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# ANALYZING ATTITUDES TOWARD STAYOVER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

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ANALYZING ATTITUDES TOWARD STAYOVER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG  
EMERGING ADULTS

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in  
Family Sciences in the College of Agriculture, Food and  
Environment at the University of Kentucky

By

Keiara A. Marsh

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Nathan Wood

Lexington, Kentucky

2018

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### ANALYZING ATTITUDES TOWARD STAYOVER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

This study bridges the gap in literature in regards to emerging adults ages 18 to 25 and their attitudes toward relationship formation, specifically towards the acceptability of stayover relationships. By using a factorial vignette to manipulate dimensions of number of nights, reason, and gender, the attitudes of emerging adults were indicated to be acceptable. Open responses were obtained to analyze how emerging adults are categorizing the academic term of stayovers. The study found that emerging adults were more likely to find 1-2 nights as acceptable when compared to stayovers that occur every night. Qualitative analysis of results showed that respondents commonly used language such as dating, friends with benefits, or committed relationship to describe stayover relationships.

**KEYWORDS:** Emerging Adults, Stayover Relationships, Attitudes, Factorial Vignette, Acceptability

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April 25, 2018

ANALYZING ATTITUDES TOWARD STAYOVER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG  
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....iv

List of Tables.....v

Chapter One: Introduction.....1

    Literature Review.....2

    Reasons for Cohabitation.....2

    Types of Emerging Adult Cohabitors.....3

    Stayover.....5

    Purpose.....6

Chapter Two: Method.....8

    Sample: Recruitment.....8

    Sample.....8

    Procedure.....9

    Measures.....10

        Demographics.....10

        Factorial Vignette.....10

        Open Responses.....11

Chapter Three: Analytical Procedure and Results.....13

    Quantitative Approach.....13

    Qualitative Approach.....14

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion.....21

    Implications.....24

    Conclusion.....25

Appendices

    Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire.....26

    Appendix B: Relationship Codebook.....28

    Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter.....31

References.....33

Vita.....36

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1, Sample Demographics.....	17
Table 3.2, Hierarchical Binary Logistic Regression Predicting the Perceived Acceptability of Number of Nights.....	18
Table 3.3, Rationale for Vignette Open Responses.....	19
Table 3.4, Rationale for Personal Open Responses.....	19

## Chapter One: Introduction

Over past decades, Erikson (1968), Levinson (1978), and Keniston (1971) have contributed to the theoretical framework and knowledge about the developmental period between late teens and early twenties. Erikson (1968) did not discuss specific age groups within the literature, however distinguished between adolescent development and the development in young adulthood. Erikson indicated that it is typical of industrialized countries to experience a *prolonged adolescence* (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). Levinson (1978) called the ages 17-33 the *novice phase* due to this age group moving into the adult stage and creating stability. Based on this theoretical background and more recent research that further distinguished individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, Arnett (2000) created the term *emerging adulthood*.

One key developmental task of emerging adulthood is the exploration of life through relationships, education, and career paths (Arnett, 2000). The task of exploring relationships has been described through terms such as dating, courtship, “hooking up”, “friends with benefits”, and even cohabitation (Jamison & Ganong, 2011). Cohabitation is defined as two unmarried individuals in a romantic relationship living in the same space. Cohabitation has been studied for more than three decades, although the research on emerging adults is lacking in regards to how they categorize the relationships. Within the last decade, cohabitation has become more prevalent throughout all demographics (Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002). Emerging adults are choosing cohabiting relationships over marriage for reasons of financial support, co-parenting, trial to marriage, convenience or to eliminate risk of divorce (Macklin, 1972; Manning, Cohen, & Smock, 2011; Sassler, 2004; Willoughby & Carroll, 2010). For these reasons, the courtship process and family



life cycle now include cohabitation as a normative stage (Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Manning et al., 2011; McGoldrick, Carter, & Garcia-Preto, 2011). Cohabitation is now considered a normal occurrence in emerging adulthood, as cohabitation is likely to take place during emerging adults' exploration of relationships.

According to Manning, Cohen, and Smock (2011), emerging adults have more time to experience dating and cohabitation because the mean age of marriage for is historically high. Instead of marrying in their early twenties, which was the average age for the 1970s, emerging adults are waiting until their late twenties or thirties to marry. Though cohabitation has been studied, less is known about the process of forming cohabiting relationships and the names attributed to cohabiting relationships among emerging adults. Therefore, the present study will examine the perception of emerging adults relative to categorizing stages of relationship formation. A limitation of studying cohabitation among emerging adults is not having a concrete definition for how it is defined.

## **Literature Review**

### **Reasons for Cohabitation**

There are several reasons couples choose to cohabit; one of the most common reasons is for financial stability (Sassler, 2004). Macklin (1972) states that college cohabitation can be practiced for reasons such as trial marriage, premarital marriage, companionate marriage, or two-stage marriage. By asking open-ended questions, Sassler (2004) put together a list of reasons why individuals cohabit: finances, convenience, housing situation, simply because they wanted to, response to parents/family, and as a trial. Sassler (2004) found that most couples indicated that financial situations and

convenience were key factors in the decision to cohabit. Cohabiting couples also reported that a concern for marriage is that the marriage could possibly end in a divorce (Miller, Sassler, & Kusi-Appouh, 2011). Often after experiencing a divorce of parents or close from other family members, individuals make a decision not to marry, and instead cohabit for fear that their marriage might end in a divorce.

### **Types of Emerging Adult Cohabitors**

As past research has suggested, there are many reasons for categories in which cohabiters can be placed (Macklin, 1972; Manning, Cohen, & Smock, 2011; Murrow & Shi, 2010; Sassler, 2004; Willoughby & Carroll, 2010). Gold (2012) lists four types of college cohabiters: Linus-blanket cohabiters, emancipation, convenience, and lastly testing. The Linus-blanket cohabiters are individuals who seek being in a romantic relationship to prevent being alone. Emancipation cohabiters refer to individuals that seek freedom from their parents and indicate that freedom by living with a partner. Convenience cohabiters refer to couples that live together to share expenses, have sexual monogamy, or any other potential gain that could come from cohabitation. The type of cohabiting taking place gives insight into the reasons each partner has chosen cohabitation over marriage (Gold, 2012; Murrow & Shi, 2010).

While research studies discuss cohabitation relationships in terms of sliding versus deciding (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006), co-parenting, clinical interventions for cohabiting couples, and the effects of cohabitation before marriage (Gold, 2012; Tach & Halpern-Meehin, 2009); researchers have failed to discuss how emerging adults would define or categorize steps leading to cohabitation.

Due to the stigma surrounding cohabitation relationships, emerging adults could be likely to disassociate their relationship formation from cohabitation for a number of reasons such as marital satisfaction, likelihood for divorce, and religious reasons. Marital quality can be defined as the individual's perception of how their relationship is progressing (Jose et al., 2010). Previous research on cohabitation has shown that, compared to non-cohabiting couples, couples who cohabit and then go on to marry the person with whom they were cohabiting are more likely to experience lower marital satisfaction (Kamp Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003). Jose et al. (2010) found that the relationship between cohabitation and marital quality is negatively correlated. Researchers also found that marital stability was not influenced by cohabitation before marriage.

Research on cohabitation also suggests that a majority of cohabiting relationships that become marriages will end in a divorce (Kamp Dush et al., 2003; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). In the literature, the phenomenon of marriages being more likely to end in a divorce due to the presence of premarital cohabitation is called the cohabitation effect (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009). As mentioned above, Murrow and Shi (2010) define three distinct types of cohabitation: precursor to marriage, co-residential dating, and trial marriage. Within these types of cohabitation, Murrow and Shi (2010) make it evident that not all cohabiting relationships will end in divorce and suggest that the difference in the likelihood to divorce is the reason the couple is cohabiting. Of the three types, co-residential dating is the most likely to end in a divorce should the individuals choose to get married. Precursor to marriage and trial marriage cohabitation

are not as likely to end in divorce due to the fact that these couples were planning for marriage (Murrow & Shi, 2010).

Trost (2016) states that up until the 1950s, couples of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith could not live together, have sex, or birth a child until after a marriage ceremony. As such, cohabitation goes against what most religious individuals believe and practice daily. According to Manning, Cohen, and Smock (2011), individuals may avoid cohabitation to respect their families' view and religion. Because religious views are passed down intergenerationally, the frequency of participating in religious practices is negatively associated with expectations of cohabitation in adolescents (Manning et al., 2011). In most religions like Christianity the issue is not necessarily with cohabitation, the problem lies within those who are cohabiting are most likely participating in premarital sexual intercourse and activities.

Beyond the stigma of cohabiting relationships, Jamison and Ganong (2011) suggest that couples that do not choose to associate or categorize their relationship as cohabitation form stayover relationships. Research states that emerging adults and especially college educated emerging adults have a tendency of having "stayovers" (Jamison & Ganong, 2011). A stayover or part-time cohabitation, according to Jamison and Ganong (2011), consists of a couple spending several nights of the week together while still keeping a separate residence. Similar to cohabitation, the reasons for stayover relationships include convenience, the desire to be alone at times, and control (Jamison & Ganong, 2011). For example, a college couple may spend every night together and sleep together, but during the day utilize their own personal dorm space or apartment.

Research surrounding the stayover phenomenon is limited due to the fact that it is a fairly new term. Though the populations that are more likely to stayover remain unknown, current research does indicate that stayover relationships are associated with more freedom and less commitment than cohabiting relationships (Jamison & Proulx, 2013). Though individuals involved in stayover relationships did not appear to want high levels of commitment, it seemed as though the partners were still looking to build intimacy. It was found that individuals that were involved in stayover relationships did not view their relationship as cohabitation (Jamison & Proulx, 2013).

Naming the phenomenon “stayovers” has been a recent occurrence. Stayovers are seen as a new relationship formation stage, similar to the language of “hookups”, “friends with benefits” (FWBs), and “shacking up” (Jamison & Proulx, 2013). With this in mind, the current study aims to analyze if this has been accepted universally or simply among researchers. There is a surplus of research on cohabitation as it is prominent in today’s culture and society, however stayover relationships have not been studied abundantly. The main relationship question in the present study is how to emerging adults categorize relationships that research has deemed a stayover? Do emerging adults believe that there is a difference between cohabitation and stayovers?

### **Present Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the attitudes and beliefs of emerging adults in regards to what forms of relationship formations are acceptable and how emerging adults categorize these relationships. The present study utilizes a factorial vignette to analyze how emerging adults categorize relationships and the acceptability of the relationships. The use of a vignette allows for manipulation of dimensions to gauge

attitudes surrounding cohabitation and stayover relationships, therefore vignettes help to understand the attitudes in regards to acceptability of cohabiting and stayover relationships. It is hypothesized that among emerging adults, what is known as a stayover relationship would be viewed as acceptable. Furthermore, the vernacular used by emerging adults to examine what they are calling what researchers have deemed to be stayover relationships will be explored.

## **Chapter Two: Method**

To explore the hypotheses of this study, factorial vignettes as well as open response items will be used. Factorial vignettes are hypothetical scenarios that allow the researcher to analyze beliefs and attitudes surrounding a certain phenomena (Ganong & Coleman, 2006). A vignette was designed to analyze emerging adults' attitudes surrounding stayover and cohabiting relationships, circumstances of the relationship, and their categorization of the relationship. These attitudes and beliefs were assessed by creating a 4 x 4 x 2 factorial design with four possible stayover and reasons for cohabitation, four choices for number of number of nights, and a random assignment of the gender of the vignette character. Open responses were used to get more in depth understanding of participant's views of stayovers.

### **Sample Recruitment**

Following IRB approval (see Appendix C), an open records request from University of Kentucky, lists of students were selected. Once selected, individuals received an email inviting them to participate in a study on relationship formation. The email contained the research flyer and a direct Qualtrics link to the survey and questionnaire. Research flyers were posted on Facebook and Instagram. The social media posts contained inclusionary criteria, a direct link to Qualtrics, and incentives.

### **Sample**

Inclusion criteria for participants consisted of them being emerging adults aged 18-25 years old. All participants ( $n = 1,111$ ) reported their age to be 18-25. The majority of the participants identified as female ( $n = 604, 54.4\%$ ). Sexual orientation of the participants was primarily heterosexual ( $n = 701, 83.5\%$ ). Other sexual orientation groups represented include lesbian ( $n = 11, 1.0\%$ ), gay ( $n = 22, 2.0\%$ ), bisexual ( $n = 72,$

6.5%), queer ( $n = 4$ , 0.4%), pansexual ( $n = 16$ , 1.4%), and 1.3% ( $n = 14$ ) identified as other. Ethnicity was presented as “check all that applies” including primarily White ( $n = 732$ , 65.9%) and Black or African American ( $n = 63$ , 5.7%) participants (see Demographics Table 1 for specifics). With the sample collected from a college population, education demographics depicted high school ( $n = 107$ , 12.7%), some college, but no degree ( $n = 485$ , 57.7%), and bachelor’s degree ( $n = 154$ , 18.3%) to be the highest level of schooling completed by participants.

Participants were asked to indicate if they are currently in a sexually romantic relationship ( $n = 444$ , 52.5%) and currently in a committed relationship ( $n = 459$ , 54.2%). It was conducted, given this demographic information that most of the participants were engaged in committed relationships, but not all of them in sexually romantic relationships. Relationship types were presented as a “check all that apply” including single ( $n = 495$ , 44.6%), cohabiting ( $n = 144$ , 13%), and stayover ( $n = 248$ , 22.3%). Participants were asked have they ever been in a relationship in which they regularly spent nights with a partner, 67.9% ( $n = 572$ ) of participants responded indicating that they have been engaged in a similar relationship. Participants considered themselves to be “somewhat religious” ( $n = 296$ , 35%).

## **Procedure**

Once potential respondents received an email to participate in the study, they had access to the Qualtrics log in through a provider hyperlink. The respondents then viewed an outlined purpose of the study along with their participant rights. The first question on Qualtrics asked participants that they were between the ages of 18-25 years old. If



participants answered “yes”, then they were able to complete the rest of the study. Participants that indicated “no” were given a message of gratitude for attempting to complete the study and we unable to move forward. Potential respondents that chose to complete the study were presented with the vignette protocol. Questionnaires and survey questions assessing the participant’s view on the presented subject will follow the vignette. The demographic and participant information was completed in the last portion of the study.

Incentives were optional to participants. The participants were asked to select either “I want a chance for a gift card” or “I do not want a chance for a gift card.” The survey ended if the participant did not want an incentive. For the participants who did want an incentive, they were instructed to click a link to a different Qualtrics survey in efforts to not have identifying data attached to responses. In the separate Qualtrics survey, participants provided their email for the drawings. The incentives for completing the research study were Amazon gift cards. Based on starting time, from the first fifty completed surveys, there was a drawing for five \$20 Amazon gift cards. The remaining participants entered into a drawing for twenty \$5 gift cards.

## **Measures**

**Demographics.** The last portion of the survey contained demographic questions such as: age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, education, and brief relationship status and history (See Appendix A). These questions were purposefully asked at the end of the survey to minimize potential priming effects.

**Factorial vignette.** Vignettes are unique because the researcher can randomly manipulate the independent variables; these are referred to as dimensions in factorial

vignettes (Ganong & Coleman, 2006). The vignette displayed to respondents will read as followed: “Jane and John, who are college aged, have been seeing each other regularly. *Jane/John (wants to seek freedom from parents/ doesn't like being alone/ wants to see if (his/her) relationship can work out/ thought it would be convenient)*, so *he/she* thought that it would be best to sleep at *John's/Jane's* apartment *1-2 nights/ 3-4 nights/ 5-6 nights/ every night* a week.” The dimensions within the vignette are in italics. The use of alternating genders in the vignette (Jane or John) controls for the perceived acceptability of males versus females within stayover or cohabiting relationships. Respondents will see one of four reasons for cohabitation: emancipation (*wants to seek freedom from parents*), Linus-blanket (*doesn't like being alone*), testing (*wants to see if (his/her) relationship can work out*), and convenience (*thought it would be convenient*). The number of nights per week gives insight rather or not it is a stayover (*1-2 nights/ 3-4 nights/ 5-6 nights*) or cohabiting (*every night*) relationship. Each participant was randomly assigned 1 of 32 vignettes; attitudes were attributed to the vignette dimensions viewed. Participants were asked, after viewing the vignette, to what extent do they view the number of nights to be acceptable. A second question regarding acceptability of the reason for the stayover was also asked. Responses for both questions were based on a four-point Likert scale and ranged from very unacceptable to very acceptable.

**Open-ended responses.** Creswell (2013) states that open-ended responses allow participants to freely provide their views and observations. Open-ended responses followed each aforementioned Likert scale question to allow participants to clarify and expand their reasons for their response. An additional open response questions was also asked “*What would you call this relationship?*” An open-ended response was also

provided to analyze how the participant categorized the relationship as dating, cohabitation, a stayover, or their personal belief and definition.

A codebook (see Appendix B) was developed to analyze how respondents named the vignette relationships and how they named their personal similar experiences if they reported participating in a stayover relationship (see analytical procedure below for details related to the development of the codebook). Fleiss (1981) states that the loss in efficiency should not be greater than 20%, therefore the reliability kappa produced would result in 0.8 or higher. The final codebook was compromised of 16 codes with a reliability kappa of 0.94.

### **Chapter Three: Analytical Procedure and Results Quantitative Approach**

Hierarchical binary logistic regression was used to analyze quantitative data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The response variable was a dichotomous variable regarding the acceptability of the number of nights participants saw in the vignette; acceptable and very acceptable were coded as 1 whereas unacceptable and very unacceptable was coded as a 0. Variables accounted for in the first step of the model included: participant gender, age, education, religiousness (very religious, somewhat religious, not very religious, and not at all religious), and if the participant has a history with cohabitation or stayovers (yes=1, no=0). Education level was recoded to: high school or less was coded together (n= 110), some college or an associate's degree (n=522), and lastly a bachelor's degree or higher (n=207). Predictor variables entered into the second step of the model were: gender of the main character of the vignette (Jane=1, John=0), reasons for cohabitation, and number of nights.

Participant age, education, gender, religiousness, and the participant's personal relationship history accounted for 6% of the variance in acceptability of the number of nights presented in the vignette,  $\chi^2(6, n = 803) = 35.87, p = .000$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .06$ . Participant's current or past engagement in stayover relationships ( $B = .483, p = .003$ ) and religiousness ( $B = -.270, p = .000$ ) were predictive of acceptability of the number of nights. Age, education, and gender identity of participants were not significant in Step 1. After the number of nights, reason for cohabitation, and gender of the main character within the vignette were added in Step 2, the total variance explained by the model was 31%,  $\chi^2(7, n = 803) = 172.62, p = .000$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .31$ . Approximately, 25% of additional variance in acceptability can be explained by the number of nights, the gender

of the main character, and the reason for cohabitation that was presented in the vignette (see Table 2). Results would suggest that females, as compared to male participants, were less likely to say the number of nights were acceptable ( $B = -.495, p = .008$ ). Female participants, when compared to male participants, were 39% *less* likely to find the number of nights presented in the vignette as acceptable. Participants who reported that current or past engagement in a stayover relationship were more likely to say the nights presented in the vignette were acceptable ( $B = .442, p = .015$ ), whereas increased religiousness ( $B = -.331, p = .000$ ) was predictive of decrease in acceptability of the number of nights presented. For every one point increase in participants religiousness there was a corresponding 28% *decrease* in the likelihood of them perceiving the number of nights seen in the vignette as acceptable.

Results also show that participants were more likely to say that Jane staying over at John's apartment was acceptable ( $B = .370, p = .024$ ) as compared to John staying over at Jane's apartment. When compared to the characters staying every night, only vignettes that had characters staying 1-2 nights ( $B = 2.72, p = .000$ ) and 3-4 nights ( $B = 1.27, p = .000$ ) were perceived as more acceptable. There was not a statistically significant difference in the acceptability between a character staying 5-6 nights a week and staying every night of the week ( $p = .472$ ).

### **Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative results were based on analyzing themes related to the question of "what do they call this?" Creswell (2013), a codebook was created for common themes of how emerging adults categorize the relationships described in the vignette ( $n = 635$ ) as well as if they ever had experience in a "stayover" relationship ( $n = 509$ ). The codes were

decided upon based on the participant's statements. Once a list of all codes was completed, the codes were then grouped together by common denominators. For example, some participants stated that the vignette was "a dating relationship", whereas others used titles of boyfriend and girlfriend. These were grouped together to create one code. Each code was then defined and examples were provided based on participant's statements. Coding the themes of open responses offers two or more coders agreeing on the determination of a passage (Creswell, 2013). I served as the primary coder and provided the codebook and open-ended data to a secondary coder who coded every third response for inter-rater reliability. The final codebook consisted of 16 codes.

Content analysis for the open-ended rationales provided by participants was divided into how the participants viewed the vignette relationship ("*What would they call it?*") and how participants viewed their personal relationships that were similar to the vignettes. Participants only described what they called the relationship if they indicated earlier in the study that they have a history of spending nights with a partner. One of the codes indicated most often for both questions was "dating". This code was assigned to responses that illustrated or stated dating, boyfriend/girlfriend, significant others or couple (see Appendix B for more examples and definitions). This suggests that individuals view stayovers to be dating or a part of the dating process in the vignette ( $n = 106, 16.7\%$ ) and in their personal lives ( $n = 265, 52\%$ ).

A discrepancy worth noting is that participants were more likely to categorize the relationship as "unhealthy" when referencing the vignette ( $n = 137, 21.6\%$ ) compared to their personal lives ( $n = 5, 0.1\%$ ). Other prominent codes indicated were "committed relationship" (vignette  $n = 84, 13.2\%$ ; self  $n = 103, 20.2\%$ ), "normal relationship"

(vignette  $n = 49$ , 7.7%; self  $n = 11$ , 2.2%), and “friends with benefits” (vignette  $n = 30$ , 4.7%; self  $n = 16$ , 3.1%). In reference to the vernacular used by emerging adults to explain stayovers, qualitative data depicted that the language of using “stayover” was not represented among the sample. Open-ended responses indicate that emerging adults refer to what research has deemed a stayover relationship as a dating relationship.

Table 3.1  
*Sample Demographics*

Characteristic	<i>(n = 1111)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	223	26.6
Female	604	72.0
Gender Variant	12	1.4
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>		
White/Non-Hispanic	732	65.9
African American	63	5.7
Asian	43	3.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	19	1.7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	9	0.8
Other	41	3.7
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Heterosexual	701	83.5
Lesbian	11	1.3
Gay	22	2.6
Bisexual	72	8.6
Queer	4	0.5
Pansexual	16	1.9
Other	14	1.7
<b>Relationship Type</b>		
Married	38	3.4
Single	495	44.6
Separated	6	0.5
Cohabiting	144	13.0
Stayover	248	22.3
Widowed	2	0.2
Divorced	3	0.3
Current Sexually Romantic Relationship	444	52.5
Current Committed Relationship	459	54.2
<b>Education</b>		
No Schooling Complete	1	0.1
Attended High School, No diploma	2	0.2
High School	107	12.7
Attended College, No Degree	485	57.7
Trade, Technical, or Vocational	1	0.1
<b>Training</b>		
Associate Degree	37	4.4
Bachelor's Degree	154	18.3
Master's Degree	38	4.5
Professional Degree	5	0.6
Doctorate Degree	10	1.2



Table 3.2

*Binary Logistic Regression Predicting the Perceived Acceptability of the Number of Nights (N = 803)*

Predictor	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$p$	OR	95% CI
Step 1	.06						
Respondent Characteristics							
Age			0.04	0.06	.533	1.04	[0.92, 1.17]
Education							
High School or Less					.740		
Some College or Associates			0.01	0.25	.967	1.01	[0.62, 1.66]
Bachelors or Higher			-0.18	0.35	.603	0.83	[0.42, 1.67]
Female <sup>(male)</sup>			-0.50	0.19	.008	0.61	[0.42, 0.88]
Previous Stayover <sup>(No)</sup>			0.15	0.18	.015	1.56	[1.09, 2.23]
Religiousness			-0.33	0.08	.000	0.72	[0.62, 0.84]
Step 2	.31	.25					
Vignette Character Gender <sup>(males)</sup>			0.37	0.16	.024	1.45	[1.05, 2.00]
Cohabitation Reason Viewed <sup>(Test)</sup>							
Convenience			0.92	0.24	.000	2.52	[1.57, 4.04]
Linus			1.01	0.25	.000	2.74	[1.69, 4.43]
Emancipation			0.84	0.24	.000	2.28	[1.44, 3.63]
Number of Vignette Nights <sup>(every night)</sup>							
One to Two Nights a Week	2.72			0.28	.000	15.22	[8.83, 26.23]
Three-Four Nights a Week	1.27			0.22	.000	3.56	[2.31, 5.48]
Five-Six Nights a Week	0.16			0.22	.472	1.17	[0.77, 1.78]

Table 3.3

*Rationale for Open ended Responses*

Qualitative Rationale	<i>Vignette Open Response Rationale</i>	
	<i>n</i>	%
Dating	106	16.7
Unhealthy Relationship	137	21.6
Committed Relationship	84	13.2
Cohabitation	6	0.9
Engaged	11	1.7
Normal	49	7.7
Talking Stage	13	2.0
One-Sided	22	3.5
Friends with Benefits	30	4.7
Disagreement with reason	12	1.9
Rushing	17	2.7
Marriage	3	0.5
Healthy	35	5.5
Convenient	35	5.5
Don't Know What to Call it	9	1.4
Miscellaneous	66	10.40

Table 3.4  
*Rationale for Open ended Responses*

Qualitative Rationale	<i>Personal Relationship Open Response Rationale</i>	
	<i>n</i>	%
Dating	265	52
Unhealthy Relationship	5	1
Committed Relationship	103	20.2
Cohabitation	10	2.0
Engaged	8	1.6
Normal	11	2.2
Talking Stage	6	1.2
One-Sided	4	0.8
Friends with Benefits	16	3.1
Disagreement with reason	0	0
Rushing	0	0
Marriage	16	3.1
Healthy	2	0.4
Convenient	0	0
Don't Know What to Call it	11	2.2
Miscellaneous	52	10.2

## Chapter Four: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the attitudes of emerging adults in regards to what forms of relationship formations are acceptable and furthermore to distinguish how emerging adults categorize what research indicates a stayover relationship. Congruent with the research of Erikson (1968), Levinson (1978), Keniston (1971), and Arnett (2004) suggesting that emerging adults are exploratory beings in relationships, the current study shows that emerging adults are continuing to explore relationships in different manners than other age demographics. The perceived acceptability in the number of nights spent with a partner and normalizing of behavior suggests that stayover relationships, like concepts of “hookups” or “friends with benefits,” is a stepping stone in relationship formation for emerging adults. Emerging adults in the present study provided open responses suggesting that these stayover relationships are considered to be “normal college relationships” or “average for college relationships.”

Jose et al. (2010), Kamp Dush et al. (2003), and Phillips and Sweeney (2005) suggested that cohabiting relationships are likely to result in lower marital satisfaction, high risk of divorce, and lower marital quality. The suggested outcomes of cohabitation before marriage suggests that there is perceived stigma on cohabitation. The current study partially supports the potential stigma in that 5-6 nights a week and every night are not as likely to be perceived as acceptable when compared to 1-2 or 3-4 nights a week. Jamison and Ganong (2011) provides evidence that individuals engaged with stayover relationships often do not like to be associated with cohabitation. It was hypothesized that stayovers, in terms of the number of nights, would be more acceptable to emerging adults

than cohabitation that was represented by every night within the vignette. Furthermore, emerging adults immersed in college life would be more likely to have their own stable residence such as a dorm or an apartment to have the liberty to stayover at a partner's residence. One could infer the acceptability of stayover relationships compared to cohabitation is due to the past experiences of the emerging adults samples.

In reference to religiousness, researchers Manning et al. (2011) and Trost (2016) previously suggested that an increase in religiousness would result in a decrease in the acceptability and likelihood for cohabitation. Similarly, current findings indicate that the more religious participants viewed their self to be the less acceptable the concept of stayovers were to the participants. Meaning that for every increase in religiousness, participants perceived the acceptability of any numbers of nights seen in the vignette to be more unacceptable than participants that considered themselves less religiousness.

Emerging adults have chose cohabiting relationships over marriage for reasons of financial support, co-parenting, trial to marriage, convenience or to eliminate risk of divorce (Macklin, 1972; Manning, Cohen, & Smock, 2011; Sassler, 2004; Willoughby & Carroll, 2010). Similar to cohabitation, emerging adults have chose stayover relationships for convenience, the desire to be alone at times, and control (Jamison & Ganong, 2011). Jamison and Proulx (2013) suggest that an important function of stayovers is to provide more freedom and have less commitment. The present study supports these findings that any reason for the stayover, when compared to the testing out the relationship, was more predictive of emerging adults perceiving the number of nights presented in the vignette as acceptable.

It was also hypothesized that the stayover language defined by researchers would not be prevalent or used among emerging adults. Resembling the indication that Jamison and Proulx (2013) considered that stayovers were a new stage in relationship formation like hookups or friends with benefits and can be viewed considerably different amongst different populations. The data depicts that even though participants ( $n = 248$ , 22.3%) indicated that they have been engaged in stayover relationships within the sample demographics, however, none of the participants indicated that a relationship with which they spent several nights with their partner was a “stayover” relationship. The data heavily supports that emerging adults considered this to be “dating” both within the vignette and within their personal lives. Other heavily used descriptions consisted of “committed relationship,” “friends with benefits,” a “normal college relationship,” or “talking.” This suggests that among emerging adults have normalized the behavior of stayover relationships within relationship formation.

In comparison of the open rationale for categorizing the vignette versus personal relationships, respondents appeared to be more likely to call the relationship “unhealthy” when discussing the vignette when compared to their own personal experiences with stayovers. Ganong and Coleman (2005, 2006) states that within vignettes respondents can indicate different experiences on sensitive topics and suggests to counteract act this by following up by asking participants about if they have encountered similar situation. The current study followed that procedure; therefore the differences between vignette acceptability and personal acceptability are accounted for.

## **Implications**

Analyzing aspects of relationship formation and the differences in relational categories can have both research and clinical implications. Research indicates that emerging adults are likely to have stayovers over cohabiting relationships, which implies that emerging adults are referring to these relationships as stayovers (Jamison & Ganong, 2011). From responses provided, emerging adults do not use the language of “stayover.” Several respondents considered these relationships to either be a “typical college relationship,” “friends with benefits,” or they did not know how to label the relationship (see Table 3 and Table 4). Therefore, future research implications would be beneficial to further analyze what emerging adults experience to be a stayover. When asked in the current study if individuals have ever been in a relationship in which that regularly spent nights with a partner, not one participant listed a stayover relationship as what they would call it; although 22% of the sample indicated that at some point they had been engaged in a stayover relationship. Due to 22% of the sample indicating they participated in a stayover implies that they know enough information to infer what a stayover is, but not to use the stayover language. Future researchers should ask about stayover relationships using the definition provided by Jamison and Ganong (2011) assessing if participants have ever spent several nights of the week with a partner while still keeping a separate residence. By assessing the nights spent with a romantic partner or the presence of another residence, future researchers will be able to adequately analyze stayover relationships.

Stayovers suggest that the couple has more commitment than hook ups and it is more exclusive than friends with benefits (Jamison & Ganong, 2011), yet it is

differentiated from cohabitation in a number of ways such as the number of nights together and shared residence. The research conducted provides a view from emerging adults that relationship formation has evolved from the formal family life cycle stages. The views of acceptability provide framework that cohabitation and stayover relationships are no longer viewed as “shacking up” or sinful behavior. Clinically, therapists and clinicians are able to utilize this data to gain understanding about emerging adults relationship formation evolving. Mental health professionals could assess client’s motivation or reason for involvement in stayover relationships to further gain understanding of the functions of the relationship for the client.

Future directions for the present study would be analyzing the vignette seen by participants and their respondents. Matching the open responses to exact vignette seen by participants would give the researcher insight on what vignette emerging adults are most likely to code as “dating.” Open-ended responses may suggest that circumstances in the vignette or several vignettes were less common among emerging adults.

### **Conclusion**

The present study examined the new phenomenon of stayover relationships and the very common topic of cohabitation among emerging adults. It appears from the findings that the attitudes and beliefs of stayover relationships and cohabitation have shifted. Future research should be conducted to analyze if emerging adults are using stayovers specifically as a precursor to cohabitation or as another step to relationship formation.



Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Age: What is your age?

Gender:

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Gender Variant/Non-conforming \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply:

White/Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_

Black or African American \_\_\_\_\_

Asian/Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is the highest degree or level of school completed?

Less than high school \_\_\_\_\_

Some high school, no diploma \_\_\_\_\_

High school graduate or GED \_\_\_\_\_

Some college, no degree

Trade, technical, or vocational training \_\_\_\_\_

Associate degree \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor's degree \_\_\_\_\_

Master's degree \_\_\_\_\_

Professional degree \_\_\_\_\_

Doctorate degree \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship Status:

Are you currently in a sexually romantic relationship?

Are you currently in a committed relationship?

Have you ever been in a relationship in which you regularly spent some nights with your partner?

If so, what would you call the relationship?

Relationship Type:

Single  
Married  
Widowed  
Cohabiting  
Statyover

Appendix B  
Relationship Codebook

Codes	Definitions	Examples
1. Dating	Respondent identifies the relationship as casual, romantic, or boyfriend/girlfriend	Dating, “boyfriend/girlfriend”, Casual, romance, Romantic relationship, significant others or SOs, intimate, “seeing each other”, couple
2. Unhealthy Relationship	Respondents identifies the relationship in terms of unhealthy in terms of clingy, dependent, weak, excessive, unstable, or needy	Clingy, enmeshment, dependent, codependent, needy, or excessive, States “immature” or “stupid”
3. Committed Relationship	Respondents indicate the dedication to the relationship using words such as committed, strong, serious, or close	Mentions long term relationship, monogamous, exclusive
4. Cohabitation	Respondents indicate cohabitation as a label for the relationship	States “cohabiting relationship”, “My current boyfriend and live together and have been dating for 3 yrs, living together for 2”, “shacking up”
5. Engaged	Respondents indicate a formal agreement to enter marriage	States or mentions “engagement”, engaged” and/or fiancé
6. Normal	Respondents indicate that the relationship is typical and/or average	“It is not abnormal”, Typical, An average relationship, or typical college relationship, “regular”
7. Talking Stage	Respondents identified that they are in a stage prior to dating, known as talking	Mentions “talking”
8. One-sided	Respondent mentioned beneficial or one-sided advantages from the relationship. Could be indicated by stating the “use” of one of the partners	“It sounds like John is just using her”

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
9.Friends with Benefits	Respondents indicate a mutual agreement in which sexual activities occur with friendship or acquaintanceship	Cordial with one another, “friendly”, States “FWB”, Mentioned a combination of friendship and sex or friendship, “hooking up”, “fuck buddy”
10. Disagreement with reason	Respondents identified deemed the reason within the vignette to be wrong	“They are spending time together for the wrong reasons” Feeling as though they are not in the relationship for the right reasons
11. Rushing	Respondents identified moving too swiftly or without thought	States or mentions moving too fast, without much thought, or rushing the relationship
12. Marriage	Respondents indicate the presence of a legal union of two individuals	Mention of married/marriage, Mention of Husband/Wife
13. Healthy	Respondents identify that the relationship has healthy components	Mentions Healthy behavior, good relationship
14. Convenient	Respondent indicates that reason for the relationship is comfort or convenience	Stated “comfortable”, “comfort”, “convenient”, or “convenience

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
15. Don't Know what to call it	Respondent is not clear on how to label the relationship	"we didn't label it" or "I do not know what to call it"
16. Miscellaneous	Responses that seem nonsensical or incomplete	Not enough information, "I call it a relationship", "fucking on the low", "a thing", "Not sure I understand the question", "A couple". "situationship", "yes"

Appendix C  
IRB Approval Letter



EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

IRB Number: 42974

TO: Keiara Marsh, Bachelors of Science Family Sciences  
PI phone #: 615-476-5733  
PI email: keiara.marsh@uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson  
Non Medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval for Exemption Certification

DATE: 1/12/2018

On 1/12/2018, it was determined that your project entitled "*Exploring the Role of Family of Origin and Peers in Relationship Formation, Sex Values, and Religiosity Among Emerging Adults*" meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" available in the online [Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook](#). Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through [ORI's web site](#). If you have

questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

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