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CREATING BETTER ROOMMATE DYADS: THE ROLD OF OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM, AND PRECEPTION WITHIN COLLEGE ROOMMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to address the relationship between optimism/pessimism, perception and roommate relationships in college students. Participants were conveniently pooled from Southeastern University and were assessed via an online survey. Literature was compiled supporting the hypotheses that the researcher created. After analysis, it was found that optimism/pessimism correlated with roommate relationships and perceived similarity of optimism and pessimism correlated with roommate relationships. These results supported some of the researcher's hypotheses but not all of them.

KEYWORDS: Roommates, Optimism, Pessimism, Self-Perception, Perceived Similarity.

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Introduction

The college experience is something many people look forward to throughout their lives. It is exciting to move out of one's childhood home and start the journey to adulthood. However, though this adventure is new and exciting, it is not stress-free. One of the common stresses new college students encounter is the roommate situation. Living with a person whom one has never met can produce anxiety (Kidwell, 2005). It often poses questions like; Will they be nice? Will we get along? What if they are unbearable? What if they do not like me? If that is not enough, it is impossible to escape the roommate horror stories from friends and family, increasing one's anxiety levels in regard to an already stressful situation. Colleges often have questionnaires and profiles for students to fill out, in an attempt to match students who will get along and produce positive roommate experiences. However, if the current system was effective, the often comedic but horrid roommate stories would not be so common.

Having a bad roommate can make college miserable, so placing students with other students whom they are likely to connect with is a vital piece of creating a good college experience for students. According to a study done by Boise State Scholar Works found that, "25% of students reported college roommate problems" ("Research Shows 25% of Students Experience College Roommate Problems," 2016). With over 15 million college students in the U.S. in 2017 ("U.S. college enrollment statistics 1965-2026," n.d.), that means 3.75 million students had a bad college roommate experience. Creating a more efficient and accurate system to increase the odds of students being properly matched is an important step in helping facilitate an overall better college experience for college students. Adding more aspects to the

questionnaires distributed by colleges or making sure the personality characteristics assessed are valid and reliable are ways to increase the chances of roommate satisfaction. A specific way to improve the questionnaires would be to assess whether the applicant believes themselves to be an optimist or a pessimist. Because of the effect one's outlook on life has on their personality, the effect personality has on roommate satisfaction, and the power perception has over both these areas, it is possible that assessing a potential roommate's perceived life orientation will provide a better prediction of compatibility.

The overall purpose of this study is to determine if there is a correlation between what a student believes their life orientation is and their roommate satisfaction. This research hopes to discover new information that will help improve the odds of having a positive college roommate experience for students. Though the research on the effects of optimism or pessimism directly on roommate satisfaction is limited, there is a plethora of research in related areas. For example, research on how optimism and pessimism affects people's lives and relationships, perceived similarities' effect on relationships, and personality's effect on relationships. This information can be compiled to suggest a relationship between optimism or pessimism and roommate relationships.

Hypothesis

Although many colleges have some sort of system to match roommates, hoping to give students good experiences, these systems often fail. Updating the questionnaires given to students, making sure they accurately assess if the paring will be a good match, is necessary to improve college students' roommate experiences.

The researcher hypothesizes that those who perceive themselves as optimistic, regardless if they realistically are, will have more roommate satisfaction then those who view themselves as pessimistic. Consequentially, this research project plans on answering the following questions;

- Do students who are more optimistic have more roommate satisfaction?

- Do students who are more pessimistic have less roommate satisfaction?

- Do students who perceive themselves to be optimistic have high roommate satisfaction?

- Are students who perceive themselves to be pessimistic satisfied with their roommate relationships?

- Do students who have perceived similarity regarding their life-orientation have high roommate satisfaction?

- Are students who perceive their life-orientations as dissimilar less satisfied with their roommate relationships?

Though the answering of the questions, the relationship between self-proclaimed optimism-pessimism and roommate satisfaction will be revealed.

Definition of Terms

Terms will be operationally defined for every reader to fully understand and comprehend this study and research.

- Optimism will be defined as the overall tendency to believe life will turn out good instead of bad (Dar & Wani, 2017, p. 300)

- Pessimism will be defined as the overall tendency to believe life is going to turn out bad.

- Personality will be defined as the Big 5 Personality Characteristics; Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

- o Neuroticism is described by emotional instability and vulnerability to stress and general negative affectivity. (Lui, Rollock, Chang, Leong, & Zamboanga, 2016, p. 276)

- o Extraversion is characterized by the level of activity, and proneness to socialize and enjoy positive affectivity. (Lui et al., 2016, p. 276)

- o Openness to Experience describes individuals' likelihood to explore new actions, values, and thought patterns. (Lui et al., 2016, p. 276)

- o Agreeableness is measured through levels of trust, compliance, and empathy. (Lui et al., 2016, p. 276)

- o Conscientiousness is described by characteristics such as diligence, organization, and goal orientation. (Lui et al., 2016, p. 276)

- Relationship Satisfaction will be defined as well-being in the relationship, combined with the likelihood of lasting over time. (Ohadi, Brown, Trub, & Rosenthal, 2018) Specific factors include:

  - o How well a person perceives their needs are met (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o General satisfaction with the roommate relationship (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o Perceived quality of relationship compared to most (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o Amount of times one seriously regrets entering the relationship (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o The amount the relationship has met one's expectations (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o The amount of love the participant has for their partner (Hendrick, 1988).

  - o How many problems the relationship has (Hendrick, 1988).

- Roommate Satisfaction will be defined as relationship satisfaction as it relates to roommates. Specifically:

- o   Are the participant's needs interpersonal needs met (Erlandson, 2009)?

- o   General roommate satisfaction.

- o   Perception of the roommate relationship as it compares to other roommate relationships.

- o   If the roommate meets expectations as it relates to personality and friendship.

- o   The amount of love, defined as care and admiration, for the roommate.

- o   The amount of conflict, whether addressed or not, the participant experiences with their roommate.

- Self-Perceived will be defined as how the subject views themselves, despite reality.

Limitations

Current research on how life orientation effects roommate relationships is limited. One of the main limitations of this study is the sample of the population. The population is college students, and for this research, the sample is students at Southeastern University. This is a biased sample since Southeastern is a small, private, Christian college, with mostly religious students. Because of this, the sample does not represent the entire population.

An additional limitation is the correlational nature of this study. While the researcher hopes to show a significant correlation, causation will not be inferable from the results.

Summary

Chapter One is an introduction to this study, The Relationship Between Self-Perceived Optimism-Pessimism and Roommate Relationships. Chapter One clearly states the hypothesis to this study as well as gives definitions to help the reader better understand the research.

Literature Review

The college process is filled with new encounters for many students.   Moving out and going to college involves picking a major and possible career path, living away from home, often being in a new place and more.   It is here new students, if they chose, can reinvent themselves, change their reputation.   However, an often-stressful part of going to college is living with a stranger, otherwise known as the roommate situation.   According to Kirk S.   Kidwell (2005), "For the first week or two, [first year students] are simply overwhelmed by the college experience: locating classrooms and buying books, learning to live with roommates and meeting other students in the dorm, making sense of multiple syllabi and completing assignments on time, and more" (p.   253).   With all the overwhelming aspects of college that first-year students encounter, researching an area which could provide them with some relief is vital.   One aspect of the college experience that could be amended for the benefits of the students is the roommate assignment process.

Past research has shown that students' overall college experiences are affected by their personality, specifically as it relates to optimism and pessimism (Chang, Bodem, Sanna, & Fabian, 2011; Dar & Wani, 2017).   However, research has not been done on how life orientation effects roommate relationships specifically, especially in relation to self-perception and perceived similarity.   This research project aims to find a correlation between self-proclaimed optimism or pessimism, as it relates to perceived similarity and roommate satisfaction.   To accurately research this topic, optimism and pessimism will be broken down and described in relation to relationships.   Additionally, descriptions and explanations of the various aspects of personality will be assessed to have a full understanding of the dynamics of college students.   Once defined, the role that optimism and pessimism play in personality will be analyzed.   Next,

the power of perceived similarities will be addressed. Finally, roommate relationships, in general, will be discussed, especially regarding the personalities of the participating parties. All of this evidence is compiled to provide a reason, based on literature, to study how people's identified outlook on life and how that relates to perceived similarity between themselves and their roommate, will affect their roommate satisfaction.

Defining Optimism and Pessimism

Optimism is commonly defined as a positive outlook on life, however, for this study's purposes, it will be defined more specifically. Dar and Wani (2017), defines optimism as, "The global generalized tendency to believe that one will generally experience good versus bad outcomes in life" (p. 300). The research supports the notion that people's positivity affects their overall quality of life and satisfaction (Augusto-Landa, Pulido-Martos, & Lopez-Zafra, 2011; Schou, Ekeberg, & Ruland, 2005). Augusto-Landa, Pulido-Martos, and Lopez-Zafra (2011) measured 217 undergraduate women's perceived emotional intelligence, psychological well-being, and optimism-pessimism, determining that optimism is positively correlated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011). Furthermore, in a study analyzing the effects of optimism on coping within breast cancer patients, it was found that optimism was directly correlated quality of life and was correlated when a fighting spirit was a mediator (Schou et al., 2005). Though these two studies exclusively included women, Lui, Rollock, Chang, Leong, and Zamboanga (2016) used both male and female college students in their study of optimism-pessimism, personality, and well-being. This study found that optimism is positively correlated with the five dimensions of subjective well-being, hedonic, physical, eudaimonic, social, and financial (Lui, Rollock, Chang, Leong, & Zamboanga, 2016). All three of these studies found optimism to be correlated with a better quality of life because optimism

includes that expectation that people have control over their own positive future and the belief that they are competent (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Lui et al., 2016; Schou et al., 2005). People looking forward to the future and knowing they have the skills to achieve their goals is essential to have a positive outlook in life because this outlook provides hope. Consequently, this positive attitude translates into confidence in one's self, which is essential to have a positive perspective on other people. This positive perspective on others increases social well-being in general, strengthening the relationships people have and increasing the likelihood that these people will acquire new relationships.

In addition to optimism being positively correlated with overall life satisfaction, research has been conducted on how optimism influences people's emotions. Dar and Wani (2017) gave university students the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, a self-esteem scale, and The Life Orientation Test-Revised to discover the relationship between happiness, self-esteem, and optimism. This research found that optimism, happiness, and high self-esteem were all positively correlated at a statistically significant level *(Dar & Wani, 2017)*. Additionally, another study used undergraduate students to measure the overall well-being, as it relates to optimism and found that optimism buffers the effects of high stress *(Kleiman, Chiara, Liu, Jager-Hyman, Choi, & Alloy, 2017)*. Happiness and stress are emotions that fluctuate throughout people's daily lives. However, by optimism raising the consistency of happiness and lowing the influence of stress, optimistic people have more overall joy. This joy creates an inner light that influences a person's self-esteem and positive emotions, continuing the cycle. The mind, body, and soul are all interconnected, so people's confidence in themselves effects their overall outlook.

While optimism has many positive effects on people, pessimism has many negative effects.   According to the research, pessimism is a negative outlook on life and is correlated with negative aspects of life (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Heinonen, Räikkönen, Keltikangas-Järvinen, & Strandberg, 2004).   Heinonen, Räikkönen, Keltikangas-Järvinen, and Strandberg, (2004), in their study on optimism-pessimism and adult attachment tendencies, gave 423 Finish adults the Life Orientation Test-Revised, the Adult attachment scale, and two measures assessing their childhood recollections in relation to attachment.   This study discovered that people with a pessimistic outlook expect more negative outcomes and withdraw their efforts easier, becoming passive and giving up on achieving their goal (Heinonen et al., 2004).   Furthermore, Augusto-Landa et al. (2011) found in their study that pessimism is negatively correlated with psychological well-being.   Expecting a negative outcome in life in general effects how people live their daily lives.   Expecting to fail influences whether people allow themselves to be challenged and ultimately their level of fulfillment.   Giving up due to fear of failure and being passive in things that one deems important causes psychological distress, perpetuating a cycle of negativity.   People who hold a pessimistic outlook feel like their dreams are unattainable, but the desire to achieve is still within them.   However, pessimists' tendencies to doubt, leads to quitting early which is followed by negative emotions, such as guilt and shame.   This causes more self-doubt.   In the meantime, the original goals are not accomplished.   This is emotionally and psychologically draining.

While pessimism effects a person's motivation, it also affects the emotions they are more inclined to experience.   Wong (2012) surveyed 398 college students through measures which assessed their positive and negative automatic thoughts, depression levels, anxiety levels, anger levels, stress levels, happiness levels, and overall satisfaction with life.   This study found that

negative thinking accounted for 29% of the variance in depression, 20% of the variance in anxiety, 11% of the variance in anger, 21% of the variance in stress and 10% of the variance in overall life satisfaction (Wong, 2012). Furthermore, another study found that quality of life, social functioning, and emotional functioning were negatively correlated with anxiousness and hopelessness (Schou et al., 2005). Depression and anxiety affect people's inner self and outer relationships. People who suffer from depression and anxiety are often stuck in a constant state of negativity. Emotionally, it is overwhelming to operate from a place of anxiety and hopelessness because every decision is a battle. These emotions lead to diminished confidence within one's self, lowering overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, lack of confidence within people translates to outer relationships, lowering social abilities in forms of overdependence, or unwillingness to truly connect with others. Unfortunately, both reactions are harmful to relationships.

Defining Personality

In addition to defining optimism and pessimism, personality must be defined to provide evidence to support the conduction of the current research project. Personality is complex. Personality is made up of various factors that are distinct yet interact with each other. The Big Five Personality traits attempt to define personality by breaking it into five basic aspects. The characteristics are described as follows:

Neuroticism captures emotional instability and vulnerability to stress and general negative affectivity. Extraversion describes the level of activity, and proneness to socialize and enjoy positive affectivity. Openness to Experience encompasses individuals' likelihood to explore new actions, values, and thought patterns. Agreeableness focuses on trust, compliance, and empathy. Finally, Conscientiousness

includes characteristics such as diligence, organization, and goal orientation.   (Lui et al.,

2016, p. 276)

While these five aspects of personality are generally accepted as the way to define personality,

for the current study it is necessary to dive deeper into components of personality.   Specifically,

how personality affects individuals' lives.

As people progress through life, their personality determines how they interact with other

people and how other people react to them.   However, according to the literature, people's

personalities change over time (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998).   To assess the change in

personality, Asendorpf and Wilpers (1998) had102 participants completed The Big 5

Assessment, a questionnaire measuring shyness and sociability, and another assessing

relationship satisfaction within various types of relationships every 3 months.   Additionally,

participants were asked to keep track of their social interactions via a diary for a two week period

(Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998).   This research found that levels of shyness and neuroticism

decreased over time, and levels of extraversion increased overtime (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998).

As the participants become more comfortable with each other, they began to relax and become

more outgoing.   This becomes helpful because extraversion influences the quantity and quality

of a person's relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998).   The more outgoing people are, the

more likely they are to have more and greater quality friendships.   Additionally, it is more likely

for other people to be drawn to those who become more extroverted, and these individuals will

gain energy from investing in relationships.

Personality as it Relates to Optimism/Pessimism

Optimism and pessimism have been found to influence personality, but optimism and

pessimism are a distinct system, separate from personality (Segerstrom, Evans, & Eisenlohr-

Moul, 2011). Never less, the interaction between personality and life orientation influence individuals' lives. Specifically, with the use of the optimism-pessimism scale and the Eysenck Personality Scale, two validated assessments, Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi, and Batayeneh (2013) found that there is a positive correlation between optimism and introversion, and a negative correlation between optimism and neuroticism. Another study supported these results through the use of the NEO Personality Inventory, a 240-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess the Big 5 personality traits, the Life-Orientation Test-Revised, and the Well-Being scale (Lui et al., 2016). This study found that optimism and extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were positively correlated with subjective well-being (Lui et al., 2016). People who are more optimistic are more outgoing, agreeable, considerate and willing to try new things. These people have an easier time going with the flow and letting the stresses of daily life roll off them. The positivity being optimistic creates translates to better well-being. Furthermore, people who are more extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, and open to new experiences, are positively reinforced to continue these behaviors by other people responding well to them, creating quality friendships. These results encourage the individuals' optimistic perspective and the behaviors are repeated.

In addition to addressing how optimism affects personality, how pessimism influences personality is relevant to the current research. Pessimism is correlated with specific personality traits, affecting how people relate to each other. According to prior research, there is a positive correlation between pessimism and anxiety, low levels of closeness, dependency, and neuroticism, and a negative correlation between pessimism and extroversion (Heinonen et al., 2004; Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi, & Batayeneh, 2013). Lui et al. (2016) supports this with their study finding that subjective well-being is negatively correlated with pessimism and neuroticism

is positively correlated with pessimism.   The need for control combined with the distrust of people creates an environment harmful to quality relationships.   People who cannot bring themselves to connect with others, or who are over-dependent on others, live in a fear of rejection, encouraging the pessimistic outlook.   Pessimists' overall life satisfaction and well-being are lower, in part, because they cannot get the relational connections they want and need. Peoples' perception that the world is bad, or negative is confirmed, not due to reality, but due to the negative personality traits often associated with pessimism.

The Power of Perception in Relationships

Commonality is key in relationships because without similarity there is no foundation for form relationships.   However, according to the research, the perception of similarity is just as impactful on relationships (Cemalcilar, Baruh, Kezer, Kamiloglu, & Nigdeli, 2018; Davis, 2017; Selfhout, Denissen, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; van Zalk & Denissen, 2015).   Specifically, Davis (2017), asked college students to rank personality characteristics in order of importance as they relate to their personal potential romantic relationship, stereotypes, and how they believe their closest friend or a person they dislike would answer, based on the group they are in.   Next, participants were required to rate a target on a Likert scale containing the Big 5 Characteristics and then are asked how often each rating related to themselves and related to their close friend, or the person they dislike, according to their group.   This study found that when the target was perceived as similar, more liking and projection took place (Davis, 2017).   The perception one has of a new person and the liking of that same new person is a cycle.   If people perceive others as similar, they are more likely to like them, which in turn makes them more likely to project themselves on to the new individual, increasing perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction. Without perceived similarity, relationships would not flourish as quickly or as often.

In addition to perceived similarity increasing liking between individuals, the literature supports that perceived commonality influences friendship formation.   Cemalcilar, Baruh, Kezer, Kamiloglu, and Nigdeli (2018), Selfhout, Denissen, Branje, & Meeus (2009), Van Zalk and Denissen (2015) all used the Ten Item Personality Inventory, having their participants rate each other's personalities, after the participants used the Big Five Inventory to assess their own personality.   Cemalcilar et al. (2018), and Selfhout et al. (2009) used participants who did not previously know each other, while Van Zalk and Denissen's (2015) subjects were adolescences who were previously friends.   Each of these studies found that perceived similarly in the Big 5 Personality traits predicted friendship formation (Cemalcilar et al., 2018; Selfhout et al., 2009; van Zalk & Denissen, 2015).   Specifically, two of the studies found that people are attracted to those that they perceive to have similar personality levels of openness, agreeableness, consciousness, and neuroticism (Cemalcilar et al., 2018; Selfhout et al., 2009).   However, Van Zalk and Denissen's (2015) found that perceived similarity in extraversion and agreeableness predicted friendship formation, but not the other personality characteristics.   A possible explanation for the discrepancy between the results of the first two studies and the third one could be the age difference in the samples, college students versus junior high students. Perceived similarity between two individuals in extraversion and agreeableness produces an environment where people are socially comfortable and easy going.   This creates a harmonious conversation between two strangers, increasing the likelihood of the individuals becoming friends.

Roommate Relationships

Roommate relationships often start off cordial and timid, with both parties trying to be pleasant towards the other because they do not yet know one another well.   Consequently,

research shows that students value knowing if they will be compatible with their potential roommate (Shekhawat et al., 2016).   Additionally, the literature supports the notion that roommates who pick each other have a higher liking for each other and better cooperation, translating to higher roommate satisfaction (Stern, Powers, Dhaene, Dix, & Shegog, 2007).   This is logical and consistent with how colleges allow returning students to pick their roommates. Friends who know each other outside a roommate context, and get along well, are likely to have a positive roommate experience.   This roommate relationship is more likely to be successful, not just because the two individuals were friends previously, but because there is a comfort in picking and knowing who one will be living within coming semesters.   Additionally, individuals with a previous, positive roommate relationship between them are more likely to continue to have a positive roommate experience than two strangers, due to history.   These people will know how to get along with each other, understand each other's stressors, and how to handle one another during times of high emotion.   Because these roommates lived together previously, they have already experienced conflict with each other and learned to cope and handle the situation accordingly, creating better relationship satisfaction.

In addition to the comfort associated with previously knowing one's future roommate, similarity in communication effects roommate relationships.   Studies have shown roommates who socialize often and have similar communication styles have higher roommate satisfaction (Martin & Anderson, 1995; Whitmore & Dunsmore, 2014).   To study the effect communication has on roommate relationships, four measures assessing willingness to communicate, interpersonal communication competence, verbal aggressiveness and roommate satisfaction were completed by roommate dyads, finding that roommates who are both high in willingness to communicate were more satisfied with their roommate (Martin & Anderson, 1995).

Furthermore, Whitmore and Dunsmore (2014) created a social interaction report, asking 410

college freshman various questions related time they actively interacted with their roommate,

and used the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, McAllister's (1995) 11-item measure of

trust and a created measure assessing perceived similarity, to also research the effect of

communication on roommate relationships.   This study found that quantity and quality of social

exchange accounts for 60% of the variance in trust, influencing roommate satisfaction

(Whitmore & Dunsmore, 2014).   This is congruent with other studies which found that more

communication predicts higher friendship intensity (Selfhout et al., 2009).   While living with

someone, it is impossible not to communicate.   However, building trust through the quality and

quantity of communication builds bonds between roommates that positively influence

relationship satisfaction.   Trusting one's roommate increases the likely hood that two people

will enjoy being roommates and will want to live together again.   Without quality and consistent

communication, trust cannot be built, increasing the likelihood of a bond neglecting to form,

resulting in a negative roommate experience and not wanting to live with that person again.

       While communication is important in building a healthy roommate relationship, peoples'

interpersonal needs are aspects of themselves which are also important to address when

considering roommate relationships.   Within roommate relationships, it has been discovered that

dyads who are both high in interpersonal communication, and roommates who are both low in

need for control, which is related to verbal aggressiveness, have high roommate satisfaction

(Erlandson, 2009; Martin & Anderson, 1995).   In the process of obtaining these results,

Erlandson (2009) distributed a Likert scale which assessed desire for inclusion, openness, and

control to 102 undergrad students while also asking them to rate their roommate satisfaction on a

scale of 1-10.   These results indicate the importance of interpersonal needs in roommate

relationships.   Communicating in a calm, informative manner increases the likelihood of one's point being understood.   When roommates feel like they are being heard, they feel understood, bonding one to another and increasing relationship satisfaction.   On the contrary, when people are verbally aggressive, it isolates them from others, decreasing the likelihood of satisfying relationships for those who assert aggression.   Additionally, being able to compromise, or relinquish control, builds a relationship.   For roommates, compromise promotes equality and cooperation, raising satisfaction.

In addition to the importance of similarity within interpersonal needs between roommates, the literature states that perceived similarity is positively correlated with roommate satisfaction.   According to Erlandson (2009), the biggest predictor of roommate satisfaction is perceived similarity.   Furthermore, as discussed earlier, perceived similarity increases liking and relationship satisfaction (Davis, 2017).   Naturally, liking one's roommate would increase roommate satisfaction, so because perceived similarity influences the degree of liking, the role of perception is vital in roommate relationships.   Additionally, Whitmore and Dunsmore (2014) found that perceived similarity is positively correlated with social exchange and trust.   Perceived similarity mediates the amount roommates interact, which facilitates the growth of trust. Roommates who do not perceive themselves as similar, are less likely to interact, providing less opportunity for liking and trust to increase.   Due to this, the lower amount of interaction between roommates decreases the likelihood of roommate satisfaction.

Why Roommate Relationships Fail

Though there are many reasons for roommate relationships to be successful, the reality is that not all roommate relationships are successful.   According to the research, being the roommate who is, or having a roommate who is, unable to give support, communicate and

problem-solve is linked to wanting to find a new roommate (Bahns, Crandall, Canevello, & Crocker, 2013). Bahns et al. (2013) asked 115 roommate pairs to fill out questionnaires assessing personality and mental health, social and communication patterns, and academic achievement attitudes at the beginning and end of a 10-week period, being asked if the participants wanted to change roommates at the end of the time. It was found that those who felt their roommate did not provide support, communicate well, or had a lot of conflicts, wanted to change roommates (Bahns et al., 2013). As in any relationship, being there for each other in times of need builds trust and increases satisfaction. Because roommate relationships involve living with another person, being emotionally supportive, and being able to compromise, relating to other people is essential in roommate situations. Furthermore, being able to resolve conflict in a compassionate and effective way is amplified within roommate relationships because the individuals are constantly in close quarters. Dissatisfaction with roommate relationships can cause people to change roommates, but if the system of assigning dyads does not effectively place people together who will get along, moving rooms is an act of futility.

In addition to how the inability to bond effects roommate satisfaction, people's personal emotional state effects if they are likely to enjoy living with another person. According to Bahns et al. (2013), people who have higher anxiety or depression are more likely to be less satisfied with his or her roommate relationship, no matter the other person's characteristics. Unfortunately, some people cannot be satisfied by the situations they are in because there is so much turmoil within them. Depression and anxiety causes people to be dissatisfied with relationships and life in general, hence its link to pessimism (Schou et al., 2005; Wong, 2012). Roommate relationships are no different. Unfortunately, this dissatisfaction not only causes the person who is suffering from anxiety and depression turmoil but effects the other person as well,

lowering their satisfaction.   Again, this often leads to a roommate break-up, which is only beneficial if the individuals are placed with new strangers who are a better fit.

Limits to Existent Research

The research supports that there is a relationship between optimism-pessimism and personality, personality and roommate-relationships, and perception of personality and relationships.   However, research has not been done on if the power of perception, specifically as it relates to optimism and pessimism, effects roommate satisfaction.   Whitmore & Dunsmore (2014) suggest, "The large correlation between trust and social exchange may indicate that both measures are assessing a common underlying construct, such as positivity" (p. 244).   In other words, possible factors in levels of roommate satisfaction are optimism and pessimism.   Though it is clear practical personality traits, such as communication and socialization levels, are important factors when addressing good roommate relationships, having similar outlooks on life could be equally as important.   The research clearly shows the power perception has on relationships, though perceived similarity of optimism and pessimism have not yet been addressed, hence the value of the current study.

The Present Study

This literature review set out to utilize previous research to support the study of the relationship between self-proclaimed and perceived similarity of optimism or pessimism and roommate satisfaction.   Optimism and pessimism were clearly defined and broken down, distinguishing the different effects they have on individuals.   The various factors that makeup and impact personality were discussed to understand the impact personality has on optimism and pessimism.   These correlations were then expanded to show the effect the relationship between optimism and pessimism and personality have on relationships, especially as it relates to

perception.   Finally, roommate relationships specifically were discussed, showing the need for more research in the realm of creating an effective roommate pairing strategy.   The research shows that similarities of many kinds and perceived similarities positively affect roommate relationships.   Because of this, it is possible for roommates who are both optimists or both pessimists to get along better than those who have opposite overall viewpoints.   The research seems to support this logic, but a specific study is necessary to determine if there is a relationship between self-proclaimed optimism or pessimism perceived similarity and roommate satisfaction within college students.

Summary

This concludes Chapter Two, the literature review, of this project.   The research supports the conduction of the current study through lack of specific literature about the effects of self-proclaimed optimism-pessimism and perceived similarity on roommate relationships.   The next chapter, Chapter Three, is Methodology.

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear and precise description of how this research project was conducted, including the purpose of the research, who the participants are, and the measures used. It will also provide all the information needed to replicate the experiment in future studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions are based in the suggestions and limitations of previous research, in relation to optimism/pessimism, perception and roommate relationships: (1) Do students who are more optimistic have higher roommate satisfaction? (2) Do students who are more pessimistic have lower roommate satisfaction? (3) Do students who perceive themselves to be optimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, have good roommate relationships? (4) Do students who perceive themselves to be pessimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, have bad roommate relationships? (5) Do students who have perceived similarity regarding their life-orientation have good roommate relationships? (6) Do students who do not perceive their life-orientations as similar have bad roommate relationships?

Hypotheses

In response to the research questions, the researcher predicts the following will be shown in the current research: (1) Students who are more optimistic will have higher roommate satisfaction. (2) Students who are pessimistic will have lower roommate satisfaction. (3) Students who perceive themselves as optimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, will have satisfying roommate relationships. (4) Students who perceive themselves to be pessimistic will have bad roommate relationships, regardless of their actual orientation. (5) Students who perceive themselves to have the same life orientation as their roommate will have a satisfying

roommate relationship. (6) Students who do not perceive themselves to have the same life

orientation has their roommate will have less satisfying relationships.

Research Design

The researcher has chosen to use an online survey for gathering data via S.P.A.R.C.

Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd.). This research design was chosen because survey

research is used to assess perceptions, opinions, and feelings of a group of people, and the

purpose of this study is to assess students' self-perceptions of their life-orientations and their

satisfaction levels with their roommate relationships. The survey consists of four sections,

including demographics, two well-known assessments, and researcher created questions. The

Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994) will be

used to measure the participants' levels of optimism and pessimism. Additionally, two

researcher created questions, determining the participants perceived self-orientation and how that

related to their perceived similarity to their roommate. Furthermore, a slightly edited version of

the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988) will be used to measure the

participants' satisfaction level with their roommate relationships. These assessments can be

found in Appendix B. These will be given to one sample, Southeastern University students.

This group is based on convenience.

Setting

Data will be collected from Southeastern University students on the campus of

Southeastern University. The students will have access to the online survey through S.P.A.R.C.

Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd.).   Students in lower level Psychology classes at

Southeastern University are required to participate in research studies via S.P.A.R.C.

Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd).

Participants

 Participants in this study will include college-age students from Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. These participants were chosen because they are in close proximity to the researcher.

Southeastern University is an Assemblies of God university located in Lakeland, Florida. It is a four-year accredited university with approximately 7,100 students. The population of Southeastern University students ethnic make-up consists of 57.2% White, 19% Hispanic/Latino, 14.8% Black or African American, 1.8% Non-Resident Alien, 1.6% Asian, 0.6% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 04% American Indian or Alaska Native. Additionally, about 56.6% of the students are female and 43.4% are male. This school attracts 18-25 year old's who are interested in going into ministry or into the corporate world.   ("How Diverse is Southeastern University?," 2013). Southeastern University's mission is to help students discover their divine design and equip them professionally, so they better the Kingdom of God as they progress through life after college.

The participants were chosen based on convenience and their willingness to volunteer making this a convenient sample. No surveys outside Southeastern students were given. The participants created an account within S.P.A.R.C. Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd.), and upon choosing to participate in the study, were asked to complete the survey. The ideal turnout was 100 male and 100 female respondents, for a total of 200 participants, however, limitations prevented that.

Due to limited numbers, only a total of 45 participants was allowed to participate in the current study. The participants of this study included 14 males and 31 females with an age range

of 18-22 (Mage=19.33 years.) Students were rewarded one research credit for participating in the study.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study. The Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994) was used to measure the participants' levels of optimism and pessimism. This measure is a Likert-scale, with a range of 1-5 and consist of 10 questions. The participants are given statements, such as "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best," and are asked how much they relate through options such as, "I agree a lot." Levels of optimism or pessimism were determined by taking the mean of each participant's score, with higher scores being more pessimistic and lower scores being more optimistic. Two researcher created questions, determining the participants perceived self-orientation and how that related to their perceived similarity to their roommate, were also included in the survey. The first question is, "Do you consider yourself an optimist or pessimist?" The participants were given the option to pick either optimist or pessimist. The second question is, "Do you believe your roommate has the same life orientation as you (optimist/pessimist)? The participants were given the option to pick yes or no. Finally, a slightly edited version of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), was used to measure the participants' satisfaction level with their roommate relationships. While this measurement normally assesses romantic relationship satisfaction, the wording was changed to make it roommate relationship specific. This instrument is also a Likert-scale, ranging from 1-5, containing seven questions. The participants will be asked questions such as, "how well does your roommate meet your needs?" The participants will then rate their answer on a scale from one, being low, to five, being high. Again, the mean for each participant is determined, with higher scores being more roommate

satisfaction. The questionnaires and questions within each assessment were randomized to avoid order bias. A copy of the surveys can be found in Appendix B.

Procedure

To recruit participants for this study, the researcher used the fact that students in Psychology classes are required to participate in surveys. S.P.A.R.C. Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd.) was used to distribute the online survey which was approved by the International Review Board (see Appendix A).

Each participant was asked to complete the online survey, containing five different parts. First, each participant was shown an informed consent, which required them to agree before they continued to participate. The informed consent described the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to confidentiality. A copy of the informed consent can be found in Appendix C. After that, the survey began.

The survey contains demographics, the Life Orientation Test (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994), an edited version of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), and two researcher created questions. The combination of the questions is designed to discover if there is a correlation between students self-perceived optimism or pessimism and their roommate satisfaction. The Life Orientation Test (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994) and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), are already validated research assessments, and the researcher created questions are based on previous studies. The survey is concluded with an explanation of the purpose of the study and thanking the participant for their time.

Measures

      Demographic data will be collected to distinguish age, ethnicity, year in college, gender, denomination, major, and their roommate situation. A copy of the demographics can be found in Appendix D. Understanding demographics will help further explain the research findings. It will be interesting to note the difference between roommate satisfaction between the various demographics.

      After the respondents complete the demographic information section, the three assessments will be given. The Life Orientation Test (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994), the researcher created questions, and the edited version of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988) will be given in random order. Additionally, within the individual assessments, the questions will not be in any particular order. The respondents will rate how they feel about each statement on a scale. Each question pertains to the participants' life orientation, perception, or relationship satisfaction. The questionnaire should give an accurate description of the correlation between self-perceived optimism or pessimism and roommate relationship satisfaction.

Summary

      In summary, these methods were used to assess perceived life-orientations correlation with roommate satisfaction. The findings of this research will be presented in Chapter 4, Results.

Results

The purpose of this section is to report the statistical results of the current research study as it relates to the research questions. The results are as follows.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows; (1) Do students who are more optimistic have higher roommate satisfaction? (2) Do students who are more pessimistic have lower roommate satisfaction? (3) Do students who perceive themselves to be optimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, have quality roommate relationships? (4) Do students who perceive themselves to be pessimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, have unsatisfactory roommate relationships? (5) Do students who have perceived similarity regarding their life-orientation have positive roommate relationships? (6) Do students who do not perceive their life-orientations as similar have negative roommate relationships?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses are as follows; (1) Students who are more optimistic will have higher roommate satisfaction. (2) Students who are pessimistic will have lower roommate satisfaction. (3) Students who perceive themselves as optimistic, regardless of their actual life orientation, will have satisfying roommate relationships. (4) Students who perceive themselves to be pessimistic will have bad roommate relationships, regardless of their actual orientation. (5) Students who perceive themselves to have the same life orientation as their roommate will have a satisfying roommate relationship. (6) Students who do not perceive themselves to have the same life orientation has their roommate will have less satisfying relationships.

Measures

Participants in this study completed an online survey which included demographics, The Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994), the Relationship

Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), which was edited to pertain specifically to roommate relationships, and two researcher created questions pertaining to perception and life orientation. Four questions from the Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994) were removed from analysis because they were filler questions that did not pertain to the assessment. The test is scored such as the higher the participant scores the more pessimistic, he or she is. Additionally, three of the questions were reversed coded. In the edited version of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), two items were reverse coded. This measure is scored such as the higher the participant's score, the more satisfied they are with their roommate relationship. These assessments can be found in Appendix B.

Descriptive Analyses

This study had a total of 45 participants from Southeastern University, of which 31.1% was male and 68.9% was female (14 men, 31 women, Mage = 19.33, age range: 18-22 years). The ethnicity of the participants was broken down into 5 categories, Caucasian, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, American Indian and other. In reference to the participants of this study, 64.4% identified themselves as Caucasian, 24.4% as Hispanic or Latino, 6.7% as Black or African American, 2.2% as American Indian and 2.2% as other. A majority of the participants identified themselves as freshmen (57.8%), then sophomores (13.3%), then juniors (17.8%), and finally seniors (11.1%). Additionally, while 33.3% of the participants were psychology majors, the other 66.7% were made up of other majors. Finally, in reference to the participants' denominations, 42.2% identified as nondenominational, 22.2% identified as Assemblies of God, 13.3% identified as Baptist, 4.4% identified as Methodist, and 17.8% identified as other. A visual representation of these demographics are shown in Figures 4.1-4.6 and can be found in Appendix E.

In reference to roommates, 62.2% of the participants had selected with their current roommate, and 28.9% had roomed with their current roommate before. A visual representation of these stats, including the number of semesters participants previously roomed with their current roommates, are shown in Figures 4.7-4.9 and are included in Appendix F.

Specific to the current study, the participants' optimism and pessimism levels were measured. The result was a mean of 2.482 with a standard deviation of 0.700. In relation to perception, participants' response to their perceived life orientation had a mean of 0.780 with a standard deviation of 0.420, and participants' response to perceived similarity with their roommates' life orientation had a mean of 0.670 with a standard deviation of 0.477. Furthermore, a total of 15.6% of the participants perceived themselves to have a different life orientation then their test scores indicated, and 31.1% of participants believed their roommate to have a different life orientation then themselves. Additionally, the mean for roommate relationship satisfaction was 3.743, with a standard deviation of 1.041. A visual representation of this data and the following correlations are included in Figures 4.10-4.11 and Table 1, found in Appendix G.

Correlations

A correlational analysis was conducted between the various variables to answer each specific research question.

Questions One and Two

The first and second research questions pertained to whether students who were optimistic had more satisfying roommate relationships than those who identified as pessimistic, with the hypothesis that, optimistic students will have more roommate satisfaction then pessimistic students. A correlational analysis was run comparing the life orientation mean and roommate satisfaction mean. The result was a significant (p = .033) negative correlation of 0.318.

Question Three and Four

The third and fourth research questions addressed students' self-perception in regard to their life orientation and how that pertains to roommate satisfaction. The hypotheses were that is students perceived themselves to be optimistic, they would have higher roommate satisfaction and if they perceived themselves as pessimistic, they would have lower roommate satisfaction, regardless of the participants' actual life orientation. The correlational analysis found the relationship to not be significant

(p = 0.142) with a correlational value of 0.223.   To supplement these results, a one-sample T-Test was

also run between self-perception and relationship satisfaction.   The results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

T-Test for Self-Perception and Roommate Relationship Satisfaction

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of Difference | |
	t	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean	Lower	Upper
Self-Perception	12.410	.42000	.06300	.7800	.6500	.9000
Life Orientation	23.776	.70013	.10437	2.4815	2.2711	2.6918
Roommate Relationship Satisfaction	24.125	1.01073	.15514	3.7429	3.4302	4.0555

Questions Five and Six

        Research questions five and six looked at whether students who perceived their roommates' life

orientation as similar to theirs had more positive or negative roommate relationships.   The hypotheses

were that those who perceived their roommate to have the same life orientation as them would have more

positive roommate relationships and those who perceived dissimilarity would have more negative

roommate relationships.   The results of the correlational analyses showed a significant (p = 0.022)

positive correlation of 0.340 between perceived similarity and roommate satisfaction.

Other Findings

        Other findings that resulted from this study proved interesting and important to research.   Again,

according to the correlational analysis participants' perception of their own life orientation has a

significant (p = 0.005) negative correlation of 0.413 to their actual life orientation.   To supplement these

results, a one-sample T-Test was run between self-perception and actual life orientation.   The results are

reported in Table 2.   Additionally, this research study found no significant correlation between

participants who selected their roommates and roommate satisfaction (p = 0.115, Corr.   = 0.238) or

between participants who roomed with their current roommate previously and roommate satisfaction (p = 0.676, Corr. = 0.064).

Summary

In summary, these results were reported to explain the relationship between perceived life-orientations correlation and roommate satisfaction, as it related to the research questions.   The explanation and application of this research will be presented in Chapter 5, Discussion.

Discussion

The following section designed to describe the implications of the current research. The sections will be broken down by research question. It is as follows.

Question One and Two

The first two research questions addressed whether optimists or pessimists have better roommate relationships. The researcher hypothesized that students who are more optimistic will have more satisfying roommate relationships than students who are more pessimistic. According to the analysis, there is a significant correlation showing the researcher's hypothesis to be true. According to previous research, there is a negative correlation between optimism and neuroticism (Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi, & Batayeneh, 2013) and a positive correlation between optimism and being outgoing, agreeable, considerate and willing to try new things (Lui, Rollock, Chang, Leong, & Zamboanga, 2016). Additionally, the literature supports the notion that pessimism has a positive correlation with anxiety, low levels of closeness, dependency, and neurosis and a negative correlation with subjective well-being (Heinonen, Räikkönen, Keltikangas-Järvinen, & Strandberg, 2004; Lui et al., 2016; Mahasneh et al., 2013). The past research provides possible explanations for the correlation the current study found, especially as it relates to agreeableness and feelings of closeness. It could be theorized that optimism and these various personality traits interact with each other to influence roommate satisfaction. Practically, this discovery can influence the current process of roommate assignment. It might be beneficial to include the Life-Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994) within the paperwork students fill out when describing their personality for roommate pairing. This could be a potential, simple, way to assess other personality traits related to optimism and pessimism, with strengthening the odds of having a positive roommate experience.

Question Three and Four

Questions three and four pertained to participants self-perception of their life orientation, and how that related to roommate satisfaction. The researcher hypothesized that those who perceived themselves as optimistic would have higher roommate satisfaction, regardless of their actual life-orientation, and

those who perceived themselves to be pessimistic would have lower roommate satisfaction. Through analysis, the correlation was found insignificant, with a relatively low correlation. This, combined with the significant correlation found between participants perception of their life orientation and their actual orientation possibly points to a limitation within the study. It is possible that due to the small sample size, not enough participants had a false perception of themselves to obtain accurate results of this correlation.

Question Five and Six

Research questions five and six addressed the power of perception as it relates to similarity in life-orientation and roommate satisfaction. The researcher hypothesized that participants who perceived their roommates to have similar life orientation would have more positive roommate relationships. The researcher's hypothesis was supported within the current study with a significant statistic. This finding supports the previous research which states that perceived similarity, within relationships, increases relationship satisfaction. According to previous research, specifically, a perceived similarity in areas of openness, agreeableness, and consciousness predict friendship formation (Cemalcilar, Baruh, Kezer, Kamiloglu, & Nigdeli, 2018; Erlandson, 2009; Selfhout, Denissen, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; van Zalk & Denissen, 2015). As these characteristics are the same as those associated with good relationship quality, and optimism, logic would suggest that perception plays a powerful role in roommate relationships. These findings can, again, be applied through an adjustment to the current roommate assignment system. It might prove useful to ask students whether they identify as an optimist or pessimist, in addition to testing their actual Life-Orientation and factoring it into matching dyads. As a result, more college students can have better roommate relationships.

The significance of Other Findings

Other significant findings include no significant correlation between roommate satisfaction and the ability to pick your roommate or between students who had previously roomed with their current roommate. These results are contrary to the findings of other studies. Though previous research has shown that students value knowing their roommate prior to living with them (Shekhawat et al., 2016) the current study found that it does not affect roommate experience, meaning there could be a better way to

assign roommates so students generally have a positive experience. Furthermore, previous literature states that students who pick each other as roommates have a better liking, cooperation, and communication, translating to better roommate satisfaction (Martin & Anderson, 1995; Selfhout et al., 2009; Stern, Powers, Dhaene, Dix, & Shegog, 2007; Whitmore & Dunsmore, 2014). Again, the current study did not support that claim.

Limitations

The limitations of the current research study include a restricted sample. Due to a high volume of research studies being conducted at the same time, the researcher was limited to 45 participants. Additionally, the sample population is not generalizable to the entire college population because participants were pooled from a small, private, Assemblies of God associated university. Because of these limitations, the current research study should be replicated on a more generalizable college campus, with more participants to confirm the results of this analysis.

Suggestion for Further Research

The researcher suggests further evaluating characteristics such as agreeableness and feelings of closeness to see how they interact with optimism and pessimism as it relates to roommate relationships. Furthermore, the researcher suggests retesting self-perception as it relates to optimism/pessimism and roommate relationships with a bigger and more accurate population sample.

Conclusion

Roommate relationships are experiences that affect the majority of college students in America. Because of this, the researcher wanted to research a topic which addressed a way to lessen the likelihood of negative roommate experiences. This research aimed to study the relationship between optimism/pessimism, perception and roommate relationships. Six research questions and hypothesis were created to specify the research and terms were operationally defined for continuity. The researcher then consulted the literature on the suggested topic.

When compiled, it was found that the literature supports the idea that there is a relationship between self-proclaimed optimism-pessimism and roommate satisfaction. Though no research was found

on the specific topic, much research was found on topics associated with optimism, pessimism, perception and roommate relationships. The research supported the idea that personality interacts with optimism and pessimism levels, which in turn interacts with perception and relationships in general. Furthermore, roommate relationships were found to be affected by perception, social skills, and personality traits as well. Because of this, the researcher proceeded to study how optimism and pessimism levels interacted with roommate relationships.

The researcher produced a study assessing participants optimism and pessimism levels through the Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994), roommate satisfaction through the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Hendrick, S. S., 1988), and perception from two researcher created questions. The sample was pooled from Southeastern University through S.P.A.R.C. Participation Systems (Sona Systems Ltd.).

The results of the analysis showed significant correlations between high optimism levels and roommate satisfaction and perceived similarity and roommate satisfaction. However, an insignificant correlation was found between self-perceptions about life orientation and roommate satisfaction. This information can be helpful in bettering the roommate assignment process if applied properly. The researcher suggests considering using the Life-Orientation Test-Revised within the roommate paperwork and asking students whether they identify as optimistic or pessimistic. This information can then be used to successfully match roommates.

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Appendix A

Southeastern University
IRB Reviewer's Review Sheet

Protocol #:_____

Exempt: Yes ✔ No ☐

Principal Investigator's Name:_____ Today's Date:_____

Co-Investigators:_____

Project Title: _____

1. Does the research place subjects at more than minimal risk? Yes ☐ No ✔
Minimal risk is defined as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life or during routine physical or psychological examination or tests)

Notes: _____
_____

2. If more than minimal risk, does the merit of the project outweigh the risks and are the benefits maximized and risks minimized? N/A ✔ Yes ☐ No ☐

Notes: _____
_____

3. Are there any ethical issues regarding the study's design and conduct? Yes ☐ No ✔

Ethical issues may include but are not limited to the Belmont Report principles: respect for persons (voluntary, fully informed consent); beneficence (obligation to protect subjects from harm and secure their well-being); and, justice (benefits and burdens of research are fairly distributed)

Notes:_____
_____

4. Is subject selection equitable? Yes ✔ No ☐

If special populations are included the IRB should ensure that subjects can understand the research, give full consent, and voluntarily agree to participate, and they should consider any other possible special problems. Are vulnerable or special populations included in the research?
☐ Pregnant women
☐ Fetus/fetal tissue
☐ Prisoners
☐ Minors Under Age 18
☐ Elderly subjects
☐ Minority groups and non-English speakers
☐ Patients
☐ Mentally/Emotionally/Developmentally Disabled persons
☐ Behavioral Abnormalities, psychological or disease condition
✔ None of the above, Normal Healthy Volunteers

Notes:_____
_____

5. Is the recruitment and consent process (including telephone scripts, ads, brochures, letters, compensation) fully described, appropriate, and non-coercive? Yes ☐ No ✔
Notes:_____
_____

6. Are risks (physical, emotional, financial, legal) to subjects minimized?   Yes ☐   No ☑
Notes:_____
_____

7. Confidentiality of Data:
Are there procedures for protecting privacy and confidentiality?   Yes ☑   No ☐
Notes:_____
_____

8. Is Informed Consent Included in the Application?   Yes ☐   No ☑

Stipulate Missing Elements:

Is affiliation with SEU clearly noted?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is the Faculty PI identified? N/A ☐	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is the study faculty sponsor identified (if appropriate)?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Does the consent state the study purpose accurately?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is it clear what the subject(s) will be asked to do?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Are risks or discomforts clearly and fully stated?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Are benefits clearly and fully stated?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Are alternatives listed (if appropriate)? N/A ☑	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are confidentiality or anonymity issues addressed?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is the PI's contact information included?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is the IRB's contact information included?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is it stated that the subject can withdraw at anytime?	Yes ☑	No ☐
Is the consent understandable at an 8th grade reading level?	Yes ☑	No ☐

Assent Form   Not Required ☑

Is one needed (can the child really refuse to participate)?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Is it one page or less?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Is the language simple and sentences short?	Yes ☐	No ☐

Notes: _____
_____

Additional Comments/Requirements by IRB:

RECOMMENDATION:

☑ Approved as submitted   ☐ Approval Deferred; add'l information required
                                                                  (additional IRB review required)
☐ Approved with stipulations as noted   ☐ Not Approved

Signature:_____   Date:_____

Appendix B

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

How well does your roommate meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly		Average		Extremely well

In general, how satisfied are you with your roommate relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely satisfied

How good is your roommate relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor		Average		Excellent

How often do you wish you had a different roommate?

A	B	C	D	E
Never		Average		Very often

To what extent has your roommate relationship met your original expectations:

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

How much do you care for your roommate?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much		Average		Very much

How many problems are there in your roommate relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few		Average		Very many

NOTE: Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored.   A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5.   You add up the items and
divide by 7 to get a mean score.

<p style="text-align:center">Life Orientation Scale-Revised</p>

Please be as honest and accurate as you can throughout. Try not to let your response to one statement influence your responses to other statements. There are no "correct" or "incorrect" answers. Answer according to your own feelings, rather than how you think "most people" would answer.

A = I agree a lot
B = I agree a little
C = I neither agree nor disagree D = I disagree a little
E = I disagree a lot

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best. 2. It's easy for me to relax.
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will. (R) 4. I'm always optimistic about my future.

5. I enjoy my friends a lot.
6. It's important for me to keep busy.
7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way. (R)
8. I don't get upset too easily.
9. I rarely count on good things happening to me. (R)
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

Scoring:

Items 3, 7, and 9 are reverse scored (or scored separately as a pessimism measure). Items 2, 5, 6, and 8 are fillers and should not be scored. Scoring is kept continuous – there is no benchmark for being an optimist/pessimist.

Perception

Circle One

Do you consider yourself an optimist or pessimist?

Optimist/Pessimist

Do you believe that your roommate has the same life orientation as you (optimist or pessimist)?

Yes/No

Appendix C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Title: Relationship Satisfaction in College Students.

Investigator(s): Jim Anderson, Madison Murphy, Larry Hazelbaker

Purpose: The purpose of the research study is to asses relationship satisfaction. You must be 18 years or older to participate.)

What to Expect: This research study is administered online. Participation in this research will involve the completion of three questionnaires. The first questionnaire will ask for non-identifying demographic information, the second questionnaire will ask you how you relate to specific phrases, and the third will ask about relationship satisfaction. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.   You will be expected to complete the questionnaire once.   It should take you about 20 minutes to complete.

Risks: There are no risks associated with this project which are expected to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you.   However, you may gain an appreciation and understanding of how research is conducted.

Compensation: You will receive one unit of course credit for your participation. Other alternatives for course credit are available – please check with your instructor for details. You may write a paper on a research article, or attend a research talk instead.

Your Rights and Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is voluntary.   There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked room and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.   Data will be destroyed five years after the study has been completed.

Contacts: You may contact any of the researchers at the following email addresses, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Jim Anderson (Jaanderson2@seu.edu) and Madison Murphy (mamurphy@seu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office IRB@seu.edu

If you choose to participate: Please, click NEXT if you choose to participate. By clicking NEXT, you are indicating that you freely and voluntarily and agree to participate in this study and you also acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age. It is recommended that you print a copy of this consent page for your records before you begin the study by clicking below.

Appendix D

Demographics

Age:

Gender: M/F

What is your ethnicity/race?

- American Indian or Alaska Native

- Asian

- Black or African American

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

- Caucasian

- Hispanic or Latino

- Other _____

Year:

- Freshman

- Sophomore

- Junior

- Senior

- Other:_____

What is your major?

- _____

Did you select your roommate?

- Yes/No

Have you roomed with your current roommate before?

- Yes/No

- If so, how many semesters?

  - _____

How many roommates do you have?

- _____

What denomination do you identify with?

- Baptist

- AG

- Methodist

- Presbyterian

- Nondenominational

- Other:_____

Appendix E
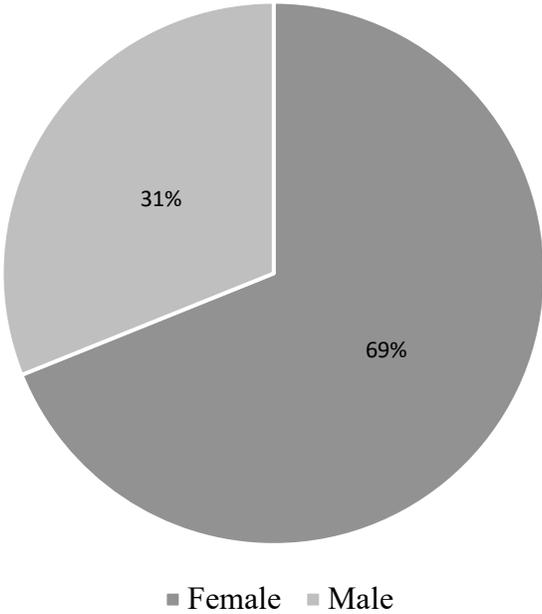
Figure 4.1.   Gender Breakdown
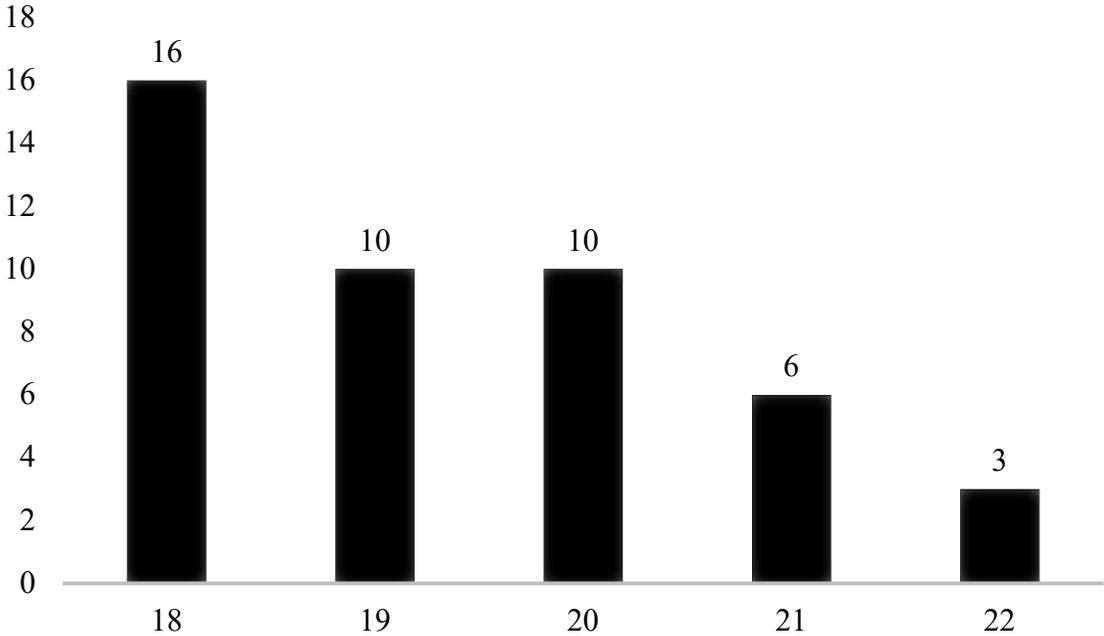
Figure 4.2.   Age Breakdown
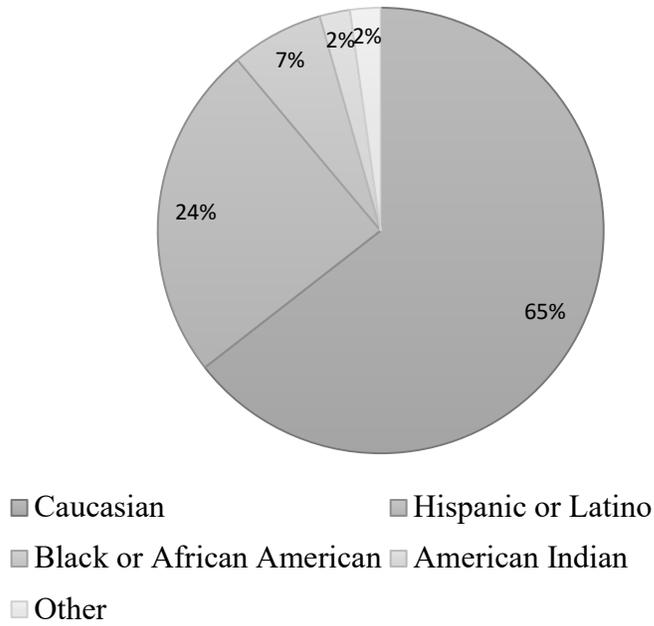
Figure 4.3.   Ethnicity Breakdown
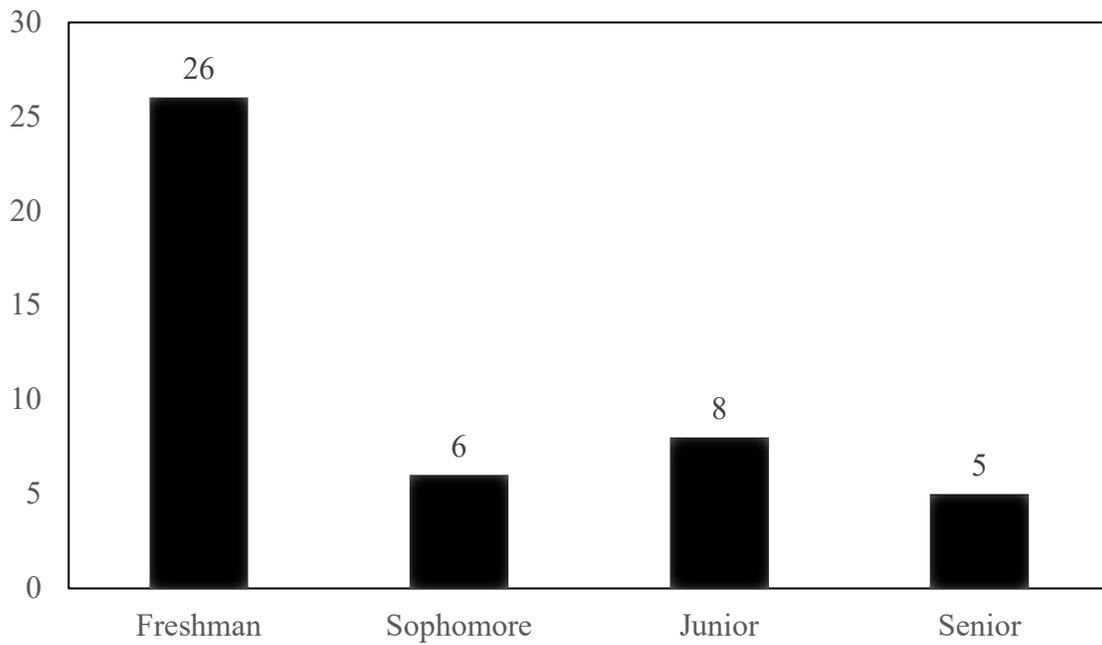
Figure 4.4.   Year Breakdown
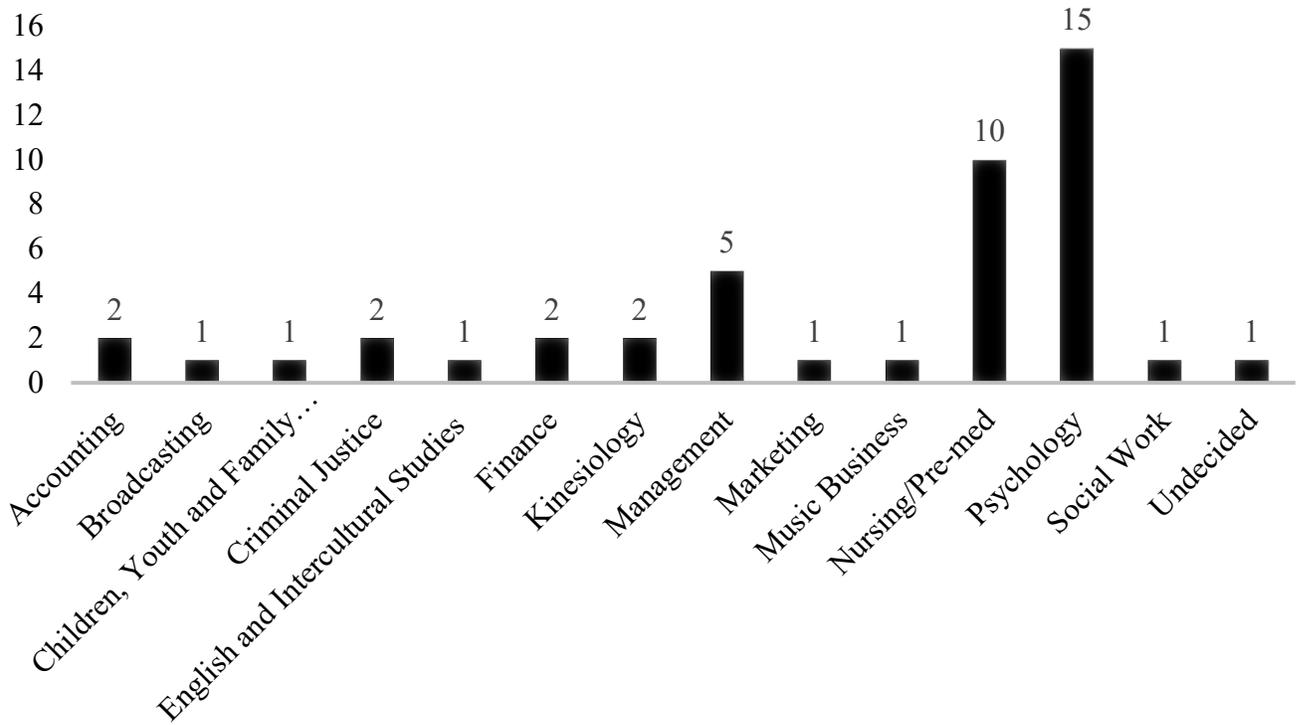
Figure 4.5. Major Breakdown
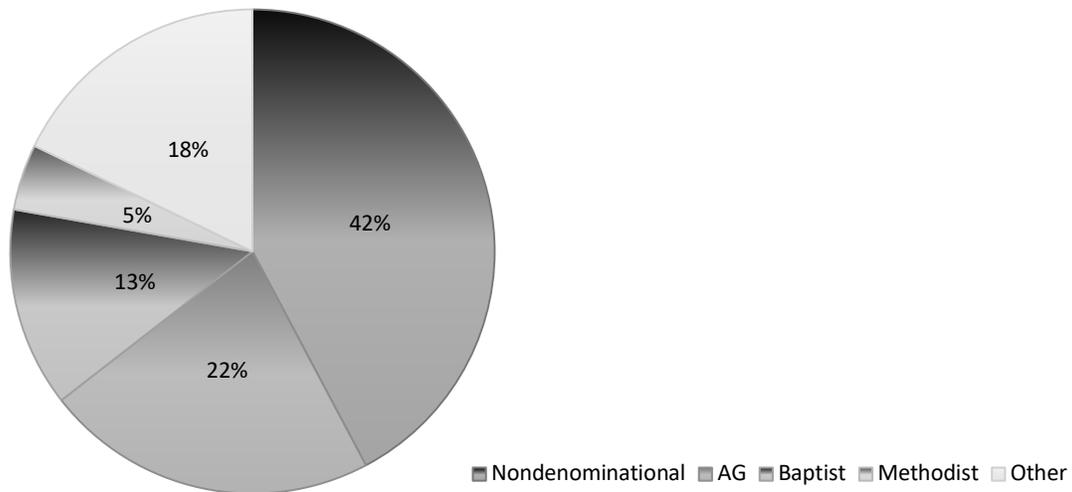
Figure 4.6. Denominational Breakdown

Appendix F

■Yes ■No
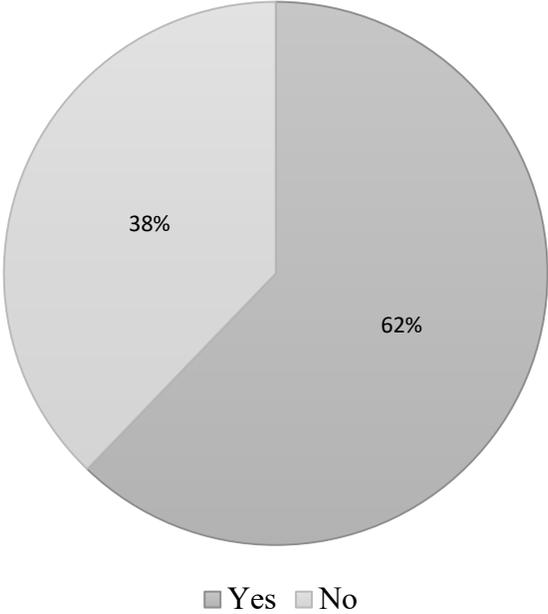
Figure 4.7. Did You Select Your Roommate?

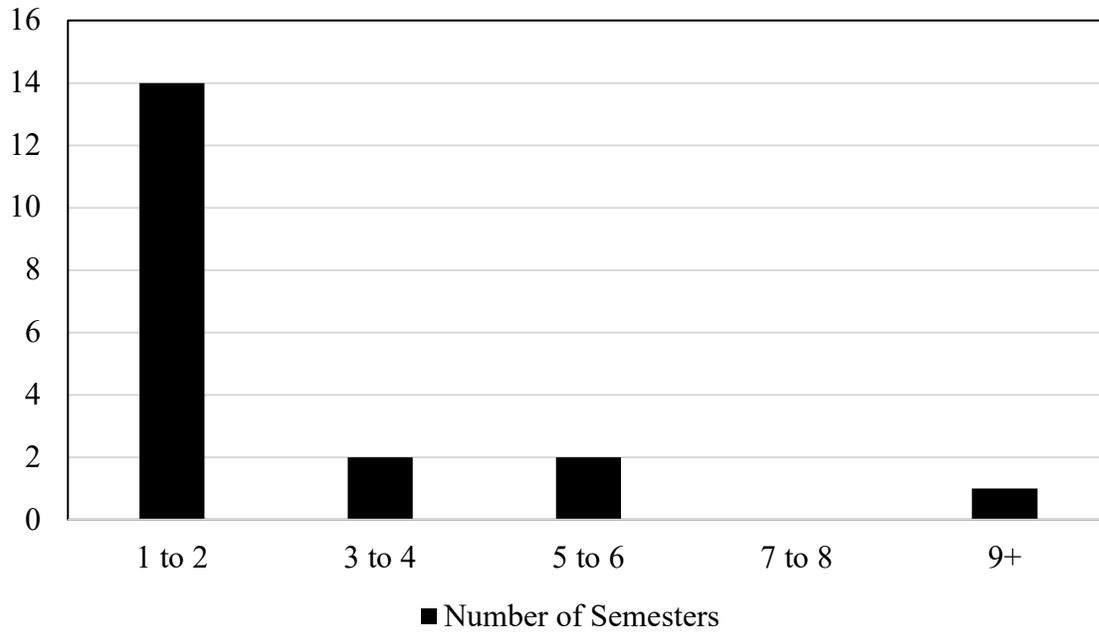■Yes ■No
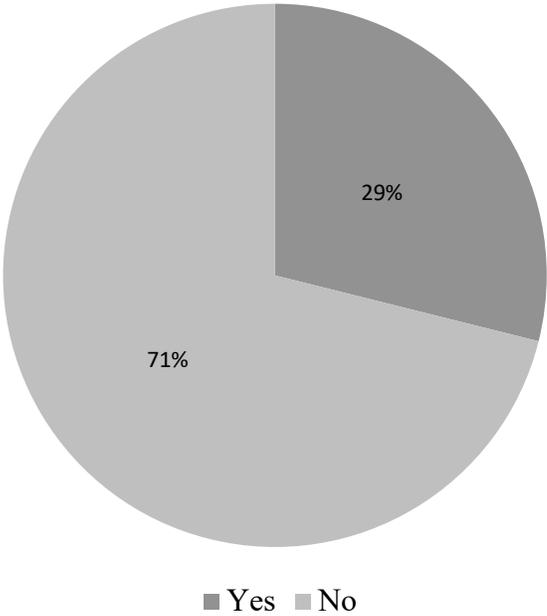
Figure 4.8. Have You Roomed with Your Roommate Before?
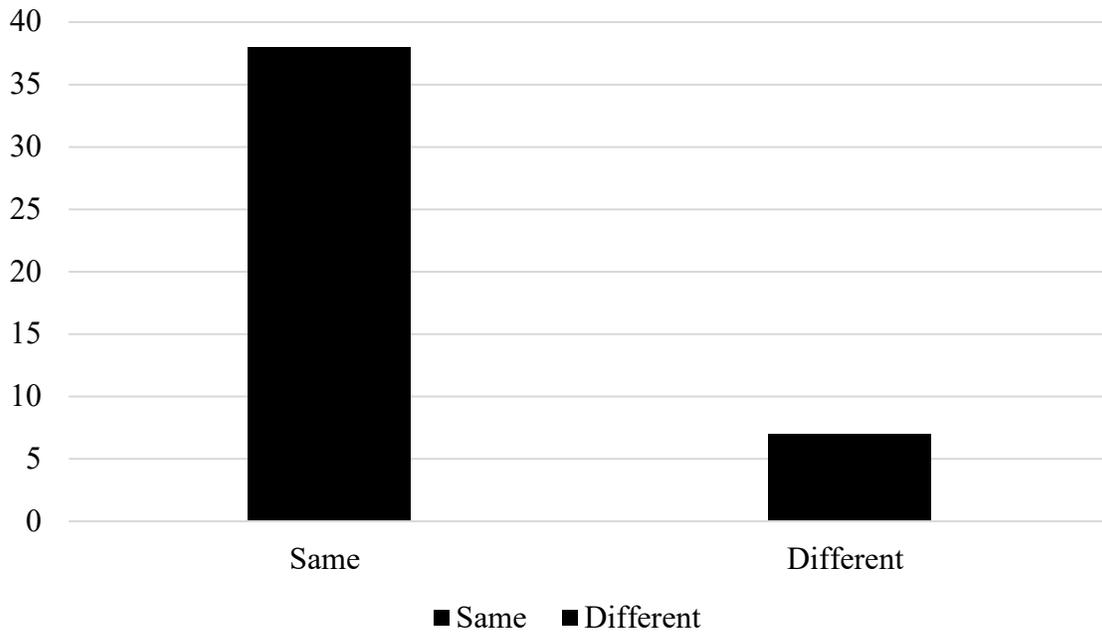
Figure 4.9.   Number of Semesters Previously Roomed

Appendix G

■ Same   ■ Different

Figure 4.10.   Perceived Life Orientation v.   Actual Life Orientation
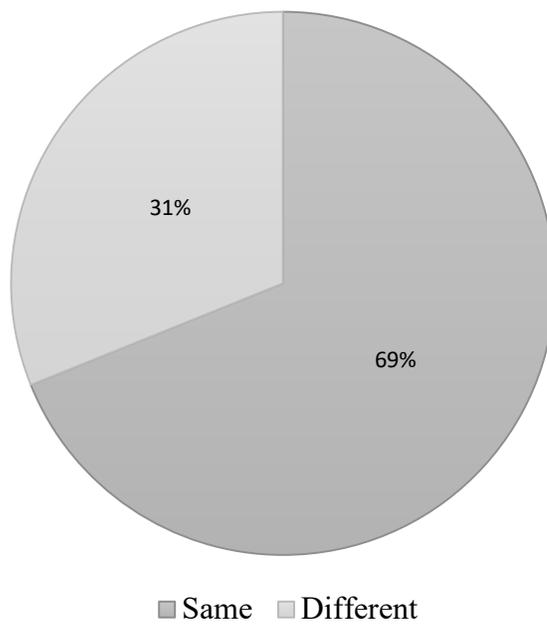

■ Same   □ Different

Figure 4.11.   Perceived Similarity of Roommate Life Orientation.

Table 1

Actual Life Orientation and Roommate Satisfaction Correlated with Self Perception

Measure	M	SD	Correlation
Life Orientation Test-Revised	2.4815	.70013	-.413**
Roommate Satisfaction Scale	3.7429	1.04073	.2230
Perceived Similarity	.670	.4770	.1890
Self-Perception	.780	.4200	--

Note.   ** = p ≤ .001