Study of the Effect of Perceived Similarity on Quality of Relationships between Chinese International Students and Their Roommates

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Abstract

Roommate relationships are important to college students, especially to international students who are away from their families and sojourning abroad. In order to explore Chinese international students' experiences sharing living space with their roommates, this study interviewed 12 Chinese international students who each shares one room with a roommate in Hawaii. An additional 29 students who also have had this experience were also surveyed.

The results indicated that perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. One of the major reasons is that they have fewer opportunities to interact with their roommates and other people, because of the novel sojourning environment. Within these few interactions with their roommates, their self-disclosures are practically oriented and low in intimacy, so that they do not require sharing similar personalities with their roommates. The key variables that are associated with Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive roommate relationships were also identified in this study.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The United States is one of the major host countries for international students from Asia. In 2010, 9.8% of students in the University of Hawai'i at Manoa were international students (UHM official website, http://www.uhm.hawaii.edu/about/), among which Chinese international students were one of the major international student groups. Due to financial and other considerations, a large number of Chinese international students who study in Hawai'i share rooms and rent with roommates. Entering a U.S. university, an international student is faced with a multitude of new relationships; roommate relationships are one of these key interpersonal relationships. This study focused on the factors that associated Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships their roommates from an ecocultural perspective.

In previous roommate studies, researchers broadly used the quantitative data collection method. By investigating which variables consistently affect roommate relationships, we have overlooked how individuals experience shared living space with others in real life. Thus, this study undertook an in-depth, semi-structured interviewing method to examine two main issues. First, I examined how important is perceived similarity in personality in Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. Second, I identified and analyzed what are the key variables associated with Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. The study took an ethnographic approach and was integrated with an ecocultural perspective. Interviews were used as the main instrument

to gather stories as data; participants also finished a survey using 5-point Likert scale after the interview.

Most of the training and orientation programs that target international students in UHM are focused on their academics, visa problems, etc., and very few mention the ways to build positive roommate relationships.   Therefore, the results of this study can be used for orientations and some training programs sponsored by the UH International Student Services office, International Student Association, English Language Institute program and East-West Center.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The first section of this literature review provides a brief review of previous roommate communication studies. Then, social penetration theory and related perspectives on interpersonal relationships were reviewed in order to consider how interpersonal relationships can be described in different stages. The main focus in this study is the influence of perceived similarity in personality on roommate relationships. Thus, literature on the effects of actual and perceived similarity in interpersonal relationships was explored. Review of relational mobility suggests that from an ecocultural perspective, human behavior is the response to ecological and cultural contexts. To adapt in a cultural context, individuals develop certain psychological characteristics and behaviors to fit the ecological and sociopolitical influences in that cultural context. Thus, the cultural differences of the perceived similarity between friends reflect the different society or environment surrounding people. Moreover, recent research on Chinese personality structure was reviewed in the last part.

Roommate Communication Study

Relationships among roommates are one type of interpersonal relationship that is important to college students, especially to international students who are away from their families and sojourning abroad. Most of the preceding roommate studies that were conducted by the quantitative data collection method did not assess the individual's actual thoughts of his or her relationship with roommates.

Since the early 1980s, few quantitative studies on interpersonal communication have been published (Miller, 2003). Only a handful of studies have concentrated on studying the roommate relationships. Some focused on conflict (e.g., Bresnahan, Xiaowen, Shearman, & Donohue, 2009), while others examined the correlation between interpersonal competence and roommate satisfaction (e.g., Duran & Zakahi, 1988; Martin & Aderson, 1995). However, the qualitative perspective in roommate relationship studies is a recent approach. For instance, Miller (2003) used in-depth interviews to examine the praxes that the intercultural roommates used in their relationships building process within a university dormitory.

In general, most of these studies assessed four major categories of explanatory variables on roommate relationships: personality; values and attitudes; background; and living habits (Lapidus, Green, & Baruh, 1985). Lapidus, Green, and Baruh (1985) classified roommate studies into two types: Behavioral measures and Subjective self-report measures.

Behavioral measures affect how roommates make decisions on whether to continue to live with their roommates. For example, Marek, Wanzer and Knapp (2004) conducted a roommate study by using the Predicted Outcome Value (POV) theory as a framework to examine why some roommates chose to live together continually and others did not. The study results supported all three hypotheses they advanced. They concluded that (1) roommates who had more positive initial impressions were more likely to chose to continue living with their roommates; (2) positive initial impressions made individuals more satisfied with their roommate; and (3) there was a positive correlation between roommates' initial impressions and using constructive or solution oriented conflict management strategies.

Subjective self-report measures affect the degree to which students are satisfied with and like their roommates (e.g., Marek, Knapp & Wanzer, 2004). For example, in Duran and Zakahi's (1988) study, 104 student subjects were asked to finish a questionnaire packet, which included items about themselves and their roommates at the beginning and the end of the semester. They measured six dimensions of communication competence including: social confirmation, social composure, social experience, appropriate disclosure, articulation, and wit. The results support a strong causal relationship between communicative competence and roommate satisfaction.

Among these roommate studies, only one (Wong & Bond, 1999) specifically studied Chinese roommate relationships, which focused on the self-disclosing behavior and personality traits linked to roommate satisfaction. In this study, 131 university students rated their own and their roommates' personality, their self-disclosing behaviors, and the strength of their friendships. Wong and Bond (1999) found that self-ratings of the personality were related to both self-disclosing behaviors and the strength of friendships. However, these scholars found the participants' self-disclosure was not related to their friendship rating, which was different from other western-based studies (Wong & Bond, 1999). In addition, they found that the perceived roommate quality of helpfulness was positively associated with the participants' friendship rating.

In Chinese interpersonal relationships, individuals have to follow proper rituals when establishing a new relationship. Such rituals can help mediate the relationship (Yum, 1988). Additionally, Krumrey-Fulks (2001) conducted a cross-cultural study that revealed that Chinese people expect friends to perform helping behaviors. This is also supported by Chen's (2005) study, which found that Chinese people treat mutual support as an important element of friendship, "helping each out whenever needed in whatever way needed" (p. 18).

Social Penetration Theory

In Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory, the level of self-disclosure is the most important concept in predicting relationship development. Self-disclosure is "the process of revealing and sharing personal information about oneself to another" (Chen, 2007). If self-disclosure is high, then the relationship will develop. As a friendship develops, the two participants exchange more intimate information about one another (Wong & Bond, 1999). According to this theory, Altman and Taylor (1973) hypothesize that "interpersonal exchange gradually progresses from superficial, non-intimate areas to more specific, intimate, and central areas of personalities of actors in a relationship" (c.f., Gudykust, 1985, p.206).

Social penetration theory has been widely used as a model in teaching about interpersonal relationships and as a framework for considering relational development (Miller, 2005). Social penetration theory posits four stages of relationship development: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange.

During the first stage-orientation-people meet for the first time and the meeting is short in duration. To avoid becoming vulnerable, communication at the orientation stage involves a low level of depth and breadth of self-disclosure. Information revealed in this stage is superficial and limited to personal preference information. Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi (2007) found that the valence of the disclosure in this stage is usually positive because participants are trying to make a good impression by following rules of social politeness.

From the orientation stage the relationship moves to the second stage. The exploratory affective exchange stage is characterized by increasing breadth and frequency, but low depth of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Gudykust (1985) equates this stage to acquaintances. In

this stage, participants might "explore" some topic to increasing breadth (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2007), by sharing personal opinions on politics or religions but the information revealed in the exploratory affective exchange stage is still considered to be public. In other words, people are trying to maintain a positive impression for one another, so the valence of disclosure is still much more positive than negative (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000).

The relationship evolves into the affective exchange stage, and both depth and breadth of self-disclosure have increased significantly. People in this stage are considered to be good friends, or romantic partners. Interaction at this stage is "characterized by a definite increase in communication in very private or central areas of the personality" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 140). However, the valence and duration of self-disclosure also may change in this stage. Because people in affective exchange stage express both positive and negative emotions more freely, conflict may occur more frequently and the relationships fade or die easily after a separation (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2007). On the contrary, if people are comfortable sharing positive and negative reactions, the relationships may become more enduring (Griffin, 2008).

The final stage in social penetration theory is stable exchange, which involves complete self-disclosure (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2007). Relationships in this stage "are likely to terminate not in an explosive flash of anger but in a gradual cooling off of enjoyment and care" (Griffin, 2008, p.116). In other words, in this stage individuals have a deep understanding of their partner, and feel free to open up with each other about everything. In reality, however, it is difficult for individuals to evolve into a true state of stable exchange. Even the closest friends tend to keep some secrets from their partner. So "social penetration theory is never total" (Mongeau & Henningsen, 2007, p368); partners in this stage can still keep secrets from each other.

Actual versus Perceived Interpersonal Similarity

The tendency for individuals to form relationships with those similar to themselves has gained attention in the study of interpersonal relationships (Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009; Lee & Bond, 1998). Overwhelmingly, anecdotal and empirical evidence indicate that individuals are attracted to others with similar attributes to themselves (e.g., Banikiotes, & Neimeyer, 1981; Tan, & Singh, 1995; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991). Byrne's (Byrne, 1971, 1997; Byrne, Gouaux, & Griffitt, 1971) classical theory of similarity-attraction posits that an individual is likely to interact with someone who shares the same attitude. Through this interaction, an individual's own thoughts about similarity are confirmed by that similar person, consequently boosting self-esteem, which in turn, leads to attraction. Based largely on laboratory data and several field studies, researchers came to view the similarity effect as a fundamental rule of attraction (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008). Berger (1975) claims that the similarity effect is "one of the most robust relationships in all of the behavioral sciences" (p. 281).

In previous similarity effect studies, researchers have made the distinction between actual similarity and perceived similarity. Actual similarity was defined as "the degree to which one is actually similar to another individual," whereas perceived similarity is "the degree to which one believes oneself similar to another" (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008, p. 890). Perceived similarity consists of two measurements from the same person: an estimation of himself or herself, and an estimation of the partner (Linden-Anderen, Markiewicz, & Doyle, 2009). Byrne (1971) refers to actual similarity as an interpersonal situation in which two individuals share attributes; this is critical for producing attraction. He borrowed the concepts of social comparison theories and cognitive dissonance to support his similarity-attraction theory.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that the reinforcing value of similarity depends on perceived similarity (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008). Buunk and Bosman (1986) conducted a study to examine the attitude towards similarity in married couples. They found that perceived similarity was significantly correlated to the attraction between couples, whereas the effect of actual similarity was limited. Hoyle (1993) claims that whether actual similarity leads to attraction depends upon the subject's perception of that similarity.

To evaluate the impact of actual and perceived similarity on interpersonal attraction, Montoya, Horton, and Kirchner (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 460 similarity-dissimilarity comparisons from 313 laboratory and field studies. According to their findings, similarity produced a large effect on attraction in laboratory data. However, the association between actual similarity and attraction was significantly lower after a short interaction, and was not detectable in existing relationships. Instead, perceived similarity strongly influences the attraction in no-interaction, short-interaction and existing relationship studies. Furthermore, Montpya, Horton, & Kirchner (2008) concluded that "[actual] similarity leads to attraction in laboratory setting, not in existing relationships" (p. 907).

Perceived similarity of personalities has been found to be associated with better quality relationships among adolescent friends (e.g., Linden-Anderen, Markiewicz, & Doyle, 2009) and adult romantic partners (e.g., Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000). Among 124 Canadian high school student participants in their study, Linden-Anderen, Markiewicz, & Doyle (2009) found that the higher the positive ratings of the friendship, the more adolescents perceived themselves as similar to their friends in personality and attitudes. In Carli, Ganley, and Pierce-Otay's (1991) roommate study, the results suggest that similarity in personality is positively related to roommate

satisfaction. Thus, the proposed study will examine the degree of perceived similarity in personalities between two roommates rather than their actual similarity.

Do We Actually Select Similar Others?

The effect of perceived similarity has found support in a variety of studies in different cultural settings such as India (Porwal & Jain, 1985), Japan (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984), and Lebanon (Yabrudi & Diab, 1978), suggesting this effect is not unique to Western cultures, but is shared by people from cultures all over the world (Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009). However, it is intriguing to find that several recent studies showed that the effect of perceived similarity tends to be lower in East Asian societies (e.g., Korea, Japan and Taiwan) than in the West (Satterwite, Feldman, Catrambone, & Dai, 2000; Uleman, Rhee, Bardoliwalla, Semin, & Toyama, 2000).

Byrne (1992) suggests that environmental cues, such as target race, room temperature, background music, and physical attractiveness dilute the impact of similarity on attraction. Cheng et al. (1995) found that Chinese college students prefer their ideal female friends to be high in helpfulness, and their ideal male friends to be high in extroversion and usefulness, regardless of the respondent's own level of these traits. Furthermore, similarity seems to be unrelated to relationship quality in East Asian countries (Lee & Bond, 1998; Wong & Bond, 1999; Heine & Renshaw, 2002).

To explain these culture differences on perceived similarity, Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura (2009) use individuals' perceptions of relational mobility to find out the reasons that Japanese and Americans have different perceived similarity levels between friends. In previous

research, which focused only on American and Japanese samples, the American samples showed higher relational mobility than the Japanese samples.

According to Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura's (2009) findings, Americans' perception of their friend-self similarity in terms of their personalities, hobbies, values, behaviors and lifestyles are rated higher than Japanese participants did. In addition, the differences between the participants were affected by the different levels of relational mobility. Therefore, they conclude that cultural differences between how one perceives similarity between self and others are not due to the differences in attitude or preferences, but due to "differences in the society surrounding each other" (p. 101). This is consistent with findings by Satterwite, Feldman, Catrambone and Dai (2000) that people in individualist cultures perceive the in-group to be relatively similar to themselves as compare to people's perceptions of friendship in collectivist cultures.

Relational Mobility

Yamagishi and his colleagues (1998) developed the trust theory, which suggests that individuals' levels of trust represent strategies to adapt to the different social contexts in each culture. Based on this, Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura (2009) theorize relational mobility as "the general number of opportunities there are for individuals to select new relationship partners, when necessary, in a given society or social context" (p. 96). Individuals in high relational mobility societies (e.g., the U.S.A.) have more opportunities to form new relationships. Conversely, individuals in low mobility societies (e.g., Japan) are more likely to be embedded in,

and unlikely to stray from, committed relationships, which consequently leads to reduced

opportunities (or need) to select new partners (Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009).

In previous research, which only focused on American and Japanese samples, Americans

showed higher relational mobility than Japanese samples. For example, Americans generally

possess a greater number of acquaintances (Tsuji, 2002), move residences more frequently (Long,

1991), and are more likely to join voluntary organizations (Curtis, Baer, & Grabb, 2001).

However, there was no effective tool to assess relational mobility before Yuki and his colleagues

(2007) developed a scale to specifically measure the individuals' perception of relational mobility

in a given society. This scale has successfully measured various cross-cultural differences that

have been found between Eastern and Western cultures, such as general trust (Yuki et al., 2007),

perceived similarity between friends (Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009), and self-

enhancement (Falk, Heine, Yuki, & Takemura, 2009).

Relational mobility as a socio-ecological variable influences individuals' behaviors and

characteristics. From the ecocultural perspective,

> "Human populations are considered to be adapted (both culturally and biologically) to
> their ecological context, and individual psychological characteristics are considered to
> be developed as a function of these ecological, culture and biological population
> variables" (Berry, 1994, p. 78).

Relational mobility is a socio-ecological variable, rather than a psychological variable. It is

not a characteristic of individuals' personalities in a particular society, but rather conveys

the characteristics of the society that surround these individuals.

In previous literature, most of the studies on cultural differences with regard to the effect of

perceived similarity were conducted with samples from Japan. Very few studies have been done to

examine the effect of perceived similarity in terms of personality traits between Chinese

individuals. Also, few studies have been conducted in roommate settings. According to Laar, Levin, Sinclair, and Sidanius, roommate dyads have "high acquaintance potential, and the familiarity and mere exposure afforded by living together is likely to generate positive affective ties between roommates" (p. 342). Thus, for this project I want to examine how the sojourning environment influences Chinese international students' perceived similarity, in terms of personality traits, and the consequent effect on creating a positive roommate relationships.

The Personality of Chinese People

The Big Five model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1989), a widely tested personality factor model, labels personality as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Intellect. The Big Five model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1989) is based mainly on using English adjectives, and has been tested in other languages such as Dutch and German (Hofstee, Kiers, De Raad, Goldberg, and Ostendorf , 1997; Goldberg, 1990).

Applying the Big Five model to Chinese, Zhou, Saucier, Gao, and Liu (2009) conducted a lexical study to explore the Chinese personality structure by selecting two independent large samples in China, and asking the participants to rate themselves and their peers from a selection of top 413 personality descriptors from the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary. (See Appendix A) In the study, they found that a seven factors represented the personality of Chinese people. These factors are: Extraversion, Conscientiousness/Diligence, Unselfishness, Negative Valence, Emotional Volatility, Intellect/Positive Valence, and Dependency/Fragility.

Wang and Cui (2003) also developed a Big Seven structure of the Chinese personality scale (QZPS): Extraversion, Kindness, Behaviors styles, Talents, Emotionality, Human relations, and

Ways of life. (See Appendix B) The QZPS stands for Qingnian Zhongguo Personality Scale, which means Youth China Personality Scale in English. Wong, Cui and Zhou (2005) found that compared with the Western Big Five structure, the Big Seven structure can accurately measure the personality of the Chinese.

Based on Wang and Cui's (2003) QZPS, Zhang and He (2010) found that extraversion was the strongest predictor of subjective well being. Extraversion was defined reflecting "activity, initiative, positivity, mild characteristics in socialization, easygoing nature, and ease in communication, as well as a happy and positive mood" (Wang et al., 2005, p. 100).

Therefore, I chose four personality traits from both Zhou, Saucier, Gao, and Liu's (2009) list of Chinese personality factors, and the QZPS (Wang & Cui, 2003) to represent good personality traits that might contribute to positive relationships between Chinese international students in Hawai'i and their roommates, integrated with one personality trait, which found in the pretest. These personality traits are easy-going, optimistic, open-minded, outgoing, and generous.

Research Questions

Based on the reviewed literature, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: How important is perceived similarity in personality in Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates?

RQ2: According to the findings of RQ1, why is perceived similarity in personality important or unimportant in building positive roommate relationships?

RQ3: What are the key variables associated with Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates?

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research design

 This study utilized in-depth and semi-structured interviews to find out Chinese students' perception of the relationships with their roommates, and how perceived similarity in personalities, sojourning environment, and other related variables affect their evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. In-depth interviews revealed the interviewees' living conditions and their experiences with their roommates. Additionally, compared to using a structured interview, a semi-structured interview setting allowed me to freely change the order of the interview questions and use different ways to paraphrase the questions for collecting information (Baxter & Babbie, 2004).

The research subject of "roommate relationships" is complex in its intimate and situational sensitivities. Therefore, it stands to reason that to understand the dynamics of such a phenomenon would require more detailed explanations and stories than a survey or questionnaire could provide. Interviewees participating in the in-depth interviews were able to explain through situations, stories, examples, and context their own perceptions of what "roommate relationships" mean to their sojourning life.

Before each interview, I requested information about the following demographic variables: gender, age, province, major, years in Hawaiʻi, living on / off campus, and email address (for potential future contact). There are two purposes of this survey: first, to make sure the interviewees group was as diverse as possible in order to represent the Chinese international

student community in; second, to make sure the questions in future interviews would be suitable for the students' different living situations.

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and audio recorded with consent from all interviewees. The tapes were then transcribed for future analysis, and only the excerpts quoted in this research paper were translated into English. Each interview lasted about one hour, and most of them were conducted in the interviewee's home. Specifically, the participants were asked general and open-ended questions regarding their roommate relationship development, their perceived similarity and dissimilarity to roommates, and their perception of the sojourning environment.

I wrote field notes during the interviews, in terms of the participants' non-verbal behaviors, their room layout, and the space arrangement. Interviewees were encouraged to elaborate and relate stories at any point. Follow-up questions were asked if elaboration and examples were not offered.

After the interview, each participant finished a survey measured on a 5-point Likert scale, in which the respondents rated the importance of each questionnaire item from No.1 very important to No.5 not at all important. Questions in the survey addressed how important each factors were to interviewees' relationships with their roommates. Also, 17 other participants did this survey online. The survey helped me gain a broader sampling of evaluations and perceptions regarding variables related to building positive roommate relationships. It also provided an additional quantifiable basis for analysis and comparison.

I utilized the ethnography method as my interview data analysis framework. The purpose of ethnographic research is:

"To describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 68).

Participants

The respondents were invited to participate in this project through the Chinese Students and Scholars Association Mailing list (CSSCUH-L list), which encourages Chinese students and scholars in Hawai'i to share information and make announcements. The online survey link was also attached in the e-mail. By using the CSSCUH-L e-mail list, over 600 Chinese students and scholars in Hawai'i were invited to participate in this study. The surveys were used as the basis for data collection to narrow down the potential interviewees for the study. Snowball sampling, in which participants were encouraged to invite others to do the survey, was also used.

Selection of the interviewees was based on three criteria: (a) Chinese international student who is studying in Hawai'i and shares one room with a roommate or who has had this experience before (their roommates can be Chinese or people from any ethnic background); (b) The willingness and availability to participate in this study; and (c) Diversity in gender, age, and location of residency (on or off campus). These requirements were also attached in the online survey invitation e-mail.

Based on these criteria, 12 participants were chosen from 17 e-mail responses and willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. All 12 participants were graduate students studying in Hawai'i. One participant was from Hawai'i Pacific University; others were studying at the

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University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa. (See sampling details of participants in Table 1 on p.18). An

additional 17 students responded to the online survey for a total of 29 participants.

Table 1:

Sampling Details of Participants

	Name (anonymous)	Gender	Major	Roommate Background
1	Yan	Female	Theater	Japanese undergraduate student
2	Lin	Female	Biological Engineering	Chinese visiting scholar
3	Ying	Female	Electrical Engineering	Chinese graduate student
4	Qian	Female	Communications	Filipino American undergraduate student
5	Xin	Female	Microbiology	Chinese graduate student
6	Meng	Male	Mechanical Engineering	Chinese visiting scholar
7	Hui	Female	Mechanical Engineering	Chinese visiting scholar
8	Tang	Female	Psychology	Chinese graduate student
9	Hao	Male	Electrical Engineering	Taiwanese undergraduate student
10	Ning	Female	Food Engineering	American undergraduate student
11	Chen	Male	Computer Science	Chinese graduate student
12	Guo	Male	Environmental Management	American graduate student

Procedure

To start this research project, two small pretests were conducted to determine appropriate questions for the in-depth interviews and the variables in the survey. One-hour interviews with the participants were the primary data collection tool. Before each interview, the participants were asked to sign the University of Hawai'i consent form, which was filed with the Institutional Review Board of the Committee on Human Studies, the agency which approves the research project.

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants. After explaining the purpose of the study to each participant, I asked each one individually to describe why he or she wants to live with a roommate. In probing for more specific detail, I asked specific questions, such as: "How did you choose your roommate? What criteria did you have?" Other questions included questions which elicited hypothetical thinking, such as: "What's the difference between you living with a roommate here in Hawai'i and living with a roommate when you were in China?" Because of the semi-structured nature of the interview, follow-up questions were improvised based on participantes responses.

The prepared interview questions were designed to elicit narratives and stories within four themes related to roommate relationships. These were: 1) relational mobility; 2) factors influence relationship quality; 3) perception of a roommate; and 4) perceived similarity between roommates. Other questions related to sojourning environment were also asked. (See in-depth interview questions in Appendix D)

After the interview, each participant finished a survey on roommate relationships with 11 questions that were on a 5-point Likert scale in hard copy. The scale measured how the

respondents rated the importance of each questionnaire item to their relationships with roommates. (See survey in Appendix E). An addition 17 participants finished the online survey at Surveymonkey.com. The data collection period was from January 10 to February 2, 2011.

Data Analysis Procedure

After all interviews were completed, all of the taped interviews and field notes were entered into computer files, and each interviewee had his or her own file. During the reading of the data, for the convenience of future data coding and comparison, I classified and labeled the data into several main categories in terms of my research questions. Then I located the textual segments that answered my research questions under these main categories. During the coding process, I created an analytic memo in which the most frequent themes would be identified and described. These themes were classified into several categories depending on similarity; each category was then labeled and saved in separate files. The next step was to determine the conceptual relationships between and among my categories based on my research questions (Baxter & Babbie, 2004).

Researcher's position in this study

I believe that my background as a Chinese international student studying in Hawai'i and sharing one room with a Chinese roommate may influence the objectivity of this study, although it could lend credibility to the study. My current situation is exactly what I want to study for this project. So, my insider experiences of living with a roommate, and my perception of living with a

roommate, may make me less objective when I designed the interview questions and in my observation perspectives.

However, this effect can be valuable: because of my insider experiences of roommate relationships, I am able to notice details during my observation that could only be observed by people who have lived with a roommate for a while. Additionally, I share the same ethnic background as my participants. All of the interviewees in this study are from Mainland China and speak Mandarin as their first language. Hence, the interviews were all conducted in Mandarin, which means we can converse in the language we are most comfortable with. Since different students have different fluency levels of English, I think I can collect more data from the participants because they may be more willing to communicate with me by using our mother tongue.

My position as a Chinese international student studying in Hawai'i shares many similarities with the participants in this project, which may influence the validity of this study in negative or positive ways. However, my awareness of my positionality and the design of this study can balance out those effects, and consequently make me an objective outsider of this study. For example, to diminished the participants' potential worry if I am somehow going to release the content in our conversation, I chose 12 participants from the 17 e-mail respondents to this project who didn't share any interpersonal relationships with me, and neither with their roommate.

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

The general purpose of this study was to uncover and analyze stories that provide insight into relationships between Chinese international students in Hawai'i and their roommates.

The data from the surveys show that perceived similarity in personality is unimportant in Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. The data from the in-depth interviews explain why perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to them. Additionally, the data show the key variables associated with Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. In order to reveal the Chinese international students' true roommate experiences, some quotes and my own analyses will be presented.

Part One

<u>Why have a Roommate?</u>

Before answering the three research questions, I'd like to discuss why Chinese international students choose to live with roommates. Throughout this study I found that sharing one room with a roommate is a very popular phenomenon among Chinese international students. The first-year students are especially likely to live with a roommate.

The first question the 12 interviewees were asked is: Why do you choose to live with a roommate rather than have a single room? An almost unanimous response was "to share rent."

Most of the participants expressed that the economic concern is one of the biggest reasons to choose to have a roommate. One student said:

> *"My parents pay my tuition and all living costs here. I don't want to burden them. So I'd try to save as much as I can."* (Yan)

Another student said:

> *"The only reason I chose to live with a roommate is because it's cheaper. Nothing else."* (Hao)

However, that being said, two participants said that they paid more rent to live with a roommate than to live by themselves, because they need a person around them when they come to a totally new environment. A female Chinese graduate student expressed her fear of a new sojourning environment.

> *"I don't know this place at all. I don't know what's gonna happen to me in this foreign country. I've heard a horrible real story, which happened in Japan. A Chinese international student died almost half a month before she was found in her apartment. This case might be an unusual example, but when I first time came to Hawai'i, I didn't know anybody here. I need someone live with me, so we can take care of each other. She doesn't really need to 'take care' of me, but if I have an accident, she can help me to call 911."* (Qian)

Another reason why Chinese international students want to live with a roommate is because they need someone to talk with. They share information and learn new living skills from their roommates. All 12 participants noted certain degrees of desire to have a person to communicate with. One student said:

> *"This city is new to me. I think if I live with a roommate, my life will be more convenient. For example, if I have a problem, I can discuss it with my roommate and find a way to solve that problem."* (Lin)

Another student said:

> *"She told me where to go shopping, where to take a bus, how to register for class. Sometimes when I knew something, such as in-store promotion or online coupon, I also told her."* (Bao)

Ying said:

"I like chatting with people; otherwise I'll feel lonely if I live by myself." (Ying)

Meng said:

"My roommate and I have a small conversation almost every night. He tells me what happens in his class. I tell him what happened in my lab. We communicate with each other. Sometimes he tells me to go to bed earlier; it's good for my health. I think if I live alone, I'll feel lonely and bored." (Meng)

In addition, 8 out of 12 participants noted in the interviews that living with a roommate helps one's self-development. When asked about likes and dislikes about their roommates, some participants said that they benefit from living with a roommate because they have learned a lot from their roommates during daily interaction. Xin lives with a roommate who is also a graduate student at UHM but is older than her mother.

"You know, she is two years older than my mom. She has already lived in the States for more than 10 years. She has a lot of experiences. When I was confused about my future, she used her own experiences to tell me what I could do. I learned a lot from her." (Xin)

Ning used to live with an American senior undergraduate student who was from California. She said when she lived with her roommate, her spoken English was improved. Moreover, this roommate helped her to understand the American culture.

"I think I've learned a lot from her. The most important thing I've learned was the young American generation's values. They value their own happiness the most. However, for us (the young Chinese generation), we don't know what we want. Do we want to contribute to our country? Or do we want show others that our life is very happy? I felt so confused at one point. But I learned from her, my roommate, as an individual the most important thing is to make myself happy." (Ning)

Participants in this study also mentioned some other reasons that they chose to live with a roommate. Three participants who live in the East-West center's Hale Manoa said that single rooms are most likely given to the East-West Center scholarship recipients. All three of them have

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no formal affiliation with East-West Center, so they cannot apply for the single room. In addition, a few participants noted that they can share kitchen and bathroom supplies with their roommates, such as pans, bowls, and other tools for daily use.

Part Two

<u>My Roommate does Not Necessarily have a Personality similar to Mine</u>

This section will address the first research question of this study.

How important is perceived similarity in personality in Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates?

In the survey portion of the study, participants were asked to rate the importance of each item in a list of 11 different variables as each applied to their relationships with roommates. Many of these terms were gathered from the pretest interviews as well as the review of literature. (See statistics for the survey in Table 2, on p.28).

Based on the data, the ranking of all 11 variables that are important in Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates were interpreted by calculating the frequency. The ranking of the 11 variables are: (1= the most important; 11= least important)

1. My roommate has no drugs, alcohol, and smoking problems.
2. My roommate is an easy-going person.
3. My roommate and I has similar sleep and work schedules.
4. My roommate is not overly messy.
5. My roommate is an optimistic person.
6. My roommate is a generous person.
7. My roommate is an open-minded person.
8. My roommate is an outgoing person.

9.   My roommate's hobbies interest me.
10.   My roommate's personality is similar to mine.
11.   My roommate helps me in daily life.

Based on the similar attribute, 11 items were combined into 5 variables. Participants in the in-depth interviews were asked to arrange 5 variables in a sequence that they think is the most relevant to building positive roommate relationships from the most important to the least important. (See Table 3, Figure 1, on p.29-p.30). The combinations of the 5 items are:

1. My roommate has good living
 habits (e.g. regular time to go to sleep,   ——>
 regular tidiness).

* My roommate has no drugs, alcohol, and smoking problems.
* My roommate and I have similar sleep and work schedules.
* My roommate is not overly messy.

2. My roommate has good personality.   ——>

* My roommate is an easy-going person.
* My roommate is an optimistic person.
* My roommate is a generous person.
* My roommate is an open-minded person.
* My roommate is an outgoing person.

The other three variables are:
3. My roommate helps me in daily life.
4. My roommate's personality is similar to mine.
5. My roommate's hobbies interest me.

The ranking of these 5 variables were arranged by calculating the means of the ranks. The ranking is: (1= the most important; 5= least important)

1. My roommate has good personality. (M = 1.417)
2. My roommate has good lifestyle (e.g., regular time to go to sleep, tidiness). (M = 1.833)
3. My roommate helps me in daily life. (M = 3.667)
4. **My roommate's personality is similar to mine. (M = 4.000)**
5. My roommate's hobbies interest me. (M = 4.083)

The findings in both surveys and in-depth interviews indicate that compared to other variables that related to building positive roommate relationships, Chinese international students in Hawaiʻi perceived similarity in personality is not significantly related to building positive relationships with their roommates. The findings are consistent with Lee's (1996) roommate study, which found that the perceived similarity between roommates had no relation to friendship strength.

In addition, the findings in the ranking question in the in-depth interviews show that good personality and good lifestyle are more important than the other three variables, because the means of these two variables are significantly lower than the rest of the variables.

In the in-depth interview, the participants were asked to give the reason why they ordered the variables in that way. Most of the participants emphasized that good personality and lifestyle are the most important variables that lead to positive roommate relationships. If their roommates have these two merits, their relationships with roommates must be good. All the other variables might be a "*bonus*" (Hui, a Chinese graduate student, Female) in their relationships, but not necessary. A Chinese graduate student who used to live with a local roommate said:

> *"I think a good lifestyle is the most important thing for building a positive relationship with my roommate. I don't care if her personality is similar to mine. I don't care if she helps me in daily life. I am learning to live in this place day by day. I can learn it by myself."* (Qian)

Good lifestyle appears to be more important than perceived similarity in building positive roommate relationships. Next, this study explores why perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates.

Table 2:

Responses for the 11 variables related to building positive roommate relationships (n = 29)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. My roommate is not overly messy.	31.0% (9)	37.9% (11)	17.2% (5)	6.9% (2)	6.9% (2)
2. My roommate helps me in daily life.	3.4% (1)	17.2% (5)	44.8% (13)	24.1% (7)	10.3% (3)
3. My roommate's personality is similar to mine.	3.4% (1)	37.9% (11)	27.6% (8)	6.9% (2)	24.1% (7)
4. My roommate's hobbies interest me.	3.4% (1)	37.9% (11)	24.1% (7)	20.7% (6)	13.8% (4)
5. My roommate has no drugs, alcohol, and smoking problems.	69.0% (20)	20.7% (6)	10.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
6. My roommate and I has similar sleep and work schedules.	31.0% (9)	37.9% (11)	20.7% (6)	6.9% (2)	3.4% (1)
7. My roommate is an easy-going person.	55.2% (16)	37.9% (11)	0.0% (0)	6.9% (2)	0.0% (0)
8. My roommate is an outgoing person.	6.9% (2)	41.4% (12)	34.5% (10)	13.8% (4)	3.4% (1)
9. My roommate is a generous person.	10.3% (3)	41.4% (12)	41.4% (12)	3.4% (1)	3.4% (1)
10. My roommate is an open-minded person.	17.2% (5)	34.5% (10)	34.5% (10)	6.9% (2)	6.9% (2)
11. My roommate is an optimistic person.	13.8% (4)	44.8% (13)	34.5% (10)	3.4% (1)	3.4% (1)

Figure 1: *Ranking of the five variables related to the evaluation of building positive roommate*
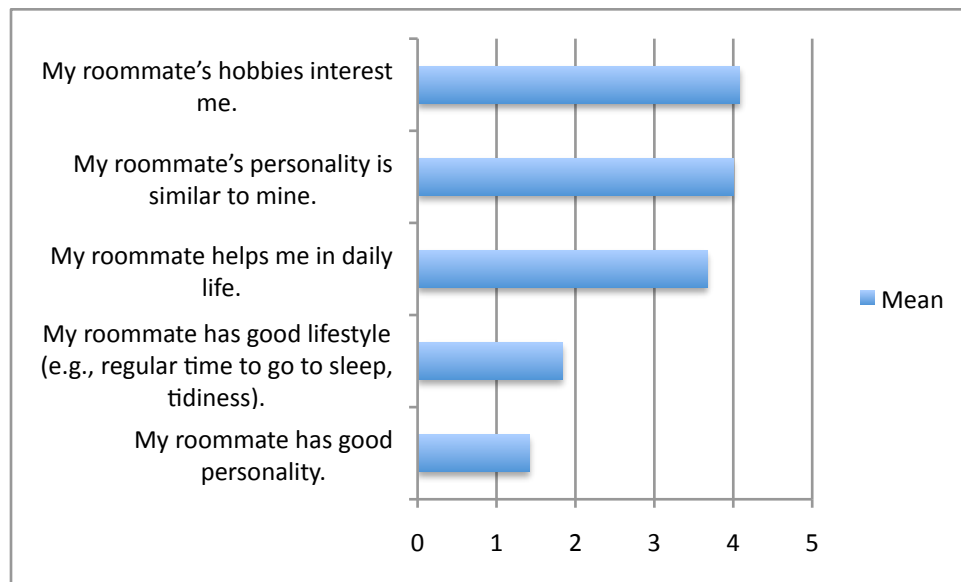
relationships (n = 12)

* Scale for responses was as follows:
Very important = 1   Somewhat Important = 2   Neither important nor unimportant = 3
Of little importance = 4   Not at all important = 5

Table 3:

Responses for the five variables related to building positive roommate relationships (n = 12)

	My roommate has a good personality	My roommate helps me in daily life	My roommate's personality is similar to mine	My roommate's hobbies interest me	My roommate has good lifestyle (e.g., regular time to go to sleep, tidiness)
Participant 1	1	3	4	5	2
Participant 2	1	5	3	4	2
Participant 3	1	3	4	5	2
Participant 4	2	3	4	5	1
Participant 5	1	5	3	4	2
Participant 6	2	3	5	4	1
Participant 7	2	4	5	3	1
Participant 8	1	4	2	5	3
Participant 9	1	4	3	5	2
Participant 10	2	4	5	3	1
Participant 11	1	3	5	2	4
Participant 12	2	3	5	4	1
Mean	1.417	3.667	4.000	4.083	1.833

* Scale for responses was as follows:
Very important = 1   Somewhat Important = 2   Neither important nor unimportant = 3
Of little importance = 4   Not at all important = 5

Part Three

<u>Why is Similarity in Personality unimportant to roommate relationships?</u>

"Two people who are similar in personality might have better communication. However, I don't communicate with my roommate a lot. So, there is no need to require my roommate to have a similar personality to mine." (Qian)

"It's meaningless to find a similar personality between me and my roommate, because we are just two people living together, sharing one room." (Hao)

The Chinese International Students' Relational Mobility in Hawai'i

This section presents the findings from the in-depth interviews and examines Chinese international students' relational mobility in Hawai'i, or in other words, the number of opportunities they have to select interaction partners in Hawai'i. As Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura (2009) note that this is: "the general number of opportunities there are for individuals to select new relationship partners, when necessary, in a given society or social context" (p. 96). Here is an example from one student:

"I can tell you my daily routine. I go the laboratory at about 8 in the morning. I work until dinnertime, then I go back home to cook dinner. After I finish with dinner, I go back to the laboratory, and work until 10 p.m., sometimes even later. During the weekend, I need to do grocery shopping, and sleep, of course. Sometimes I also have to work during the weekend, but not often. If my roommate and I both have time, we play badminton, or go swimming sometimes." (Meng)

Meng is a Chinese graduate student doing a master's in mechanical engineering major. He has lived with a Chinese visiting scholar for more than seven months. Although the other 11 participants were not as busy as Meng, in the in-depth interview all said they spend most of their time studying, working, and doing domestic chores. Time for socializing with people, recreation, and entertainment is limited, and even unwanted by a few participants. Therefore, Chinese

international students' opportunity to interact with others is reduced significantly by lack of time to socialize.

The participants' narrations supported this standpoint as well. When talking about the difference between living with a roommate here in Hawai'i and living with a roommate when they were in China, several participants were keen to communicate with their roommate, but due to busy schedules they don't have that opportunity. One interviewee said:

"My roommate is very nice. If she planned to hang out with her Japanese friends, she always asked me if I'd like to go with her. However, I've never gone with her, even once, because I was so busy during that semester. It was my first semester here; I needed to take two ELI classes and three major courses. I was also in charge of the subtitles of the White Snake. You know we played the White Snake in Kennedy Theater during that semester. This show took me lots of time to do the preparation. I believe if I have time to communicate with her more, our relationship would be better because she is a very good person." (Yan)

Another student said:

"My interactions with my roommate are quite limited. Sometimes we go grocery shopping together, or cook together. Most of the interactions are related to domestic chores, or what I called 'more lifestyle' interactions. When I was in China, my roommates and I didn't need to think about what to eat for lunch, because we ate at the student cafeteria. Life was so easy when I was in China. I could hang out with my friends because I had time and I knew where to go. However, now, I am so busy with my studying. So is my roommate. All he knows is 'Research, Research, Research.' He won't spend any time thinking about politics, economics, or recreation. I don't either. If I have time to do these things, I'd rather sleep. I like to sleep late. (Laugh)." (Chen)

Interestingly, that being said, several participants said that they noticed the lack of intimacy overall in interpersonal interaction patterns among Americans. This finding leads them to model these patterns and to have fewer conversations with their roommates or other people around them. This additional evidence shows that Chinese international students in Hawai'i are low in relational mobility.

"During the daytime, my roommate and I go to school. At night, we have dinner separately. Most of the time, we do our own business. From my experiences, I think the interpersonal relationships are easier and more simple here than in China. In China, people like asking private questions. It's so annoying. Here, in the U.S., people won't ask you anything." (Qian)

Almost 80 percent of participants stated thoughts similar to those of Qian. They perceived that privacy and confidentiality are evaluated highly in the American interpersonal interaction patterns. In the interview, when they were asked to compare living with a roommate in China and living with a roommate in Hawaiʻi, all of these participants expressed appreciation and a feeling of freedom because they had fewer conversations about personal information with their roommate. Therefore, living in Hawaiʻi, they tend to follow this pattern by having less communication with people around them. One student said:

"Although we live in the same room, I still need my own space and my privacy. I won't tell him my story unless he asks me. I won't tell him first." (Chen)

Another student commented:

"You know, Chinese interpersonal relationships are so complicated. Chinese people are too dependent on 'guanxi.' Therefore, compared to the Chinese ways of interacting with people, I prefer the American ways. I think the interpersonal relationships are simpler here. Since I am living here now, I want to enjoy this simple interpersonal relationship." (Lin)

As an ecological-level variable, the individuals' level of relational mobility is influenced by their ecological context, and individual psychological characteristics are developed as a function of their ecological context (Berry, 1994). According to Sandhu and Asrabadi (1991), international students are destined to feel stress from the abrupt cultural adjustment after to a new environment. The findings in this study support this statement.

By analyzing the findings from the in-depth interviews, a snapshot of Chinese international students' life in Hawaiʻi was revealed. Chinese international students perceived their lives in Hawaiʻi as very busy and stressful. The unfamiliar environment and heavy school loads force them to spend most of their time on studying, work, and domestic chores. Ultimately, this reality leads to less time and need to communicate with people around them, including with their roommates.

The low level of relational mobility among the Chinese international student community leads to different kinds of psychological characteristics and behaviors towards relationships with their roommates. This will be discussed in the next section.

What do Chinese International Students Communicate with Their Roommates?

In the in-depth interview, participants were asked to identify the stages of their relationships with roommates by using Altman and Taylor's (1973) four-stage interpersonal development theory: exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange.

Findings discussed in the previous section indicate that theoretically Chinese international students tend not to be very intimate with their roommate since they have few opportunities to interact with people around them. In other words, their opportunity for self-disclosure with others is limited. However, in the interviews, three out of four interviewees said they have gone through the first three stages with their roommate. This means their self-disclosure with roommates would be frequently enough to involve very private or central areas of the personality, and they would perceive roommates as their good friends (Altman and Taylor, 1973). This was clearly inconsistent

with the findings described in the previous section that Chinese international students are low in relational mobility in Hawai'i.

Two possible explanations might describe this inconsistency. First, unlike other types of interpersonal relationships, the development of roommate relationships is not consistent with the development of self-disclosure, which was perceived as the foundation of the development of interpersonal relationships in social penetration theory. Second, although Chinese international students in Hawai'i are low in relational mobility, the close proximity between roommates allows the roommate to become one of the few people that they can communicate with. The findings from the interview support the second explanation, and show three characteristics of Chinese international students' communication patterns with their roommates.

Sharing information is a main component of communication between Chinese international students and their roommates. In the interview, 100 percent of participants mentioned the experiences of sharing information with their roommates. One student commented:

> *"My roommate is a very friendly person. She always tells me useful information, such as that Times is having a sale next week, or that a part-time job is available in her department."* (Tang)

Another student shared this:

> *"Sharing information is a big part of our daily talk. You know, we don't subscribe to a newspaper. We don't have TV in our house. Although we have Internet, we are still lacking information, especially the information that relates to our daily life. For example, when I just arrived here, I didn't know where to go shopping. My roommate arrived here two weeks earlier than me. She told me that she went to the Safeway in Manoa once, it had everything she needed. So I went there with her. Afterwards, I heard from another Chinese student that Don Quijote is a big Japanese grocery store, which has more Asian style products. So I told my roommate, and after that, we went to Don Quijote instead. Sometimes I feel bad about myself. After I came to this new place, I have money with me, but don't know where to go to spend this money (Laugh)."* (Hui)

Due to the nature of roommate relationships, Chinese international students are physically close to their roommates. No matter how low they are in relational mobility, they still have to communicate with their roommate. Otherwise, they might have even fewer channels to get information.

Academic-related topics are another marked tendency that Chinese international students would communicate with their roommates. Almost 80 percent of the participants considered academic-related conversations to be common interactions with their roommates in the second stage of their relationships development (the exploratory affective exchange stage). One student said:

> *"My roommate and I talk about the different learning experiences we have here, compared to when we were in China. For example, my roommate told me that this semester, she and her partner have to lead a whole class session by themselves. So it's like a two-hour presentation! She feels so stressed because of this task."* (Ying)

Another student commented:

> *"We are in different departments. She is majoring in accounting. I am majoring in microbiology. Sometimes, we share what we learned in our fields with each other, but not in a formal academic way. For instance, I told her not to drink the running water directly, because the pipeline system is so old in our house, there might be some unhealthy bacteria. So it's better to boil the water before we drink. My roommate sometimes shares what she learned from the class, such as what types of taxes people should pay in the America. All this knowledge is so different from what I've learned in my field, but very useful."* (Xin)

Chinese international students' communication with their roommates involves some intimate and private topics. Some participants in the interviews said that they see mutually sharing romantic relationship stories as a signal of involvement in an intimate roommate relationship. In addition, two of the participants said that they share family information with their roommate as well. All the participants who perceived that their relationships with roommates are in the third stage talked about this issue. One student said:

"I think we are in the third stage. For example, I would tell her about what I think about her boyfriend. I would also tell her about my relationship with my boyfriend. I think it is a very intimate topic." (Tang)

Another student said:

"I think the first stage is quite common. I share some basic information with him. Sometimes we discuss our future plans, and the weaknesses we have. So, I think we meet the second stage. During the winter break, my roommate's girlfriend came to visit him, so he talked a lot about his relationship with his girlfriend. So, I think we are in the third stage." (Meng)

Besides these two topics that the participants perceived as intimate conversation topics with their roommate, no other theme emerged from the in-depth interview. According to Altman and Taylor (1973)'s definition of the third stage in the social penetration theory, interaction at this stage is "characterized by a definite increase in communication in very private or central areas of the personality" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 140). Although about 75 percent of the participants perceived that their relationships with roommates were in the third stage, their self-disclosures did not really reach the central part of each other's personality.

This conclusion is also supported by the findings that almost half the participants showed some degree of doubt on their own estimations of this question.

"Yeah, I said my roommate is my good friend. But, she is different from my previous good friends, you know, my friends in China. I don't know how to explain this. But, yeah, maybe I should say she is my good friend here, in Hawai'i." (Ying)

"I can share very intimate stories with my roommate, but I don't consider him as my good friend." (Hao)

Based on the analysis of Chinese international students' relational mobility in Hawai'i and their communication patterns with their roommates, this study concludes that Chinese international students in Hawai'i are facing two main pressures. First, they face pressure from living in a novel

environment, and second, they face pressure from studying in a new academic system. All these pressures from the ecological context lead to lack of time and necessity to interact with others.

However, low relational mobility doesn't mean that Chinese international students have no opportunities to interact with others. For those Chinese international students who have roommates, physically close distance allows them to have relatively more chances to communicate with their roommates. Nevertheless, this low relational mobility still caused relatively fewer opportunities for Chinese international students to interact with their roommates.

The conversations between Chinese international students and their roommates mostly involved the exchange of information and sharing academic experiences. A few might share their own romantic experiences with roommates. Nevertheless, Chinese international students' communication patterns are practically oriented and low in intimacy. Although many participants perceived that relationships with their roommates are in the affective exchange stage, based on their narrations, their self-disclosure has not actually reached the central area of the personality. Therefore, their relationships did not reach this stage in reality. This is consistent with Wong and Bond's (1999) Chinese roommate study, in which they found that participants' rating of self-disclosure was not related to their friendship rating.

Overall, communication between Chinese international students and their roommates is not intimate and frequent enough to demonstrate that they share perceived similarity in personality. This communication pattern is formed by low relational mobility among Chinese international students in Hawaiʻi. As Qian's quote at the beginning of this section shows, this is the main reason that perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to their evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates.

Chinese International Students' Attitudes toward Similarity and Dissimilarity

This study supports the findings in the recent literature that the effect of perceived similarity on the interpersonal relationships tends to be lower in East Asian societies than in the West (Satterwite, Feldman, Catrambone, & Dai, 2000; Uleman, Rhee, Bardoliwalla, Semin, & Toyama, 2000). When the participants were asked to provide reasons why they thought perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to their evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates, many of them addressed their attitudes toward the effects of similarity and dissimilarity. One student said:

> *"I like interacting with people different from me. It doesn't matter that he has a different personality than mine, or he is from a different cultural background. At my age, I think it is a good stage to explore this world. How to interact with different people is an important lesson for people my age. So I don't perceive that two roommates sharing no similarity is a bad thing."* (Guo)

Another student commented:

> *"Living with a similar person can be boring sometimes. You won't interview my roommate, right? (Laugh). I think interacting with a person dissimilar to myself will be an interesting experience. You may say that everybody is a different individual, but still like you asked, people may be similar in personality. I wish I could interact with people whose personality is different than mine; that must be a lot of fun."* (Tang)

In the in-depth interview more than 80 percent of participants expressed a positive attitude towards having dissimilarities with people. However, most of them didn't specifically point out the dissimilarities they appreciated most. Nevertheless, this generally positive attitude towards dissimilarities could be another reason that Chinese international students perceived that similarity in personality is unimportant to the evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates.

Part Four

<u>Key Variables Associated with Building Positive Roommate Relationships</u>

This study has explored why perceived similarity in personality is unimportant to the Chinese international student's evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. Looking at the quantitative data along with the qualitative data, themes emerged as to which are the key variables in establishing positive roommate relationships. In the in-depth interviews, many participants noted that the reason they perceived that sharing a similar personality with their roommate to be unimportant was that other variables were more important to them. So this leads us to answer the third research question:

What are the key variables associated with Chinese international students' evaluations of building positive relationships with their roommates?

Easy-going Personality

The quantitative data significantly support the importance of having an easy-going roommate. Table 2 shows that among the five constructed variables that might relate to Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive roommate relationships, good personality ranked first place. In addition, in the online survey, an easy-going personality was considered by Chinese international students as the most important attribute that should be possessed by their roommates.

In the in-depth interview "easy-going" was a key word mentioned unanimously by all 12 participants. When the participants were asked to list their requirements for a roommate, same sex and easy-going personality are the only two criteria addressed frequently in the interview.

"I didn't have any specific requirements when I was searching for a roommate. I just wanted an easy-going girl."(Ying)

Most of the respondents believed that if one's roommate is an easy-going person, his or her relationship with roommate will be positive, or at least, they will get along with each other. One student said:

"My roommate is an easy-going person. She doesn't care too much about details. For example, she can fall asleep when my reading lamp is on. You know, some people can't stand that, but she is fine." (Yan)

Another student said:

"What I like about my roommate is that she is an easy-going person. She is not too particular about trifles. We have a cleaning schedule rule that I am in charge of taking out the kitchen garbage. However, if she sees that the garbage bin is overloaded, she will help take it out." (Lin)

Ning said:

"That small space was shared by two people. No matter how careful we were, sometimes I might disturb her, or she might disturb me. Inconveniences were unavoidable. So, I think the most important thing to having a good roommate relationship is having an easy-going roommate. Mutual tolerance between roommates is important." (Ning)

The participants emphasized the importance of their roommates possessing an easy-going personality, regardless of their own personality. Only one respondent mentioned that both his roommate and himself are easy-going people.

"Talking about similar personality, I think both my roommate and I are easy-going people. Because we are both easy-going people, our relationship is good. I think it is the only reason." (Xin)

Therefore, having an easy-going roommate is a key variable when Chinese international students in Hawai'i were asked to evaluate building a positive roommate relationship. However, based on the current data, Chinese international students do not consider that they also have to possess an easy-going personality themselves.

Alcohol, Smoking, and Drugs

The online survey data (p.28) show that most of the Chinese international students surveyed believed that having a roommate who has no alcohol, smoking, and drug problems is the most important variable in building positive roommate relationships. On the other hand, the ranking question (p.29) in the in-depth interview combined this variable and four other variables into the "good living habit" category, which was ranked as the second important variable. However, in the in-depth interview, no participant specifically pointed out this issue when they were asked to provide their criteria for a roommate. Only two participants addressed this issue in other parts of their narrations, and neither of them showed any negative emotions towards it. One student said:

"I know my roommate does drugs, but it doesn't bother me at all. I've never seen her do drugs in our room. So, I don't think it's a problem. Oh, and she also smoke cigarettes, but she never smokes in our room either." (Qian)

Another student said:

"My roommate is a party person. She usually parties twice a week on average. Sometimes she was very drunk when she got home. But I don't think she bothered me in most cases, because I had usually fallen asleep by the time she arrived home. I remember only once, she was so drunk that night that she couldn't even walk, I think. The noise woke me up, so I

helped her to clean up the vomit, and moved her to bed. I'd like to help, and this was the only time she woke me up at night. So, I think that's fine." (Ning)

It is easy to notice that the survey findings and narrations are inconsistent. This leads us to ask: why did Chinese international students rate alcohol, smoking and drug problems so important in the survey, but did not really mention this issue in the interviews?

The first and a technical reason is that all 12 participants have not encountered roommates with serious alcohol, smoking, or drug problems, or at least their behaviors did not arouse the participants' awareness of this issue in reality, according to the interview data, because few of the interviewees said they had roommate with serious smoking, alcohol or drug problems.

The second reason is that for Chinese students, the drug issue is very sensitive and serious. One of the participants who did both online survey and in-depth interview was surprised when he saw this item in the survey. He said:

" Drug issues are too serious to me. I think most of the Chinese students will perceive this as a very serious problem. It is illegal, and horrible. No one would expect to have roommates who have drug issues. To me, it's too far away from the reality." (Chen)

However, two other participants suggested that I could divide this variable into two: drug issues, and alcohol and smoking issues. They thought that alcohol and smoking problems have a negative influence on roommate relationships, whereas drug issues have not. This may also be due to the lack of experience and knowledge of these issues. Therefore, although these are two almost opposite opinions, the conceptions of drug issues led Chinese students to rank this variable second. Overall, the correlation between Chinese international students' evaluation of building positive roommate relationships and roommate's alcohol, smoking and drug issues is uncertain in this study.

Good Living Habit

Unlike the alcohol, smoking and drug issues, having a similar sleep and work schedule was a theme that appeared frequently in the in-depth interview and in the quantitative part of the study as well. More than 80 percent of participants addressed this issue in the interviews. One student said:

"If two roomates have different living schedules, for example, they go to bed at different times, their quality of sleep might be influenced." (Ning)

Another student said:

"I know my roommate got angry at me sometimes, because she prefers to go to bed early, but I sometimes work until midnight. She doesn't like the light from my study lamp." (Lin)

Meng said:

"My roommate and I are both very busy. Both of us are not at home during the daytime usually, and we go to bed almost at the same time." (Meng)

Xin said:

"As students, our lives here are not easy, and very busy. So I think if my roommate and I have similar work and sleep schedules, life will be easier, and more convenient." (Xin)

Although the participants had not evaluated how important similar work and sleep schedules are to the relationships with their roommate, about half of the participants expressed that they were more likely to live with a roommate who is also a student. They reasoned that students have similar schedules, in terms of sleep, work, and recreation. One student explained:

"When I decided to find a roommate here, I wanted her was also a student. First, I think students are more reliable, since they don't have very complicated social networks as working people do. Second, I think if both of my roommate and I are students, our daily schedule would be similar. You know, we both need to go to school in the day time, and have to study after we come back." (Yan)

Another student said:

"For me, having a roommate who also is a student is very important. At the very beginning I didn't notice how important it is until I had lived with a working roommate. She had two jobs, one was a daytime job, and another was at night. So she came home so late, and I had fallen asleep before she came back most of times. She was a very nice person, I know. She tried to keep quiet as much as she could, but still this did not work. I didn't blame her, because that was her job. However, I told myself I should find a student roommate next time, because at least we have similar work and sleep schedules." (Ning)

Tidiness is another important living habit variable ranked in the 4th place among all 11 variables in the online survey. However, the significance of this variable was not shown in the in-depth interview. Again, lack of experiences in having tidiness-related problems between participants and their roommate is the reason that the interview data was insufficient in supporting the findings in the quantitative portion of this study. The quotes from the participants are all built on assumptions, such as: "If my roommate is too messy a person, I think we might not fit to live together." (Ying)

A Good Way to Interact with People

"For building good roommate relationships, having a good way of interacting with people is far more important than sharing a similar personality with a roommate." (Ying)

There were no direct survey items about the importance of good ways to interact with people; however, this theme did appear in the in-depth interviews. When participants were asked to address any other variables that they thought were important in building positive roommate relationships, words like "mutual respect" and "mutual understanding" were mentioned frequently in the in-depth interview. Typically, about half of the participants ranked mutual respect between roommates lower than good personality and good living habits. One student said:

"I believe most of the people we interact with in daily life are good people. All we need is to mutually respect each other, and be more considerate. You know, when two people live so close to each other, small conflicts are unavoidable. So, mutual respect is very important between roommates." (Chen)

Guo said:

"I think we are all different individuals, [for interpersonal interaction] the most important principal is mutual respect, respect the difference we have. For example, my roommate has a habit of reading the Bible before he goes to bed. I am not a Christian, but I respect his religion. I've never judged his religion." (Guo)

Another student said:

"I think both my roommate and I are very considerate; we respect other people's feelings. For example, when one went to sleep, the another will try her best to not make noise." (Ning)

Interestingly, a few participants noted that good ways to interact with people are also part of having a good personality. One student said:

"Mutual respect is also an important variable that can build positive roommate relationships. However, it's also a personality thing. Even if two people have different views and different living habits, if they can accept the differences, rather judging who is right, and who is wrong, their relationship can still be good. That's what an easy-going person would do." (Lin)

Another student said:

"I think an easy-going person have good ways to interact people. They know how to adjust themselves to tolerate differences. When two people live together, it is important for both of them to adjust to this 'two-people-live-together mode', and be tolerant." (Ying)

Common words like personality were not interpreted in this study, but "good personality" constantly appeared during the interviews. One of the participants provided an interesting example when he was asked why perceived similarity is unimportant to his evaluation of relationships with his roommate. He said:

"I think similarity in personality is not necessary between roommates. Sometimes similar personalities can be a horrible thing. For example, A and B are both very mean people, and have very bad personalities. If they roomed together, their relationship will not be good. So, in the final analysis, good personality is the most important thing for building positive roommate relationships."

Besides the good easy-going personality we discussed in the previous section, the next section will analyze other personality traits that Chinese international students valued as important in their evaluation of building positive relationships with roommates.

Other Personalities Valued by Chinese International Students

According to the study's survey data, the participants considered that all five personalities that were listed in the online survey were more important than the effect of perceived similarity in building positive relationships with roommates. The ranking of each personality was: 1). easy-going, 2). optimistic, 3). generous, 4). open-minded, and 5). outgoing. The importance of living with an easy-going roommate has been supported by both in-depth interview and the online survey. The interviewees did not say the other four personalities is being important, yet a few participants mentioned these personality traits in their narrations.

In the interview, the participants were asked to present their own ideas about the variables were important in building positive relationships with their roommates. Two participants emphasized that having an outgoing roommate can increase the communication between roommates, which can lead to better roommate relationships.

"One thing I want to add is that I hope my roommate is an outgoing person. Still, it is a part of a good personality. If my roommate is an outgoing person, we will talk to each other more, and have more communication. I think this is important to our relationship." (Meng)

"My roommate is an outgoing person. She likes to talk, and share what she knows. I am a quiet person. Basically, I won't start a conversation usually, so my roommate always takes responsibility to make our room not too quiet. (Laugh)." (Lin)

Overall, the findings of this study showed that Chinese international students perceived that possessing an easy-going trait is significantly important to building positive relationships with their roommates. However other personality traits were not emphasized by the participants who did the in-depth interview. A possible explanation could be that, as addressed in the previous section, the communication between Chinese international students in Hawai'i and their roommates is not intimate and frequent enough for them to connect with their roommates' "central area of personality" (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Hence, once their roommate possesses an easy-going personality, which they perceive can guarantee that they get along with their roommates, other personality traits are just bonuses, but not necessary.

Helpfulness

In the previous literature on Chinese interpersonal relationships, researchers concluded that Chinese people treat mutual support as an important element of friendship. Chinese people expect friends to perform helping behaviors (Krumrey-Fulks, 2001). Moreover, according to Wong and Bond's (1999) roommate study, Chinese students perceived that the roommate quality of "helpfulness" was associated with the friendship rating with their roommate.

In the in-depth interview portion of this study, "help" is a word that constantly appeared in participants' narrations. The data supports the previous literature on Chinese interpersonal relationships; in which 100 percent of the participants agreed that helping behaviors between roommates can contribute to their relationship with roommate. One interviewee said:

"I think helping behavior is a very normal interaction between roommates. If we can mutually help each other, take care of each other, my life with my roommate can be more comfortable. My roommate helped me once, which affected me deeply. I had an important exam at 8 a.m., but got up late that morning. When I was so busy preparing the materials, and other stuff for the exam, my roommate made me breakfast and brought it to my table. I didn't ask him to do this, so I think it is a kind of help. I really appreciated his helpfulness." (Meng)

Tang said:

"I think a roommate is a person you can talk with, and who can help me when I have trouble." (Tang)

Yan said:

"My roommate helping me in daily life is not the most important thing. However, if she is a helpful person, our relationship must be better, and more harmonized." (Yan)

However, the quantitative portion of this study was inconsistent with the in-depth interview data. In the survey, more than 70 percent of the respondents rated "my roommate helps me in daily life" as neither important nor unimportant, of little importance and not at all important. The current data cannot explain why Chinese international students perceived helpfulness as an important variable to their evaluation of building positive roommate relationships in the interviews, but did not in the survey scale. The wording of this item in the online survey might be a possible reason. If I used "my roommate is a helpful person" instead of "my roommate helps me in daily life," the respondents might have rated it higher.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Limitations

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study presented a snapshot of Chinese international students'

relationships with their roommates in Hawai'i. The study attempted to focus on the variables that

contributed to the students' evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates.

This study tested whether the perceived similarity was an an important variable, and found that

Chinese international students' perceived similarity in personality with their roommates was

unimportant in building positive roommate relationships.

Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura's (2009) relational mobility theory largely explained

the findings obtained in this study. Overall, Chinese international students in Hawai'i are low in

relational mobility, which is supported by the findings that the participants lacked the time and

opportunities to interact with people around them, including with their roommates. Almost all the

participants expressed that they and their roommates were just two people living together; the self-

disclosure between roommates were practically oriented and low in intimacy. Therefore, as a

central area of self-disclosure, perceived similarity in personality between roommates is

considered unimportant or not necessary by Chinese international students in building positive

relationships with their roommates.

The findings of the key variables that associated to Chinese international students'

evaluation of positive relationships with their roommate are generally consistent with previous

literature on Chinese interpersonal relationship patterns, in which an extroverted personality is the

most important predictor of the Chinese people's well-being. However, building positive roommate relationships as a special type of interpersonal relationship, a combination of other variables to contribute to this relationship, such as good living habits and helping behaviors.

Together, these findings give clear support to Berry's (1994) socio-ecological approach, which considered individuals' psychological characteristics and behaviors as adaptations to the specific ecological context in which they live. When facing the novel sojourning environment, Chinese international students choose to live with a roommate in order to reduce the stress from their new life in Hawaiʻi. On the other hand, the ways they interact with their roommates are also adaptations to this environment.

The value of this study is that we may be able to help Chinese international students adapt to the sojourning environment faster, have better relationships with their roommates and be more satisfied with their life in Hawaiʻi. Chinese international students are facing pressure from studying and living in a new environment. The pressure from academic study might not be eliminated easily, while there are many ways to deal with the pressure from daily life. For example, orientations sponsored by universities or other organizations could provide more daily life information to international students and ease the pressure of starting a new life in a new environment. In addition, workshops could be designed to target communication skills associated with roommate satisfaction.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, because I used a sample of Chinese international graduate students in Hawaiʻi, the extent to which these findings apply to the Chinese

international students community or a more general population is uncertain. However, the population structure of Chinese international students in Hawaiʻi determined this limitation. According to the International Student Services office at the University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa, in fall 2010, there were 148 Chinese international students from Mainland China currently studying at UHM, with 11 students at the undergraduate level. Nevertheless, the findings of this study were based on a non-probability sample, and had a limited number of interviews and survey responses. Therefore, it may be difficult to determine how truly representative the findings may be. If the sample size were increased, the validity of this study might be increased as well.

In addition, the scale that measured how important each variable is to Chinese international students' relationships with their roommates was created based on previous literature and two pretests. It was not formally tested by large numbers of samples and other studies, so its validity is questionable.

Future Study

Due to the limitations of this study, there were some inconsistencies between the findings of the quantitative portion and the qualitative portion of this study. For example, participants ranked having no drugs, smoking, and alcohol problems as the most important variable that might affect their roommate relationships, however, no one specifically talked about this issue in the interview. Therefore, future studies might benefit from incorporating relational mobility scales such as its usage by Falk, Yuki, and Takemura (2009) and Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, and Takemura (2009) to further investigate the relational mobility of international students in sojourning environments.

This study also found that many Chinese international students ranked helpfulness as an unimportant variable in their evaluation of building positive relationships with their roommates. However, in the interview, they have shown a great appreciation of their roommates' helping behaviors in daily life. Future study could examine the deeper psychological reasons for causing this inconsistency. Moreover, the results of this study could be tested by future studies by using a different theoretical framework, such as the Big Seven structure of the Chinese personality scale.

This study did identify a list of the key variables that build positive roommate relationships, based on information obtained from the in-depth interviews with Chinese international graduate students. Future studies may use participants from diverse cultural background to examine whether this list can apply to students from other cultural backgrounds. In addition to this, considering the specialty of Hawai'i as an isolated territory of the U.S., future studies may look at international students' relationships with their roommate in other major destinations of foreign students.

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Appendix A

Zhou, Saucier, Gao, and Liu's (2009) list of Chinese personality factors

Table 1

**Terms With the Highest Loadings on Each of Seven Emic Chinese
Personality Factors**

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
Extraversion			
waixiang 外向	Extraverted, Outgoing	.72	.67
huoyue 活跃	Active, Dynamic	.68	.59
kailang 开朗	Open, Frank, Optimistic	.67	.69
huopo 活泼	Lively, Vivacious	.65	.65
reqing 热情	Warm, Enthusiastic	.61	.52
hequn 合群	Sociable, Gregarious	.59	.56
jiantan 健谈	Talkative, Brilliant in conversation	.59	.49
yangguang 阳光	Sunny	.55	.59
kuaile 快乐	Happy, Cheerful	.55	.59
gaoxing 高兴	Happy, Joyful	.53	.55
leguan 乐观	Optimistic	.50	.53
chenmoguayan 沉默寡言	Taciturn, Withdrawn	− .66	− .58
neixiang 内向	Introverted	− .63	− .60
gudan 孤单	Lonely, Alone	− .59	− .60
chenmen 沉闷	Not outgoing, Withdrawn, Dull	− .59	− .59
gudu 孤独	Lonely, Solitary	− .55	− .62
yiyu 抑郁	Depressed	− .54	− .56
youyu 忧郁	Melancholy, Sombre	− .53	− .57
yumen 郁闷	Gloomy, Depressed	− .53	− .53
beiguan 悲观	Pessimistic	− .53	− .53
Conscientiousness/Diligence			
yisibugou 一丝不苟	Unfailing precision, Meticulous	.58	.53
qinfen 勤奋	Diligent, Assiduous	.57	.61
yange 严格	Strict, Rigorous	.53	.52
qinkuai 勤快	Hard-working, Diligent	.53	.44
keku 刻苦	Assiduous, Hardworking	.50	.63
yanjin 严谨	Strict, Rigorous, Meticulous	.50	.42
renzhen 认真	Earnest, Conscientious	.49	.50
nuli 努力	Making an effort, Hard-working	.47	.63

(Continued)

Table 1 (Cont.)

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
qinlao 勤劳	Diligent, Industrious	.44	.54
qieerbushe 锲而不舍	Persevering	.44	.52
jinqu 进取	Enterprising	.41	.50
jianrenbuba 坚忍不拔	Firm, Indomitable	.41	.49
lansan 懒散	Lazy and sluggish	− .62	− .61
lanyangyang 懒洋洋	Languid, Listless	− .61	− .59
santiandayu, liangtianshaiwang 三天打鱼，两天晒网	Lack perseverance	− .61	− .58
landuo 懒惰	Lazy	− .60	− .67
sanman 散漫	Undisciplined, Slack	− .60	− .59
lanchong 懒虫	Lazy bones	− .56	− .58
cuxin 粗心	Careless	− .51	− .46
mahu 马虎	Careless, Sloppy	− .50	− .50
Unselfishness			
chunpu 淳朴	Simple, Honest, Unsophisticated	.64	.24
chunpu 纯朴	Simple, Honest, Unsophisticated	.63	.18
hanhou 憨厚	Simple, Honest, Kind	.59	.38
kuanhou 宽厚	Tolerant, Generous, Kind	.57	.38
dunhou 敦厚	Honest and sincere	.55	.23
kuanrong 宽容	Tolerant, Lenient, Forgiving	.54	.25
kuanhongdaliang 宽宏大量	Magnanimous, Broad-minded	.51	.40
zhonghou 忠厚	Honest and Innocent	.51	.33
houdao 厚道	Honest and Kind, Magnanimous	.50	.33
renhou 仁厚	Benevolent and Generous	.48	.35
jianyiyongwei 见义勇为	Act bravely for a just cause	.41	.42
yingyong 英勇	Heroic, Valiant	.28	.51
zisi 自私	Selfish, Self-centered, Egoistic	− .60	− .40
aoman 傲慢	Arrogant, Haughty, Overbearing	− .56	− .22
yaomianzi 要面子	Be sensitive about one's reputation	− .52	− .42

(Continued)

Table 1 (Cont.)

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
xiaoqi 小气	Stingy, Narrow-minded	−.49	−.40
aimianzi 爱面子	Be sensitive about one's reputation, Vain	−.48	−.37
jichou 记仇	Bearing/harboring/nursing Grudges	−.46	−.36
xurong 虚荣	Vain	−.45	−.44
tanxin 贪心	Greedy, Avaricious	−.45	−.41
Noxious Violativeness (NV; Harmfulness)			
qinshou 禽兽	Beastly, Inhuman persons	.64	.66
xiajian 下贱	Degrading, Low	.62	.70
yindang 淫荡	Lascivious, Lewd	.61	.63
xiongcan 凶残	Fierce and cruel, Bloodthirsty	.60	.66
xiee 邪恶	Evil, Sinister, Wicked, Vicious	.58	.68
langxingoufei 狼心狗肺	Brutal and cold-blooded, Heartless and ungrateful	.58	.67
beijian 卑贱	Low	.58	.65
xialiu 下流	Dirty, Indecent, Lewd, Obscene	.57	.67
huaidan 坏蛋	Scoundrel, Bastard, Rascal	.56	.65
fubai 腐败	Corrupted, Rotten	.56	.61
quede 缺德	Wicked, Unscrupulous, Unprincipled	.54	.74
xionghen 凶狠	Ferocious, Cruel, Fiendish, Cutthroat	.53	.57
jian 贱	Lowly	.51	.62
beilie 卑劣	Despicable, Contemptible,	.48	.75
elie 恶劣	Abominable, Foul, Disgusting	.46	.69
fangdang 放荡	Dissolute, Dissipated, Loose	.46	.61
yinxian 阴险	Insidious, Sinister, Treacherous	.44	.72
kechi 可耻	Shameful, Disgraceful, Ignominious	.43	.75
taoyan 讨厌	Disgusting, Hateful, Repulsive	.39	.69

(Continued)

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Table 1 (Cont.)

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
wulai 无赖	Rascal, Scoundrel, Rogue	.39	.69
Gentle/Even Temper			
siwen 斯文	Gentle, Refined	.50	.37
wenjing 文静	Gentle and Quiet	.37	.46
guaiqiao 乖巧	Cute, Lovely	.33	.50
wenrou 温柔	Gentle and soft	.44	.29
guai 乖	Well-behaved, Obedient	.29	.43
tinghua 听话	Docile, behaving as told, Obedient	.29	.43
hanxu 含蓄	Reserved	.35	.36
xini 细腻	Sensitive, Exquisite	.42	.28
anfen 安分	Knowing one's place, Not going beyond one's bounds	.27	.41
chongdong 冲动	Impulsive	−.61	−.31
jixingzi 急性子	Quick-tempered, Short-tempered	−.59	−.43
xingji 性急	Short-Tempered, Impatient, Quick-tempered	−.53	−.38
jizao 急躁	Impatient, Irritable, Hot-tempered	−.53	−.28
baozao 暴躁	Irascible, Irritable, Fiery	−.51	−.28
juejiang 倔强	Stubborn, Unbending, Tenacious	−.42	−.30
jidong 激动	Excited	−.42	−.29
panni 叛逆	Rebellious, Treasonable	−.40	−.39
dadan 大胆	Daring, Bold	−.35	−.50
qiangying 强硬	Tough, Unyielding	−.35	−.43
yonggan 勇敢	Brave, Courageous, Intrepid	−.30	−.42
Intellect/Positive Valence			
dute 独特	Unique, Distinctive	.66	.42
tebie 特别	Special, Unusual, Peculiar	.57	.38
duocaiduoyi 多才多艺	Versatile	.51	.40
tiancai 天才	Genius, Talent	.49	.56
wanmei 完美	Perfect	.48	.53
jiechu 杰出	Outstanding, Prominent	.44	.50
bang 棒	Great, Fantastic	.44	.49
gaogui 高贵	Noble, Morally elevated	.39	.59

(Continued)

Table 1 (Cont.)

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
congming 聪明	Bright, Intelligent, Clever	.38	.42
xinggan 性感	Sexy	.38	.40
ruizhi 睿智	Wise and prescient/far-sighted	.36	.49
chuse 出色	Outstanding, Remarkable, Splendid	.36	.45
jiling 机灵	Smart, Clever	.36	.44
rencai 人才	Talent, Talented person	.35	.45
jizhi 机智	Resourceful, Quick-witted, Tactful	.35	.45
decaijianbei 德才兼备	Having both ability and integrity	.35	.40
putong 普通	Ordinary, Average, Common	− .55	− .55
pingfan 平凡	Ordinary, Common, Mean	− .50	− .49
pingyong 平庸	Mediocre	− .47	− .49
muguangduanqian 目光短浅	Short-sighted	− .37	− .44
Dependency/Fragility			
jiaodidi 娇滴滴	Delicate, Fragile	.52	.23
jiaoqi 娇气	Squeamish, Fragile, Delicate	.50	.31
tianzhen 天真	Naïve, Innocent, Simple-minded, Unsophisticated	.48	.25
haiziqi 孩子气	Childish	.45	.44
youzhi 幼稚	Childish, Naïve	.40	.49
cuiruo 脆弱	Fragile, Weak	.35	.40
diaoman 刁蛮	Headstrong	.34	.31
renxing 任性	Self-willed, Headstrong	.33	.26
ganqingyongshi 感情用事	Sentimental, Be swayed by one's feelings/sentiments, Emotional	.27	.42
nanzihan 男子汉	Manly, True man	− .52	− .21
laolian 老练	Seasoned, Experienced	− .39	− .42
duli 独立	Independent	− .39	− .26
chengshu 成熟	Mature	− .34	− .44
shenchen 深沉	Deep, Impenetrable	− .34	− .33
chenwen 沉稳	Steady, Prudent, Tranquil	− .31	− .59

Table 1 (Cont.)

Chinese	English	Peer	Self
chenzhuo 沉着	Composed, Calm	− .29	− .55
lengjing 冷静	Calm, Sober, Cool, Imperturbable	− .27	− .70
dongshi 懂事	Sensible/intelligent	− .22	− .37
zhending 镇定	Calm and collected, Composed	− .20	− .47
xianshi 现实	Practical, Realistic	− .19	− .44

Appendix B

Wong & Cui's (2003) QZPS

Table 1 The Big Seven structure of the Chinese personality (QZPS) (Wang & Cui, 2003)

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1. WX: Extraversion

Extraversion reflects activity, initiative, positivity, mild characteristics in socialization, easy-going nature and ease in communication, a happy and positive mood. WX has three subfactors:

    WX1 – Active: active and sociable. People with high scores are active, positive, lively, natural and have high coordination skills.

    WX2 – Gregariousness: affinity. People with high scores are cordial, gentle and well liked.

    WX3 – Optimistic: happy and positive. People with high scores are positive and energized.

2. SL: Kindness

The 'good person' in Chinese culture, showing honest, forgiving, caring, trustworthy, righteous and affectionate characteristics. People with high scores are honest, kind, caring, trustworthy and affectionate. SL includes three subfactors:

    SL1 – Altruistic: friendly and caring about others. People with high scores are forgiving, friendly and caring about others.

    SL2 – Honest: honest and credible. People with high scores are honest and true to their words.

    SL3 – Affectionate: the degree to which one emphasizes feelings vs personal interests. People with high scores are affectionate and righteous.

3. XF: Behavior styles

The way one behaves and his/her attitude. People with high scores are serious, meticulous, thoughtful, clear about goals, practical, obeying rules and cooperative. XF has three subfactors:

    XF1 – Rigorous: describes work attitudes and self-constraints. People with high scores are serious, steady and rigorous.

    XF2 – Self-constrained: cooperative and law-abiding. People with high scores are self-constrained, law-abiding, cooperative, uninterested in fame and wealth.

    XF3 – Composed: composed. People with high scores are meticulous and thoughtful.

4. CG: Talents

The ability and work attitudes of an individual. People with high scores are not afraid of difficulties, are persistent, involved, and are not afraid to undertake difficult assignments. CG has three subfactors:

    CG1 – Decisive: the ability to make a decision. People with high scores are not afraid of difficulties, decisive, capable of quick thinking and are of a strong character.

    CG2 – Persistent: persistent in work. People with high scores have clear goals, abide by their principles and are persistent.

    CG3 – Alert and Resourceful: Assertiveness and alert. People with high scores are involved with work, dare to do what they think is right and are active and quick.

5. QX: Emotionality

The stability of one's emotions in working and interpersonal situations. People with high scores are impetuous, impulsive and cannot control their emotions easily. QX has two subfactors:

    QX1 – Patient: the control and expression of one's emotions. People with high scores are emotionally stable and mild, and can control their emotions well.

    QX2 – Candid: candid characteristics of emotion. People with high scores are frank and outspoken, impetuous and have difficulty controlling their emotions.

6. RG: Human relations

The basic attitude toward human relations. People with high scores are friendly and mild, altruistic and easy to communicate with. RG has two subfactors:

    RG1 – Generous: the basic attitude toward human relations. People with high scores are mild, friendly, generous and self-content.

    RG2 – Warm: the characteristics of human relations. People with high scores are active, positive, mature and persistent in communication.

7. CT: Ways of life

The fundamental attitude of the individual toward life and career. People with high scores are goal-oriented, persistent, have clear visions of the future, are assertive about the future, and aspire to excellence. CT has two subfactors:

    CT1 – Assertiveness: career ambition. People with high scores are assertive about life and the future, and work actively toward goals.

    CT2 – Not Seeking Fame and Wealth: attitudes toward achievement and success. People with high scores are satisfied with their current situations and have no clear goals or ambitions for the future, and lead a peaceful life without secular desires.

Appendix C

Consent Form

Consent Form
Agreement of participation
Study of the Effect of Perceived Similarity on Quality of Relationships between Chinese
International Students and Their Roommates

Lu Cao
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Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects. After reading the statements below, please indicate your consent by signing this form.

Project Description

This research project is being conducted as a component of a scholarly paper for a master's degree. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Chinese international students define and make sense of their relationships with roommates. The main focus of this project is to examine the factors, which related to positive roommate relationships. The interview will be carried out with Chinese international graduate and undergraduate students at Hawaii. The face-to-face interview will ask questions related to a participant's relationship with roommate. The interview will last one hour. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed.

For the protection and privacy of interviewees, personal information of an interviewee will be kept confidential. Tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key. Audiotapes will be destroyed immediately following transcription. Pseudonyms will be employed before back translation, and writing up the research. Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time during the duration of the project for any reason.

Benefit

Participating in this research may be of no direct benefit to you, and there is no compensation. However, the investigator believes that there is little or no risk to participating this research project. Also, the results from this project will help international students develop a good roommate relationship.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact the researcher, Lu Cao, at (808) 253-9809.
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808) 956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

Certification

I certify that I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate as a subject in the research described. I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. My participation in

this research is given voluntarily. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. I certify that I have been given a copy of this consent form to take with me.

_____   _____   _____

Name (printed)   Date   Signature

Appendix D

In-depth Interview Questions

Interview Protocol

1. Questions to elicit relational mobility:

    a. Tell me about why you chose living with a roommate rather than having a single room by yourself.

    b. What's the difference between you living with a roommate here in Hawaii and living with a roommate when you were in China?

2. Questions to elicit factors influence relationship quality:

    a. How did you choose your roommate? What criteria did you have?

    b. Please arrange these factors in a sequence that you think is the most relevant to your relationship with your roommate from the most important to the least important. The factors are: (Write sequence number right next to the options, No. 1 is the most important factor)

( ) my roommate has good personality

( ) my roommate helps me in daily life

( ) my roommate's personality is similar to mine

( ) my roommate's hobbies interest me

( ) my roommate has good lifestyle (e.g., regular time to go to sleep, tidiness)

Others_____

_____

Explain your sequence to me.

3. Questions to elicit the perception of a roommate:

    a. How would you describe a roommate?

    b. I am going to show you a four-stage relationship development theory (social penetration theory) researchers have identified in previous studies of relationship development. (Provide a verbal description) Can you tell me which stages you have gone through with your roommate? Explain your choice to me.

* Orientation (You initially interact with your roommate, and provide some basic information of yourself.)

* Exploratory affective exchange (You share your personal opinions on politics or religions with your roommate, but most of these information are public, because you tried to maintain the positive image in your roommates' mind.)

* Affective exchange (Your roommate is your good friend. You share very private information with your roommate, which can be both positive and negative emotions.)

* Stable exchange (You are completely open to your roommate. You can share any information with him or her.)

    c. How would you evaluate the quality of your relationship with your roommate?

4. Questions to elicit perceived similarity between roommates:

    a. What similarities do you share with your roommate? (Do you see any similarities or dissimilarity between you and your roommate?)

    b. How about you and your roommates' personality?

    c. Do you think these similarities and dissimilarities between you and your roommate influence the quality of your relationships?

5. Other related questions:

    a. Tell me about your first meeting with your roommate.

    b. After your first meeting, what did you think about him or her?

    c. How much time do you spend together outside of the room?(what kinds of activity?)

    d. Are there any things you do together regularly?

    e. Tell me about your likes and dislikes about your roommate.

    f. What else would you like to share about your relationship with your roommate?

    g. Introduce your roommate to me

Appendix E

Online Survey

Survey

Please rate the importance of each of the following values as they apply to your roommate relationship using the scale below. Then, in the blank space provided, please list any factors that you feel are important to your relationship with your roommate that have not been addressed in this list.

Indicate your rating of each of these by circling the appropriate ranking:
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

1). My roommate is not overly messy.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

2). My roommate helps me in daily life.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

3). My roommate's personality is similar to mine.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

4). My roommate's hobbies interest me.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

5). My roommate has no drugs, alcohol, and smoking problems.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

6). My roommate and I has similar sleep and work schedules.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

7). My roommate is an easy-going person.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

8). My roommate is an outgoing person.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

9). My roommate is a generous person.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

10). My roommate is an open-minded person.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

11). My roommate is an optimistic person.
1. Very important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Of little importance
5. Not at all important

Others_____

_____

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