

From **U. C.**an **S.**tudy **B.**uzzed to **U. C.**an be **S.**toned in **C.**lass:

An Analysis of the Influence of Spatial Relationship and the University Experience

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Writing 50




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### Abstract

The University of California has ten different campuses located thorough the state. Each campus provides a completely unique college experience. The spatial relationships between the campus, where the majority of the students live, and a given community that surrounds it, is a hugely influential factor that contributes to the overall experience at each university. In this research, the spatial relationships at the University of California Santa Barbara, the University of California Santa Cruz, and the University Berkeley are analyzed. Data relating to community interactions, age range, and student-faculty interaction from each university are compiled and analyzed. Conclusions are drawn about how, and to what extent, different components of the spatial relationship influence the university experience.

The environment in which a given event occurs has a profound influence upon the overall experience of that event. While this is true in many walks of life, it is especially so when relating to educational experiences, such as attending a University. The University of California has ten different campuses, each placed in a separate location and providing a totally unique university experience. Much of this is influenced by how, where and with whom the students attending the university are housed. The spatial relationship between the campus, the community and where majority of the student populace is housed hugely influences the overall “college experience.” It can, in fact, be a primary factor which influences a number of aspects contributing to the general atmosphere at each University and how it functions as a unit. This relationship affects aspects such as integration into the community, age range at the University, and interactions between students and faculty. For the purpose of this research, three University of California divisions, each representing a very different housing practice, have been selected for analysis: University of California Santa Barbara, University of California Santa Cruz, and University of California Berkeley.

The spatial relationships at each of the three University of California sectors which are under analysis are represented in Figures 1-3. The three variables which form this spatial relationship are: Students , University/Faculty , and Community . The Student variable represents the location(s) where the majority of the student population is housed. The University variable represents the actual campus, and the Community variable represents the closest community around the campus with which the students and university interact.

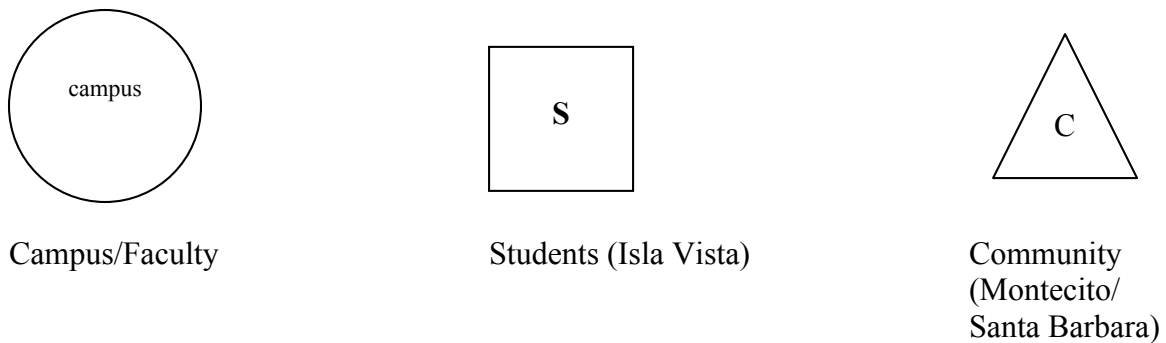
UC Santa Barbara

Figure 1: Spatial relationships UCSB: Campus and Faculty; Students; Community.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the University of California Santa Barbara is positioned in a very isolated location. The campus rests upon cliffs, is bordered on three sides by the Pacific Ocean, and is one of the few universities nationwide to house its own beach (University of California Santa Barbara, 2009). Directly adjacent to the campus is the utterly unique compact town of Isla Vista, where the majority of students live. Notable for its beach and student culture and energetic atmosphere, "I.V." is buzzing with life at almost all hours of the day. According to the 2000 census, the 2.2 square mile area has an extremely dense population of 18,344 residents (Isla Vista, 2009). These residents are almost entirely comprised of UCSB and Santa Barbara City College students. The young and active student population of Isla Vista, along with routine alcohol and drug use, culminate to give UCSB its infamous "party school" reputation. The student body is essentially active in a complete separate environment than that of the campus, and students tend to enter the campus only for class or to study, and then return to I.V. soon thereafter. The third component of the spatial variation relationship, the community, is

ultimately absent in this set up. Isla Vista is a tight knit community within itself, but there is no real relation to any exterior culture or community beyond that. Goleta and Santa Barbara are the nearest communities, but for the most part they do not interact directly with IV. This is primarily due to demographic issues, which isolate UCSB and make it both difficult and inconvenient for students to leave, and for other members of the community to access.

### UC Santa Cruz

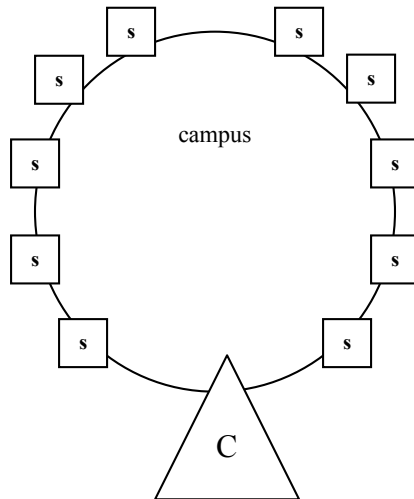


Figure 2: Spatial relationships UCB: Campus and Faculty; Students; Community.

The University of California Santa Cruz is located south of San Francisco in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The 2,001 acre campus is tucked away in the groves of the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, bordered on the south by neighborhoods, on the east by Harvey West Park, and on the west by Gray Whale Ranch (University of California Santa Cruz, 2009). Here, most of the student population is located on campus, where resident

halls, apartments, an RV park and family living facilities can all be found. UC Santa Cruz is unique in that its undergraduate program is based on a residential college system, where all undergraduates, and majority of the faculty, are affiliated with one of the ten residential colleges on campus. The presence of these colleges provides students with the advantages of a small college atmosphere within a larger university (Student Housing Services). Thus, there are numerous small, tight knit student communities on campus that are very integrated with the university, and more so with the faculty, but not necessarily with each other, as seen in Figure 2. The campus resides at the end of a single long access road, so it is somewhat isolated from the community, yet there is still a strong correlation between the town of Santa Cruz and the university students and faculty.

UC Berkeley

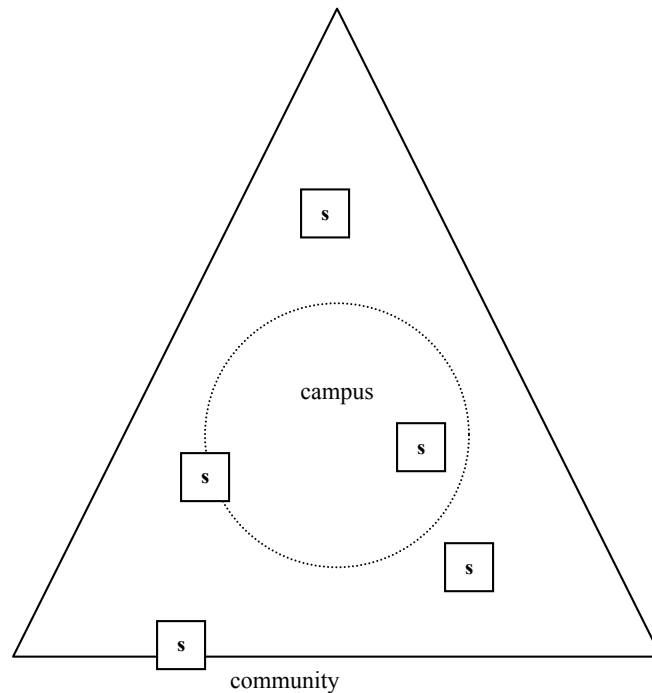


Figure 3: Spatial relationships UCB: Campus and Faculty; Students; Community.

The University of California Berkeley's 200 acre main campus (6,650 total acreage) is nestled into the community, surrounded by layers and layers of diverse cultural and city aspects. To the west is the downtown Berkeley business district, to the north are the neighborhoods of Berkeley and Northside, home to a large graduate student population, and further north of that is Berkeley Hills where many faculty members live. Student housing and fraternity row lie immediately south of campus, and adjacent is Telegraph Avenue, one of Berkeley's main shopping districts (University of California Berkeley, 2009). A large housing complex in nearby Albany offers facilities for married students as well. Berkeley is unique in that it has twenty student housing co-ops, providing quality low cost housing for university students who might not otherwise be able to afford a university education (Residential and Student Service Program, 2008). As seen in figure 3, at UC Berkeley, the spatial variation between the students, community and campus is very congruent. The campus is enveloped in a meshwork of both students and community to a point that it is almost a continuation of the town of Berkeley itself. Students are living with people of all different age ranges, professions and cultures and are much more integrated into the community as a result.

### Integration into Community

One of the main aspects of the university atmosphere that is affected, as a direct result of the spatial variation between the campus, community and students, is the integration of the university and its student population into the given community at each location. UC Santa Barbara lacks a true integration with their community. The community, in fact, is almost entirely absent from the spatial relationship. Isla Vista is the primary community

of UCSB, but as it is comprised mainly of college students who mostly interact with each other, there is little engagement with the outside community. Thus, the I.V. community almost acts as an extension of high school culture, where day to day interactions occur between the same people and within a narrow age group range. As a result, students don't get as much exposure to other contributing factors or scenarios of a more "real world" culture or community like they would at Berkeley, for example. Goleta and Santa Barbara are the nearest local community districts, yet are not very affiliated with UCSB. Isla Vista is far enough away from downtown Santa Barbara that they are almost completely segregated, aside from students who are employed there. Also, it is not that easy or convenient to get to downtown Santa Barbara from Isla Vista, especially for students without cars. Because I.V. has most everything an average UCSB student would need on a day to day basis, such as a variety of eateries, cafes, a bookstores and bike shop, students tend to stay in the area more often than not. Due to their conveniently close proximity and secluded location, the campus and Isla Vista merge to form one big bubble, within which students seldom find a need to venture out. There seems to be more involvement with Goleta than downtown Santa Barbara, however, because of its nearness to the campus. Some programs and internships provide opportunities for university students to tutor or mentor younger students in the community, or get involved in neighborhood projects and programs. The UCSB Community Affairs Board is a volunteer center dedicated to lessen the gap between the university and community, and enhance the student's educational experience by providing access to community service work (C.A.B., 2009).



While UCSC is also a bit isolated from the community, it tends to have a stronger integration than that which takes place at UCSB. Downtown Santa Cruz is closer to campus than downtown Santa Barbara, and is thus much easier to access on a regular basis. Busses in Santa Cruz with connecting routes are more abundant and frequent. This provides an opportunity for different college levels, such as freshman in dorms or those without cars, to more easily integrate into the community. The students and graduates at UCSC are very engaged in community and public service, with 35% completing internships and 44% involved with community service. Also, the University of California Santa Cruz has had a large economic and cultural impact on Santa Cruz County, and contributes meaningfully to the region's economic vitality by providing more than \$1 billion in annual economic impact and helping create an additional 9,500 jobs for local residents (Santa Cruz Accountability Profile, 2009). Additionally, the presence of a world-class research and teaching university draws endowed individuals to the area, which contributes greatly to the local region by means of research, intellect and educational services.

University of California Berkeley is by far the most integrated into the community. This is due to the fact that the student population is dispersed into the layers of culture and society surrounding the campus. Because of the intermingled spatial relationship, the day to day community interactions for students at UC Berkeley, in general, will range significantly more than those at UCSB and UCSC in terms of community members age, religion, profession and ethnicity. This provides students with a unique educational experience that has potential to better prepare them to work and live in a progressively

more global and multicultural society. Berkeley's contribution to society can be seen through the many volunteer programs and organizations carried out by both faculty and students. The faculty aid in solving many of society's complex issues by contributing their expert knowledge to government committees and panels: "A quarter of a million Californians benefit from the more than 200 community-service programs at UC Berkeley and 300,000 public-service hours contributed annually" (Berkeley Accountability Profile, 2009). A few of these programs include "Greening Berkeley", which encourages student involvement in environmental issues, "Youth Musicians Program", which provides free lessons to musically gifted low-income students, and "Berkeley United in Literacy Development" (BUILD), which provides math and literacy tutoring to youth in Berkeley and Oakland. The economic impact has a profound influence on the community as well, providing yet another link between the university and community. In 2007-08, UC Berkeley spent \$1.6 billion on salaries, 81% of which was in the Bay area, and the campus employed 25,700 people making it one of the largest employers in the area (Berkeley Accountability Profile, 2009). The relationship between community and students/university is sufficiently stronger as a result of the spatial arrangement.

When looking at the three different spatial variations among these UC's, it is apparent that the location of students relative to the community has a profound effect on integration and involvement within that community. Both UCSB and UCSC are isolated from their communities, but while the single congregate unit of students in IV segregates them from external interaction with the community, it is evident that the smaller subunits

of student populace and a closer proximity to downtown allows UC Santa Cruz to integrate more effectively with their community. The student population at Berkeley, which is scattered throughout the community, results in the most interaction out of the three student spatial variations.

### Age

The age range at each university is also influenced by the location of the students relative to the campus and the community. This is demonstrated from data found in the undergraduate profiles from each university. UC Santa Barbara undergraduates have an average age of 21 years, with only 3% of the student population over the age of 25. UC Berkeley also has an average of 21 years, but 7% of undergrads are 25 years of age or above. The population at UC Santa Cruz averages 23 years of age, with 4% over the age of 25 (Accountability Profiles, 2009).

This data is not surprising in relation to UCSB, and logically correlates to the given orientation of campus relative to where the majority of students live. Isla Vista houses a vast majority of the undergraduate population and its consistent, and often underage, party scene does not cater toward a population much older than twenty-one. Older individuals looking to attend a UC may be driven away partially by the close association of UCSB to I.V., and instead consider a campus that is generally more diverse in age. This factor most likely contributes to the 7% of UC Berkeley undergraduates that are older than 25. Because of the dispersed integration into the community, students of any age might be more likely to feel socially accepted. As the average age of 21 only pertains to the undergraduates, this figure does not adequately represent the whole of UC

Berkeley's student population. The graduate student population at UC Berkeley is significantly higher than that of UC Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz. With 10,258 graduate students comprising 29% of the total population, and assuming that the average age of a graduate students is sufficiently older than 21, one can assume that the general age range will be much higher at UC Berkeley. Graduate students at UCSB total 2,958 comprising 13.5% of the student body, and the 1,418 at Santa Cruz make up only 8% of their total population (Accountability Profiles, 2009). Thus, while the average age at UCSC may be a few years older, there is less of a graduate student population, which is undoubtedly contributing to an older population at the other universities. Factors other than those included in this study may explain why the undergraduate age at UCSC is two years higher than that of UC Berkeley and Santa Barbara.

### Student-Faculty Interactions

The outcomes of student-faculty interactions will obviously vary with individual experience from student to student, but can also fluctuate in a general sense from campus to campus. The frequency and manner of interactions which occur between students and their professors may be influenced by the relationship between student housing, campus and the community. At UCSC, there is both on and off campus faculty housing available, with a number of professors living in a housing facility very close to campus. At UCSB, a fair amount of the faculty is housed in condos off of West Point campus, which is also in close proximity to the main campus (Housing and residential services, 2004). At UC Berkeley, most of the faculty tends to live in nearby neighborhoods such as the Berkeley Hills. The proximity of the faculty housing to campus will most likely have an influence

over the availability for and likelihood of student-faculty interactions. In a UCUES survey in 2008, 52% of UCSB seniors reported that they had assisted faculty with research or creative studies, and 65% talked to a professor about course material outside of class. At UCSC 55% of seniors assisted faculty with research, and 76% talked with an instructor outside of class. At Berkeley, only 42% assisted faculty with research or creative studies (Accountability Profiles, 2009).

The higher values at UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz could be due to the close proximity of faculty to campus. Additionally, UC Santa Cruz's top percentage of student-faculty interactions outside of class is very likely a result of the ten different residential colleges. Because faculty members are each associated with one of the ten colleges, they will have an increased opportunity to converse and work with a particular group of the student population outside of the classroom. This low figure for UC Berkeley could relate to the proximity of faculty housing, or could again correlate to the absence of statistical value for graduate school participation, indicating that perhaps most student-faculty interactions take place at the graduate level. Also, while these results are expressed in a survey, student faculty interactions on a more personal allied level may not be recorded at all. At UC Berkeley, students are rumored to interact with faculty as their ally, whereas at UCSB, the students are more likely to ally against the faculty. This could be a result of the "continuation of high school" feel that prevails in the university experience at UC Santa Barbara, which is definitely influenced by traditions resulting from how the students are housed.

Also, at UCSB students tend not to congregate or hang out on campus because they lack the appropriate area to do so. Because of this, students will simply walk or ride bikes back to Isla Vista right after, and even in-between classes. This undoubtedly diminished chances of interacting with faculty on campus. At UCSC and UC Berkeley, there are common areas on campus where students and faculty congregate throughout the school day. This spatial arrangement provides for more frequent and easily accessible out-of-class interactions with faculty. In an interview comparing campus living between UCs, Spencer Headly, former UCSB student who transferred to UCSC in 2007, stated that,

In Santa Cruz, I have found that the relationship between faculty and students is very accommodating. Professors often go on field study programs with students, and I have personally been able to talk pretty freely to any professor I have had at UCSC, more so than in Santa Barbara. UCSC was originally intended to be a very small school based around the notion that students and professors would be seen as equals, eat in the same places, and openly discuss topics at will. I go to a restaurant on campus where faculty is always eating. I would say it is an incredibly open relationship between students and professors (Headly, 2009).

In spatial relations where there is a common area for students and faculty alike to congregate, there will be a greater likelihood of student-faculty interactions.

In conclusion, the spatial relationship between the campus, its community, and the students will undeniably influence the overall experience at a given university. After comparing UC Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and Berkeley, this becomes apparent. The correlation between these three factors contributed to differences among these UCs

regarding community integration, age range and faculty-student interactions. Other factors which are most likely affected by the spatial relationship at each university, but are not touched upon in this paper, such as alcohol/drug abuse, peer interactions and political activity would also be beneficial to study. As these are all factors which significantly affect the overall college experience at each location, incoming students may want to take note of this before making their decision as to which university to attend.

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