic interactionist theory, reciprocity theory, and Erving Goffman's "dramaturgy."
- We used a semi-structured interview protocol to obtain our data. We interviewed thirteen first year students, nine of which had switched roommates, and four of which were still living with their original roommate.
- The seven common conflict themes:
  - Appealing Alternative Roommates: First years may be lured by the opportunity to live with a friend, especially when they are not completely satisfied with their current roommate.

- Living Habits: Students may be irritated or feel disrespected by their roommate's lack of cleanliness, organization, or hygiene.
- Significant Others: The presence of a boyfriend or girlfriend can create awkward situations for the roommate.
- Daily Schedules: Roommates whose schedules are in opposition may find it difficult to sleep, study, or socialize in the room.
- Disrespect of Property: Sharing and using possessions can create conflict and a feeling of disrespect.
- Disrespect of Person: Generally as a result of other conflict, personal disrespect in the form of cursing, yelling, and arguing creates further problems.
- Personality and Values: Roommates with drastically different personalities and values may find it difficult to find a common ground of respect and understanding.
- Institutional Improvements:
  - We suggest that the Housing Preference Form be expanded to include a brief statement by incoming students allowing them to indicate any strong preferences or desires not covered by other questions.
  - The Roommate Contract could be improved with greater encouragement to fill it out, a section about consequences for contract violation, a less legalistic title, and a review with Junior Counselors after Fall Break.
  - Roommate mediation by the Junior Counselors should be de-stigmatized and encouraged as a first step, instead of a last resort.
- Due to current American values, we believe that there is always the potential for conflict in roommate relationships, but that conflict does not necessarily have to end with failure.

For most young people, going to college means navigating an entirely new and possibly strange relationship: that of the college roommate. Many people have great experiences with their roommates; in fact, some share the "best times of their lives" with their roommates or become lifelong friends. Speak to any college student, however, and she will be able to relate at least one story of a horrible roommate. The roommate relationship and situation can be awkward, uncomfortable, or downright terrible. This possibility is commonly acknowledged among students, as we can see from the social commentary that comes up on our own St. Olaf campus. There is a satirical, student-run webpage, "Olevillains.com," that publishes a variety of comical and fictional stories that parody life at St. Olaf College. One feature on this website is "My Shitty Roomie." These articles consist of outrageous stories about some of the ways a roommate can complicate life. While not strictly true, these stories are exaggerations of real situations. One writer tells of her disgust upon repeatedly discovering her roommate's dirty underwear on the floor. While the roommate may see no problem with leaving her clothes strewn about the room, the author finds this completely disrespectful of their shared space.

These roommate issues that we, as college students, have observed in our daily lives led to our guiding research question: why do some roommate relationships work while others fail to make it through the school year? Our research addresses various aspects of first year roommate relationships at St. Olaf College.

### **Setting and Community**

St. Olaf College is a private liberal arts college located in Northfield, Minnesota. The college was founded in 1874 and is located 35 miles from the Twin Cities. The college is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and identifies strongly with its Norwegian heritage. 3,040 students attend St. Olaf. 55% of students are female, and 45% of students are male. The college

has a selective admissions process, with an average high school GPA of 3.65 among incoming students. 85% of incoming students were in the top 25% of their high school class. The comprehensive fee, including tuition, room, and board, for attendance at St. Olaf College in the 2007-2008 academic year is \$38,500. The average incoming student received a need-based financial aid package of \$23,700.

St. Olaf College offers 44 academic majors. The average class size is 22 students, and the student-to-faculty ratio is 12.5:1. St. Olaf College is known for its strong natural sciences programs, with many St. Olaf students pursuing biology, chemistry, and physics majors. Many St. Olaf graduates continue their education in graduate programs in mathematics, statistics, medicine, religion, theology, or music. St. Olaf also has a strong music program, with one-third of students participating in music organizations on campus.

St. Olaf College prides itself on its Residence Life program. 94% of students live on campus, and the college maintains a four-year residency requirement for all students. The residency requirement prohibits students from living off-campus without a valid rationale (i.e. married students, fifth-year seniors). There are ten residence halls, five of which house first year students. Three of the residence halls exclusively house first years, while the other two house both first years and upperclassmen.

St. Olaf College and the Office of Residence Life have a variety of policies designed to ensure safety and health in residence halls. The St. Olaf Student Handbook states, " Sharing a room and living in close quarters with other students on a residence hall floor requires compromise and consideration 24 hours a day." Residence Life recognizes that conflicts may arise between roommates, and states that "a dvices and counsel should be sought from the community assistants, junior counselors, resident assistants, student hall coordinators, area coordinators or the residence life office."

In order to ensure an environment of respect and consideration, the inter-visitation policy limits the amount of time that students of different genders may be in one another's rooms and corridors. Men and women are not permitted in one another's rooms or corridors from 1-9 a.m. Monday through Thursday, and 2-9 a.m. Friday and Saturday. The Student Handbook notes, "All residents, including residential life staff, are expected to confront residents whose actions are in conflict with the inter-visitation policy and infringe upon the right to a healthy community."

St. Olaf College prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs on the campus. St. Olaf asserts that the prohibition of the use of these substances will "a) enhance the atmosphere for study, learning, growth, work and wellness; b) support members of the community affected by or concerned with the abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs; c) respect the decisions of those who choose not to use alcohol or illicit drugs; and d) promote a caring environment." Even if a student is legally able to buy and consume alcohol, they are prohibited from possession, consumption, and distribution of alcohol on St. Olaf property. If students are caught violating this policy, disciplinary action will be taken. Upon the first offense, a student may be required to complete an educational program, pay a fine, apologize to those persons they affected, or complete a behavioral contract. Upon a second or a more serious first offense, the student may be required to meet with a Wellness Center advisor, have their parents, academic advisor, or co-curricular directors or coaches informed, or be placed upon probation from the residence hall. Upon a third or a very serious offense, the student may be referred to the dean of students, may be referred for alcohol screening or assessment, be placed on probation from the residence hall, or may be removed from the residence hall altogether.

Life in a first-year residence hall at St. Olaf is, in many ways, similar to that at other universities. There is, however, a distinct flavor to St. Olaf residence halls that reflects both the specific rules and the ideals of the institution. In most cases, first-years are assigned roommates based on the Housing Preference Form that they complete over the summer (see Appendix B). The application,

which we discuss at length below, allows the student to express his needs and desires for how his rooming situation will be.

While each first-year residence hall on campus houses a range of students, they have acquired certain stereotypes. While these stereotypes may not be wholly true, the fact that students perceive these stereotypes makes them important to recognize. Ellingson Hall is perceived as a "nerdy" and quieter residence hall, inhabited by academically focused first-year students. Ellingson Hall houses students in the Great Conversation Program, which is a two-year academic program focused upon classical Western literature. Mohn Hall is perceived as a "party dorm," inhabited by many hockey and football players, as well as upperclassmen. Mohn Hall is perceived as "dirty," and many students tell stories of urine and vomit being found in the elevators after most weekends. Kildahl Hall is perceived as a tight-knit community, with incredibly small rooms. Students believe that residents of Kildahl Hall become "cliquey" as a result of spending time together in the public spaces of the residence hall, in order to avoid spending time in their small rooms. Kildahl residents are perceived as remaining cliquey throughout their college careers. Hoyme Hall is perceived as a "party residence hall." Kittelsby Hall is located on the southwestern corner of campus, and many students perceive it as "far away" or "not worth the walk." Thus, the residents of Kittelsby Hall often become a tight-knit community, and may be perceived as "cliquey." Residence Life tries to dispel these stereotypes, yet they persist because they are defined as real by many students.

According to Pamela McDowell, the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life, roommate assignments are made based upon a Housing Preference Form and several other factors (personal communication, May 2, 2008). Residence Life spends considerable time during the summer matching roommates by hand, and does not rely upon any computer programs to match roommates. Residence Life prioritizes the residence hall in which students prefer to live. After assigning students to their respective residence halls, the Housing Preference Form becomes an important factor (see Appendix B). Pamela McDowell stated that she places in-state students with out-of-state students, and students involved in Great Conversation with students not involved in Great Conversation. She then prioritizes the student's perceived bedtime, in order to match roommates' sleeping schedules. Factors such as alcohol use and cleanliness are secondary. Dean McDowell discussed the difficulties she has placing students who are smokers. The other factors on the Housing Preference Form become important when choosing between several students who responded identically to the items viewed as important by Residence Life.

The residence halls are structured as intentional communities and it is the goal of Residence Life that the halls provide a comfortable, encouraging, and enjoyable place to live. There is a hierarchy within the Residence Life staff. Each hall has an Area Coordinator (AC), which is a full-time staff position. The AC is responsible for most of the happenings in the residence hall, from discipline to event coordinating. All ACs live on campus, either in the first-year hall or in an upperclassman hall. Each hall also has ten to sixteen Junior Counselors (JCs) that live in the residence hall with the first-years and are under the supervision of the AC. While the AC handles the administrative and disciplinary issues in the residence hall, the JCs are responsible for having direct contact with residents. The JCs occupy the roles of counselor, peer, and supervisor. The JCs live in pairs and together each pair is primarily responsible for one corridor of 16-25 residents. There is a JC on duty every night that makes several rounds of the residence hall so as to make sure that students are safe and are following the residence hall policies.

The JCs and AC are also important when it comes to dealing with roommate conflicts. When roommates have a problem, one option is to go talk to their JCs, who can help to mediate the situation. If this does not help resolve the issues, students can go speak with the AC to discuss options for improving the rooming situation. If this does not resolve the conflict, residents are referred to Pamela McDowell, the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life.

## **The Problem**

To fully comprehend the effects that roommate relationships have on both individuals and the St. Olaf community, we turned to C. Wright Mills' integrative theory. C. Wright Mills posits that,

"Personal troubles are those problems that affect an individual and those immediately around him or her [...] Public issues tend to be those that affect large numbers of people, perhaps society as a whole [...] There are various relationships between personal troubles and public issues. For example, widespread personal troubles can become a public issue and a public issue can cause many personal troubles." (Ritzer 2004: 487)

First we will discuss the private troubles that individuals experienced with their roommates. We will later place this in the context of the institution of Residence Life and the public issues that such private troubles pose to St. Olaf College. This framework is important for understanding the relationship between personal roommate relationships and their position in the wider context of St. Olaf College. To examine these private troubles, we will use Reciprocity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism to analyze the lived experience of individual roommates.

Symbolic Interactionist theorists assert that human beings learn the meanings and symbols of their communities through social interaction. The meanings that individuals attribute to social circumstances are critically important, as W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas assert: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas qtd. in Ritzer 2004: 221). The roommate relationship is a real source of anxiety for prospective college students, and thus the roommate situation is defined as real. The consequences of interactions between roommates are viewed as critically important, particularly due to the intimate nature of sharing a room with another individual. For example, Ogletree et al. (2005) found that one-third of college students have experienced conflict, frustration, or guilt with their roommates over cleanliness and housework. This illustrates that even tedious or seemingly meaningless aspects of daily life can take on additional meaning and importance in the context of a roommate relationship. The framework of symbolic interactionism is useful in our analysis of roommate relationships, as it allows for an understanding of how the seeming minutiae of daily life can become critically important when they are a source of conflict between roommates.

In considering roommate relationships, Reciprocity Theories are useful in our analysis. Reciprocity Theories examine the give-and-take of relationships. While much work in this area has considered the social and economic systems of small communities, it is also applicable to the roommate relationship. Bailey and Peoples (1999) discuss two types of reciprocity that occur based upon social distance. Generalized reciprocity normally occurs in family and intimate relationships, and is characterized by "giving without expectation of quick and equivalent return" (97). However, both parties reap long-term benefits from their give-and-take relationship. In functioning roommate relationships, some degree of general reciprocity occurs. Individuals are often willing to compromise or give aid with the assurance that their roommate will be willing to do likewise in the future. Negative reciprocity occurs when "both parties attempt to gain all they can from the exchange while giving up as little as possible" (99). In roommate relationships, this may be characterized by an unwillingness to compromise or a lack of concern for the roommate's feelings and needs.

Erving Goffman is also a symbolic interactionist theorist, and his work focuses upon the idea of "dramaturgy" (Ritzer 2004). Goffman states that human beings perform as actors, with "impression management" being of central interest. When we are acting in a front-stage performance with an audience, we modify our behaviors by examining how our actions will be perceived by the audience. Human beings attempt to present an idealized picture of themselves when they are front-stage, which means that they try to avoid or hide negative aspects and play up positive parts of

themselves. Goffman also discusses a back-stage, which is a place and/or time when a person can relax their impression management tendencies and allow suppressed behaviors to surface. As the front-stage and back-stage are usually adjacent to each other, it is important to keep them separate. This can be extremely difficult when one lives among peers.

Peer groups are one of the most important audiences for adolescents. When they move to college, students no longer have as clear a separation of public and private space and impression management becomes more difficult. This is especially true in the case of roommate relationships. Necessary behaviors that normally take place in private – such as those that accompany sadness, frustration, and anger – may be inhibited in the front-stage setting of the room. The quality of the roommate relationship can determine how comfortable students are in their own rooms. Having a back-stage space, a place to let your hair down and be yourself is important and if you feel close enough or safe enough with your roommate, the room provides this space. However, if you are uncomfortable with your roommate and feel that you must always be impression managing, your own life and your relationship with your roommate can become a struggle.

### **Methodology**

After choosing first-year roommate relationships as our topic of study, we began to complete the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application. We decided to seek an intermediate level of review for our project. Our project posed no greater than minimal risk to participants. We obtained intermediate IRB Approval.

In order to conduct our study, we needed access to confidential information. We met with the Director of Residence Life, Pamela McDowell. She agreed to contact via email first-year students who had switched roommates. We composed an email to potential participants, describing the nature of our research, giving a preliminary explanation of the method and confidential nature of the study. The email instructed potential participants to contact us to set up a time to meet for an interview. We accepted all participants who contacted us. We hoped that by sending out an email to all students who had switched roommates, we would gain a more representative sample of students than if we had contacted only students that we personally knew who had switched. The email was sent only to students who had moved out of their rooms, and was not sent to students who remained in the room. We received eight responses to this email.

We later attempted to contact roommates who remained in their rooms, and this yielded one additional participant. Having only nine participants seemed limited, so we decided to contact personal first-year acquaintances who had positive roommate experiences. This yielded four additional participants. We had a total sample of thirteen participants.

After receiving an email indicating a willingness to participate, we responded to each participant and set up a convenient time to meet to conduct a one-on-one interview. Participants were interviewed in the Library, in Residence Hall lounges, in the participant's room, in the room of one of the researchers, or in a lounge in Buntrock Commons. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour. The researchers obtained verbal informed consent. Participants were reminded that they were free to refuse to answer any question, and that their responses would be kept confidential.

The interview was conducted using a semi-formal questionnaire technique. Questions were generally asked in a specified order, though the wording of questions was flexible. The interview was divided into six sections: Demographics, Expectations about College, Initial Impressions of the Roommate, Living Conditions, the Switching Process, and Present Living Conditions (see Appendix A). Researchers encouraged participants to tell anecdotes and stories, and reminded participants

that all information they could provide would be useful. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were given information about available resources if they were upset as a result of discussing their roommate relationship.

At the conclusion of our study, we had the opportunity to interview Pamela McDowell, the Director of Residence Life and an Associate Dean of Students. We used a semi-formal questionnaire technique. We asked Dean McDowell questions regarding her expectations of roommate relationships, factors leading to roommate switches, and the manner in which Residence Life matches first-year roommates.

Our study is strengthened by our semi-structured questionnaire, which allowed us to be flexible in order to ask follow-up questions and probe for more depth. Our interview protocol remained consistent throughout our study, which ensured that we would obtain similar data from each participant in order to compare our participants to one another. Our experience as Junior Counselors means that we are familiar with Residence Life, first-year students, and living in residence halls. We were therefore able to anticipate many of the conflicts that would arise between roommates. This meant that our protocol was thorough and did not require modification during the course of our research. The confidential nature of our data collection allowed participants to feel comfortable sharing the intimate details of their experiences.

Our study was limited by our small sample size, which may not reflect the diversity of the first-year class. We were unable to interview both individuals of a roommate pair, which means that we only heard one side of the story. Pamela McDowell said that, when dealing with roommates, it is important to refrain from making a judgment based on only one side of the story. While we are able to identify many sources of roommate conflict, we cannot be certain that we completely comprehend all facets of the situations. Our sample may have been biased by the self-selective nature of our recruitment method. It is possible that those who responded to our invitation experienced extreme situations or were very emotionally affected, and thus desired a space to discuss their experience. Additionally, despite our assurances that we were not representing Residence Life or acting in our JC capacity, some participants may have chosen to omit certain aspects of their roommate conflict. In particular, they may have been reluctant to share details about alcohol use or other policy violations. These factors limit our ability to generalize our findings beyond St. Olaf College and beyond the first-year class.

## **Findings**

To begin our analysis, we will examine the private troubles experienced by our participants, and we will later seek to connect these to the public issues that result, as C. Wright Mills theorized. We have identified seven categories of primary issues that roommates encounter. We will examine how our participants dealt with these issues, and how these issues may have contributed to roommate switching. The seven categories include: appealing alternative roommates, living habits, significant others, daily schedules, disrespect of property, disrespect of person, and personality and values.

### *Appealing Alternative Roommates*

While some individuals seek to switch roommates due to continued conflict and problems, some first-year students are drawn away from their initial roommate by the availability of an appealing alternative roommate.

For example, Betty knew from her first interaction with her roommate that they would not be best friends. Betty described herself as a "laid back, not high stress, go with the flow" young woman. In contrast, her roommate was "high strung." Over Christmas break, Betty was contacted by one of her friends, Celia, in her corridor. Celia wanted Betty to move in with her, so that Celia's roommate could move out. Celia and her roommate were experiencing conflict, and both wanted to change their living situation. Betty was excited to help Celia change her negative living situation, and was happy to move into a room with a friend. She and Celia rearranged their room to create shared spaces, and now share everything from groceries to clothes. Betty reports that she "lives with one of her best friends" and is happy with the switch, though she maintains that being best friends with your roommate is not important for successful residence hall living.

Susan was similarly drawn by the attraction of living with a friend. Susan said that she knew from viewing her roommate's Facebook profile that they would not be best friends. Susan and her roommate did not spend time together outside of the room, but they experienced no conflict during the time they shared a room. After Thanksgiving break, Susan's friend, Lucy, began to live by herself after her roommate left. By the end of interim, Lucy offered to share her room with Susan. Susan loves living with Lucy, and they have created shared space in their room. While Susan reports that she and Lucy live separate lives, they are also good friends. Susan and her first roommate are still amiable, and will stop into each other's room occasionally. Susan reports that roommates are "better if you know each other, or get along, and have something in common even if you are not best friends." However, Susan also maintains, "It is important to have some distance, have separate lives so you don't get sick of each other." Susan believes that any roommates can live well together, as long as they both respect one another.

Based upon the attractiveness of living with a friend, it is important to consider Reciprocity Theory. First-years may be attracted to the possibility of living with a friend, because they believe that friends will be more likely to engage in generalized reciprocity. As Bailey and Peoples (1999) note, generalized reciprocity is characterized by "giving without expectation of quick and equivalent return" (97). In a roommate relationship based on friendship, first-years may have more confidence that their roommate will be willing to compromise, share belongings, and give aid. This is evident in both Susan and Betty's experience, as they were comfortable creating shared space with their new roommates.

First-years may also be drawn to living with a friend due to their desire to have a "back-stage" space in their room, as Erving Goffman would assert. A back-stage is a place and/or time when a person can relax their impression management tendencies. First-year students may be drawn to living with friends, as they feel less of a need to impression-manage when they are with close friends. As neither Susan nor Betty were friends with their first roommates, they may have felt a greater need to impression manage in their rooms. They may have been uncomfortable demonstrating frustration, sadness, anger, or excitement freely. Thus, when the possibility of living with a friend emerged, they were drawn to the comfort of having a room in which they could uncover their backstage behaviors.

#### *Living Habits: Cleanliness, Temperature, and Room Set-Up*

In any rooming situation, decisions must be made about how the physical room will be maintained. In residence halls, this includes the set-up of furniture, the temperature, organization, and general cleanliness.

For example, Jack became quite frustrated with his roommate's lack of cleanliness. He was disgusted by his roommate's habit of walking into the room with muddy shoes and tracking dirt all over the floor. Jack's roommate also enjoyed break dancing, and would leave sweat all over the

floor. Further, Jack's roommate was a very messy eater, and Jack said, "I was worried that we would get rats from all the crumbs." Jack's roommate would leave his possessions all over the floor, and Jack reported that his roommate's possessions occupied two-thirds of the room. Jack said, "My roommate's stuff began to swallow my side." Jack and his roommate also disagreed over the temperature of their room. Jack reported that his roommate would turn the heat very high, and when Jack entered he room he could "feel his lips peeling off." They eventually came to a compromise about the heat, and both abided by this compromise.

Jessica and her roommate conflicted over the cleanliness and temperature of the room. Jessica said, "Her half was a mess, you couldn't walk in it. It bothered me immensely." Jessica also reported that her roommate "turned the heat up high." Jessica preferred being comfortable or even cold, and said, "It was a hotly debated issue in our room." Jessica and her roommate also disagreed over the set-up of their room. At the beginning of the year, their room was divided equally into two separate sides. Jessica and her roommate eventually rearranged their room, placing Jessica closer to the door and creating more shared space. Jessica did not like this and requested that they change it back, but her roommate refused.

Nick and his roommate experienced conflict over the cleanliness of their room. Nick reported that his roommate was quite messy, and emptied his pocket lint on the couch, and left "moldy pizza under his bed." Nick's friends called his roommate's side "the vortex of doom." Nick reported that there was a line of dust and dirt down the middle of the room, dividing Nick's cleanliness and his roommate's dirtiness. Nick was also disgusted by his roommate's hygiene, and even found it necessary one night to "Febreze" his roommate while he was sleeping.

Based upon these examples, we propose using Goffman's theory to analyze how defining the room as "front-stage" or "back-stage," becomes important when deciding how the room should be kept and set-up. While an individual may feel that their room should be private space where they can leave their clothes or food wherever they please, their roommate may see the area as too public for this type of housekeeping. When sharing a room with another individual, the room takes on a liminal state between public and private space, thus the room is neither fully "front-stage" nor fully "back-stage." Additionally, some people have personal preferences about or issues with cleanliness. Many people find it hard to function in extremely messy areas and most people would agree that moldy food and unpleasant odors make for an uncomfortable living situation. Treatment of the room is an issue of both personal preference and of consideration of others. A student may not be overly concerned with cleanliness, but if she knows that her roommate is, she may want to make an effort to keep her space a bit neater. Generalized reciprocity is also implicated, as individuals may believe that if they are considerate in housekeeping, then their roommate will afford them the same consideration. When this fails to occur, housekeeping becomes a source of conflict between roommates. One individual may feel that they are in a state of negative reciprocity, in which their roommate is taking advantage of their respect and courteousness, while they receive nothing in return.

### *Significant Others*

Another issue that arises between roommates is the use of the room in terms of who gets to be there and when. One of the most difficult and potentially awkward situations for roommates can be that of dealing with significant others. Many St. Olaf students are in relationships with people on or off campus. Specifically in cases where the significant other does not live on campus, visiting boyfriends or girlfriends can become a problem. While technically inter-visitation is not allowed after particular hours, this rule is frequently broken. Sometimes a student doesn't mind if the roommate's boyfriend or girlfriend comes to stay for a weekend but depending on the frequency and duration of his or her stay, visits can become a serious issue. Not everyone is comfortable having a member of

the opposite sex sleep in the same room and the intimacy desired by an individual and her significant other can make the roommate feel like she is intruding just by being in her own room. The term 'sexile' is commonly used to refer to the exiling of a roommate from his or her room because the roommate and significant other are using the room for private purposes. While many roommates are able to deal with this from time to time, extended or frequent sexiling can put a real strain on the roommate. In our study females had more problems with a boyfriend's presence in the room. We assert that social norms of female modesty may be violated by the presence of a male in the room. While males may also have this problem, it seems to be brought up less. Pamela McDowell suggests that this is because male students feel that it is less acceptable to tell on their roommates or to admit that they are bothered by having a female stay in their room.

Jennifer identified the boyfriend issue as one of the primary difficulties in her roommate relationship. "Originally she asked me if it was okay [to have her boyfriend visit] and I agreed with some conditions. I thought it'd be once in a while. He began visiting a lot more, staying the whole weekend." Jennifer found that her initial agreement to allow the boyfriend to come made it hard to discuss her concerns with her roommate. The situation became critical later in the semester. She said, "One weekend she told me he wasn't coming but then he showed up at 4 in the morning. I was upset because I didn't want to stay there but didn't have anywhere to go." Jennifer says that this incident is what finally prompted her to go to her AC to ask about switching roommates. In this instance, Jennifer did not confront her roommate about her frustrations. However, there are examples of roommates discussing the issue and resolving the problem.

Prior to coming to St. Olaf, Esther was concerned about the possibility of having a roommate whose boyfriend would constantly be in their room. One evening, Esther was upset to find her roommate's boyfriend spending the night. Esther had to get ready for class in the bathroom the following morning, and was upset by this inconvenience. Esther talked to her roommate about her discomfort, and her roommate apologized. They agreed to a general rule of "no boys allowed" overnight. If either Esther or her roommate really wants someone to stay overnight, they must ask permission ahead of time.

This issue could be another instance of the difficulties with Goffman's "front-stage" versus "back-stage" in the room. With the addition of a significant other to the room, "back-stage" behaviors may be inhibited, which could cause frustration.

### *Schedule*

The schedules of all roommates are likely to conflict in some way at one point or another. Problems may arise over who is in the room when or what time individuals go to bed or get up. McDowell says that scheduling is one of the main reasons for which students request a roommate switch. Although the Housing Preference Form has students indicate when they prefer to go to bed, the time that students indicate on the form may change when they actually get to school. A student may hope or believe that he will go to bed between 10:30 and 11:30pm each night, but once he gets to college he may find that he stays up much later. This can be hard for roommates who want to go to bed earlier. Sleep is a prized commodity in college, since many students are extremely busy. Trying to sleep while your roommate is up in the room can be difficult, especially for people who need dark and quiet for sleeping. While it seems reasonable to expect the student who is staying up later or getting up earlier to be quiet, having to constantly do work or get ready quietly in the dark can be very frustrating. Research has also suggested that people who have different sleep schedules are likely to have other personality differences. Watt (1982) found that circadian rhythms can affect roommate relationships. Roommates who identified themselves as 'morning people' were likely to take a more negative view of time wasting and were more likely to exhibit achievement tendency. Additionally, roommates whose circadian rhythms differ in regards to

morning activity also tended to have more negative evaluations of the roommate relationship. We observed several scheduling issues in our data.

Diana described the difficulties she and her roommate had, saying, "I got up earlier, she went to bed later. That was one of the reasons we switched." Diana and her roommate also had a major argument over sleep schedules that precipitated the move-out. Both girls had been out late the night before. Diana didn't have class until later the next day but her roommate had a 9 o'clock class. Diana relates the story: "Her alarm went off in the morning and kept going off so I picked it up and set it on her bed. She thought I turned it off and she thought I was trying to make her miss her class. She was furious and locked me out of the room that night. I didn't sleep in the room for the rest of the week." Diana was obviously frustrated that her roommate's alarm woke her up before she needed to get up. This one incident may have escalated as a result of built up frustration on both sides.

Jessica and her roommate had schedule problems that manifested themselves in two ways. The first was that Jessica's roommate was almost always in the room. "We both had class in the morning and would come back for one hour in between," Jessica said, "In the afternoon I worked and she had one class. She'd be in there when I got back. I'd go out to dinner or whatever for the night and generally she'd be in. There were not many instances when I'd have the room to myself." Jessica also said that she rarely had friends over because her roommate was always around. She found the lack of private time and space to be frustrating and stressful. There were also problems with bedtimes and morning routines. "She would set her alarm an hour and a half before class, and she usually had four or five alarms. I got up sometime in the middle of that," explained Jessica. Jessica's roommate stayed up much later. She said there were many arguments about this and described one such argument: "I need it really dark and quiet to sleep. I had gone to bed and she had our lamp on. One of the lights was shining on my bed so I twisted the lamp away from me. She freaked out and said, "Go to fucking sleep, it's not that bad. Stop being a fucking baby." Jessica was hurt and frustrated by both the verbal response and her roommate's lack of consideration.

Jack was bothered by his roommate's erratic schedule. His roommate would sleep as late as he possibly could and would stay up very late, often until 2:00 a.m. He would have the lights on in the room, and this would wake up Jack. Jack felt overtired and "kind of sick" most of the time. Jack finally realized how unhealthy his living situation was, and believed that he needed to sleep more and stick to a regular schedule. Jack also believes that it is inconsiderate for a roommate to sleep very late, as Jack believes that academic studies should be a priority. Since Jack's roommate would sleep so late, Jack felt that he couldn't study in his room for fear that he would disturb his roommate. Jack asserted that after 10 a.m. on weekdays, both roommates should be awake.

Nick and his roommate's main source of conflict was their vastly different daily schedules. Nick's roommate would set his alarm for 6:30 a.m., and then hit his snooze button 7-12 times. Eventually, Nick's roommate adhered to a strange sleep schedule. He would often miss class, and would sleep between 3:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. He would then wake up and come in and out of the room, disturbing Nick's sleep. Nick's roommate would stay awake until 6:00 a.m. Nick could never sleep soundly because of his roommate's sleeping habits. His athletic performance suffered and he felt sick due to lack of sleep.

Clearly, it can be difficult to work out schedules of studying, socializing and sleeping in the dorm room. Having similar schedules certainly can be helpful. Tim, who still lives with his initial roommate, said that he and his roommate had schedules that worked really well together. "We're both gone from 8 to 5 or 6 everyday. I'm around a bit more in the afternoon and he's around more in the evenings. He usually goes to bed between 12-1 a.m. and I go to bed between 1-2 a.m.," Tim said. Tim and his roommate also have mutual friends that frequent the room, explaining, "We really have an open door. Lots of people come in to do homework but end up hanging out and relaxing. In the winter it was really a place to hang out."

As we have seen, other conflicts appear to arise from schedule issues. The frustration of scheduling can be a catalyst for arguments and other forms of disrespect. As W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas assert, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas qtd. in Ritzer 2004: 221). If an individual's roommate is frequently disrespectful of the individual's schedule, the consequences of small actions like leaving lights on become increasingly real and negative.

### *Disrespect of Property*

Sharing and using one another's possessions can cause conflict due to miscommunication and assumptions between roommates. For some roommates, this becomes a source of continued, unresolved conflict leading to the dissolution of the relationship. For other roommates, compromise can be reached and the relationship can be salvaged.

For Jack and his roommate, compromise over sharing possessions failed repeatedly. During their first week as roommates, Jack's roommate decided to use Jack's tape to put posters up around the residence hall. Jack asked his roommate to refrain from using his possessions without first asking. His roommate agreed to this compromise. Jack's roommate later ate an entire box of Jack's granola bars and would often help himself to Jack's food. Jack's roommate would also use Jack's computer without asking, and one afternoon he changed Jack's desktop screen because he felt it was too boring. Jack began to hide his possessions from his roommate and felt that his roommate never abided by the agreements they made with regards to sharing possessions.

Nick and his roommate agreed at the beginning of the year that they would share possessions, as long as they asked first. The roommate would borrow Nick's belongings without asking. Nick would ask his roommate about his possessions, and his roommate would say that he hadn't used anything. When Nick's roommate moved out, Nick found many of his belongings in his roommate's desk drawers.

Kevin had several problems with his roommate using and abusing his property. Kevin's roommate, Eric, and Eric's friends were often in the room. Kevin came back a few times to discover that someone had tried to log onto his computer but Eric denied that anyone had done so. After Kevin had spoken to Eric and his friends about not drinking alcohol in the room one night, he left and came back to find alcohol spilled on some of his books and notebooks. A lot of his food had also been eaten. Kevin reported this and a few days later his parents came and helped him move into Mohn to avoid further damage of Kevin's belongings. Kevin now lives in a different room on the same corridor and still experiences property and personal disrespect in the form of rude messages on his whiteboard and inappropriate pranks.

While Rachel and her roommate still live together, they have conflicted over sharing possessions. At the beginning of the year, Rachel's roommate ate all of Rachel's food without asking. Rachel began to hide her food in her desk drawers to prevent her roommate from eating it. While Rachel still hides some of her food, she also has learned to label her food with a post-it note, stating "Please do not eat without asking." Rachel reports that this has resolved this source of conflict and that she and her roommate now share possessions more freely. Rachel's roommate even gave Rachel a new light bulb when hers burnt out.

Similar to Rachel and her roommate, Esther and her roommate continue to live together despite conflict over sharing possessions. Esther's roommate used Esther's computer at the beginning of the year, as she did not have a computer of her own. Esther accepted that her roommate needed a computer, but was not particularly happy with having to share her own. Esther was particularly upset when her roommate took Esther's computer to the laundry room to use it. Esther was also

upset when her roommate printed a ten-page paper on Esther's printer. Esther talked to her roommate about these incidents, and told her roommate to ask before using her possessions. Esther's roommate agreed and apologized.

Negative reciprocity characterizes these roommate relationships. Nick, Kevin, and Jack felt that their roommates were attempting to gain from their relationship without giving anything in return (Bailey & Peoples 1999). Nick, Kevin, and Jack felt that they were being used for their possessions and neither reported any reciprocal offers of sharing of possessions from their roommates. It is important to note that this disrespect of property occurred within the context of a variety of other conflicts for both Nick and Jack. Thus, this disrespect of possessions acquired particular meaning, as W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas would assert. As Kevin, Nick, and Jack felt disrespected by their roommates in other regards, their roommates' use of their possessions acquired particular meaning and had a particular consequence. The use of their possessions meant that their roommate did not respect them and did not take their feelings into consideration. Further erosion of trust between roommates was a consequence of this disrespect.

For Rachel and Esther, their roommates' disrespect of their property occurred in the context of functioning roommate relationships based on general respect and consideration. Rachel and Esther eventually learned that their roommates would also share their possessions and generalized reciprocity occurred. Since Rachel, Esther, and their roommates respected one another, this disrespect of property did not acquire any particular negative meaning or consequences.

#### *Disrespect of Person*

While some roommate problems revolve around schedules or possessions, others occur due to basic disrespect of the individual. This disrespect may be in the form of yelling, cursing, or lying. Sometimes this occurs during arguments about other issues, such as scheduling, as we saw in the example above where Jessica's roommate swore at her for moving the lamp. Other times, this disrespect happens on a regular basis and is the cause of arguments. Our interviews revealed several instances of disrespect of person. We've already mentioned the abusive language that Jessica experienced. During the alarm incident, Diana's roommate also became furious and yelled at Diana. In addition, Kevin, Jack, Jean, and Rachel all experienced personal disrespect.

Kevin's roommate, as we've discussed, allowed his friends to vandalize Kevin's possessions and eat Kevin's food. When Kevin directly asked his roommate about it, his roommate continually lied, saying "I don't know," when Kevin asked him how things had happened. They also got into a huge fight after Kevin reported his roommate for excessive drinking in the room. According to Kevin, his roommate kept lying and the argument turned into a yelling match such that a JC came to find out what was going on.

Jack's roommate began to ask Jack very intrusive questions about his sexual history and sex life. Jack's roommate would ask Jack about the sexual activity that Jack and his girlfriend engaged in. Jack's roommate would repeatedly ask him about what he used to masturbate. Jack remembers his roommate watching pornographic material while Jack was trying to sleep. He would pretend not to hear the pornographic material, but his roommate's headphones were very loud. One day when Jack returned from class, he opened the door to find his roommate naked on the ground and Jack believes he was masturbating. Jack believed that his roommate's questions were meant to be provocative and aggravating, though his roommate seemed to believe that he was helping Jack to open up about his sexuality. Jack felt personally violated and disrespected by his roommate's intrusive questions and porn-watching habits.

Jean's main source of conflict and discontent was her roommate's lying. Jean believes that her roommate, Stephanie, is a compulsive liar. Stephanie told Jean that her best friend had died and left her baby for her to care for. Stephanie set Jean up with one of her friends who went to the University of Minnesota. Jean received emails from this young man and even received flowers from him. Stephanie kept setting up times for them to meet, but the young man would never show up. Jean then received an email from a website entitled "willselfdestruct.com," which allows users to send anonymous emails that will self-destruct after read. The email stated, "The young man is a lie. Thought you should know." Stephanie then informed Jean that the picture she had shown her of the young man was not actually him. Jean called her roommate and "chewed her out for 2 hours." Stephanie wrote her a note apologizing, and stating that she had leukemia and had six months to live. Jean had a difficult time believing that her roommate was ill. Jean was furious with her roommate's continued lies and decided that she needed to find a new roommate.

Rachel felt disrespected by her roommate's comments and felt that her roommate was mean and judgmental. Rachel's roommate would call her mother while they were walking back from dinner, thereby ignoring Rachel. One evening during dinner, Rachel's roommate got up as if she was going to leave, so Rachel followed suit. Rachel's roommate then sat back down, and made fun of Rachel for being a follower. Rachel was hurt by these comments, but never told her roommate about her feelings.

The problem of disrespect of person is rarely the only problem that the roommates are experiencing. Rather, it seems to be a way in which roommates try to make known their frustrations. However, bringing up relationship issues in this manner achieves the opposite of resolution. Instead of being open to dialogue, a verbally assaulted individual will become more defensive and unwilling to help fix the situation. We can use part of Homans' Exchange Theory to understand why some of these personal disrespects occur. According to Homans' Aggression-Approval Proposition, "When a person's action does not receive the reward he expected, or receives punishment that he did not expect, he will be angry; he becomes more likely to perform aggressive behavior, and the results of such behavior become more valuable to him," (Homans qtd. in Ritzer 2004: 274). In our examples, one roommate feels that they are not receiving the respect or consideration that they deserve and, as a result, may become angry. This anger may be manifested in further personal disrespect, which may be gratifying to the individual.

### *Personality and Values*

While most roommates will encounter conflict from time to time, some first-year roommates may find that their personalities and values are so fundamentally different that they cannot be comfortable living together or cannot respect one another.

At their first corridor meeting during Move-In Day, Jack became very embarrassed by his roommate's sexist and racist jokes. He remembers worrying that other people would believe that he was friends with his roommate, and was therefore similar to his roommate. Jack reported that he and his roommate had different political and religious backgrounds. His roommate was politically and religiously conservative, while Jack tends to be more liberal politically and religiously. Jack believes that his roommate's parents asserted control over his political and religious views. Jack reported that his roommate was very homophobic. He thought that his roommate had "rude and ignorant views on those that were different from him" and was "wrong and backwards in his thinking." Jack felt that he had a responsibility to educate his roommate. He was appalled by many of his roommate's values and opinions, and this became a source of frustration for Jack. Jack became annoyed by constantly listening to views that he considered disrespectful and narrow-minded.

While Jean's main rationale for switching roommates was her roommate's lying, she and her roommate also had different values and personalities. Jean describes herself as "aggressive" and "confident" with "high expectations for herself." In contrast, Jean describes her roommate as "aloof," "clingy," "lost," and "confused about who she is." Jean stated that it's important to not "sacrifice who you are in order to not cause waves." Jean became frustrated by her roommate's lack of ambition and inability to make decisions. Jean prides herself on her passion for dance, and her ability to take good care of herself physically and mentally. Jean became quite annoyed with her roommate's habit of lying, and prides herself on her honesty and ability to express herself. Her roommate's lack of communication abilities and secrecy became a source of conflict.

Jennifer felt that her roommate had a more assertive personality compared to her own non-confrontational personality. This made for difficulties because Jennifer had trouble talking about her frustrations to her roommate. "If we'd get into a discussion about anything controversial, she'd try to push her opinion more than I did, and I think some of our conflicts came from me avoiding confrontation some times. She was aware that she was more assertive and used this to her advantage," Jennifer said.

Diana also felt that her and her roommate's personalities clashed: "She is very clean, precise, nit-picky. She spends an hour getting ready in the morning - I take 15 minutes. She's very pink and I'm not. She's very conservative, I'm not." Diana also felt that having similar personalities was one of the most important aspects of a successful rooming situation, saying, "if one [roommate] is more uptight and one is more liberal - that's the biggest difference."

In contrast to these examples, Teresa and Rachel shared Christian values, and this became the basis for their successful roommate relationship. Teresa remembers receiving a letter from Rachel over the summer and was pleased to find that Rachel shared her Christian beliefs. Rachel and Teresa did not fill out the Roommate Contract, as they thought that their Christian values would help them to work together and compromise without the aid of an official document. Both Teresa and Rachel were relieved to find that they shared similar values, and both reported that they felt it would be difficult to live with someone who did not share their Christian values. They both sought a Christian roommate for their sophomore year. While Teresa and Rachel did experience conflict over sharing possessions and had some difficulty communicating, they shared similar histories and had an initial level of respect for one another that was maintained throughout the year.

When roommates have personalities and values that differ greatly, it may be more difficult to work through any conflict. The individuals may not feel that they can be their true selves in the room, and thus the room is not a "back-stage." As Goffman asserts, we each have a "looking-glass self," which is how we imagine that we appear to others, and how we imagine we are judged by others (Ritzer 2004). When roommates differ in their personalities and values, they may believe that their roommate will judge them negatively. This makes it more difficult to resolve conflict and compromise over issues of daily living. When roommates share in their values and personalities, a level of respect and understanding underlies all of their interactions. They are more comfortable being their true selves and the room becomes a "back-stage." Conflicts are easier to resolve as a result of shared experiences and shared values.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

From the interviews, it is obvious that rooming with another individual can cause many "private troubles" that individuals must deal with in some fashion. However, due to the fact that these troubles, though differing in extremity, are common on the campus, we can also examine them as "public issues." The cultural context of St. Olaf College, including the satirical feature in "Olevillains.com," and the use of phrases like "sexiling," illustrates the prevalence of these issues.

Residence Life has to view roommate situations on an institutional level, as well as on an individual level. The Housing Application Form, the Roommate Contract, and the position of JC have been instituted to help prevent and mediate roommate conflict. While these are effective in many respects, our data have suggested several aspects which could be improved on the macro-level.

At the conclusion of our interviews, we asked participants to list characteristics of a good roommate and recommendations they would make to incoming first-year students. These questions elicited common themes that illustrate how our research could be used to improve roommate relationships and improve the manner in which Residence Life handles roommate relationships. Respectfulness, conscientiousness, and willingness to compromise were the three most common descriptions of good roommates. Most of our participants also noted that being "best friends" with your roommate is not imperative for a good roommate relationship. As Jennifer said, "You should be aware of the other person and be willing to live differently than you would if you were by yourself. You have to be willing to change some of your habits to make them more compatible with the other person's." Several of our participants commented on the importance of discussing issues openly as they arise. Nick wished he had talked about potential issues at the beginning of the year. He suggested that individuals should, "Sit down and force [themselves] to talk to [their] roommate, even though it's awkward."

As Junior Counselors, we are particularly interested in how Residence Life can prevent and address roommate conflict. While Pamela McDowell explains that the Housing Preference Form is shorter than those from other colleges and universities, she asserts that St. Olaf's method remains effective (see Appendix B). Dean McDowell noted that Residence Life matches roommates by hand while other colleges and universities use computer programs to match roommates based upon extensive questionnaires. In contrast to Dean McDowell's satisfaction with the Housing Preference Form, many of our participants felt that the form was too brief to effectively match roommates. Jack said, "There is no way that you can create an accurate representation of a person in 10 questions." We assert that the main problem with the Housing Preference Form is not its brevity, but is the fact that it asks high school students to imagine how they *will* live in a residence hall based upon how they *currently* live at home. While we do not deny that living with someone who differs from oneself is a valuable learning experience, we believe that Residence Life could allow students to write a brief response about factors that they believe are important, or were not asked about in the form. This could be achieved by allowing students to add a limited statement of 20-30 words indicating a strong and specific preference.

Only three of our thirteen participants filled out the Roommate Contract at the beginning of the year. Pamela McDowell stated that she believed that the Roommate Contract "can force a conversation" about potential issues. Many of our participants stated that they did not fill out the contract because they believed that they would get along and be able to solve conflicts on their own. This may illustrate the adolescents' need to assert their independence, and live without rules or constraints. This may be a part of the experience of beginning college, and breaking away from the rules that they lived with at home. Additionally, roommates may feel awkward discussing potential sources of disagreement. Individuals may have a "romanticized" view of what college and their roommate will be like, and may not want to realize that all relationships require work and compromise. St. Olaf promotes a general culture of effortless success in which students are expected to juggle academics, athletics, music, and social obligations with ease. The roommate relationship may also be vulnerable to this cultural construct.

Furthermore, students may want to avoid the "bureaucratization" of their roommate relationship that they perceive might occur by completing a roommate contract. The Roommate Contract may be a result of the reflexivity characteristic of modern life, according to Giddens (Ritzer 2004). Giddens states, "Social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices" (Giddens qtd. in Ritzer 2004: 417). The fact that Residence Life has taken note of common issues and created an institutionalized preventative contract

illustrates reflexivity. By discussing how the relationship is going to be, roommates alter what their relationship is. This can be uncomfortable, especially in a very new relationship. It also detracts from the feeling of effortless. Pamela McDowell told us that Residence Life plans to edit the Roommate Contract to include a section about consequences for failing to abide by the agreement. Residence Life plans to call the form "The Roommate Agreement," in an effort to remove the legalistic connotation of the word "contract."

Many of our participants did not seek mediation from JCs, ACs, or Residence Life until their conflicts were seemingly past the point of mediation. This may be evidence of the independence that adolescents seek to assert. Individuals seem to seek out help only after they've decided that they want to move. At this point, Residence Life often requires mediation, but it is generally futile at this point. We would suggest that the stigma of mediation as a sign of "failure" or "last resort" be removed. We feel that many situations could be resolved by earlier discussion of the problem. Many of our participants seemed to agree with this proposition. Perhaps Residence Life could institute a time after Fall Break for each roommate pair to meet with their JC together and/or individually to review, revise, and discuss their Roommate Contract and relationship. This would de-stigmatize mediation as all students would be required to have such meetings. It would also allow JCs to evaluate the relationships and offer suggestions.

Further research could be conducted at other colleges and universities, as well as at St. Olaf College. Where interviews are not possible, perhaps quantitative measures could be taken to assess roommate relationship satisfaction and common sources of disagreement. First-year roommate relationships could be compared to those of upperclassmen in order to assess similarities and differences between randomly assigned versus personally chosen roommates. Pamela McDowell noted that upperclassmen have equivalent numbers of switches throughout the school year, and further research could be conducted to evaluate and understand this claim. It would also be helpful to interview both roommates in order to hear both sides of the story.

Even if these improvements were made, it is important to realize that there will always be roommate issues. As Americans, sharing intimate space with non-family members is difficult, and goes against our cultural constructs of individuality, privacy, and entitlement. Particularly as family sizes shrink, the notion of sharing a room becomes more uncomfortable. American adolescents are accustomed to having a clear division between their "front stage" and "back stage," which is often violated by the roommate relationship. The fact that the college roommate has taken on such cultural significance is evident in such guides to starting college life entitled "The Naked Roommate" by Harlan Cohen (2005). In the face of current attitudes towards college roommates, this relationship takes on cultural significance as one of the keys to satisfaction in college life. Further research could be conducted to examine the roommate relationship in the context of American society at large, particularly with respect to American values of individuality and privacy.

The information in the above three paragraphs comes from "St. Olaf By the Numbers," found at <http://www.stolaf.edu/admissions/numbers.html>.

The information in the above three paragraphs was found in "The Book" at <http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/reslife/community.html>.

This information in the first paragraph was found in "The Book" at <http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/reslife/community.html>.

All names have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of participants.



