

Life in Lockdown: Understanding Roommate Relationships during Covid-19



Group 2:

Amen Aiwekhoe, Peggy He, Cindy Huang,
Kathleen Parsons, & Megan Woodruff

Agenda

1

Research Question

- Sub Questions
- Curiosity around this topic

2

Research Design

- Sample Population
- Participants
- Methods
 - Personal Inventory
 - Semi-structured Interviews

3

Analysis & Findings

- What we found
- Design recommendations
- Implications of findings

1. Research Question

To what extent have the social realities of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted roommate relationships ?



Sub questions:

- What are the ways roommates have managed new social norms and policies brought on by the pandemic?
- What are the behaviors that have impaired or strained roommate relationships?
- What are the behaviors attributed to a positive roommate relationship?



Why this question?

- Unique challenges posed by COVID-19
 - Roommates spending more time at home
- In 2015, 1 in 4 people ages 18-34 in the U.S. were living with roommates
- Per literature review, gap in qualitative research around this



Why Qualitative Research?

-
1. Because we were interested in experience, relationships, and perspectives of people, qualitative methods was the best way to get this information
 2. Qualitative data is expressive information, which is not conveyed in quantitative data

2. Research Design

Sample Population



- People who lived with one or more roommates during the pandemic for at least 3 full months



- We defined a “roommate” to be anyone with whom the person shared a kitchen and other common household areas



- Not included were people who were living with only a romantic partner or with members of their nuclear family

Study Participants

Recruiting

- Distributed online screener survey
- Received 24 responses. Identified and contacted 6 qualified participants

Questions Responses **24**

Roommate Relationships During Covid-19

We are a group of Human Centered Design and Engineering students at the University of Washington studying the relationship between COVID-19 and roommate relationships.

We invite all University of Washington students who currently live with at least one roommate (either on or off campus) to take this screener survey to be considered for our diary study. Should you be selected to take part in the diary study, our team will thank you with a \$5 Starbucks gift card.

Thank you for your consideration! For any questions, please contact our team at woodrume@uw.edu

Email address *

Valid email address

This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)

What is your current education status at the University of Washington? *

Current Undergraduate Student

Current Graduate Student

Study Participants

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Participant	Age	Gender	Numbers of roommates	Time living together	How they met
Participant 1	25	Female	4 roommates	1.5 years	Friends before living
Participant 2	27	Female	5 roommates	4 years	Friends before living
Participant 3	26	Female	1 roommate	3 years	Friends before living
Participant 4	27	Male	3 roommates	2 years	Friends before living
Participant 5	25	Female	3 roommates	2 years	Met on Craigslist
Participant 6	25	Male	2 roommates	3 years	Friends before living

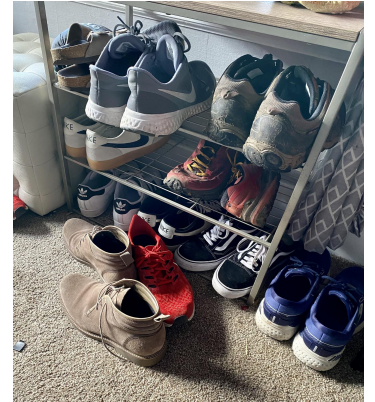
Methods

1. Personal Inventory

Each day for five days, participants were sent an email asking them to:

- Take a photo of a space or object that they share with their roommates and used that day
- Describe the space or object
- Explain why they chose this space or object

Photos were uploaded via an Airtable form



Methods

2. Semi-structured Interview

- 60 minute Zoom interviews
 - 1 interviewer, 1 note-taker, 1 theme note-taker
- Topics
 - Daily life
 - Experience living with roommates
 - House rules
 - Covid-19, etc.
 - Personal inventory/timeline entries



3. Analysis & Findings

Analysis

fy 3-5 Key Findings
 up paper and
 tion efforts moving

irst draft (findings,
 ology, etc) due(ish)

ation due Dec. 9. --
 slides / outline for
 day practice?

Finding from previous course paper
 "Finding 3: The timing of when vouchers were sent could be improved."

peijieh98@yahoo.com

Megan Woodruff

Amen Aiwekhoe

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6

miro

What group activities can be done virtually?

House rules

Finding 1

Covid-19 social distancing increased participants' reliance on their roommates for social, emotional, and practical support



“He is the best lifesaver. I don’t think I would have survived this without him... I think in other times I had very close friends who I would see, and I would be depending on them emotionally to come over if I was having a hard time. But I can't have that, and so I depend on [my roommate] for that.” - P3

Finding 2

As time spent with roommates increased, active roommate interactions improved relationships, while passive interactions led to more negative feelings



“Mid-May was the low point. At that point... it wasn't like we hated... we definitely don't hate each other... we were just like, kind of vying to see fresh faces and stuff.” - P4

Finding 3



Differing risk assessments and public uncertainty around Covid-19 made it difficult for some participants to align with their roommates on household protocols



“When Governor Inslee put out, ‘every household can see five people’ – that was a very confusing guideline for us. At first we decided that each of us individually was considered a household and we could each see five people. A week or so later, a few of us realized that was probably way too much and we had to backtrack.” - P5

Finding 4

When exposed, misalignment with roommates on household Covid-19 protocols led participants to feel more negatively toward their roommates



“Finding this out [that her roommates were not aligned] was emotionally challenging, because I like a lot of things about my roommates and I really looked forward to hanging out with them in the first few months of the lockdown.” - P1

Finding 5

Participants felt that communicating more concretely and proactively about Covid-19 guidelines would (or did) improve their roommate relationships



“The biggest thing I’ve started wanting in [roommate] relationships during Covid is an actual set of agreed upon rules about what we are and aren’t doing in terms of seeing people.” - P6

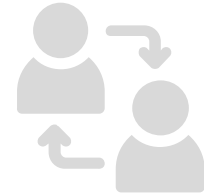
Impact of this Research



- Our research further support ideas from Spring 2020 articles



- Adds new ideas (e.g., active interactions vs. passive)



- Outlines challenges and identify ways to help with roommate relationships.

Design Recommendations



Communicate

- Roommates should communicate early and often about Covid-19 protocols



Review Regulations

- Seek clarity from their roommates about what statewide regulations mean to their situation



Engagement

- Make plans to engage actively with their roommates in group activities, recognizing that passive interactions may grow fatiguing over time.

Future Implications



Washington Department of
Public Health: improve
communication of guidelines



Share with housing
staff at colleges and
people with
roommates



Future research: different
segments of sample
population

Additional Resources

Final Paper:
Raw Collection of Data: