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**DOES MENTORING CAUSE A PERSON TO HAVE LEARNED
OPTIMISM?**

by
Kristine Sherri Smalls

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Masters of Arts in School Psychology

at
Rowan University

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Thesis Chair: Terri Allen, Ph.D.

Abstract

Kristine Sherri Smalls

DOES MENTORING CAUSE A PERSON TO HAVE LEARNED OPTIMISM?

2013/14

Terri Allen, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of the study was to explore “optimism”, the characteristics of an optimistic person, and the relationship to the mentoring experience. Are optimistic individuals, likely to engage in helping others through volunteering and mentoring? The study specifically focused on the experiences of being a mentor or mentee and a possible relationship to learned optimism. The relationship between the mentoring experience and learned optimism was examined through the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) and a demographic survey. The Life Orientation Test- Revised has been used in numerous studies done to measure optimism in people and to test whether a person is optimistic in their life expectancies. There were zero significant differences between the groups as determined by the one-way analysis of variance. It was revealed that there was no correlation between those who were mentors and optimism. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there is no correlation between those who were mentees and optimism. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there is no correlation between those who were volunteers and optimism. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there is no correlation between those who indicated above involvement a positive impact on life and optimism.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

We live in a world where either optimism or negativity may exert power over our actions. As we dream to someday become a famous actress, doctor, a police officer, a philosopher, or maybe even an astronaut, there may be those who help and encourage us and others that shoot us down so we come to believe that our dream is impossible.

Within society, there are people who do not go out of their way to help others and only think about themselves. They are the “Debbie Downers” of society. On the other hand, the optimistic view life from a different perspective and generally come up with positive and successful outcomes to situations. Mentoring, volunteering and being helpful may reflect some ways that can make a person views life from a more optimistic perspective.

The more optimistic we are, we are less likely to be influenced by negative information (Begley, 2011). In other words these people who like to help are practicing positive psychology, which means helping others makes them feel happy with themselves. Most times when people are happy they look at things on the bright side, which gives them more of a positive approach to the situation at hand. Helping behaviors will open a person up to have great mental and physical health. Those people who do not get involved with others will always see the negative in every situation because they have never experienced dealing with different problems that could impact their views. It may hinge on the way a person thinks and talks to themselves in determining if they are and optimist or pessimist (Beattie, 2013).

Need for Study

Optimism and positive psychology are related to overall well being (Seligman, 2006). Volunteering and mentoring are related to optimism because both things can help a person view their lives in a positive way. They can expand a person's thoughts by helping them to things differently from different perspectives. This will cause them to be optimistic in situations because they will be able to make a positive outcome. It is also said that being involved is good for a person's health. Helping people through volunteering and mentoring can lead to positive things. Once it is seen how great helping can be that can encourage more people to help another person. The experience overall leaves a positive impact on their lives.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore "optimism", the characteristics of an optimistic person, and the relationship to the mentoring experience. The study will also see if those optimistic people are more likely to engage in helping others through volunteering and mentoring.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study was to see if the involvement in volunteering or mentoring will cause a person to be more optimistic than those who weren't involved.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The review of literature will define and conceptualize “optimism” and particularly in regard to those characteristics that may be present in an “optimistic” person. Next, the definition of mentoring and the different styles of mentoring will be discussed. A comparison of the positives and negatives aspect about mentoring will be examined. Following a discussion of the effects of mentoring have on individuals, the relationship between the mentoring experience and learn optimism will be examined.

Definition of Optimism

Optimism is being able to look at everything in your life going positively and to believe in succeeding in your goals (Soluk, 2010). It gives people the advantage of looking at the bright side and having hope in tough situations. Also, optimism may promote happiness in your life. Carver, Scheier and Segerstrom (2010) found that “Higher levels of optimism have been related prospectively to better subjective well-being in times of adversity or difficulty” (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010, p. 879). Optimism appears to be based on a person’s expectancies of life.

Life expectancies and how to measure them

Optimism is grounded upon the thought that many people have about the expectations of life. “This links ideas to a long history of expectancy-value models of motivation and expectancy- value theories assume that behavior reflects the pursuit of goals in life” (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010, p. 880). Overall, the more important a goal is to a person the more the greater the value (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Carver &

Scheier, 1998; Higgins, 2006). Confidence appears to be the key to one's life expectations that enables an individual to set realistic goals and practice learning how to adopt alternative goals to replace those goals that cannot be met (Carver & Scheier 2003; Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, & Schulz, 2003).

Researchers have developed way to help measure generalized expectancies (Carver & Schier, 1992; Peterson and Seligman (1984). First, Carver and Scheier (1992), measured generalized life expectancies by directly asking people what they expect the outcomes of their lives to be (Carver & Scheier, 1992). The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) requires respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement through a set of statements such as "I hardly ever expect things to go my way" and "I rarely count on good things happening to me". The test measures a person's life orientation through regular- keyed items that measure the construct and reverse-keyed items that measure the absence of construct. The scores for the pessimistic questions answers are reversed scored and added to the optimistic question answers to come up with a sum predicting how an optimistic or pessimistic a person is (Kam & Meyer, 2011). Although this is the most common way of measuring optimism, other researchers (Peterson & Seligman, 1984) discovered an alternative way.

Peterson and Seligman (1984) generalized expectancies within the context of the person's past experiences. Peterson and Seligman (1984) believed if current failures are seen as a reflection of a person's past failures then more failure is expected, "because the cause (which is relatively permanent) is likely to remain in force" (Peterson & Seligman, 1984, p.880) . This would cause people to have attitudes in the future stemming from past disappointments, which were seen as a reflection to unbalanced situations, this would

mean that the source of the problem would no longer be in existence. Along with this motive, some people evaluate optimism and pessimism as attributing to the foundation of the events that occur, which eventually leads to expectancies (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). If a person only knew what it meant to fail then they would not expect anything different but to fail. When people have failing expectancies for their life and situations, they are usually known as a pessimist.

Pessimism

Pessimism is not being able to see the positive in all aspects of life but instead seeing things negatively and anticipating horrible outcomes. A pessimist is a person who displays negative thoughts and expectancies of negative outcomes in life. Kam and Meyer (2012) found in their study using the Life Orientation Test Revised that pessimism correlated with neuroticism, which is related to jealousy, moodiness, anxiety and envy (Kam & Meyer, 2012). Additionally, Clarke and Edmond (2002), further broke down the concept into different types, ineffective and effective pessimism. An ineffective pessimist believes everything in their life will go bad but will only focus on the problem and not think of any potential solutions and an effective pessimist believes that everything in their life will go bad but somehow they think of ways to prepare with potential solutions (Clarke & Edmond, 2002). An effective pessimist has back up plans to keep them positive. Although a person is considered pessimistic they may still have something that keeps them a little positive. That shows that most people are optimistic or has some optimistic tendencies, but at different degrees (Segerstrom, 2006).

People who have Optimism

Being optimistic is being hopeful and confident about your life and future.

Optimists have the tendency to make lemonade out of lemons and usually will look at their glass as half full (Eisold, 2012). Optimists tend to have a good idea of what they want in life and how to handle all types of situations that come their way. Lerner, Brittain and Fay (2007) says all people have strengths, such as the capability to change their behaviors, to develop new cognitive abilities, promote different interests, acquire new behavioral skills and establish new social relationships (Lerner, Brittain, & Fay, 2007). With that being said, optimists have a little more strength than the average person because most optimists have characteristics of the helping behaviors, which include doing things like volunteering and mentoring which makes them more open and available to others. The reason an optimists can do these types of things is because “they are more likely to see adversity as a challenge, transform problems into opportunities, put in the hours to refine skills, persevere in finding solutions to difficult problems, maintain confidence, rebound quickly after setbacks and persist” (Winter, 1999, p. 31). Having qualities like that gives optimists the abilities to make themselves available to help others, in which a lot of optimistic people get involved in volunteering or mentoring.

Volunteering and Mentoring

Volunteering is one way that people give back to others for a good cause or even to gain their own personal growth, but there may be other reasons why people volunteer. For instance, one may volunteer to improve their understanding of oneself or to boost one’s self esteem, to be able to gain new friendships as well as new experiences, to help others that may be less fortunate than themselves or to have some kind of impact on

another person's life. Showing concern for others is usually a characteristic of those who volunteer (Anderson & Moore, 1978). The opportunities that volunteering offers is the expression of a person's values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998). It involves the opportunity for new learning experiences, the chance to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities and reflects on motivations focused on relationships with others (Clary et al., 1998). Most volunteers also become mentors or are mentoring while volunteering.

Mentoring is another way people choose to help others. According to Webster's online Dictionary (Mentoring, 2014) a mentor is "the act of someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person". Mentoring includes a process, an active relationship, a type of helping, a teaching-learning experience and reflective practices (Roberts, 2000). Mentoring can be organized or formal with volunteers or part time workers who are paired with people for a period of time (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009). It is the relationship between two individuals who share goals of professional and personal development where the mentor shares knowledge, experience and advice with the mentee (Mentoring, 2012). The mentee is the person that is receiving the help. Surprisingly, there are "44 million American adults who are not currently mentoring a young person but would seriously consider it" (Mentoring.org, 2006). According to Beam, Chen, & Greenberger (2002) and Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro (2002) say, most of the American youth report having a meaningful relationship with a non-parental adult. The researchers conducted a survey amongst students that have meaningful relationships with non-parental adults that they depend on in the time of need and are respectable role models and they discovered

that minors that are involved with a very important non-parental adult were less likely to engage in negative behavior, regardless of the conduct of their peers or members of their family (Beam, Chen & Greenberger, 2002).

Most people who are mentors for these programs are college students who have gone through a mentoring program at some point in their lives. “96% of mentors recommend mentoring to others” (Mentoring.org, 2006, p. 2). The reason that mentors would recommend mentoring to others is because they themselves have been through mentoring programs and they see how much it has shaped them into who they are today.

Different types of Mentoring

There are a number of different ways in which mentoring can be implemented. A person can be mentored in almost anything they do. It all depends on how the person takes the information learned and how they apply it. It is all about building a relationship. Mentoring comes in different forms such as individual, peer and group.

Individual Mentoring

Individual mentoring is also known as one on one mentoring, which allows a better understanding in the relationship due to all of the attention being focused on the one person. Swatzell (2010) found that the frequencies of one on one mentor/ mentee relationships with 68 youth ranging from fourth to eighth grade displayed that mentoring resulted in the children having increased connectedness. For example a tutoring session can be used as one on one mentoring session because it allows for a student to receive attention from the tutor and can build a relationship between the two. It gives the opportunity to for guidance not only in the class but in other areas too.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is between two colleagues at the same level where one is helping the other or both helping each other in areas of need. This type of mentoring can be the most comforting because the persons involved will look at each other as friends or colleagues with similar experiences. . Ruane (2013) found that peer mentoring provided meaningful interactions for individuals involved in the activity. This can be seen in schools where teachers assign students in buddy systems and working toward helping partners in class. Lastly, group mentoring is mentoring with one mentor and several mentees.

Group Mentoring

Mentoring in a group brings diversity to the mentoring network (Goodyear, 2006). The most popular form of group mentoring is illustrated in sports, as seen in the relationships between teammates or coaching staff. While participating in sports, a person receives feedback on their performance from teammates and/or coaches. Feedback can either reinforcing of good performance or corrective of mistakes. . Also, often coaches usually make themselves available outside of practice to be of assistance to their team. There are so many programs that provide individual, peer or group mentoring available and have plenty of people who work as mentors. According to Grossman and Rhodes (2002), currently there are about five million American youth are involved in mentoring programs (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Programs such as Boys and Girls Club of America, C.H.A.M.P, and Big Brother Big Sister are implemented specifically for mentoring.

Mentoring Programs

The Boys and Girls club asserts “their club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence” (Boys and Girls club, 2006). The program mainly focuses on developing social skills through six areas: character and leadership development, health and life skills programs, education and career development, arts programming, sports, fitness, and recreation, and specialized initiatives (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010). Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, and Ferrari (2003) examined the different outcome between low, moderate and high attendees found mentees who attended the club more often had higher academic achievement, stronger positive attitudes toward school (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003).

C.H.A.M.P stands for Creating Higher Aspirations Motivation Program (CHAMP/GearUp, n.d). It is a program that is for students in middle school through high school. The program is hosted seven days a week and is also offered through winter and summer breaks. The students are paired with college students who basically help them with homework, any problems that they are facing and just being a person there to talk to about whatever may be going on.

Another well-known mentoring program is Big Brother Big Sister. They establish and support the relationships between adult mentors and children in a community setting. The program’s name describes how the relationships are formed. Basically, mentors are carefully screened and then trained. Once they are trained they are then paired with a student who is the perfect match for them and they act as a big brother or sister. The relationships are associated with positive child outcomes that include improved mental

health and social well-being (De Wit, Lipman, Manzano-Munguia, Bisanz, Graham, Offord, O'Neill, Pepler, & Shaver, 2007; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Sale, Bellamy, Springer, & Wang, 2008).

A study done by Grossman and Tierney (1998) with youth between the ages 10-16 who participated in the Big Brother Big Sister, found that the youth were less likely to have started using drugs and alcohol, felt more competent about doing school work, attended school more, got better grades, and had better relationships with their parents and peers than they would have had if they did not participate in the program. The study also found that the way the Big Brother Big Sister program operates has a positive effect on youth, due to the matches provided and their relationships (Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

Mentor/Mentee Experience and Benefits

Through mentoring there are two different perspectives that can come from the mentoring experience, the mentee's perspective and the mentor's perspective (Cohen, Cowin & Cichanowski, 2012). The people involved in the mentoring session all have their own experience in which it may be beneficial or not. Most of the experiences happen to be beneficial to the mentee because of the amount of information that is learned during the session. Both the mentor and mentee working together will lead to a great experience. According to 4-H (2006) "a world in which youth and adults learn, grow and work together as catalysts for positive change" (4-H USA website, 2006). Also, mentoring comes with a lot of great benefits for both the mentee and the mentor. It can improve leadership and communication skills, make new ways of thinking, advance a career and help to gain a great sense of personal satisfaction (Mind Tools, 2012).

During a mentoring session a mentee will experience having a warm and friendly environment, being accepted, freeness to express feelings, reflection, being respected, having guidance not being directed, and shown awareness of their role in the relationship that is gradually built (Axline, 1989). A mentee will gain most of the benefits because they are learning everything from a person who already has the qualities they want. They will gain valuable advice, develop their knowledge and skills, improvement of their communication skills, learn new perspectives, build networks and advance perspective careers (Mentoring, 2012). These benefits will continue to impact the mentee long after the session is over (Lockwood, Evans & Carr, 2007). That will leave an everlasting feeling of accomplishment for the mentor.

During the mentoring session a mentor may experience helping someone in need, satisfaction, renewal and built relationships. Each mentoring experience is different each time for a mentor because each mentee is different and will give off different responses. Once a mentor has worked with all of the different types of mentees, this will help them to build self-confidence, enhanced awareness of their own strengths, improved managerial skills and performance (McCorkel-Clinard & Ariav, 1998). For a while studies have only been done on the benefits of the mentee, but recently some were done on benefits of the mentor (Ghosh & Reio, 2013). A mentor can benefit from the experience by “gaining constructive feedback on their mentoring, experiencing peer supervision, gaining curriculum management expertise and learning how to encourage critical reflection in mentoring” (Andrews, 1987). Allen, Eby and Lentz (2006) study found that there was significance between mentoring and promotion and salary (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).

Mentoring and Learned Optimism

Mentoring can leave a person feeling good about themselves, which is known as positive psychology. It is when a person does something good such as mentoring and helping that makes them have positive feelings about themselves knowing that they had the chance to make a difference. Positive psychology is associated with happiness, hope, and optimism, fulfillment, positive relationships and what makes life worth living (Linley, Joseph, Harrington & Wood, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Normally when a person has positive thoughts due to positive psychology, this can cause them to be very optimistic helping them to understand the bright side to everything. This is considered learned optimism because they understand what helps them to stay positive.

A mentor helps the mentee to believe in themselves and build their confidence, their positive approach towards different situations in life help them to become better understanding and absolutely positive at that very instant, which causes the mentor to become optimistic. No matter what the situation is mentors always encourage the mentee to do their absolute best and make them believe that the outcome will turn out good, just the way an optimist would. Mentors and optimist have a few things in common, they both have a positive and progressive way of thinking, they both find opportunities in difficult situations and they both inspire others to do positive things. An optimist foresees and expects the best to happen; *“The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”* (Edberg, 2011)

Chapter 3

Methodology

Subjects

The survey was introduced to the Rowan Subject Pool through the SONA Network to help conduct this study. The subjects included 80 male and female student participants between the ages of 18-24. This survey was self selected by all participants and was completely voluntary, anyone that did not want to participate did not have to in which there were no penalties held against them. Those students that did participate did receive credit for doing so from their professors. The Rowan subject Pool was used not only because they are college students, but also because they can consent for themselves and they most likely have been apart of a mentoring experience that can benefit this study. Also college students go through some rough times in school and that is where the optimism would show up the most if they have it. Anyone that was under the age of 18 and who is not a current student at Rowan University was ineligible to participate in the survey. The following Figure 1 shows the number of male and female students who participated in the survey.



Figure 1. The number of male and female participants.

Variables

The survey consist of 5 questions which were made up to get demographic information and to see if the participant has been involved in mentoring or volunteering activities. This will allow the researcher to have a better understanding of whether or not the participants had an opportunity to learn optimism. Along with that short survey the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) was also used to conduct the study. The LOT-R has been used in numerous studies done to measure optimism in people. The scale was made to test whether a person is optimistic and their life expectancies. The test was revised by Scheier, Carver and Bridges in 1994. The scale consists of ten questions that the person will agree or disagree or have a neutral response. There are question like “In uncertain times, I usually expect the best”, “I enjoy my friends a lot” and “Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad”. There are three fillers throughout the test so that it can distract the participant from the obvious optimistic and pessimistic questions. The response scores were on a likert scale, which

measures a person's attitude directly. The numerical scale that corresponds with the responses are (1) Disagree a lot, (2) Disagree a little, (3) Neither agree or disagree, (4) Agree a little and (5) Agree a lot. Whereas a score of 2 or lower means that the person has a disagreement with the statement. If there is a score of 3 the person is in between feeling neutral about the statement. Lastly if the score is 4 or higher the person is in agreement with the statement. On the likert scale the statements dealing with negative aspects in life expectancies were reverse scored so that there is not only an agreement but also a positive perception of life expectancies. The scale has been known to be valid and reliable on count of all the studies that have used the scale to determine if a person is more optimistic or pessimistic about their life.

Procedure

The principal researcher developed the first part of the survey and Michael Scheier, Charles Carver and Michael Bridges developed the second portion. In order to use the second portion of the survey permission had to be granted from the developers and the American Psychological Association. After being approved by IRB the survey was uploaded onto the SONA network and was administered through the online network. As the subjects signed up they were able to view the Alternate Informed Consent portions of the process. This portion informed the participants of what the study was being done for, the researchers contact information and to make them aware that they were not being forced to take the survey. Once the surveys were completed, their responses were sent directly to the researcher through the SONA Network. After receiving all of the material from the participants the information was then examined, combined and analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Statistical Analysis

In the research the hypothesis was that if people were involved in some type of mentoring then they have more optimism than those who were not involved in mentoring. The data examined in SPSS was analyzed in a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The first test ran was to compare participants who were mentors and determine if the groups differed significantly in their levels of optimism. The second test ran was to determine if those who were mentees were significantly different in their levels of optimism. Lastly, the third test ran was to determine if those who indicated mentoring involvement as a positive impact on life were significantly different in their levels of optimism.

Chapter 4

Results

Descriptive Analysis: Sample Population

Descriptive statistic procedures were conducted on the entire body of survey responses. These results are an important indicator of the overall representation of the survey sample. The results in Table 1 are descriptive statistics pertaining to the entire body of survey participants and their corresponding response scores to the most pertinent survey items. To summarize, the mean Mentor Score among the survey sample is 21.1 (SD = 3.47). The mean of the Mentee Score is 19.9 (SD = 4.30). The mean of those who Volunteer is 20.1 (SD = 4.41) The mean Indicated above Involvement as Positive Impact on Life Score is 20.1 (SD = 4.58).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Population Optimism Scores

Participant Identifier	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Mentor	27	21.1	3.47	14.00	30.00
Mentee	35	19.9	4.30	11.00	30.00
Volunteer	68	20.1	4.41	7.00	30.00
Indicated above Involvement a Positive Impact on Life	71	20.1	4.58	7.00	30.00

Note. Scores range from 1.00 to 5.00; higher scores indicate participants' greater degree of agreement with positive statements regarding extracurricular programming involvement.

Analyses Investigating Optimism in Mentors

The statistical process was conducted to investigate participants who identified themselves as a mentor and if their levels of optimism were higher than those who did not

identify as a mentor. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to assess whether a Mentor's Score varies significantly according to a participant's indicated level of Optimism. The findings were not significant, $F(1,79) = 2.682$, $p = 1.06$.

Analyses Investigating Optimism in Mentees

The statistical process was conducted to investigate participants who identified themselves as a mentee and if their levels of optimism were higher than those who did not identify as a mentee. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to assess whether a Mentee's Score varies significantly according to a participant's indicated level of Optimism. The findings were not significant, $F(1,79) = .001$, $p = .974$.

Analyses Investigating Optimism in Volunteers

The statistical process was conducted to investigate participants who identified themselves as volunteers and if their levels of optimism were higher than those who did not identify as a volunteer. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to assess whether a Volunteer's Score varies significantly according to a participant's indicated level of Optimism. The findings were not significant, $F(1,78) = 1.463$, $p = .230$.

Analyses Investigating Optimism in Indicated Involvement as Positive Impact on Life

The statistical process was conducted to investigate participants who indicated involvement as a positive impact on life and if their levels of optimism

were higher than those who did not indicate involvement as a positive impact on life. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to assess whether a Indicated Involvement as a Positive Impact on Life's Score varies significantly according to a participant's indicated level of Optimism. The findings were not significant, $F(1,75) = .006$, $p = .938$.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The results showed that those who were involved in the mentoring experience had no significantly higher amount of optimism than those who were not involved in the mentoring experience. So therefore it is proven that mentoring has very little impact on the amount of optimism a person can have throughout a lifetime. The lack of significance between any type of involvement in mentoring and optimism could have been a result of people handling situations as they come. It could mean that optimism is not something that everyone learns, but it is something that comes from within.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the current research involves the sample population. The Rowan psychology subject pool was used in the study, which caused a few issues. The first issue is that all the students are psychology students. So they most likely have some background on positive psychology and learned optimism. With having learned that information from class may have influenced their answers on the Life Orientation Test. Also being a psychology student they may have heard all about the Life Orientation Test and how some questions are just fillers to distract the participant. Another issue with the sample population is that they were all in the same age range 18-24. This kept the answers to the questions very similar because people of the same age range are usually going through some of the same things and have the same mindset that can influence what they choose as their answers. The last issue would be is that the sample population

was very small. There were eighty people in total, which wouldn't be enough to get noticeably significant results.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study might be improved by expanding the size and the representativeness of the sample. By doing so there would be a variety of backgrounds, which would not only be limited to psychology majors. The different backgrounds may have influenced perceptions of optimism as well as expanding the range of life experiences. Expansion of the age range would also enhance the research rather than limiting the experiences to those that may be encountered by college students. Also allowing the survey to be distributed for a longer amount of time giving the opportunity for more people to participate.

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