THE INFLUENCE OF ARGUMENTATIVENESS, VERBAL AGGRESSIVENESS, 
AND AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION ON ROOMMATE COMMUNICATION 
SATISFACTION AND ROOMMATE AFFINITY

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THE INFLUENCE OF ARGUMENTATIVENESS, VERBAL AGGRESSIVENESS, AND AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION ON ROOMMATE COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION AND ROOMMATE AFFINITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between three specific communication traits and roommate communication satisfaction. The three traits this study examined included: verbal aggressiveness, argumentativeness, and affective orientation.

Two Hundred four participants were asked to complete a questionnaire measuring argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, affective orientation and roommate communication satisfaction. The findings indicated there was no significant relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and argumentativeness, nor was there was significant relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and affective orientation. However, the results did show a significant negative relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and verbal aggressiveness. Implications of these findings, and suggestions for future research are discussed.
DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my wonderful husband. Without his unwavering support this past year, I could not have accomplished this goal. I only hope that I can repay the favor some day soon and help you to follow your dreams.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In late August as high school graduates leave home to attend college, one of the many new challenges faced will be that they will share a room and often a fair portion of their college experience with someone they have never met before the first day of school (Pierce, 1970). Entering college is often an adjustment period for many students. First year students are faced with forming a multitude of new relationships. Research has shown that these interpersonal relationships can have the single greatest impact on the student’s college experience (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). Because of the significance of the roommate relationship, unsuccessful and negative consequences may occur if the individuals involved experience conflict and relational turmoil. In addition, students who do not develop strong interpersonal relationships often feel alienated which can ultimately lead to withdrawing from school after their freshman year (Baker & Siryk, 1980). For reasons such as this, the overall adjustment and well-being of college students is contingent upon the formation of successful relationships.

One of the most important interpersonal relationships that college students need to develop is with their roommate. According to Hawken, Duran, and Kelly (1991), a student’s relationship with his or her roommate plays a major role in the overall college experience, particularly during their first year. College students often associate poor interpersonal relationships with poor college experiences in general. For example
students with unsuccessful roommate relationships are more likely to view their living situation as unsatisfactory as well (Perkins, 1977). These smaller roommate issues can quickly snowball into larger problems for both the student and the university. Students engaged in unsuccessful roommate relationships also tend to have more negative perceptions of the school, which can ultimately lead to lower retention rates (Waldo, 1986). Therefore, it is to the school’s benefit to do whatever it takes to aid in the development of interpersonal relationships, particularly roommate relationships.

The formation of successful and satisfying roommate relationships is a major part of a college student’s life. Strong, positive relationships can ultimately lead to fond memories and more importantly, the development of valuable communication and relationship skills which can be utilized in all aspects of life.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Roommate Satisfaction

Many interpersonal relationships formed during one's college years are extremely satisfying and crucial to healthy emotional development. Meeting new people and making lasting friendships is integral to becoming a successful college student (Dies, 1974; Feldman, 1969; Scott, 1975). Of all the new relationships formed, those between roommates are somewhat unique because these relationships often involve a great deal of interaction with someone students initially know very little about.

College students are at a developmental stage in which the formation of interpersonal relationships is critical to healthy emotional growth. According to Lovejoy, Perkins, and Collins (1995), "Students who cope successfully with this new living situation generally show better overall adjustment to college life" (p. 594). Additionally, Pace (1970) found that satisfaction with college roommates is directly related to both the perceived quality of the overall college experience and strong academic performance. Furthermore, Waldo (1984) reported that positive roommate relationships are also correlated with better psychological adjustment among college students.

However, not all relationships formed during college are positive or successful. If negative or unsuccessful roommate relationships begin to form, the results of such
unhealthy relations can prove to be disruptive for all parties involved. For this reason, early identification of the issues creating tension is essential. In doing so, interventions or mediations involving the Residential Life staff could take place before permanent damage occurs to the relationship. Research indicates that negative roommate relationships can lead to a myriad of issues involving college life. One such study found that social problems, often including roommates, was one of the most common reason students reported for engaging in suicidal behaviors (Bernard & Bernard, 1982). In addition, there has been evidence to support that poor relationships between roommates have been correlated with negative perceptions of the university environment and lower GPAs (Pace, 1970). According to Lovejoy, Perkins, and Collins (1995), volatile roommate relationships can be identified early in the academic year simply by asking the students directly about their overall satisfaction. In order to measure overall roommate satisfaction they utilized the Social Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ) and as a result determined that through the use of this scale, schools would be able to predict which roommate pairs were incompatible and thus headed for conflict or even breakup.

Because the establishment of interpersonal relationships is fundamental to student growth, it is important to understand the skills needed to form such relations. Research indicates that the quality of interpersonal relationships is correlated with the use of specific communication skills within relationships (Guerney, 1977). Additionally, evidence suggests that positive relationships have been found between roommates who clearly understand each other’s expectations, openly communicate with each other, and verbalize to each other their thoughts and feelings (Waldo & Fuhriman, 1981). Furthermore, Waldo (1984) found that speaking and listening skills were significantly
related to the overall quality of the roommate relationship and the level of communication between roommates was also related to the perceptions of the residence hall as a socially involving, emotionally supportive environment.

Roommate satisfaction and communication satisfaction are related as it is difficult to have one without the other (Waldo, 1984). According to Waldo (1986), poor personal adjustment was related to poor communication. Hecht (1978) conceptualized this relationship between communication and satisfaction. According to his research, satisfaction is defined as “the affective response to the fulfillment of expectation-type standards and symbolizes an enjoyable fulfilling experience” (p.350). He reported that if an individual anticipates and receives positive expectations, communication satisfaction results. In other words, if person A expects to have a pleasant interaction with person B and such an interaction occurs, person A then experiences communication satisfaction (Hecht, 1978). Duran and Zakahi (1988) state “communication satisfaction serves as a useful construct to measure an individual’s ability to perceive and fulfill the communicative expectations of one’s partner” (p. 137). Therefore, communication satisfaction can be seen as an ideal variable to measure the development of the affective communication process of roommate relationships.

College administrators spend countless hours each year pairing incoming first year students in hopes of aiding in the development of successful, satisfying roommate relationships. However, despite the best efforts of housing offices, roommates do not always get along and conflict is inevitable.
Roommate Affinity

Roommate affinity or liking is conceptually very similar to roommate communication satisfaction. The concepts of satisfaction and liking tend to go hand in hand, as it is difficult to have one without the other (Duck & Pittman, 1994). However, they are different enough to warrant separate explanations. According to Rubin (1970), liking involves the extent to which one admires, respects, and has basic affection for one's partner. This concept is vital if not essential to have in successful roommate relationships. In fact, previous research has shown that affinity or liking is considered to be a necessary component of relationship satisfaction (Hinkle, 1999). If students don't respect or like one another, then coexisting in a small room will likely become impossible. If research existed that pointed to ways to increase affinity between roommates or identify individuals who would likely connect on an interpersonal level, this information could prove to be very beneficial for those in Residence Life offices when pairing roommates. This, in turn, may ultimately lead to the development of stronger interpersonal relationships, which might result in better retention rates for incoming students. As outlined above, previous research has shown that satisfaction and liking among college roommates is directly related to both the perceived quality of the overall college experience and strong academic performance (Pace, 1970). Furthermore, Waldo (1984) reported that positive roommate relationships are also correlated with better psychological adjustment among college students.

In addition to satisfaction, affinity is also closely related to similarity in interpersonal relationships (Duck & Barnes, 1992). According to Martin and Anderson (1995), roommates who are prosocially similar express more satisfaction with and liking
for their roommates. In other words, roommates who were both low in verbal aggressiveness versus both high in verbal aggressiveness reported more affinity toward one another. Furthermore, Deutsch, Sullivan, Sage, and Basile (1991) also found that friends share more similar self-concepts than non-friends. Again, this research could be used by housing offices to effectively pair incoming roommates who share similar traits in order to increases the likeliness that the roommates would be more satisfied within the relationship.

*Roommate Conflict*

Conflict is a common communication phenomenon even in the most satisfying relationships (Argyle & Furnham, 1983). College roommates engage in conflict for a variety of reasons. Everything from sleep habits to music preference can potentially become an issue when sharing close quarters. Roommate relationships are very similar to marriages in many respects. Both relationships include binding contracts, sharing personal belongings, and personal interests are frequently similar. Additionally, much like marriages, roommate relationships involve interpersonal conflict and the participants must learn to resolve differences (Miller & Zoradi, 1977).

Several definitions of the term conflict exist. Donahue and Kolt (1992) define conflict as “interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals” (p. 4). Similarly, Deutsch (1973) define conflict as “the perception of incompatible activity wherein one person’s action is believed to make another’s less likely or effective” (p. 135). Therefore, individuals in interpersonal relationships need to try to understand why these interpersonal disputes occur in order to
devise solutions to effectively manage the conflict and avoid such interference in the future. Cloven and Roloff (1991) suggest that conflict experiences induce sense-making activity. In other words, when an interpersonal problem occurs, the individuals involved engage in reflective thought in order to better understand the conflict.

Effectively communicating through a conflict is often viewed as a beneficial act. However, the nature of this communication also plays an essential role in how individuals make sense out of their disagreements. Sillars (1980) conceptualized a detailed categorical system which outlined the various conflict strategies in which college students engage. According to Sillars, three types of communicative options are available to students engaged in interpersonal conflict with their roommate which include passive-indirect, distributive, and integrative strategies.

The first major communication option students involved in interpersonal conflict with their roommate may engage in is the passive-indirect option which involves strategies that “minimize explicit acknowledgement of and communication about conflicts” (Sillars, 1980, p. 181). In other words, these are conflicts that tend to suppress or ignore the conflict at hand or involve indirect or ambiguous communication about a particular conflict. This tends to be more of an avoidance strategy in which the roommates don’t say anything to one another in hopes that the conflict will resolve itself.

The second major communication option is the distributive approach which refers to “explicit acknowledgement and discussion of conflict which promotes individual over mutual outcomes by seeking concessions or expressing a negative evaluation of the roommate” (Sillars, 1980, p. 181). These types of conflicts would involve directly approaching the roommate about a problem at hand and pressing the other individual to
withdraw completely as opposed to compromise. For example, if roommate A wanted to
sleep during the day and stay up all night doing homework, he or she would not seek to
find a schedule that worked for the other individual, but instead, would engage in conflict
until roommate B surrendered.

The third and final major communication option college students tend to engage
in while involved in an interpersonal conflict with a roommate includes the integrative
strategy. This method is defined as “explicit discussion of conflict which does not seek
to elicit concessions and sustains a neutral or positive evaluation of the partner” (Sillars,
1980, p. 182). The integrative strategy, like the distributive strategy, involves directly
confronting the other individual involved, however, the goal of this method does not
promote individual outcomes or push others to withdraw or concede, but rather sustains a
more neutral role which is more conducive to compromise. Using the above example
with the integrative strategy, if roommate A wanted to sleep during the day and stay up
all night doing homework, he or she would directly approach roommate B, but maintain a
neutral perspective and work to create a schedule that was suitable for both students.

The results of Sillars (1980) research included an extensive coding scheme which
outlined the various strategies and described various conflicts which might fit into each
category. For example, the passive and indirect strategies were divided into four sub-
categories: nonstrategies, avoidance strategies, indirect strategies, and submissive
strategies. These methods included conflict resolution tactics such as letting the issue
resolve itself, avoiding the issue, avoiding the conflict, hinting at an issue but never
actually addressing it, and jokingly discuss a problem.
For the purpose of his research, Sillars (1980) divided the distributive strategy into two sub-categories: non-coercive compliance gaining and coercive compliance gaining. The non-coercive methods included conflict resolution tactics such as requesting, demanding, and persuading, while the coercive methods included aggressive emotion (i.e., insults, slurs, yelling, anger) and threat-aversion in which punishment is threatened for failure to comply. Finally, the integrative strategies were divided into two sub-categories which included: disclosure and problem-solving.

Research indicates that the use of integrative strategies is associated with greater successful resolution of conflicts as opposed to use of the distributive or avoidant strategies (Sillars, 1980). Furthermore, individuals tend to view the integrative strategy as more effective which ultimately has an indirect result on relational outcomes such as trust (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987).

In addition to the three strategies that Sillars (1980) outlined, Donahue and Kolt (1992) detailed two different types of conflict: constructive and destructive. According to their work, each type has a list of criteria that can be utilized to differentiate between the two types of conflicts. For example, constructive conflicts are interest centered, manifest, capable of bolstering interdependence, focused on flexible means for solving the dispute, and committed to both parties accomplishing their goals. In contrast, destructive conflicts are needs centered, focused on personalities and not behaviors, involved in power preservation and face saving, aimed at compromising interdependence, concentrated on narrowly defined goals and short-cut problem solving, and are frequented by extended, uncontrolled escalation or avoidance cycles. Additionally, according to Cloven and Roloff (1991), given the fact that conflict has the potential for
both positive and negative outcomes, it is essential to identify the variables that impact disputes.

There are a number of factors that impact conflict between individuals and understanding these factors can prove to be invaluable to creating a content student body. Communication behaviors are often dictated by the communication traits that an individual possesses. Research indicates that individuals’ communication traits and behaviors can be a factor in influencing roommate relationships (Saida, 1990). A solid understanding of these influential traits and the situations in which they occur is a key factor in determining personal satisfaction among roommates.

**Communication Traits**

Communication researchers have studied a variety of different traits including: argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, and affective orientation to name a few. According to Infante, Rancer, and Womack (2003), a communication trait is defined as “an abstraction constructed to account for enduring consistencies and differences in message-sending and message-receiving behaviors among individuals” (p. 77). Traits are hypothetical constructs that give meaning to certain communication behaviors and often provide explanations that otherwise would not exist (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 2003). Researching three such traits, argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, and affective orientation may provide a basis for what to expect in several relational contexts. One such situation may be the impact that these traits have on the development of roommate relationships and the satisfaction of these relationships based on traits of the two individuals involved the roommate relationship.
Argumentativeness

The manner in which roommates engage in conflict communication can ultimately determine whether the relationship will succeed. If a conflict is approached in a constructive manner, it is more likely that the pair will reach an amicable conclusion. According to Infante and Rancer (1982), argumentativeness is defined as “a generally stable trait which predisposes individuals in communication situations to advocate positions on controversial issues and to attack verbally the positions which other people hold on these issues” (p. 72). This trait is viewed as a constructive communication trait. Argumentativeness involves a combination of the ability to defend a position on a certain subject in conjunction with the ability to simultaneously refute the opposite position (Infante & Rancer, 1982).

The argumentative trait consists of two major components which tend to compete with one another: the tendency to approach arguments (ARGap) and the tendency to avoid arguments (ARGav). The more the tendency to approach an argument exceeds the tendency to avoid it, the stronger the argumentative trait is in that particular individual.

According to research conducted by Rancer, Baukus, and Infante (1985), there are several beliefs that individuals hold about arguing. In their research, they identified and labeled these beliefs as hostility, activity/process, control/dominance, conflict/dissonance, self-image, learning, and skill. The research suggests that these individuals who differ in the above beliefs, will also differ in their level of argumentativeness. For example, high argumentatives are more positive about all the beliefs, with the exception to hostility, than low argumentatives which reinforces the notion that highly argumentative individuals view the act of arguing as positive or constructive. In addition to being
constructive, these individuals also consider arguing to be a productive communication activity which also enhances their self-esteem and leads to a valuable learning experience for all parties involved which can ultimately improve their rhetorical skills.

An extensive amount of work has been conducted on the argumentativeness trait in general. Perhaps the most important overall finding is the fact that being highly argumentative is a very positive or constructive trait. Conflict and arguing seem to have very negative connotations or stigmas attached and, therefore, it is important to correct these stereotypes. In other words, being skilled and motivated to argue is considered productive across many contexts and situations. Research has also shown that highly argumentative individuals are less likely to be provoked into verbal aggression, which is considered to be a very negative or destructive trait (Infante, 1981). In addition to this central finding, arguing has been found to stimulate curiosity and increase learning. This is because we tend to seek out more information on the topics about which we are arguing (Johnson & Johnson, 1979). Furthermore, arguing has been found to reduce egocentric thinking and force the arguer to explore the topic from several perspectives.

Interestingly, several studies have also examined the outcomes when highly argumentative individuals are on the receiving end of persuasive messages. In such situations, studies show that high argumentatives are less likely to be persuaded to take another position on a topic (Infante, 1981). Additionally, highly argumentative individuals have been seen as higher in credibility and trustworthiness than individuals with lower levels of argumentativeness. In this same sentiment, research has shown that more skillful argumentation skills also demonstrate higher levels of communication competence (Infante, 1981). High argumentatives have also been shown to be leaders in
group discussions and have higher levels of self-esteem (Rancer, Kosberg, & Silvestri, 1992; Schultz, 1982).

Argumentativeness has been studied across several communication contexts such as: family communication, organizational communication, and intercultural communication. Across all contexts, this trait has been shown to be a positive and beneficial trait. However, a companion communication trait, verbal aggressiveness, has been demonstrated to have dysfunctional consequences in interpersonal relationships (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Rancer & Avtgis, 2006).

Verbal Aggressiveness

Certain communication behaviors exist that almost always manifest themselves in negative ways; verbal aggressiveness is one such trait. Verbal aggressiveness is a subset of the hostility trait whereas argumentativeness is a subset of assertiveness (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 2003). Oftentimes people become very emotionally attached to the ideas they discuss, and consider any attack on the position as a personal attack on themselves. As an argument progresses, one of the individuals involved may sense that he or she is losing the argument. Because of the emotional attachment to the topic, the individual may begin to experience a sense of personal loss and as a result become very defensive. As the argument continues and the individual runs out of solid evidence, he or she may resort to self-concept attacks or verbal assaults rather than feel defeated.

Infante and Rancer (1982), define verbal aggressiveness as the tendency to attack the self-concept of another person in face-to-face encounters instead of, or in addition to, attacks on another’s arguments. A verbally aggressive individual not only attacks the self-concept of others, but does so in order to inflict psychological pain that may include:
humiliation, embarrassment, depression, and other negative feelings about one’s self (Infante & Wigley, 1986).

Verbal aggressiveness is expressed in a number of different forms. Some of these forms include: character attacks, competence attacks, background attacks, physical appearance attacks, maledictions, teasing, swearing, ridicule, threats, and nonverbal emblems (Infante, 1987). Additionally, Infante (1995) reported that other forms of verbal aggression consisted of: blame, personality attacks, commands, global rejection, disconfirmation, negative comparison, sexual harassment, and attacking their target’s significant others to name a few. In addition to the forms in which verbal aggression is often expressed, there are also a variety of situations in which it is likely to occur. When a topic is of great importance and the consequences of the argument are meaningful, the motivation to win becomes much higher. Some such situations include: dating relationships, family settings, and work environments.

Several causes of verbal aggressiveness have been suggested including: psychopathology, or an individual expression of previously repressed hostility, disdain for the target of aggression, social learning of aggression, genetics, and an argumentative skill deficiency (ASD) (Infante, Trebing, et al. 1984). ASD occurs when an individual fails to attack the opponent’s ideas successfully, and instead, engages in personal attacks against the advocate of the disfavored idea.

There has been a great deal of research conducted on verbal aggressiveness in interpersonal relationships. Previous research has found that verbal aggressiveness can produce damage to an individual’s psyche that is more harmful and longer lasting than the results of physical aggression (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Additionally, individuals
high in verbal aggressiveness seem to be desensitized to the pain caused by such messages because these individuals do not view verbally aggressive messages as hurtful to others (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Interestingly, a relationship has been shown to exist between verbal aggressiveness and several other communication behaviors. For example, Martin, Anderson, and Thweatt (1998), found that individuals who are perceived as being verbally aggressive are also perceived as being less communicatively and cognitively flexible. Additionally, studies have found that verbally aggressive individuals are also perceived as being less responsive (Martin & Anderson, 1996), and less competent (Kassing & Infante, 1999). Furthermore, individuals high in verbal aggressiveness are also more likely to engage in behaviors considered to be disconfirming. According to Rancer, Kosberg, and Silvestri (1992), verbally aggressive individuals tend to be more defensive. Furthermore, a study by Myers and Johnson (2003) found that perceived verbal aggressiveness of an individual was negatively correlated with liking for the same individual.

**Affective Orientation**

Communication research has traditionally focused on how to react to or deal with various emotions rather than how those emotions drive our communication decisions and outcomes. The trait of affective orientation claims that certain individuals are predisposed to be aware of their emotions and in fact use them as guidance when communicating with others. According to Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1994), affective orientation (AO) can be defined as “the degree to which people are aware of their emotions, perceive them as important, and actively consider their affective responses in making judgments and interacting with others” (p. 332). Booth-Butterfield
and Booth-Butterfield (1990) state that AO is unique from other communication traits in at least two aspects: the focus on how the emotional information is processed; and the requirement of actual implementation of the emotional information in interactions.

Affective orientation (AO) is comprised of two components, the awareness of emotions and the behavioral response to emotional cues (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994). Individuals who tend to be higher in affective orientation demonstrate the ability to not only be aware of and pay attention to their emotions, but are also able to use affect to guide to their interactions. Furthermore, high AOs are more aware of underlying currents in conversations. Emotional sensitivity is central to affective orientation. In contrast, low AOs tend to be unaware of or altogether reject their emotions unless they are at unusually high levels. These individuals do not view their emotions as useful or important when engaging in communicative behaviors.

Several studies have examined the nature of this trait. For example, researchers are interested in how high or low trait affective communication may be beneficial or problematic in various relationships. Yelsma (1995) studied affective orientation and couples’ verbally abusive patterns and found that participants who were higher in affective orientation were also more inclined to express their emotions negatively, but not necessarily abusively, toward their spouse. In a similar study, Taylor (1994) found that affective orientation was inversely related to alexithymia, a clinical term which refers to a difficulty in identifying and describing feelings. The results of Taylor's study suggests that those high in affective orientation may experience better interpersonal relationships, especially during periods when disagreement is evident.
Higher levels of affective orientation have also been found to be constructive in a variety of social patterns. Dolin and Booth-Butterfield (1993) found affective orientation to be positively associated with nonverbal sensitivity and comforting behaviors. For example, individuals with elevated levels of affective orientation were more sensitive to nonverbal cues and were engaged in more successful comforting strategies. Furthermore, previous research has also uncovered differences in cognitive processing and memory retrieval among high and low AOs. According to Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1990), when given a timed test, individuals with higher levels of affective orientation were able to recall more emotional words than low AOs. This finding suggests that communication production is significantly enhanced among individuals high in affective orientation when discussing emotional topics.

Research also has demonstrated differences between genders in affective orientation. Females and feminine individuals tend to have higher levels of affective orientation than males and masculine individuals (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994).

*Communication Traits and Roommate Satisfaction*

The communication traits outlined above are three of many traits that can affect the success of interpersonal relationships. Previous research suggests that the roommate relationship may be one in which traits influence satisfaction (Martin & Anderson, 1995).

Many college students claim that personality or communication differences are often sources of conflict. According to Jones, McCaa, and Martecchini (1980), differences regarding specifics such as study habits, sleep patterns, or willingness to trust are all less important to the overall relationship than similarity of interpersonal
orientation (e.g., degree of Machiavellianism). Their research indicated that college students, freshmen in particular, should be paired with roommates of similar attitudes and personalities for the most successful relationships to form. A study conducted by Martin and Anderson (1995) supported this speculation. According to their study, roommates who are prosocially similar in their communication traits reported the highest levels of roommate satisfaction and liking. They specifically examined verbal aggressiveness, willingness to communicate, and interpersonal communication competence. Among these three traits, results indicated that the most satisfied roommate pairs are both high in willingness to communicate, high in interpersonal communication competence, and low in verbal aggressiveness. In contrast, a study conducted by Carey, Hamilton, and Shanklin (1986) which focused solely on personality type rather than communication traits, found no relationship between personality type similarity and relationship satisfaction among the all male participants.

There has been a great deal of research conducted on the topic of roommate relationships; many of which involve similarity among the roommates. Carli, Ganley, and Pierce-Otay (1991) found that roommates who perceive themselves to be more similar also reported higher levels of social attraction and affinity for one another. However, these results should be interpreted cautiously because the study measured perceived rather than actual similarity.

Rationale for the Present Study

Despite the plethora of research on roommate communication, a number of questions remain. As mentioned earlier, roommate satisfaction is essential in student development and adjustment to college life. If relationships between roommates prove to
be negative or unsuccessful, it can affect student in various ways. Social problems, oftentimes involving roommates, were the most common reason students reported for engaging in suicidal behaviors (Bernard & Bernard, 1982), and were also found to be related to academic difficulties which resulted in lower overall GPAs (Pace, 1970). Additionally, previous research has determined that communication skills can be fostered through direct training, resulting in improved communication and improved relationships (Guerney, 1977). If research can determine which traits are positive or negative in interpersonal relationships, then perhaps entering college students could be assessed on a number of traits which contribute to successful communication encounters. Waldo (1989) created a training program in which 20 Relationship Skills Workshops were conducted on college students with positive results. Perhaps increased knowledge about communication traits might also lead to greater positive effects on interpersonal relationships.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between trait verbal aggressiveness, trait argumentativeness, trait affective orientation, roommate communication satisfaction and roommate affinity. Based on a review of previous literature, the research questions below were advanced.

Previous research found that spouses, who are more argumentative, as opposed to verbally aggressive, are higher in marital satisfaction (Sabourin, Infante, & Rudd, 1993). Additionally, Miller and Zoradi (1977) discuss the similarities between roommate relationships and marriages. Therefore, if argumentativeness is related positively with marital satisfaction, then might it also be related with roommate satisfaction?
Additionally, argumentativeness has proven to be a constructive trait across all contexts (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Thus, might this trait ultimately lead to higher levels of satisfaction? While a previous study conducted by Martin and Anderson (1997) found no relationship between argumentativeness and roommate satisfaction, the present study re-examined this finding in order to determine if different results are uncovered.

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between argumentativeness and communication satisfaction among college roommates?

The communication trait of verbal aggressiveness was chosen as part of this study because previous studies have suggested the concept of an *argumentative skill deficiency* to explain the development of verbal aggressiveness (Infante, Chandler, & Rudd, 1989). The ASD concept suggests that individuals low in motivation and skill in argumentative communication do not have the ability to generate arguments as they are needed during a conflict. For this reason, they are more likely to resort to verbal aggression and, during disagreement, may begin to attack their adversary’s self-concept or character as opposed to their position on a particular topic. As such, this skill deficiency which can lead to the use of verbal aggression, can ultimately lead to increased anger and even physical violence. If this skill deficiency is a cause of interpersonal conflict among family members, one might also suggest that dysfunctional interpersonal outcomes might also occur among college roommates who do not possess the ability to engage in constructive arguments in order to resolve conflict. Additionally, Martin and Anderson (1995) found a significant relationship between roommate satisfaction and verbal aggressiveness. Therefore, this study was also a test for replication of their results.
RQ2: What is the relationship between verbal aggressiveness and communication satisfaction among college roommates?

As mentioned earlier, higher levels of affective orientation have also been found to be constructive in a variety of social patterns. Dolin and Booth-Butterfield (1993) found AO to be positively associated with nonverbal sensitivity and comforting behaviors. For example, individuals with elevated levels of affective orientation were more sensitive to nonverbal cues and were engaged in more successful comforting strategies. If individuals who are higher in affective orientation are more successful in comforting others, would the trait result in more satisfying roommate relationships?

RQ3: What is the relationship between affective orientation and communication satisfaction among college roommates?

As outlined above, previous research has shown that affinity or liking is considered to be a necessary component of relationship satisfaction (Hinkle, 1999). If students don't respect or like one another, then coexisting in a small room will likely become impossible. If research existed that pointed to ways to increase affinity between roommates or identify individuals who would likely connect on an interpersonal level, this information could prove to be very beneficial for those in Residence Life offices when pairing roommates. This, in turn, may ultimately lead to the development of stronger interpersonal relationships, which might result in better retention rates for incoming students. The present study hoped to create such research.

RQ4: What is the relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and roommate affinity?
Previous research by Martin and Anderson (1995), found that roommates who are similar, express more satisfaction with and liking for their roommates. Specifically, they focused on three communication traits, one of which was verbal aggressiveness. Their research uncovered that students who were both low in verbal aggressiveness versus both high in verbal aggressiveness were more satisfied in their roommate relationships and liked one another more. However, this particular study examined perceived verbal aggressiveness, rather than self-reported verbal aggressiveness. The present study hoped to uncover similar findings using self-reported verbal aggressiveness.

**RQ5:** What is the relationship between verbal aggressiveness and roommate affinity?
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample for this study contained 67 male students and 136 female students for a total sample size of 204 participants. One participant chose not to respond to this question. The results revealed that the sample included full-time college students ranging in age from 17-23 (M = 19.42, SD = 1.25). More specifically, the study was made of one seventeen year old, 60 eighteen year olds, 54 nineteen year olds, 42 twenty year olds, 37 twenty-one year olds, nine twenty-two year olds, and one twenty-three year old student. Of the 204 participants, 97 were first years, 32 were sophomores, 54 were juniors, 19 were seniors, one participant considered him or herself to be in the other category, and one participant chose not to respond to the question.

Participants were asked how long they had lived with their current roommate. One hundred and eleven participants had only lived with their current roommate for one semester; 65 participants for two semesters; 11 participants for three semesters; 14 participants for four semesters; and only one participant had lived with their current roommate for five semesters. Two participants chose not to respond to this question.

Procedures

In order to answer the above mentioned research questions regarding roommate communication satisfaction, college students from a small, liberal arts college in the
Midwest were asked to participate in the study. Before the research began, permission was obtained from the Human Subjects Board at both The College of Wooster and The University of Akron (See Appendices C & D for the IRB approvals). Once this was obtained, surveys were distributed to the students during their weekly residence hall meetings. Therefore, the study primarily depended on a convenience sample. Students were instructed that their participation was completely voluntary and anonymous and the researcher went over the instructions for the various instruments. After the instructions were given, the researcher then left the room and the Resident Assistants collected the surveys in order to reassure the students of their anonymity. Once all of the completed surveys had been returned to researcher, the results were then analyzed.

Measures

Five scales measuring trait argumentativeness, trait verbal aggressiveness, trait affective orientation, roommate communication satisfaction, and roommate affinity respectively were included in the roommate survey (See Appendix B).

Argumentativeness

The argumentativeness trait was measured using the original version of the Argumentativeness Scale (Infante & Rancer, 1982). The 20-item scale contains 10 items that measure one’s motivation to approach an argument and 10 items that measure one's motivation to avoid an argument. Alpha reliabilities for this scale are typically in the .80-.90 range and the measure seems to be stable across time (Infante & Rancer, 1982).

Verbal Aggressiveness

Similarly, the verbal aggressiveness trait was measured using the original version of the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (Infante & Wigley, 1986). The 20-item scale utilizes
a 5-point response format. Alpha reliabilities for this scale are typically in the low to mid .80s and the measure also seems to be stable across time (Infante & Wigley, 1986).

Affective Orientation

The communication trait affective orientation was measured using the enhanced Affective Orientation scale developed by Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1996). This 15-item scale refocuses the measurement of AO on the ways individuals use emotions as information to guide us. The scale typically reports alpha reliabilities around .85 (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1996). The AO15 was chosen instead of the original measure because it offers a more definitionally focused operationalization of AO and exhibits minimal gender differences in mean scores (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1996).

Roommate Communication Satisfaction

Roommate communication satisfaction was measured using a modified version of Hecht’s (1978) Communication Satisfaction Scale. Previous studies have reported reliabilities of .94 and .93 (Martin & Anderson, 1995; Duran & Zakahi, 1988). This scale was slightly modified so that it was specific to roommate communication satisfaction. Therefore, the items on the scale were altered to include the language "roommate communication" to clarify the items for the participants. For example, the statement "my friend genuinely wants to get to know me" was modified to read "my roommate genuinely wants to get to know me."

Roommate Affinity

Roommate affinity was measured using a modified version of the recently revised Social Attraction subscale of McCroskey and Richmond's (1979) Interpersonal Attraction
Scale (McCroskey, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006). The language in the instrument was also modified in order to specifically focus on roommate affinity rather than affinity in general. For example, the statement "my friend would be pleasant to be with" was modified to read "my roommate would be pleasant to be with." A previous study reported a reliability of .89 for this instrument (Martin & Anderson, 1995). However, the recently revised version of the scale is being used because new research has carefully analyzed the reliability and validity of the first generations of these measures and developed second generation measures that are more reliable and are presumed to be more valid for future research (McCroskey et al., 2006).

Data Analysis

In order to answer the three above mentioned research questions, the data collected was thoroughly analyzed. All five research questions were examined by employing a series of two-tailed Pearson correlations. The first question examined the relationship between argumentativeness (ARGgt) and roommate communication satisfaction. The second question examined the relationship between verbal aggressiveness and roommate communication satisfaction. The third research question examined the relationship between affective orientation and roommate communication satisfaction. The fourth research question examined the relationship between roommate affinity and roommate communication satisfaction. Finally, the fifth research question examined the relationship between trait verbal aggressiveness and roommate affinity.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Reliability of Scales

Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was computed to determine the reliability of each of the scales used in the analyses. Reliability coefficients for each of the instruments used will follow.

Argumentativeness

The argumentativeness trait was measured using the original version of the Argumentativeness Scale (Infante & Rancer, 1982). The 20-item scale contains 10 items that measured one’s motivation to approach an argument and 10 items that measured one's motivation to avoid an argument. Reliabilities for the two dimensions of this scale are typically reported in the .80 - .90 range and the measure seemed to be stable across time (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Infante & Rancer, 1996). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the tendency to avoid an argument (ARGav) dimension was calculated at .86, while the alpha for the tendency to approach an argument (ARGap) dimension was calculated at .88. A composite score was obtained by using the following formula: ARGgt = ARGap - ARGav

Verbal Aggressiveness

The verbal aggressiveness trait was measured using the original version of the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (Infante & Wigley, 1986). The 20-item scale utilized a 5-
point response format. Reliabilities for this scale are typically reported in the low to mid.80s and the measure also seems to be stable across time (Infante & Rancer, 1996 Infante & Wigley, 1986). Cronbach’s coefficient for the measure in this particular study was calculated at .83.

Affective Orientation

The communication trait affective orientation was measured using the enhanced Affective Orientation Scale developed by Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1996). This 15-item scale refocuses the measurement of affective orientation on the ways we use our emotions as information to guide us. Previous research using this instrument typically reported reliabilities around .85 (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1996). In the present study, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha reliability for the Affective Orientation Scale was .90.

Roommate Communication Satisfaction

Roommate satisfaction was measured using a modified version of Hecht’s (1978) Communication Satisfaction Scale. The scale was modified in order to specifically address communication between roommates. Previous studies have reported reliabilities of .94 and .93 respectively (Martin & Anderson, 1995; Duran & Zakahi, 1988). The results of this study found a Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of .93 for this scale.

Roommate Affinity

Roommate affinity was measured using a modified version of the recently revised social attraction subscale of Interpersonal Attraction Scales (McCroskey, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006; McCroskey & McCain, 1974). The newer version of the scale was utilized because recent research found it to be a more reliable measure (McCroskey,
McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006). This instrument was also modified to specifically address roommate affinity. As with the Communication Satisfaction Scale, the items on the Affinity Scale were modified to specifically address roommate affinity. A previous study utilizing the older version of the scale reported an alpha reliability of .89 for this instrument (Martin & Anderson, 1995). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was calculated at .94 for this study.

**Test of the Research Questions**

A series of two-tailed Pearson correlation coefficients were conducted to determine if any significant relationships existed between the variables measured within this study. A table of means and standard deviations for each variable can be found in Table 1. The results of these correlations can be found in Table 2.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Means and Standard Deviations for Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argumentativeness</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>14.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggressiveness</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>10.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Orientation</td>
<td>50.29</td>
<td>9.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Communication Satisfaction</td>
<td>84.05</td>
<td>20.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Affinity</td>
<td>50.20</td>
<td>10.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Roommate Comm. Satisfaction</th>
<th>Affective Orientation</th>
<th>ARG.</th>
<th>VA</th>
<th>Roommate Affinity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Comm. Satisfaction</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.83**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Orientation</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARG.</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Affinity</td>
<td>.83**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** p<.01, * p<.05

The study focused on three research questions. Research Question one asked if there was a significant relationship between argumentativeness and communication satisfaction among college roommates. In order to answer this question, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the argumentativeness and roommate communication satisfaction variables. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between these variables ($r = -.00$, $p > .05$).

Research question two asked if there was a relationship between verbal aggressiveness and communication satisfaction among college roommates. In order to answer this question, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the verbal aggressiveness and roommate communication satisfaction
variables. The results showed that there was a significant negative relationship between these variables ($r = -.24, p < .01$).

Research question three asked if there was a significant relationship between affective orientation and communication satisfaction among college roommates. In order to answer this question, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the argumentativeness and roommate communication satisfaction variables. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between the two variables ($r = -.03, p > .05$).

Research question four asked if there was a significant relationship between roommate affinity and roommate communication satisfaction among college roommates. In order to answer this question, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the roommate affinity and roommate communication satisfaction variables. The results showed there was a significant relationship between the two variables ($r = .83, p < .01$).

Research question five asked if there was a significant relationship between trait verbal aggressiveness and roommate affinity among college roommates. In order to answer this question, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the verbal aggressiveness and roommate affinity variables. The results showed there was a significant relationship between the two variables ($r = .15, p < .05$).

**Post-hoc Analysis**

In addition to the five primary research questions, one post-hoc analysis was conducted. As previous research suggests (Rancer & Avtgis, 2006), a relationship
between trait verbal aggressiveness and trait argumentativeness exists. This study wanted to confirm this previous research.

*Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness*

A two-tailed Pearson correlation also revealed a significant relationship between argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness ($r = .43, p < .01$). This finding is consistent with recent previous research (Anderson & Rancer, 2003; Rancer, Avtgis, Kosberg, & Whitecap, 2003; Rancer, Whitecap, Kosberg, & Avtgis, 1997; Roberto & Finucane, 1997) and suggests that, at least among younger individuals, there is a tendency to see these two traits as similar.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and verbal aggressiveness, argumentativeness, and affective orientation. Each of the relationships between the variables examined will be discussed in the next sections.

Roommate Communication Satisfaction and Argumentativeness

The results of this study showed that there was no significant relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and argumentativeness. These results support the findings of Martin and Anderson (1997) who also found no relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, Venable and Martin (1997) conducted a similar study examining the relationship between argumentativeness and satisfaction in dating relationships. This study also found that the two variables were not significantly related. The present study as well as the studies conducted by Venable and Martin (1997) and Martin and Anderson (1997) utilized college aged students as participants.

Interestingly, a similar study utilizing older participants in married relationships found that spouses, who are more argumentative, as opposed to verbally aggressive, are higher in marital satisfaction (Sabourin, Infante, & Rudd, 1993). This result is intriguing because Miller and Zoradi (1977) discuss the similarities between roommate relationships and marriages. If these relationship types are similar, then it raises the question, why is
there a relationship between argumentativeness and satisfaction in marital relationships, but not roommate relationships or dating relationships? These contradicting results lead one to speculate that perhaps understanding the difference between the two traits and the behaviors associated with them does not develop until later in life. However, future research would need to be conducted to confirm this speculation.

Roommate Communication Satisfaction and Verbal Aggressiveness

The second major finding of this study revealed a significant, negative relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and trait verbal aggressiveness. This finding supports and extends research conducted by Martin and Anderson (1995) who examined similarity in communication and roommate satisfaction. As with the present study, Martin and Anderson (1995) discovered that when both roommates are low in verbal aggressiveness, higher levels of satisfaction and liking were reported by those roommates. Their study was slightly different from the present study in that they examined the effects of similarity of the traits in roommate pairs, while the present study examined the self-reported existence of the trait in individual participants. However, the results were the same; the higher the levels of verbal aggressiveness, the lower the levels of roommate communication satisfaction.

Additionally, Venable and Martin (1997) found similar results when examining the relationship between satisfaction and verbal aggressiveness in dating relationships. Although they studied dating relationships rather than roommate relationships, the present study supports and extends their research which found that self and partner verbal aggressiveness were negatively related to satisfaction in dating relationships.
Furthermore, this finding may also provide support for the argumentative skill deficiency (ASD) concept outlined earlier which suggests that individuals low in motivation and skill in argumentative communication do not have the ability to generate arguments as they are needed during a conflict (Infante et al., 1984). For this reason, they are more likely to resort to verbal aggression and during disagreement, may begin to attack their adversary’s self-concept or character as opposed to their position on a particular topic. However, regardless of the reason, it is clear that the presence of higher levels of verbal aggressiveness ultimately leads to lower levels of roommate communication satisfaction.

These findings could be very useful to Residence Life and Housing professionals. When pairing incoming students, it might be beneficial to have the students complete a battery of self-report measures to uncover the student's communication predispositions (e.g. argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, affective orientation, and communication apprehension). In other words, the results of the measures could help schools match compatible roommates. For example, The College of Wooster currently has incoming students complete the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator in order to successfully match roommates. Perhaps either in addition to, or instead of the Myers-Briggs personality assessment, schools could have roommates complete a questionnaire that includes communication measures as well.

In addition to actual pairing of roommates, once the roommates are paired the information uncovered in this study could be utilized to determine potential problem areas. As outlined earlier, verbal aggressiveness is considered to be a negative trait across all contexts (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Rancer & Avtgis, 2006). Therefore, it is
likely that if an incoming student reports a very high verbal aggressiveness score, there might be potential roommate conflicts as the year progresses. Additionally, the results of this study indicate that as the level of verbal aggressiveness increases, the level of affinity or liking decreases. In more practical terms, if incoming students are required to complete a questionnaire that examines a student's communication traits, and high levels of verbal aggressiveness are reported, it is, therefore, also likely that the higher verbal aggressiveness may lead to lower the levels of affinity for the roommate. This could potentially be a volatile situation for the students. If housing offices knew this information in advance, perhaps such situations could be avoided.

One such way to avoid these types of situations might be to offer some sort of roommate orientation and training program. In such an orientation, incoming students could attend sessions in which they are taught the difference between argumentativeness, a constructive trait, versus verbal aggressiveness, a destructive trait. Additionally, students could be taught vital communication skills to which they may not have previously been exposed. It is unlikely that a few sessions will help to reduce very high levels of verbal aggressiveness, or other destructive communication traits in students. However, it would provide a foundation from which to work. If students were at least able to realize that they possessed such destructive communication traits, then they might be able to address the problem and grow and develop communicatively as the academic year progresses. From another perspective, if a student who is low in a destructive communication trait is paired with a student who is high in the trait, then he or she might be able to identify the behaviors and address the issues that arise as a result of the trait
early on in the year rather than letting the issues fester before the relationship cannot be salvaged.

Roommate Communication Satisfaction and Affective Orientation

The third major finding uncovered in this study showed that there was no significant relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and affective orientation. Previous studies indicate that individuals with elevated levels of affective orientation were more sensitive to nonverbal cues and were engaged in more successful comforting strategies (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield, 1993). Therefore, it was thought that if students were found to possess high levels of such comforting behaviors and were sensitive to the nonverbal cues of their roommates, then this trait might be related to roommate communication satisfaction. However, this speculation was not supported by the data.

The lack of a significant relationship is an important finding because there has been very little, if any previous research conducted on the relationship between roommate communication satisfaction and affective orientation. As outlined above, one can make assumptions as to the outcome, however, now there is quantitative data to support that the two variables may not be significantly related.

This finding may be a direct result of the sample population utilized in this study. As previously mentioned, more than half of the students studied had only lived with their current roommate for one semester. Perhaps the participants did not know their roommates with enough familiarity to make an impact in the results of the study. In other words, affective orientation may only produce significant results in very close interpersonal relationships and because the participants were just getting to know their
roommates, the affective orientation did not yield significant results when correlated with roommate communication satisfaction. It might be that affective orientation plays a major role in close interpersonal relationships, but perhaps not as strong a role in the initial stages of interpersonal relationship development. According to Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1994) affective orientation is a relatively stable trait, but little research has been conducted to determine if it plays a more significant role in specific relationship types, at specific stages of an interpersonal relationship, or in specific contexts. In other words, even though an individual may be high in affective orientation, he or she may allow emotion to guide communication more in a dating relationship rather than a professional relationship. Perhaps, an individual high in affective orientation may allow emotion to guide communication more once he or she feels comfortable with someone else, and guards these emotions more so in the initial stages of an interpersonal relationship. Future research would need to be conducted in order to support this claim.

Verbal Aggressiveness and Roommate Affinity

A series of post-hoc correlations were also conducted to explore the relationship between the other variables in this study. The first post-hoc finding was the significant, negative relationship between verbal aggressiveness and roommate affinity. In other words, the more verbal aggressiveness in a roommate relationship, the less roommate affinity or liking exists. A similar study conducted by Martin and Anderson (1995) also utilized a modified version of the Social Attraction subscale of McCroskey and Richmond's (1979) Interpersonal Attraction Scale in order measure roommate affinity or social attraction. As with the present study, they too uncovered a significant negative relationship between verbal aggressiveness and affinity. In other words, their research
found that roommates who were both high in verbal aggressiveness expressed less affinity or social attraction than roommates who reported lower levels of verbal aggressiveness. This finding also supports previous research in that a verbally aggressive individual not only attacks the self-concept of others, but does so in order to inflict psychological pain, that may include: humiliation, embarrassment, depression, and other negative feelings about one’s self (Infante & Wigley, 1986). These attacks can be achieved through the use of character attacks, competence attacks, background attacks, physical appearance attacks, maledictions, teasing, swearing, ridicule, threats, and nonverbal emblems (Infante, 1987). Regardless of the type of attack, all of these forms of verbal aggressiveness attack an individual's self-concept rather than the actual issue. Thus, according to the results of this study, the more these personal attacks occur between roommates, the less liking will exist between roommates.

Unlike argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness is considered to be a negative and destructive trait across all contexts (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Rancer & Avtgis, 2006). Based on the findings of these studies, it becomes clear that this is also the case in roommate relationships. In a previous study Myers and Johnson (2003) also found that perceived verbal aggressiveness was negatively correlated with liking for an individual. This study supports and extends Myers and Johnson's (2003) findings because the present study examined self-reported verbal aggressiveness, not perceived verbal aggressiveness. Additionally Myers and Johnson (2003) studied general interpersonal relationships as opposed to the roommate relationships utilized in the present study. However, despite these differences between the two studies, both of the results found a significant negative
relationship between the two variables. Therefore, affinity has been shown to be negatively correlated with verbal aggressiveness, whether self-reported or perceived.

*Roommate Communication Satisfaction and Roommate Affinity*

Another interesting post-hoc finding was the significant positive relationship observed between roommate communication satisfaction and roommate affinity. This finding suggests that the more the roommate communication satisfaction, the more the roommates liking for each other increases. These results support the research conducted by Waldo (1984) who found that roommate satisfaction and communication satisfaction are related as it is difficult to have one without the other. This result is particularly valuable as there is very little previous research which links these two variables. It seems reasonable to assume that as roommate communication satisfaction increases, then the more the roommates will like one another; however, there is now some quantitative data to support this claim.

*Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness*

A third interesting post-hoc finding was the significant, positive relationship between trait verbal aggressiveness and trait argumentativeness. This finding is particularly interesting because previous research (Infante & Wigley, 1986) found either no relationship or an inverse relationship between these traits in adults. In other words, research has shown that highly argumentative individuals are less likely to be provoked into verbal aggression, which is considered to be a very negative or destructive trait (Infante, 1981). Recent research, (Anderson & Rancer, 2003; Rancer, Avtgis, Kosberg, & Whitecap, 2000; Rancer, Whitecap, Kosberg, & Avtgis, 1997; Roberto & Finucane, 1997) however, suggests that argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness may be
related especially among younger people. The finding from this study also reveals a positive correlation between the two traits. This suggests that perhaps college students do not fully understand the difference between the two traits and therefore, any attack, whether constructive or destructive, is viewed as verbal aggressiveness. For this reason the roommate orientation concept may also be effective. Students could be taught the difference between expressing valid arguments during a conflict rather than verbally attacking their roommates' personal character. If students are taught how to effectively resolve their own conflicts, it might take a great deal of pressure off of housing officials to get involved every time a conflict between roommates arises. This would also prove to be an invaluable life lesson for students to learn before they enter the professional workforce.

Limitations of this Research

Based on the procedures followed, a number of limitations potentially presented themselves in this study. One such limitation was that the researcher decided to attend students' weekly required hall meetings in order to gather a more diversified sample population. It was originally speculated that attending hall meetings rather than individual classrooms would yield a more representative population. As it turned out, at The College of Wooster, first years are much more likely to attend their hall meetings as opposed to upperclassmen. Additionally, despite the fact that the hall meetings were "required," fewer students attended these meetings. On a typical hall, out of the 25-30 students who lived on the hall, approximately 5-10 attended the hall meetings. Therefore, the researcher had to attend 17 different hall meetings in order to acquire the 204 participants utilized in the study. This led to a slightly less diverse sample which was
over-represented by first-year students. Of the 204 participants within this study, 97 were first years. This presents a potential problem because the majority of these students were very young and may not have much knowledge or experience living with other students. Additionally, this did not allow them much time to develop any sort of coping skills or to interact with their current roommate for a long period of time which may have affected the overall results of the study.

A second concern with the sample population utilized in this study was the gender composition. Of the 204 participants, 136 were female and 67 were male. This again, is a direct result of the fact that the participants were obtained from resident hall meetings because in general, females were much more likely to attend the meetings and volunteer their time as opposed to the male students. If the study had utilized a classroom environment it may have been more likely that the gender split would have been more equivalent. However, the fact that the sample population consisted of such a high number of females makes it difficult to generalize the findings for the male participants.

A third concern with the sample population utilized in this study was the fact that the majority of the participants had only lived with their current roommate for one semester. According to the results, of the 204 participants in the study, 111 students had only lived with their current roommate for one semester. This is in large part because so many of the participants were first years. However, this presents a concern because the students did not have much time to get to know one another before completing the questionnaire. Therefore, they had very little time to develop in depth interpersonal relationships and understanding of their roommates which may have also impacted the outcome of the study.
Suggestions for Future Research

While some significant results were uncovered in this study, there are a few suggestions for future research. A previous study conducted by Martin and Anderson (1995) examined the relationship between various communication traits and roommate satisfaction and affinity. However, in order to accomplish this, they needed both roommate pairs to complete the questionnaires in order to participate in the study which may have affected the outcome of the study. Based on this limitation, the present study opted to modify the procedures in order to avoid this problem. However, as a result, this modification solved one potential problem, but created new concerns.

As outlined in the limitations, the sample population raised a series of concerns. One such concern was the fact that more than half of the participants had only lived together for one semester. One suggestion for future research might be to limit the participants to those students who had lived with their current roommate for at least two semesters or more.

An additional recommendation for future research might be to modify the procedure in which the participants are acquired. The use of hall meetings was a deliberate choice on the part of the researcher in hopes to create a more diverse sample population; however, this was not the case because participation in the hall meetings was primarily first years. A better sample population might be obtained by setting up a table in the student union and recruiting students as they enter the building. Or perhaps, attending a variety of classes, as previous studies have utilized, would yield a more diverse sample population.
Another recommendation for future research might be to utilize a different instrument to measure roommate communication satisfaction. Hecht's (1978) Communication Satisfaction measure was modified for the purposes of this study in order to be specific to roommate communication satisfaction. However, perhaps the use of a different scale would provide different results. Or perhaps a future study could create a new instrument specific to roommate communication satisfaction, rather than modifying an existing measure.

Additionally, there may be other communication traits that play a more significant role in roommate communication satisfaction. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study utilizing different communication traits. For example, communication apprehension may affect satisfaction more so than the three traits examined within this study (McCroskey, 1970). Perhaps locus of control has a major impact on the overall success of the roommate relationship (Leftcourt, 1984).

In addition to recommendations within the college environment, perhaps further research should be conducted throughout various contexts or setting such as adult roommate relationships. If it has been determined that verbal aggressiveness has been significantly correlated to lower levels of satisfaction in a variety of contexts, perhaps this information could help to alleviate problems within other organizations as well. At a number of businesses, co-workers are required to share work space. It would seem logical that many of the conclusions drawn from roommate relationships and potentially destructive traits might also prove useful in work environments. However, before these assumptions can be confirmed, further research confirmation is necessary.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PASSIVE CONSENT

Informed Consent Document

Dear Participants:

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Robyn M. Laditka, a master's degree student at The University of Akron in the School of Communication and a staff member in the Dean of Students Office at The College of Wooster.

Purpose
I am conducting a study focusing on communication and the roommate relationship.

Procedures
The data from this study will be obtained solely from the instrument distributed to students at various resident hall meetings across campus. When answering the questions, please keep your current roommate in mind. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once the surveys have been collected, the results will be analyzed and the information will be part of a large data set which will then be used as the research for my graduate thesis. If you would like a copy of the results, please feel free to contact me at rladitka@wooster.edu.

Benefits
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with the procedures outlined above. However, your participation in this study may uncover benefits for future students. This study will allow College officials to better understand roommate satisfaction and how communication can either enhance or detract from roommate satisfaction. This information may prove to be beneficial to students because the Housing Office can take the results into account when pairing roommates.

Right to Refuse or Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and your refusal to participate or withdraw from the study at any given time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Anonymous & Confidential
No identifying information will be collected, and your anonymity is further protected by not asking you to sign and return the informed consent form. Furthermore, the data collected will be kept secured in a locked cabinet in my adviser's office.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about this study, you may call me, Robyn M. Laditka in the Dean of Students Office at The College of Wooster at Ext. 2011, or my thesis director Dr. Andrew Ranier, Professor, School of Communication, The University of Akron, at 330-972-6801. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact me at rladitka@wooster.edu.
participant, you may call Sharon McWhorter, Associate Director for Research Services at The University of Akron (330) 972-7666 or 1-888-222-8790.

Participant Consent
I have read the information provided above and all my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. My completion and return of this survey will serve as my consent. I have been given a copy of this consent form for future reference.
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Communication Study Questionnaire

PART I - We would like to take a moment to get to know a little more about you. Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. Age ______
2. Male ______  Female ______
3. Class Year: First Year  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Other ______

PART II - Now, we would like to know a little about your roommate. Please answer the following questions, keeping your current roommate in mind.

4. How long have you been living with your current roommate? ______ (semesters)
5. Age of your current roommate ______
6. Major of your current roommate ______

PART III - This portion of the survey contains items which examine your attitudes and behavior about communicating.

A. Instructions: This portion of the survey is concerned with how we get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you try to influence others. Please use the following scale:

1=Almost Never True
2=Rarely True
3=Occasionally True
4=Often True
5=Almost Always True

7. ______ I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when I attack their ideas.
8. ______ When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften their stubbornness.
9. ______ I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
10. ______ When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
**Communication Study Questionnaire**

1=Almost Never True  
2=Rarely True  
3=Occasionally True  
4=Often True  
5=Almost Always True

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<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I try to make people feel good about themselves even when ideas are stupid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>When people insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>When I attack a person’s ideas, I try not to damage their self concepts.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>When I am not able to refute others’ positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Communication Study Questionnaire

#### B. Instructions: The next portion of this questionnaire contains statements about arguing controversial issues. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally by placing the appropriate number in the blank to the left of the statement. Remember to consider each item in terms of arguing on a controversial issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Almost Never True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rarely True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Occasionally True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Often True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Almost Always True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. ____ While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.
28. ____ Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.
29. ____ I enjoy avoiding arguments.
30. ____ I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.
31. ____ Once I finish an argument I promise myself that I will not get into another.
32. ____ Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.
33. ____ I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.
34. ____ When I finish arguing with someone I feel nervous and upset.
35. ____ I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.
36. ____ I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.
37. ____ I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.
38. ____ I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.
39. ____ I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.
40. ____ I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.
41. ____ I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.
42. ____ I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.
43. ____ I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.
44. ____ I have the ability to do well in an argument.
45. ____ I try to avoid getting into arguments.
46. ____ I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.
Communication Study Questionnaire

C. Instructions: Sometimes, people use their feelings and emotions to guide their behavior. Realize that emotions and feelings can be positive or negative. A person can feel anger; another can feel love and tenderness. Both cases, however, are emotions.

Use the following 5 point scale to indicate your answers.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Uncertain
2=Disagree
1=Strongly Disagree

47. _____ I use my feelings to determine what I should do in situations.
48. _____ I listen to what my "gut" or "heart" says in many situations.
49. _____ My emotions tell me what to do in many cases.
50. _____ I try not to let feelings guide my actions.
51. _____ I am aware of and use my feelings as a guide more than other do.
52. _____ I won't let my emotions influence how I act most of the time.
53. _____ I follow what my feelings say I should do in most situations.
54. _____ Most of the time I avoid letting my emotions guide what I do.
55. _____ I usually let my internal feelings direct my behavior.
56. _____ Usually my emotions are good predictors of how I will act.
57. _____ My actions are often influenced by my awareness of my emotions.
58. _____ My actions provide me solid direction in my life.
59. _____ How I act often depends on what my feelings tell me to do.
60. _____ Even subtle emotions often guide my actions.
61. _____ When I am aware of my emotional response, I listen to it to determine what to do.
Communication Study Questionnaire

PART IV - In this portion of the survey we would like to know a little bit about your communication with your roommate.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that each statement describes your most recent conversation with your roommate. The 4 or middle position on the scale represents “undecided” or “neutral,” then moving out from the center, “slight” agreement or disagreement, then “moderate,” then “strong” agreement or disagreement.

For example: If you strongly agree with the following statement you would circle 7

The other person moved around a lot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

62. _____ My roommate lets me know that I communicate effectively.
63. _____ When my roommate and I communicate, nothing gets accomplished.
64. _____ I would like to have another conversation with my roommate like our most recent one.
65. _____ My roommate genuinely wants to get to know me.
66. _____ I was very dissatisfied with the most recent conversation with my roommate.
67. _____ During my last conversation with my roommate, I felt that I was able to present myself as I wanted him/her to view me.
68. _____ I was very satisfied with my most recent conversation with my roommate.
69. _____ My roommate expressed a lot of interest in what I had to say.
70. _____ I did not enjoy the most recent conversation with my roommate.
71. _____ My roommate did not provide support for what he/she was saying.
72. _____ I felt I could talk about anything with my roommate.
73. _____ During our last conversation, my roommate and I each got to say what we wanted.
74. _____ I felt that my roommate and I could laugh easily together.
75. _____ Conversations between my roommate and myself flowed smoothly.
76. _____ My roommate frequently said things which added little to our conversation.
77. _____ My roommate and I talked about something I was NOT interested in.
Communication Study Questionnaire

Part V: Finally, we would like to ask you a few questions about your affinity or liking towards your roommate.

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree to the following statements as they apply to your roommate. Use the following scale.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Undecided
2=Disagree
1=Strongly Disagree

78. _____ I think my roommate could be a friend of mine.
79. _____ I would like to have a friendly chat with my roommate.
80. _____ It would be difficult to meet and talk with my roommate.
81. _____ My roommate and I could never establish a personal friendship with each other.
82. _____ My roommate just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.
83. _____ My roommate would be pleasant to be with.
84. _____ My roommate is sociable with me.
85. _____ I would not like to spend time socializing with my roommate.
86. _____ I could become close friends with my roommate.
87. _____ My roommate is easy to get along with.
88. _____ My roommate is unpleasant to be around.
89. _____ My roommate is not very friendly.
APPENDIX C
AKRON HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7656 O/E
330-972-6091 Fax

January 18, 2006

Robyn M. Laddika
2060 Williams Way
Wooster, Ohio 44691

Ms. Laddika:

The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of the protocol entitled “The Influence of Argumentativeness, Verbal Aggressiveness and Affective Orientation on Roommate Satisfaction and Roommate Affinity.” The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20060104.

The protocol was reviewed on January 18, 2006 and qualified for exemption from continuing IRB review. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

(D) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) Information is recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of civil or criminal liability or be damaging to subjects’ financial standing, employability or reputation

Enclosed is a copy of the informed consent document, which the IRB has approved for your use in this research. In addition, your request for a waiver of documentation of informed consent, as permitted under 45 CFR 46.117(e), is also approved.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make any changes or modifications to the study design or procedures that either increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within one of the categories exempted from the regulations, please contact the IRB first, to discuss whether or not a request for change must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter
Associate Director

Cc: Andrew Rancer, Advisor
Department Chair
Phil Allen, IRB Chair

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Opportunity Institution.
The College of Wooster  
Human Subjects Approval  
Submitted via Email

>>> Rod Korba <rkorba@wooster.edu> 1/17/2006 2:42:09 PM >>>

Sharon McWhorter  
Associate Director of Research Services  
The University of Akron

Dear Sharon,

As a member of our Human Subjects Review Committee at The College of Wooster, I have reviewed Robyn Laditka's proposed research study, and have found that it is exempted from further review by this institution.

I have informed Robyn that as far as The College of Wooster is concerned, she may begin this study at her earliest possible convenience. Robyn will provide me with a completed proposal, which will be held in the possession of Dr. Bill Scott, Department of Psychology at The College of Wooster.

Rod Korba Ph. D.  
Association Professor of Communication
APPENDIX E

APPROVAL LETTER

THE COLLEGE OF
WOOSTER

November 4, 2005

To the Human Subjects Review Committee,

Robyn Laditka has my permission to administer surveys to the College of Wooster residential student community regarding communication skills and their affect on roommate relationships. Robyn has my permission to work through our RA staff and community meetings to access these residents.

Please feel free to contact me with questions at (330) 263-2498 or dschanta@wooster.edu.

Thank you,

Danielle Schanta
Interim Director, Office of Residence Life