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Life in a Residence Hall: The Relationships Between Personality,  
Conflict Resolution Style, and Satisfaction

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Chancellor's Scholars Council of

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Completion of

the Chancellor's Scholars Program

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by

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University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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## Abstract

In an effort to study the conflict within residence halls, 103 college students (61 females and 42 males) were given the NEO-FFI and a conflict resolution style questionnaire created by the researcher. While past research has primarily focused on conflict within organizations, the current study examined personality, conflict resolution style, and satisfaction with residence hall scenarios. Consistent with past research done within an organizational setting (Moberg, 2001 & Antonioni, 1998), it was found that conflict resolution styles correlated with personality. Satisfaction with the resolution was found to correlate with extraversion, conscientiousness, collaboration, and avoiding. Differences on conflict resolution choice were also found between people living a residence hall and those not, and people living with a roommate and those who were not.



## Chapter One

## Personality, Conflict Resolution, and Satisfaction

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. Everyone experiences times when their own goals are incompatible with others. If dealt with properly, interpersonal conflict can lead to an enhancement of social adjustment. If conflict is handled inappropriately, it can damage a person's interpersonal relationships and social identity (see Ohbuchi, 1997 for discussion).

Imagine for a moment that you have a roommate that enjoys watching television all the time. You on the other hand, are taking some difficult classes this semester, and need to study a lot. Now think about how you would handle this situation. Would the fact that you are shy make a difference in what you said to your roommate about this situation? What if you were more outgoing? What if you cared a lot about what other people think about you? Would the way you chose to handle the conflict influence whether or not you were satisfied with the outcome?

Conflict style refers to the preference of specific behavior patterns that a person chooses to utilize when dealing with conflict. Both Moberg (2001) and Thomas (1976) identify four typical styles of resolving conflict. There is facing the conflict directly, which involves problem solving, collaborating, and integrating to reach a solution. Thomas (1976) calls this collaboration. For example, working together with your roommate to work out an appropriate television watching/studying schedule. When the two parties try to work together to reach a mutually beneficial solution, they are collaborating.

Minimizing differences (Moberg, 2001) requires accommodating, obliging, smoothing, and yielding to find a solution to the problem. Thomas's (1976) word for this resolution style is accommodation. In this case letting your roommate watch television whenever they wanted to even after mentioning the need for some quiet time. One who uses the accommodation form of conflict resolution gives into the other party's goals, or acts in a self-sacrificing manner.

One can try to maximize their outcomes at the expense of their opponent's by contending, competing, dominating, and forcing (Moberg, 2001). Thomas (1976) would refer to this as competition. Physically forcing your roommate to stop watching television by turning off the TV and taking the remote when you are trying to study. Competition is when one party persists until their goals are achieved at the expense of the other party's goals.

Avoiding, not acting, or withdrawing means that the person is avoiding conflict altogether. Thomas would also call this avoiding. One could avoid the conflict altogether by leaving the room to go study in the library.

Because some of the previous research integrated collaboration and compromise (eg. Moberg 1998 & Moberg 2001), compromise was not focused on as a separate concept in the current study. Avoiding is when a person suppresses the conflict, or withdraws from the conflict altogether.

Much of the previous research looking at the relationships between conflict resolution style and personality focused on conflict within organizations. Moberg (1998) chose to measure conflict style in managers and supervisors by asking them to answer

questions about how they might resolve organizational conflict and the longer version of the Five Factor Inventory used in this study. The same method was used by Moberg (2001) with a sample of managers and supervisors. Gross and Guerrero (2000) had students imagine that they were involved in a downsizing decision for an organization, and then they filled out surveys based on their experience.

Some of the research previously done on personality and conflict management did address interpersonal conflict outside of the organizational setting. For example, Barthelemy and Fine (1995) looked at conflict as a factor of adjustment to college. In that study, social, academic, emotional, and institutional attachment were among the variables examined. Previous research had found that family life contributed to college adjustment, and Barthelemy and Fine argued that residence hall life could resemble family life. They found that the less conflict perceived within a residence hall, the better adjustment students had to the social area of college.

However, no study could be located that specifically looked at conflict resolution style within a residence hall setting. This topic is interesting because residence halls are a breeding ground for conflict. Living very close to each other are many different personality types with many different preferences on how things should be done. The result of the conflict or the way in which the conflict is handled may have implications for how students feel about their residence hall experience and perhaps even the university as a whole.

Another variable that seemed tied to the topic of conflict was personality. Indeed, personality has been shown to relate to conflict resolution. Specifically, researchers have

used the Big Five (e.g. Moberg, 2001 & Antonioni, 1998) to measure personality and its relationship to conflict resolution. The five different traits that the five-factor model measures are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1997). The factor of extraversion is concerned with how assertive and sociable a person is as opposed to introversion, which reveals how reserved, timid, and quiet a person is. Agreeableness is the factor concerned with the degree a person is warm, cooperative, understanding, and sympathetic, and its opposite, antagonism, is related to being rude, insincere, harsh, and unsympathetic. The factor concerning hardwork, organization, and dependability is conscientiousness, versus the opposite undisciplined that is concerned with being lazy, disorganized, and unreliable. Openness to experience are those people that are reflective, creative, and comfortable with theory, while those people that fit into closeness are associated with being conservative in opinions, practical, and set in ways. The emotional stability of a person is related to being calm, self-confident, and patient, and neuroticism is related to being tense, insecure, and irritable.

Within the organizational setting, personality has been found to correlate with certain types of conflict resolution. Moberg (2001) found a relationship between the Big Five dimensions and conflict resolution choice. Specifically, people more likely to use the conflict resolution style eluding the conflict (which is like avoiding) were more likely to score high on neuroticism and low on extraversion and conscientiousness. Individuals were more likely to score high on extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness and low on neuroticism if they scored high on facing the conflict directly (collaboration). Participants who score high on minimizing differences (accommodation) are more likely

to score high on openness and agreeableness. Agreeableness was found to be high in individuals who use the conflict resolution style of maximizing one's outcomes at the expense of the opponent (competition).

Antonioni (1998) used a sample that consisted of managers and undergraduate business students. The students were asked to answer the questions based on their residence hall experience and the managers were asked to answer the questions based on conflict they had experienced with a coworker. He found that for the students who participated in his study, an integrating style of conflict management (collaboration) was used by students who scored high on extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness. Students who score high on the conflict management style of avoiding were more likely to score low on extraversion and openness, and high on neuroticism and agreeableness. Students with high scores on extraversion and low scores on agreeableness and neuroticism were more likely to use dominating (much like competition) as a conflict management style.

Personality has been examined in a variety of ways within the residence hall. For example, one study looked at how two certain personality characteristics effect an individual's preference to be a morning person or an evening person (Davis, Hill, Walkup, & Russin, 1986). Additionally, Lapidus, Green, and Baruh, in 1985, looked at personality as one of the variables that may predict compatibility of roommates. Others looked at how temperament might effect college residence initial adjustment (Klein & Rennie, 1985). Though one could imagine that a student's sleep schedule, roommate compatibility, and temperament could influence conflict, none of these studies address it

directly. Indeed, no study could be found that looked at personality and conflict resolution within a residence hall.

Satisfaction is a variable that we felt was important because though there may be people who tend to use a particular conflict resolution style more than others, satisfaction with the choice may not be a natural consequence. We wanted to see if there was a correlation that may support this idea. It was not known, however, whether satisfaction would be predicted more by personality or conflict resolution style. Pertinent to the current study, Greene (1973) highlights a theory by Cherrington, Reitz, and Scott in which rewards are the main link to satisfaction. In that study, those participants who received some reward for behavior were more satisfied than those who received no rewards. In resolving conflict, there are those styles (i.e. collaboration and competition) that result in some gain or reward to at least one of the parties involved, thus satisfaction is likely to be related.

### The Current Study

To summarize, the current study sought to examine personality and conflict resolution style, and satisfaction within a residence hall setting. Specifically, the Big Five Personality Theory and the conflict styles of competition, collaboration, avoiding, and accommodation were examined.

Based on the findings of previous research (Moberg, 2001 & Antonioni, 1998), it was expected that the conflict resolution style competition would positively correlate with extraversion and would negatively correlate with agreeableness and neuroticism. Second, it was hypothesized that the conflict resolution style avoiding would positively correlate

with neuroticism and agreeableness and would negatively correlate with openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the conflict resolution style collaboration would positively correlate with openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion and would negatively correlate with neuroticism. It was also predicted, based on past research, that the conflict resolution style accommodation would positively correlate with openness and agreeableness.

Though not predicted in previous research, it was hypothesized that conscientiousness would positively correlate with competition. We felt that individuals who were more conscientious might feel more of a need to fight for what they wanted, and what they believe was right. Conscientious people may feel a sense of responsibility toward their own needs.

Additionally, it was hypothesized by the researcher that satisfaction would have a negative correlation with highly agreeable and highly neurotic individuals. This was believed because individuals who scored high on these two variables may be less likely to strive for their own desires. However, we hypothesized that satisfaction would have a positive correlation with highly extraverted individuals because they may be more willing to work with others to achieve their goals.

Somewhat based on previous research on satisfaction (Greene, 1973), it was hypothesized that satisfaction would positively correlate with the conflict resolution style collaboration and competition, because individuals who utilize this style of conflict resolution may be more likely to perceive the resolution of these styles as rewards. However, it was hypothesized that satisfaction would negatively correlate with the

conflict resolution style accommodation and avoiding, because the resolution from these styles may not result in rewards.



## Chapter Two

## Methods

Participants

One hundred and three participants were recruited from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, seventy-four from Introductory Psychology classes, fourteen from upper division psychology courses, and fifteen were acquaintances of the researcher. There were 61 females and 42 males. Out of the 103 participants there were 49 freshman, 17 sophomores, 25 juniors, and 12 seniors. The mean age for participants was 22.02 with the minimum age 18 and the maximum age 58. Fifty-one of the participants were White, twenty-four Black, two Hispanic, three Asian, fourteen Native American, and six did not choose to disclose their ethnicity or were of mixed origins.

Fifty-six participants currently live in a residence hall, while forty-seven do not. Seventy of the participants live with a roommate and thirty-three do not. Fifty participants shared a room as a child and fifty-three did not.

The students participating from Introductory Psychology received credit in their classes and the students from the upper division classes received extra credit for participating. One participant was dropped from the study because he did not finish the questionnaires in the one hour time limit, but he was still given credit for participating. The students participating in this study were treated with courtesy and respect. The guidelines on ethics established by APA were used during all sessions.

### Measures

Two primary measures were used in this study. The measure of personality used was the NEO Five-Factor Inventory Form S (Costa & McCrae, 1991). The test consisted of 60 items on a five point likert type scale. Participants were asked to mark how accurately each statement described them by indicating their agreement or disagreement with each statement by bubbling in strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree (SD, D, N, A, and SA). For example, a statement from the neurotic scale would be "I am not a worrier," the extraversion scale would be "I laugh easily," the openness to experience scale would be "Poetry has little or no effect on me," the agreeableness scale would be "Most people I know like me" and from the conscientiousness scale would be "I work hard to accomplish my goals". The NEO was designed to measure five different aspects of personality: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The internal consistency values for the NEO FFI Form S are reported as ranging from .68-.86 (NEO Five-Factor Inventory).

For the purpose of this study a scale was constructed to assess participant's preference for conflict resolution styles within a roommate situation. This questionnaire presented 17 scenarios regarding conflict that may happen in a dorm situation. Each scenario addressed common conflicts that may be experienced while living in a residence hall (See Appendix A for the Conflict Scenario Questionnaire). For each scenario participants indicated the degree to which they would engage in each of four possible conflict resolution styles. Each of the responses and the satisfaction question were

answered using a six point likert scale. These styles corresponded to accommodation, avoiding, competition, and collaboration as defined previously. An average score was obtained for each style.

For each of the 17 scenarios participants were asked to rate, on the same six point likert scale as mentioned above, how satisfied they would be. They were asked to answer this question by thinking about the response they would be most likely to do. To assess satisfaction, an average score for the 17 satisfaction questions was obtained.

Finally, we assessed a variety of background variables. Participants were asked for their age, sex, ethnicity, and class rank (See Appendix B for Demographic Questionnaire). Because living with someone may impact the findings of this study, we asked participants about present and past living arrangements. They were asked questions regarding living in, or ever living in, a residence hall, whether they were living with a roommate or not, and about having to share a room as a child.

### Procedure

For recruitment of all participants students were told they would have the opportunity to participate in a study dealing with conflict with a roommate. The experiment was held in a classroom setting. Participants were asked to sit quietly until the testing began. At five minutes after the posted beginning time, the researcher closed the door with a sign reading, "Experiment in Progress: DO NOT ENTER." The participants were then asked to turn off their cell phones while the study was being conducted. Before the test packets were distributed, the participants were told there were no right or wrong answers to the questions they would be answering. They were reminded that they would

be getting credit by their instructor as stated in class and that their participation was voluntary. The researcher made it clear that they could leave at any time if they wanted to decline from the study. At this point, the research passed out the consent forms (See Appendix C for the informed Consent Form).

The researcher then passed out the experiment packets that included the conflict questions, the personality inventory, and the demographic questionnaire. The participants were asked to fill out the measures in the before mentioned order. After everyone had finished answering the questions of all three measures, the researcher distributed the debriefing sheet (See Appendix D for the Debriefing Sheet). After reading the debriefing sheet, the participants were free to leave (See Appendix E for Protocol).

## Chapter Three

## Results

The reliability for each of the conflict styles was assessed. The alpha coefficient for accommodation was .6577, for collaboration .7842, for competition .8527, and for avoiding .7598. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for all variables.

Correlations Between Primary Dependent Variables

In order to test the primary hypotheses, correlations were obtained between all variables. Correlations for all dependent variables are presented in Table 2.

Competition. Consistent with previous research, and as predicted, a negative correlation was found between agreeableness and competition,  $r(101) = -.28, p < .01$ . However, the current study did not reveal the predicted positive correlation with conscientiousness and extraversion,  $r(101) = -.07, p > .05$  and  $-.05, p > .05$  respectively.

Avoiding. As hypothesized, participants that scored higher on neuroticism were more likely to chose the avoiding style of conflict,  $r(101) = .27, p < .01$ . Inconsistent with predicted results, a positive correlation between avoiding and agreeableness was not found,  $r(101) = -.08, p > .05$ , or a negative relationship between openness, extraversion, or conscientiousness,  $r(101) = .08, p > .05$ ,  $-.08, p > .05$ , and  $-.16, p > .05$  respectively.

Collaboration. As predicted the more extraverted an individual is the more likely the individual will use the conflict resolution style of collaboration,  $r(101) = .20, p < .05$ . Also consistent with previous research and the hypotheses of this study, a positive correlation was found between collaboration and conscientiousness,  $r(101) = .34, p < .01$ . However, the predicted relationships with openness and neuroticism were not

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for all Dependent Variables

Dependent variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Neuroticism	103	23.80	8.22
Extroversion	103	28.53	6.46
Openness	103	27.20	6.08
Agreeableness	103	29.50	5.87
Conscientiousness	103	31.24	6.44
Accommodation	103	2.32 <sup>a</sup>	0.51
Collaboration	103	4.27 <sup>b</sup>	0.65
Competition	103	2.47 <sup>a</sup>	0.81
Avoiding	103	2.90 <sup>c</sup>	0.61
Satisfaction	103	4.67	0.62

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly from each other,  $p < .001$

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for All Dependent Variables

	Accommodation	Collaboration	Competition	Avoiding	Satisfaction
Neuroticism	+.32**	-.06	+.01	+.27**	-.12
Extroversion	-.17	+.20*	-.05	-.08	+.31**
Openness	+.19	+.07	-.09	+.08	-.12
Agreeableness	-.26**	+.23*	-.28**	-.08	+.13
Conscientiousness	-.31**	+.34**	-.07	-.16	+.38**
Accommodation	-	-.02	+.12	+.71	+.09
Collaboration	-.02	-	-.01	+.06	+.45**
Competition	+.12	-.01	-	+.19	+.15
Avoiding	+.71**	+.06	+.19	-	+.20*
Satisfaction	+.09	+.45**	+.15	+.20*	-

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , two-tailed test. \*\*  $p < .01$ , two-tailed test.

found,  $r(101) = .07, p > .05$  and  $-.06, p > .05$  respectively. An unpredicted positive correlation was found between collaboration and agreeableness,  $r(101) = .23, p < .05$ .

Accommodation. The predicted positive relationships between accommodation and openness and agreeableness were not confirmed by the findings of this research,  $r(101) = .19, p > .05$  and  $-.26, p > .05$  respectively. There was an unpredicted tendency for individuals scoring high on neuroticism to also score high on accommodating,  $r(101) = .32, p < .01$ . A negative correlation that was not hypothesized was found between accommodation and agreeableness,  $r(101) = -.26, p < .01$ , and accommodation and conscientiousness,  $r(101) = -.31, p < .01$ .

Satisfaction. The findings of this study were inconsistent with predicted correlations between satisfaction and highly agreeable individuals,  $r(101) = .13, p > .05$ . The predicted relationship between satisfaction and highly neurotic individuals was also unsupported,  $r(101) = -.12, p > .05$ . However, consistent with predictions, the study did find a positive correlation with satisfaction and highly extraverted individuals,  $r(101) = .31, p < .01$ .

Also, as predicted, satisfaction did correlate positively with the conflict resolution style collaboration,  $r(101) = .45, p < .01$ . However, the predicted correlation with satisfaction and conflict was not found,  $r(101) = .15, p > .05$ . The findings of this study were also inconsistent with the predicted negative correlations between satisfaction and accommodation and avoiding,  $r(101) = .09, p > .05$  and  $.20, p > .05$  respectively.



Satisfaction was found to have an unpredicted positive correlation with conscientiousness,  $r(101) = .38, p < .01$ . Also not hypothesized, satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with the conflict resolution style avoiding,  $r(101) = .20, p < .05$ .

#### Supplementary Analyses

A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a difference in conflict resolution preference. The analysis revealed a significant difference among means,  $F(3,306) = 224.357, p < .001$ . A series of Bon Feroni corrected post hoc paired t-tests were used to determine which means were different from each other. As shown in Table 1, it was found that participants tended to prefer a collaboration conflict resolution style more than competition  $t(102) = 17.61, p < .001$ , accommodation  $t(102) = -23.73, p < .001$ , and avoiding  $t(102) = 16.11, p < .001$ . Also, participants were more likely to use the conflict resolution style of avoiding more than accommodation  $t(102) = -13.64, p < .001$  and competition  $t(102) = -4.77, p < .001$ .

Demographic Differences. Men and women varied on the variables collaboration and competition. The mean conflict resolution preference scores for men and women are presented in Table 3. As noted in the table, women tended to use collaboration ( $M = 4.46$ ) more than men ( $M = 3.99$ ). Men, however, were more likely to use competition ( $M = 2.76$ ) than women ( $M = 2.27$ ).

It was found that the variable of living in a residence hall or not did make a difference in participants' conflict resolution style preference. Table 4 shows the means for people who do and do not live in a residence hall. A difference was found with accommodation and collaboration. People who currently live in a residence hall were

Table 3

Means for Males and Females on Conflict Resolution Styles

Dependent Variable	Females <i>M(SD)</i>	Males <i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i> value	Two-Tailed probability
Accommodation	2.30(.51)	2.34(.51)	-.43	.670
Collaboration	4.46(.62)	3.99(.60)	3.89	.000
Competition	2.27(.66)	2.76(.91)	-3.19	.002
Avoiding	2.94(.64)	2.83(.56)	.90	.372
Satisfaction	4.75(.64)	4.55(.57)	1.60	.113

Note: All *df* = 101.

Table 4

Means for Living in a Residence Hall versus Not on Conflict Resolution Styles

Dependent Variable	Residence Hall <i>M(SD)</i>	Not <i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i> value	Two-Tailed probability
Accommodation	2.42(.50)	2.20(.51)	2.19	.031
Collaboration	4.14(.68)	4.42(.59)	-2.19	.031
Competition	2.53(.85)	2.39(.75)	.926	.357
Avoiding	2.98(.58)	2.79(.63)	1.59	.115
Satisfaction	4.60(.57)	4.75(.67)	-1.25	.213

Note: All *df* = 101.

more likely to use accommodation ( $M = 2.42$ ), than those who do not ( $M = 2.20$ ). People who currently live in a residence hall were more likely to use collaboration ( $M = 4.14$ ), than those who do not ( $M = 4.42$ ).

Table 5 reports the means for people who live with a roommate and those who do not. A difference was found with the conflict resolution styles of accommodation, collaboration, and avoiding. People who currently live with a roommate were more likely to use accommodation ( $M = 2.39$ ), than those who do not ( $M = 2.17$ ). Those who do not currently live with a roommate were more likely to use collaboration ( $M = 4.48$ ), than people who do ( $M = 4.17$ ). Students who currently live with a roommate were more likely to use avoiding ( $M = 2.98$ ), than those who do not ( $M = 2.73$ ).

When looking at whether participants shared a room as a child, as shown in Table 6 no differences were found. Finally, as shown in table 7, there were no differences based on ethnicity.

Table 5

Means for Living with a Roommate versus Not on Conflict Resolution Styles

Dependent Variable	Roommate <i>M(SD)</i>	Not <i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i> value	Two-Tailed probability
Accommodation	2.39(.51)	2.17(.49)	2.02	.046
Collaboration	4.17(.66)	4.48(.58)	-2.30	.024
Competition	2.47(.80)	2.46(.83)	.07	.947
Avoiding	2.98(.60)	2.73(.60)	1.99	.049
Satisfaction	4.60(.61)	4.82(.61)	-1.71	.091

Note: All *df* = 101.

Table 6

Means for Sharing a Room as a Child versus Not on Conflict Resolution Styles

Dependent Variable	Child <i>M(SD)</i>	Not <i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i> value	Two-Tailed probability
Accommodation	2.28(.50)	2.35(.52)	-.69	.492
Collaboration	4.33(.64)	4.21(.66)	.94	.352
Competition	2.35(.75)	2.58(.85)	-1.50	.137
Avoiding	2.90(.58)	2.89(.64)	.07	.944
Satisfaction	4.60(.58)	4.74(.65)	-1.18	.243

Note: All *df* = 101.

Table 7  
Means for Ethnicity on Conflict Resolution Styles

Dependent Variable	White <i>M(SD)</i>	Black <i>M(SD)</i>	Hispanic <i>M(SD)</i>	Asian <i>M(SD)</i>	Native American <i>M(SD)</i>	Other <i>M(SD)</i>
Accommodation	2.33(.55)	2.19(.48)	2.29(.58)	2.31(.39)	2.31(.50)	2.59(.42)
Collaboration	4.15(.67)	4.29(.71)	4.29(.50)	4.84(.18)	4.58(.55)	4.22(.50)
Competition	2.65(.83)	2.12(.66)	1.88(.50)	2.94(1.12)	2.42(.92)	2.42(.51)
Avoiding	2.99(.60)	2.70(.64)	2.56(.79)	3.12(.52)	2.77(.42)	3.10(.72)
Satisfaction	4.50(.62)	4.86(.63)	4.32(.46)	5.08(.29)	4.73(.37)	4.94(.77)

## Chapter Four

## Discussion

The present study focused on the effects of personality on conflict resolution style and satisfaction. Specifically, the purpose of the current study was to examine whether certain personality factors correlate with a specific conflict resolution style and whether personality factors and conflict resolution styles correlate with satisfaction with the experience.

As predicted (Moberg, 2001), people who tended to be more agreeable were less likely to use the conflict resolution style competition. This correlation could be due to the fact that people who are more agreeable do not like to upset other people. If people are less likely to upset other people, they are also going to be less likely to want to compete with people for what they want.

People who scored higher on neuroticism were more likely to choose the avoiding style of conflict resolution. This is consistent with past research (Moberg, 2001 & Antonioni, 1998). People who tend to score high on neuroticism may have a distorted idea of reality, and it could be that they are more likely to be caused anxiety by everyday happenings. This tendency can be seen from the questions on the inventory used in this study. The questions are asking about feeling inferior to others, feeling lonely and blue, being sad and depressed, and feeling helpless and discouraged (Costa & McCrae, 1991). Individuals who score high on neuroticism may choose to avoid conflict to avoid any unwanted stress.



Also consistent with both Moberg (2001) and Antonioni's (1998) findings, the more extraverted people are, the more likely they are to use the conflict resolution style collaboration. People who are more extraverted interact with people more than those people who are introverted. These people may have less problems spending the time it takes to work problems out with people using the collaboration style. Also, people who are more conscientious were more likely to use collaboration. This may be because conscientiousness makes people more willing to work out problems than to let them go without speaking up for what they want. Also found, but unpredicted and not found in previous research, more agreeable people were more likely to use collaboration. Agreeable people were more likely to use collaboration because collaboration may be a way for them to get some of what they want without feeling like they have to fight for their needs.

People who tended to score high on neuroticism also scored high on accommodation. This tendency was unpredicted, but understandable. As mentioned above, people who tend to be neurotic may tend to have unwanted, sometimes unwarranted, anxiety. They may choose to accommodate the other person to avoid causing themselves more anxiety.

Those who scored high on agreeableness scored low on accommodation. This relationship was also unpredicted, and is a little surprising. Accommodation may require some sort of giving in to what the other person wants, and maybe agreeable people tend to let the other person have what they want instead of giving in after voicing their desires.

Also unpredicted, individuals scoring high on conscientiousness were less likely to use accommodation as their preferred conflict resolution style. This may be because people who are high in conscientiousness feel a sense of responsibility. This may make them less likely to use accommodation because they feel a responsibility to their needs as well as the other persons'. They may feel that giving in to what the other person wants is compromising their needs too much.

Individuals who are more extraverted are more satisfied. This may be because they thrive on interactions with people. Conflict, though not always good interaction, may give extraverts the arousal they are looking for. Eysenck theorized in 1967 that extraverts have a lower level of brain arousal than introverts. This causes them to be stimulus hungry, while introverts shy away from stimulus (Friedman & Schustack, 2003).

Also, people who are more conscientious seem to be more satisfied. The relationship between these two variables was unpredicted. Their satisfaction may stem from their feelings of responsibility to resolve the conflict.

When a person was more likely to use the conflict resolution style collaboration, they were more likely to be satisfied. From what Greene (1973) pointed out in his study on satisfaction, this is not surprising. The individual probably perceives a sense of reward from this conflict resolution style. Not only are they getting what they want, but are also working together to give the other individual what they want as well. Unpredicted however, we found that people who were more likely to use the conflict resolution style of avoiding were also more satisfied. This may point to a general satisfaction when conflict can be averted thus seeming like a "win."

Participants tended to prefer using the conflict resolution style collaboration more than competition, accommodation, and avoiding. The second favorite conflict resolution style of participants was avoiding. They preferred this style over accommodation and competition. It is interesting that the other studies did not look at this variable.

It seems that the participants' responses varied on certain demographic variables. The women tended to use the collaboration conflict resolution style more than the men. The men, however, preferred to use the conflict resolution style competition more than the women. Based on society's gender stereotypes, this makes sense (Baron, Byrne, & Johnson, 1998). Women play the role of "peace keeper" and want everyone to be happy. Men, however, are taught to fight for what they want.

Individuals who currently live in a residence hall were more likely than those who do not to use the accommodation style of resolving conflict. While they were less likely than individuals who do not live in a residence hall to use collaboration. Individuals who actually face the types of conflict presented in the questionnaire may realize that collaboration is not always the most desired choice, or even the one that works in most cases. Many times, students living in a dorm do not choose to even acknowledge that there is a problem, and if they do, they may tend to let the other person have their way to save time and energy.

Those people who currently live with a roommate were more likely to use accommodation and avoiding, but people who do not live with a roommate use collaboration more. Again, this may stem from the hassle found in trying to collaborate

with a roommate on every conflict that arises. People may be too busy, or even lazy, to spend the time trying to work out differences.

Many of the correlations this study found between personality and conflict resolution style were in support of previous research, but many of the correlations found in previous research were not found in this study. This difference could be attributed to the somewhat low reliability for the conflict resolution style accommodation in the questionnaire. This low reliability may have attributed to the unpredicted findings in this study. It would have helped to do a pretest to obtain better reliability for the questionnaire. Because of limited time, this was not possible with the current study.

The correlation between satisfaction and avoiding is somewhat surprising. One would not think that avoiding a conflict would leave a person satisfied. None of the other previous studies looked at found this correlation. It may be that in the questionnaire used for this study, the outcome for avoiding the conflict was a positive one, while maybe the avoiding for previous research was more the "fire in the wastebasket" problem (Lussier & Achua, 2001). This is when conflict is avoided and left unresolved it tends to get worse, much like a small fire in a wastebasket left unattended.

This study is useful to dorm supervisors and dorm assistants. They may be able to use this information to help solve some of the conflict that arises in a residence hall. Also, this study does add to the body of literature on conflict resolution, and may lead others to continue work in this area.

Further work that needs to be done includes looking at how people have actually handled conflicts. Also, it would be worthwhile to look at what conflict resolution style is

most useful and effective. One may choose to look at how conflict resolution style correlates with other measures of personality. Some measures that may be of interest would be self-monitoring and authoritarianism. Also, because this study found some differences in gender, maybe looking at how conflict resolution correlates with a gender role measure would be beneficial.

In conclusion, the current study provided a good first look at these common used variables in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, but applied to residence halls. Hopefully, the findings of this study will be helpful to those in charge of residence halls. Also, it is hoped that this study will lead others to continue research in this area.

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Appendix A

Conflict Questions

Read each scenario. After each scenario there are four choices of ways to resolve the conflict with a roommate. If you don't have a roommate or if you have never lived in a residence hall or apartment, imagine how you might respond. For each of these four choices there is a response scale ranging from less likely to more likely. You are to determine how likely you would be to do each of the four choices for that scenario. Then you are to mark how satisfied you would be with the situation if you performed the choice that you mark would be your most likely solution.

For example, consider that you must ask to have borrowed money returned to you from a friend. How would you go about this? (This example would show that you are most likely to ask for the money directly.)

-Ask directly

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less Likely					More Likely

-Never ask

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less Likely					More Likely

-Hint about the money

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less Likely					More Likely

-Ask to borrow that same amount

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less Likely					More Likely

For the satisfaction part of each question you would base your response on asking directly. (if you had a tie between two resolutions, please choose the one that you believe you would most likely do, given what you've done in the past to resolve conflict)

- Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied



- 1) **You are sitting in your room trying to study for a big test that you have tomorrow. You hear your next door neighbor come in, but you don't think anything about it until, all of a sudden, you hear the stereo blaring in the room beside you. It's so loud that you're unable to concentrate anymore on the material you're studying. You're sure the people down the hall can hear the music too.**

You handle this situation by:

- a) doing something else until he/she realizes how loud it is, or leaves the room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

- b) knocking on the next door neighbor's door and politely asking her to turn it down for now, explaining that you're studying for a test. She/he quickly apologizes, but asks if you can wait until this song is over because it's their favorite song. You agree and go back to your room. As soon as the song is over, she/he turns the music down to a much more tolerable level.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

- c) calling your RA who will most definitely write the person up. How dare she/he turn the music up that loud when they should know that you have a big test tomorrow to study for. And even if you didn't, you don't want to hear that country crap.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

- d) leaving your room. You're sure it will be quieter in the library.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied



3) **You and your roommate are both under the age of 21. Your roommate drinks, but you don't believe in underage drinking. One night your roommate and friends are drinking in your room. For the next several days, there are empty alcohol bottles all over the room. You worry that your dorm supervisor might come into your room and see all those empty bottles and you would get into trouble as well as your roommate.**

You handle this situation by:

a) yell at your roommate and tell him/her that you don't want them drinking in your room anymore and if they do, you'll call the cops on them.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) telling your roommate that you would prefer they not drink in the room, but if they decide to, you would appreciate it if they threw their empty bottles away in the trash can in the hall. While they threw a few away the next time, they still left some bottles in the room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) cleaning the beer bottles up yourself and never saying anything to your roommate about it.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) doing nothing. You'll just have to hope that your dorm supervisor doesn't come into your room until your roommate decides to clean up.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied

**4) Your roommate likes to watch TV all the time. You want to study in your room, but you can't study with the TV on.**

You handle this situation by:

a) doing nothing. You like watching Road Rules and Real World, even though it is interfering with your studies.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) leaving the room whenever you study. There's always the library or a friend's room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) asking your roommate if maybe he/she could wear headphones while you're trying to study. They agreed to wear headphones, but they had the TV up so loud you could still hear the noise.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) turning the TV off. It's your TV, you can do what you want with it.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied

- 5) You and your roommate do not have the same sleeping patterns. You have early classes and you like to go to bed early, but her/his classes aren't until later in the afternoon, so she/he stays up late. It wouldn't be so bad if she/he didn't make so much noise while you were trying to sleep. She/he talks on the phone, watches TV loud, and chats on AIM with the volume turned up. You just can't get to sleep like that.**

You handle this situation by:

a) wearing ear plugs. You can sleep with them in, and sometimes you can hear your alarm clock in the morning.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) lying in bed miserable until she/he finally goes to bed or leaves the room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) continually getting up and turning things off while she/he is doing them. Eventually she/he will get the message and go to bed.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) talking to her/him about the things that bother you. The two of you work out a compromise on the volume level after you decide to go to bed.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied

6) **You come in after class one day starving, only to find that your roommate has eaten your last packet of Easy-Mac, again. This isn't the first time that he/she has eaten all your food, and he/she never offers to replace any of it.**

You handle this situation by:

a) talking to your roommate about eating your food. You tell him/her that you don't mind if they eat some, but not to eat the last of something.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) going to the store to buy some more Easy-Mac. You don't pay for your food, your parents do, so why should you keep your roommate from eating it.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) going to the store to buy some more Easy-Mac, but this time, trying to put it somewhere your roommate might not find it.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) hiding your food from your roommate even if it means buying a safe to keep your food in. There's no way you're going to continue to let that pig eat your food.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied



**8) Your roommate has an early class on a day that you don't. She/he sets her/his alarm clock for at least an hour and half before the class. Then she/he hits the snooze button until its about 45 minutes before the class. Every time the alarm goes off, you wake up too, and it makes you very angry.**

You handle this situation:

a) throwing the alarm clock out the window.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) getting up. You can use this extra time to do some homework.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) reminding your roommate that every time her/his alarm clock goes off, it wakes you up too. Then the two of you can work out a better way to help her/him wake up in the mornings. Even though you talked about it, it still tends to happen.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) lying in bed miserable until its finally time for you to get ready for your class.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied





**10) You live in a dorm where two rooms are joined by a bathroom. Your suite mates lock the bathroom door while they are taking a shower, and forget to unlock your entrance to the bathroom when they leave.**

You handle this situation by:

a) asking a friend if you can take a shower in their room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) breaking the door down. You're not about to let your suite mates keep you from taking a shower.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) waiting until later, when your suite mates finally remember to unlock the door, to take a shower.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) working out a way for them to signal they're in the shower without having to lock the door. They do put a scarf on the door, but occasionally you still find the door locked.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied

**11) In this same style of dorm, the AC control is located in your suite mates' room. They turn the AC all the way up/down, and then leave for the weekend. The suite is unbearable for you the whole weekend.**

You handle this situation by:

a) buying an extra sweatshirt to keep you warm or a fan to keep you cool.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) getting the air turned to a normal level during the weekend, but then talking to your suite mate's about the temperature. The four of you work out a reasonable temperature to leave the AC on.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) breaking the door down. It's their fault you had to do it, so of course they'll have to pay for the damage and not you.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) getting the dorm supervisor to open the door so you can turn it to a reasonable level.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied





**14) Your roommate has his/her friends over on many occasions to play video games, and sometimes they stay so late that they're keeping you from going to sleep.**

You handle this situation by:

a) yelling at your roommate and his/her friends until they finally leave your room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) putting on some headphones with white noise and trying to sleep.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) getting up and using the time to study, though you will be tired in the morning.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) asking your roommate if they can have their friends leave before it gets too late. Set a time with your roommate that you both agree is too late.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied



**16) One night you walk into your room and find your roommate having sex.**

You handle this situation by:

a) you decide to simply leave the room whenever they want to have sex.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

b) telling your roommate that you never want that to happen in your room again. You threaten to call his/her mother if it does.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

c) working out with your roommate a way for the two of you to know if that is going on in the room.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

d) leaving the room and not coming back until much later. You never mention the your roommate that you saw him/her having sex. You just hope that they didn't even notice that you came in the room, and if they did, then hopefully if you don't bring it up neither will he/she.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Less likely					More likely

Considering that response that is most characteristic for you (i.e. that response item you gave the highest score to) how satisfied would you be with that resolution?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all satisfied					Very Satisfied





Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

Sex (circle one)    Female                  Male

Class (circle one)    Freshman                  Sophomore                  Junior                  Senior

Do you live in a residence hall? (circle one)    Yes                  No

If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

If no, have you ever lived in a residence hall in the past? (circle one)    Yes                  No

If you have lived in a residence hall in the past, how long did you live there? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live with a roommate? (circle one)                  Yes                  No

If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, do you share a bedroom? (circle one)                  Yes                  No

Did you share a room as a child? (circle one)                  Yes                  No

If yes, indicate the number of people in the room \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Consent Form for Research Participation

I consent to participate in the research that is being conducted by Hillary Griffin (under the direction of Dr. Kelley Charlton).

The goal of this study is to assess your feelings about a variety of questions. You will be asked to read these questions and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the responses provided. The study will take no longer than 45 minutes to an hour.

The results of this study will be presented to a group of campus faculty, staff, and students and may be published. You will not be identified in any presentation or report. As such, we ask that you **not** put your name or student ID number on any of your responses.

We would like you to know that your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time during the session without penalty. This project is not expected to involve risks greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life although it is not possible to identify all potential risks. At the end of the session you will have an opportunity to read about the study in general.

Please sign below to indicate that you understand this and to give your consent to participate in exchange for credit in your Psychology 101 course as outlined in your course syllabus. If you have any concerns about the ways in which this study was conducted, you may contact Dr. Elizabeth Denny, 521-6240. Your signature does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print full name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Psyc 101 Professor \_\_\_\_\_ Day and Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

Debriefing Sheet

## Personality and Conflict Resolution in the Dorm

Please read the following and then **leave the sheet with the researcher**

We would like to thank you for your participation in our research project. The goal of this research is to better understand how people make judgments about how to solve conflict.

The big five has been used in previous research related to conflict resolution (e.g. Moberg, 2001 & Antonioni, 1998) and was the personality measure focused on in this study. We focused on four typical styles of resolving conflict, identified as avoiding, competition, collaboration, and accommodation. With this study we hope to support that certain personality types will correlate with certain conflict resolution styles. Greene (1973) highlights a theory by Cherrington, Reitz, and Scott in which rewards are the main link to satisfaction. In that study, those participants who received some reward for behavior were more satisfied than those who received no rewards. We believe that satisfaction concerning conflict would follow this pattern. We also hope to find a correlation between personality, conflict resolution and satisfaction.

In this study we asked you how you would handle a number of conflict situations that might arise in a residence hall and how satisfied you would be with the situation. With this study we hope to be able to correlate personality type with a certain type of conflict resolution and overall satisfaction of the experience.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, or if you would like further information regarding the purposes of this study, please contact Hillary Griffin or Dr. Kelly Charlton. We appreciate your participation. Thank You.

**So that we may get accurate data from this study, we ask that you please not talk about this experiment with other students.**

## Appendix E

Protocol

## Personality and Conflict Resolution in the Dorm

*As people arrive have them take a seat in the classroom. Put up the sign "Please sit quietly, the experiment will begin in a few minutes."*

*Begin the experiment at 5 minutes past the time to begin and close the door with the "experiment in progress" sign up.*

Before we get started, let's all take a minute to check our cell phones. Please, if you have a cell phone with you, turn it off while you are participating in this study.

Welcome to the experiment, my name is Hillary Griffin. I'll be reading all the instructions today so that I can make sure everyone hears the same thing in all my sessions. In this study, I am interested in how you would handle situations that may occur in a dorm or apartment. As such, you will be reading about a variety of problem situations that may occur while living with a roommate. There are no right or wrong answers.

I anticipate no risk arising from your participation in this experiment, as these are everyday situations. However, if you would like to discuss the experiment with a faculty member or if the questions bring up some feelings you wish to discuss with a counselor, information sheets are available at the desk when you leave.

You will receive credit from your instructor as they have announced in class and/or in their syllabus. If you wish to participate, please read your consent form and sign it. Once I have collected the consent forms, I will distribute the experiment packets. You may decline to participate by leaving now. Additionally, if at any time you decide you want to stop participating, you may turn in your materials and leave or simply turn in blank materials at the end. Your materials will then be destroyed. Your participation is voluntary.

*Pass out and then collect consent forms.*

I would now like you to read and answer the questions in this packet. Please read the instruction before starting each separate part. Please read each item thoroughly and answer the questions as thoughtfully and carefully as you can. Answer the measures in the order you find them in the packet I passed out. This is the order they should be answered.

*Write the order of the measures on the board. Conflict Questions, Personality Inventory, Demographic Questionnaire.*

You may not leave until everyone is finished with the test unless you are declining to participate in the study. When you are finished with the packet, please turn it face down on your desk and sit quietly.

*Pass out the measures packet.*

Before you begin, let's look at the example...*(read example)* If you have a tie on two of the answers, when answering the satisfaction question, pick the one that you would be mostly likely to do. You may begin now. And remember, when you are finished with the packet, please turn it face down on your desk and sit quietly.

*When everyone has finished...*

Thank you so much for participating in my research study. I would like to have you know a little bit more about the study you just participated in, so I'm handing out this debriefing sheet. When you have read the sheet you may leave, just leave the sheet on top of your measures on your desk. I will collect them when everyone has finished. Please remember not to talk about the study to your friends until I am through running the study. Also, remember if you want further information about the study there is an information sheet that you may take as you leave the experiment.

*Hand out debriefing sheet.*

When you have finished reading the debriefing sheet, please leave everything on the desk and you are free to go.

*Have the information sheet available for them at the front desk.*

*Once everyone has gone, pick up the packets and make session number and subject number on each one. Make any notes that need to be made about the sessions and put everything in Dr. Charlton's office.*