Can We Determine Our Own Happiness? Core Self-Evaluation as Related to Job and Relationship Satisfaction
By Jenny Fendos

Abstract

College is a double-edged sword in that it is often seen as a time of newfound freedom and fun, but also described as a core source of stress. Considerable research suggests that one's tolerance to stress is directly related to personality factors that determine general life satisfaction. However, evidence suggests core self-evaluation, a personality factor consisting of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, is linked to not just general life satisfaction, but specific types of life satisfaction, such as one's job. This study utilizes a survey to examine the relationship between core self-evaluation and college satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping skills among 161 college students. I find statistical significance in between all three relationships - core self-evaluation being positively related to job and relationship satisfaction and coping skills – and discuss the possible reasons behind why. These findings not only help to shed light on a new personality variable that can determine satisfaction, but also offer insight into how internal factors can manifest in one's everyday life.

Keywords: Core self-evaluation, job satisfaction, college, relationship satisfaction, stress tolerance, coping skills

1. INTRODUCTION

While human resource experts often try to make a job seem as competitive and fulfilling as possible, what traits they advertise vary. Some believe Maslow's Hierarchy to be reflective of a job role, advertising security and opportunity for upward mobility. Others are of the opinion that the prime motivator is financial and reflects the competitive nature and possible opportunities a role presents. However, there is a common consensus that certain jobs are a better fit for certain types of individuals - in other words, people with specific personalities and character traits will perform better and have greater job satisfaction in specific roles.

A significant portion of job satisfaction research has focused on topics such as organizational roles, Big 5 personality traits, and culture. However, Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) identified four dispositional factors, self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability/low neuroticism, known together as "core self-evaluations," which were defined as "fundamental assessments that people make about their worthiness, competence, and capabilities" (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005, p. 257). Previous analyses have shown that these four factors share much in common – thus, it is not surprising that these highly interrelated traits have been shown to have an average correlation of .64, which is equal to the correlations among similar measures of Big Five traits (Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoreson, 2002). However, while core self-evaluations have been related to how satisfied with life people were in general, they have been linked to and utilized as explanatory variables for both job satisfaction and job performance more (Judge et al., 2002; Judge et al., 2003; Lemelle & Scielzo, 2012).

Core self-evaluations are also a medium in which one can learn more about one's individual relationship satisfaction. While core self-evaluation has previously been mostly used in

the context of job satisfaction and job performance, it has also been used in the context of interpersonal relationships and family enrichment (Scott & Judge, 2009; Haines, Harvey, Durand, & Marchand, 2013). Individuals scoring high in core self-evaluation were found to be more effective when dealing with difficult events and were better able to perceive an unsupportive work environment as enriching their family role than individuals low in core self-evaluation (Haines et al. 2013). Additionally, individuals scoring high in core self-evaluation were more likely to interact with others positively, exhibit social skills, and be friendlier, all of which contribute to greater relationship success and satisfaction (Scott & Judge, 2009).

Everyday stress, individual stress, and relationship role stress are core parts of relationship satisfaction and stability (Ruffiex, Nussbeck, & Bodenmann, 2014). In the four dimensions of core self-evaluation, stress tolerances can be a differentiating factor in relationship success. For example, people with lower self-esteem report feeling less satisfied with their relationships than people with higher self-esteem (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). Individuals with lower self-esteem tend to have perceptual biases of lower self-worth combined with higher protective instincts, making them hypervigilant to potential rejection (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). As a result, small stressors seem to accumulate more quickly for them than for someone with high self-esteem, thus increasing the overall stress. Additionally, individuals with low self-efficacy can be less efficient when dealing with problems and more likely to give up (Judge et al., 2002). This is similar to individuals with an external locus of control, who feel as if their problems are controlled by external events and out of their control (Judge et al., 2002). They are less likely to cope with stress and show fewer levels of health and well-being in comparison to individuals with an internal locus of control (Kahn and Boyosiere, 1992). Both of these factors exacerbate a cycle of learned helplessness, where individuals feel like they cannot overcome challenges and instead feel

overwhelmed (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). According to Eysenck's (1967) theory of personality, neuroticism is associated with increased reactivity and lower tolerance to stressors. Additionally, neuroticism is inversely associated with oneself and one's partner-relationship satisfaction, specifically as it is related to intra- and interpersonal strain (Hampson, 2012; Renshaw, Blais, & Smith, 2010). These four factors not only make up one's core self-evaluation, then, but also better illustrate how core self-evaluation could impact stress tolerances and relationship satisfaction.

An individual's core beliefs about one's self, abilities, and control over outcomes also represent previous experience with stressors and the ability to function successfully with challenges. Thus, core self-evaluations help to shed light on how an individual reacts to stressful life events and, subsequently, their coping methods. Individuals scoring high in core self-evaluation tend to have greater belief in their competencies and control and can overcome dealing with challenges actively, thus directly addressing the issue (Li, Guan, Chang, & Zhang, 2014). However, individuals scoring lower in core self-evaluations deal with challenges passively, meaning their problems persist, which in turn continue to further remind them of their incompetencies (Li, Guan, Chang, & Zhang, 2014). Both of these coping methods help to explain why exposure to similar stressors causes different outcomes and satisfaction for some individuals, but not others (Pejuskovic, Lecic-Tosevski, Priebe, & Toskovic, 2011).

Today, the college environment is like a highly stressful job environment, spilling over into one's personal life. 75-80% of college students are moderately stressed, and 10-12% are severely stressed, with stress being particularly salient when considering academic achievement (Coccia & Darling, 2013). 25% of students drop out of their first year and only 50% finish their undergraduate degree by the six-year mark (Coccia & Darling, 2013). Both of these statistics represent the collegiate form of job satisfaction and job burnout. In fact, according to Lian, Sun, Ji, Li, and Peng

(2013), academic satisfaction and burnout are an extension of job satisfaction and burnout in education. Coccia and Darling (2013) found that spillover effects also occurred with college stress affecting life satisfaction. In fact, relationship formation and maintenance are foundational to the happiness and satisfaction of college students (Coccia & Darling, 2013).

This thesis contributes to original research by examining the relationships among core self-evaluation and college satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping methods among college students. Core self-evaluation has been noted to be a significant influence on goal setting, task performance, interpersonal relationships, salary, and affective commitment, all of which make it a stable predictor of job satisfaction and job performance. Additionally, through its relation to the underlying personality factors of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability and, in turn, relevance to stress tolerances, core self-evaluation has also been linked to relationship satisfaction and coping methods. However, all of the subjects in these studies were working adults. This is a notable discrepancy, as recent college graduates are a considerable segment of the workforce. Through this thesis, core self-evaluation can be better understood among college students and even young adults who are entering the workforce.

This thesis consists of six separate sections, including this introduction, Section 1. In Section 2, there is a literature review that discusses core self-evaluation as related to job satisfaction, coping methods, and core self-evaluation as related to relationship satisfaction. In Section 3, the methodology utilized is discussed. In Section 4, the results of the study are reported. In Section 5, the analysis of the results and implications for future research are discussed. Finally, in Section 6, conclusions are discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a conceptual basis for my research, I review three pillars of literature as related to core self-evaluation and college students: job satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping methods. The first pillar includes the existing literature on job satisfaction relevant to core self-evaluation that can be used in the context of bettering how core self-evaluation manifests in job satisfaction, how college satisfaction is similar to job satisfaction, and what differences it may have with a college population. Next, I analyze core self-evaluation from an interpersonal context in terms of stress spillover, core resource theory, and role conflict and how they affect relationship satisfaction. Lastly, I tie in both college and relationship satisfaction as they are related to core self-evaluation and coping methods.

2.1 Core Self-Evaluation and Job Satisfaction

While the four personality factors of core self-evaluation – self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability – affect individuals in unique ways, they are all interrelated in developing individuals' fundamental views of themselves. Accordingly, extending such projections onto something as prolonged and effort-involved as a job only makes sense. Self-esteem represents the overall perception and value individuals have of themselves and, thus, is said to be the most fundamental trait of core self-evaluation (Judge, Locke, 2003). Interestingly, Judge (1997) described neuroticism as "the opposite of self-esteem" and similar to low self-esteem in the sense that less emotionally stable individuals have a greater propensity to become emotionally upset in difficult situations. Therefore, it is not surprising that individuals with low self-esteem are particularly susceptible to perceiving resource deficits such as conflict, lack of organizational fit, and feelings of isolation with peers, all of which become amplified when experiencing job stress (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Additionally, self-efficacy has been found to be

a subcomponent of self-esteem and critical in regards to coping methods when faced with stress; high self-efficacy acts as a stable influence when encountering perceived threats, which in turn helps to preserve a sense of internal locus of control. Overall, high core self-evaluation mitigates negative affectivity, reduced performance on tasks, and attributing failure internally, which in turn insulates against decreased job satisfaction (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Lemelle & Scielzo, 2012). As a result, individuals' satisfaction with their perceived value in the organization and relative alignment with individual goals directly affect motivation, engagement, and involvement with not just everyday fits, but also in projected future fits, both of which factor into job satisfaction (Bono et al., 2013).

A college environment possesses the stressors that jobs have and, thus, individuals will have varying levels of college satisfaction as well. First, college students often put in many hours of studying each week on top of their normal class time. The amount of commitment and hours required only increases as tests near, if there is on-campus involvement, or due to a particularly hard class. According to Coccia and Darling (2012), there is a negative relationship between hours studied and college satisfaction. This is similar to many other studies in the work stress field, which found that the number of hours at work increased perceptions of stress, which in turn decreased job satisfaction (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013). Additionally, college students often report social stressors to be highly demanding; this is similar to studies that have found manager-employee conflicts and employee-employee conflicts lead to low satisfaction and, eventually, high turnover (Aguinis, 2013; Coccia & Darling, 2012)

However, college students have some different personality dynamics than compared to working adults with established careers. First, college students often have not experienced too much stress, so they are more prone to feeling overwhelmed (Coccia & Darling, 2012). This is

reflected by their lower scores in self-efficacy and locus of control than compared to adults (Seiffge-Krenke, 2011). Both the lower self-efficacy and lack of control mean that young adults have less self-esteem when faced with new adversity and thus experience greater stress (Moksnes, Moljord, Espnes, & Byrne, 2010). In fact, this greater perceived stress from increased academic or professional demands and the inability to manage the stress as well leads to the 20-30 year old segment having the lowest job satisfaction when compared to any other age group (Clark, 1997).

2.2 Core self-evaluation and Relationship Satisfaction

Core self-evaluation plays a role in determining relationship satisfaction, largely through how resilient one is to stress. According to Core Resource Theory, people invest a significant amount of emotional capital when building relationships. Positive returns on social interactions give people a sense of efficacy, esteem and control, while negative returns deplete their social capital (Harris, Harvey & Kacmar, 2009). If enough negative interactions accumulate, emotional capital will be depleted, stress tolerances will be lowered, and relationship satisfaction will decrease. This aligns with Boxall and Macky's (2014) finding that greater work stress is associated with lower satisfaction with life events.

Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, and Koch's (2013) study also found that more positive events and positive thought buffering helped with detaching from stress in relationships and in reducing stress-to-relationship conflicts. Disagreement and stress often create a heightened sense of self and a lowered sense of commonality, thus creating distance between the couple, more conflict, and greater chance of relationship dissolution (Lavee and Ben-Ari; Boxall & Macky, 2014). This aspect of spillover is critical, as it shows how stress can negatively impact oneself first then spread to one's relationships.

Relationship satisfaction is also heavily weighted on relationship role conflict (Bono et al., 2013). Bolino and Turnley (2005) state that according to role theory, "people generally seek to behave in ways that are consistent with the way their roles are defined." However, individuals can encounter role conflict as they find it increasingly difficult to accomplish each of their roles with fewer resources or less compatibility among roles. Moreover, individuals low in core self-evaluation will experience greater distress with role conflict than someone high in core self-evaluation. This is due to their low self-esteem and thus perceived lack of value of themselves; so, role conflict usually requires one to change. However, someone with low self-esteem will feel as if their inadequacy prompted this change, thus triggering discomfort (Haines et al., 2013).

2.3 Coping Methods & Implications

Whether it is college, work, or a relationship, there will always be conflicts or challenges that arise. However, just like how individuals with higher levels of core self-evaluation would be more likely to perceive an environment positively (and on the contrary, individuals with low CSE perceive an environment negatively), core self-evaluation can help to determine the coping methods that an individual would be more likely to use (Chang et al., 2012).

Individuals with higher self-esteem choose to engage in more problem-solving coping than avoidance coping, as they believe their efforts will be met with success (Judge et al., 2002). Because of problem-solving coping skills, these individuals not only perceive themselves as managing conflict well, they also continuously seek new situations to challenge themselves. In fact, they tend to exhibit more goal setting behaviors, which not only help improve their life situations, but also help them have a more positive outlook (Judge et al., 2002). Moreover, those ranking high with problem-solving coping skills are less likely to encounter the same stressor, as they have already previously "solved it," which in turn results in lower levels of perceived strain

(Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Additionally, such individuals are less likely to experience negative affectivity or perceive themselves as losing control over situations or resources, thus making them feel as if they have greater control over their environments (Judge & Bono, 2001). As a result, individuals with problem-solving coping skills not only manage conflict better, but are also better at compartmentalizing it so it does not affect other parts of their lives (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Scott, 2009).

On the contrary, however, low self-esteem individuals have less hope regarding their problems; they feel as if there is no point in working on resolving the issue, since they are "doomed to fail" (Judge et al., 2002). As a result, they are more likely to detach from their problems and practice avoidance coping. Therefore, employees that practice avoidance coping are more likely to bottle up their stress and attempt to avoid it. Additionally, they are more likely to feel greater disagreement and isolation when interacting with someone of a different coping style (Judge et al., 2002). These methods are demanding both internally and externally, as individuals who practice avoidance coping tend to have lower job and interpersonal satisfaction due to the mounting pressure of stressors (Boyar & Mosley, 2007).

3. METHODOLOGY

This section consists of my hypotheses as related to relevant content in the literature review, data collection methods, background of the scales utilized, and how all aspects relate for analysis to my research question about the relationship between core self-evaluation and college students.

3.1 Hypotheses

Self-esteem, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy all have positive correlations with core self-evaluation, while neuroticism is negatively correlated (Judge & Bono, 2001). In fact, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and self-esteem were all positively related to job and

relationship satisfaction, while neuroticism was negatively related. As a result, these personality measures help illustrate how one's core self-evaluation will relate to one's job and relationship satisfaction. I predict the following two hypotheses:

H1: CSE is positively related to college satisfaction.

H2: CSE is positively related to relationship satisfaction.

Individuals with high core self-evaluation have a positive sense of self-worth, which leads to an improved mood when faced with challenges, thus making them feel more in control of their environment and being prone to experiencing fewer stressors. On the other hand, individuals low in core self-evaluation tend to have less emotional stability, which causes greater negative effects and more perceived stressors. Therefore, high core self-evaluation individuals are more likely to adopt approach-oriented coping skills, whereas those with low core self-evaluation will adopt avoidance oriented coping skills (Judge & Scott, 2009). Accordingly, it follows that:

H3: CSE individuals exhibit more problem-solving coping skills.

Lucht found that female employees had lower organizational support, lower professional efficacy, greater work stress, and higher job demands than men, but did not report lower job satisfaction or work-life conflicts. Keogh and Herdenfelt (2002) found that when encountering a stressor, women tend to use more coping strategies, particularly in positive self-statements, problem-solving, and support seeking. This would suggest that women have greater coping skills and thus would be more tolerant to stressors. In fact, this is supported by Lucht (2015), who found that female employees did have lower organizational support, lower professional efficacy, greater work stress, and higher job demands than men, but did not, as a result, report lower job satisfaction or work-life conflicts. Therefore, my fourth and fifth hypotheses are:

H4: Women will score higher for college satisfaction than men.

H5: Women will score higher for relationship satisfaction than men.

As a continuation of spillover effects, Lavee and Ben-Ari (2007) highlighted that as couples become stressed and argue more they eventually become overloaded. Overloading is a term used to describe when an individual struggles to cope with multiple aspects of his/her life, thus aggravating the stress burden overall. However, overloading has a cyclical nature, with couples becoming distant, arguing more, becoming more stressed in other aspects of their lives, and then bringing the stress home with them, only for the process to repeat itself all over again (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2007). My sixth hypothesis is:

H6: Lower college satisfaction is negatively related to relationship satisfaction.

3.2 Procedure

The study comprised 161 participants (86 females and 75 males) who were recruited from MTURK. The ages of the participants ranged from ages 19-42, with a mean of 24.05 years. Participants completed the survey online and received compensation. There were two filtering questions at the beginning of the survey which asked participants "What is your current relationship status?" and "What is the highest level of education you have completed?" If a participant responded that they were "single," "widowed," or "divorced," the survey ended and they were compensated. If not, they were prompted to continue onto the next question; if they answered anything other than "I am currently in college", the survey ended and they were compensated. These mechanisms helped to preserve the desired integrity of the sample of currently enrolled undergraduate students in relationships. The full survey can be found in Appendix A.

3.3 Measures

Core Self-Evaluation

I used the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (Judge et. al, 2003) to measure students' overall core self-evaluations. This scale consists of 12 items, which reflect four personality traits: generalized self-efficacy, self-esteem, neuroticism (conversely emotional stability), and locus of control. Each personality variable had different questions to measure responses. An example of a statement is "My life is determined by my own actions." All responses were given a 1-5 format on a Likert scale, with options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In this study, reliability was 0.873.

College Satisfaction

I used a 5 question job satisfaction scale developed by Brayfield & Rothe (1951) to measure college satisfaction. A five-point Likert scale was used with choices ranging from ''1 = Strongly Agree'' to ''5 = Strongly Disagree.'' An example statement was "Most days I am enthusiastic about college." High scores represented high satisfaction. Although the Brayfield and Rothe Index (1951) was developed 50 years ago, it continues to be used in research investigations, as it is quick, easy to understand, and provides an accurate measure of general job satisfaction. However, reliability in this study was 0.631 and lower than the other scales utilized.

Relationship Satisfaction

The Relationship Assessment Scale is a brief 7item questionnaire designed to test romantic relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998). The scale is unique in that it is worded to suit all types of romantic relationships and not just marital satisfaction. A sample question would be "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" The scores are added and presented as raw scores. The reliability of the scale was high, with an average of .872 across

many studies (Graham, Diebels & Barnow, 2011). The scale reported a mean inter-item correlation of .49 and an alpha of .86 (Hendrick, 1988). In the context of this study, alpha was 0.718. The Relationship Assessment Scale is also effective at predicting what couples will stay together versus those who will separate (91% of those who stay together and 86% of those who separate), another strong indicator of relationship satisfaction.

Coping Skills

The Coping General Self Efficacy (CGSE) Scale by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1979) consists of 10 items that measure a generalized sense of competence. All items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'Not at all true' to 4 = 'Exactly true.' Scores on the GSE were computed by summing all the 10 items, giving a range of 10–40. The higher the score, the greater self-efficacy the respondents possessed. Moreover, as it is well established it is reliable; in samples from 23 countries, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. In this study, reliability was 0.825. Additionally, the scale is suitable for a broad range of applications. It can be taken to predict adaptation after life changes, but it is also suitable as an indicator of quality of life at any point in time.

The survey was designed to take no more than approximately five minutes. This was an intended decision to better appeal to an online population of survey respondents who likely were not interested in longer surveys. Moreover, this lowered the risk of participants becoming bored and randomly clicking the same bubble throughout the whole survey. This risk was mitigated by having two filters. First, participants were asked what their education level was. If they selected "currently in college," they proceeded to the second filter. Next, participants were asked their relationship status. If they were either "married," "engaged," or "in a relationship," they were prompted to take the full survey.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

Using the four scales listed above, I first reverse coded negatively worded questions before summing them up to be utilized in the subsequent measures. I then conducted reliability analyses on the factors of core self-evaluation, college satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping skills to determine whether the scales were valid and should be used in my analyses. Then, I conducted three separate linear regressions to measure the relationships between individual core self-evaluation and the dependent variables of college satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping skills, thus determining support for hypotheses one, two, and three. Afterwards, I conducted two sample t-tests assuming unequal variances for hypotheses four and five, followed by Pearson's correlation coefficient for hypothesis six.

3.5 Appropriateness of Study Design

The intent of the methodology was to analyze the relationships between core self-evaluation and college and relationship satisfaction and coping skills. The scales utilized were all previously utilized in academic literature in a self-report survey fashion, as well as used to measure similar constructs, therefore preserving tested reliability.

Because the researcher needed participants who were both in college and in a relationship, a survey seemed the appropriate method to capture this information. Additionally, because some questions were of a more personal nature (especially in regards to a few questions on the Core self-evaluation scale meant to capture neuroticisms and the relationship satisfaction scale), taking the survey anonymously over the Internet preserves participant comfort. Lastly, posting the survey on MTURK removed the need for convenience sampling within the researcher's social network and led to a more even distribution across genders.

This study was reliant on the assumptions that, for the most part, participants would not randomly click through bubbles and that the scales utilized within the survey would be reliable, as they had all been utilized in previous academic literature. The filtering mechanism at the beginning of the survey was intended to find participants that were in the desired population, thus preserving accuracy and responses. A common problem with MTURK is that people will take surveys just for money, without actually fitting the parameters of the study. In turn, these participants tend to be less involved and are more likely to try to quickly go through the survey by clicking random bubbles. As mentioned before, this risk was mitigated by having two levels of filters – education level and relationship status – to find a better sample, thus increasing the accuracy of the data. Additionally, I assumed the scales to measure the appropriate constructs, as they had been utilized in literature for many years.

While the researcher made key assumptions about the reliability of the scales, there were some limitations that could skew reliability. First, while the researcher believed that key information found about core self-evaluation, job satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping skills could apply to college students, there was a chance that the college demographic would interpret them differently due to lifestyle and experience differences. Moreover, the sample was slightly skewed to be older than the average four-year college student ($M = 24.09$). I originally made the assumption that most college students would be 18 to 22 years old; however, if they are slightly older, that likely means they started later, and have either delayed graduation or been working and going to school part-time. Either way, studies show that starting later, taking longer to finish, and going to school while working all are more stressful than just going to school full-time - this could result in different stress tolerances and thus, different responses (Coccia & Darling, 2012).

4. RESULTS

In order to ensure the reliability of further analyses, this section first focuses on reliability

tests. Then, analyses how hypotheses tests are established.

4.1 Reliability Tests

First, reliability tests were conducted to determine whether certain scales were valid in

measuring a construct. The scales analyzed were core self-evaluation, college satisfaction,

relationship satisfaction, and coping skills. Core self-evaluation, relationship satisfaction, and

coping skills had high validity of over 0.70, but college satisfaction had slightly lower reliability

at 0.63. A correlation matrix and Cronbach's Alpha scales are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

Variable	Core Self-Evaluation	College	Relationship	Coping Skills	Means	Standard Deviation
Core Self-Evaluation	1				30.2375	8.5924
College Satisfaction	0.5918	1			13.5438	3.9998
Relationship Satisfaction	0.2856	0.3301	1		16.8438	5.1512
Coping Skills	0.1794	0.03911	-0.0036	1	37.3375	9.2212

Table 2: Reliability Tests

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
College Satisfaction	0.631	5
Core Self-Evaluation	0.873	12
Relationship Satisfaction	0.718	7
Coping Skills	0.825	10

4.2 Hypotheses Tests

H1: CSE is positively related to college satisfaction.

H2: CSE is positively related to relationship satisfaction.

H3: CSE individuals exhibit more problem-solving coping skills.

Table 3 shows the statistical data points for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

Variable	Axis	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
College	Intercept	5.2127	0.9381	>.001
College	X Variable	0.2755	0.02985	>.001
Relationship	Intercept	11.6665	1.4365	>.001
Relationship	X Variable	0.1712	0.0457	>.001
Coping Skills	Intercept	22.9041	2.0098	>.001
Coping Skills	X Variable	0.1466	0.064	0.0231

In Figure 1, the linear regression shows that core self-evaluation was positively related to college satisfaction (y = 0.2755x + 5.2127, p<.001). However, 35% of variability in college satisfaction stemmed from core self-evaluation, which means that the two had a higher correlation and a "better fit."

Figure 1: Linear Regression for Core Self-Evaluation and College Satisfaction
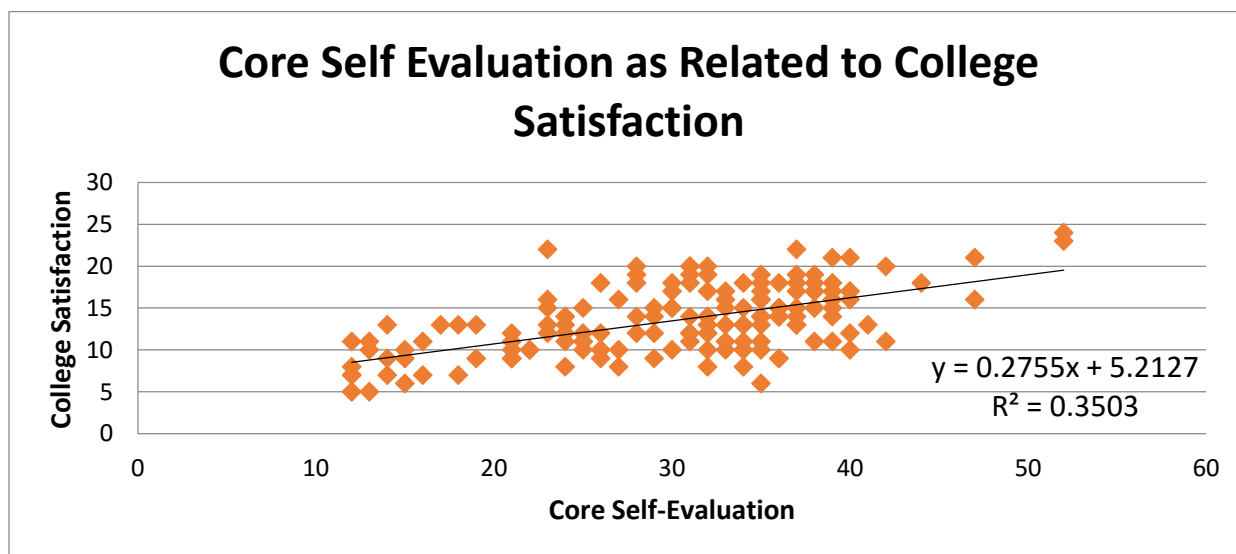
From Figure 2, we can see that there was a positive relationship between core self-evaluation and relationship satisfaction, with y = 0.1712x + 11.667, p<.001. However, R^2 was much lower at .08, with many outliers that ranked lower in core self-evaluation but were high in relationship satisfaction. This could be due to the fact that Judge's Core Self-Evaluation Scale has not traditionally been used to measure relationship satisfaction, even though the four underlying personality factors may help explain an individual's life satisfaction to a degree.

Figure 2: Linear Regression for Core Self-Evaluation and Relationship Satisfaction

Core Self-Evaluation as Related to Relationship Satisfaction

$y = 0.1712x + 11.667$
$R^2 = 0.0816$
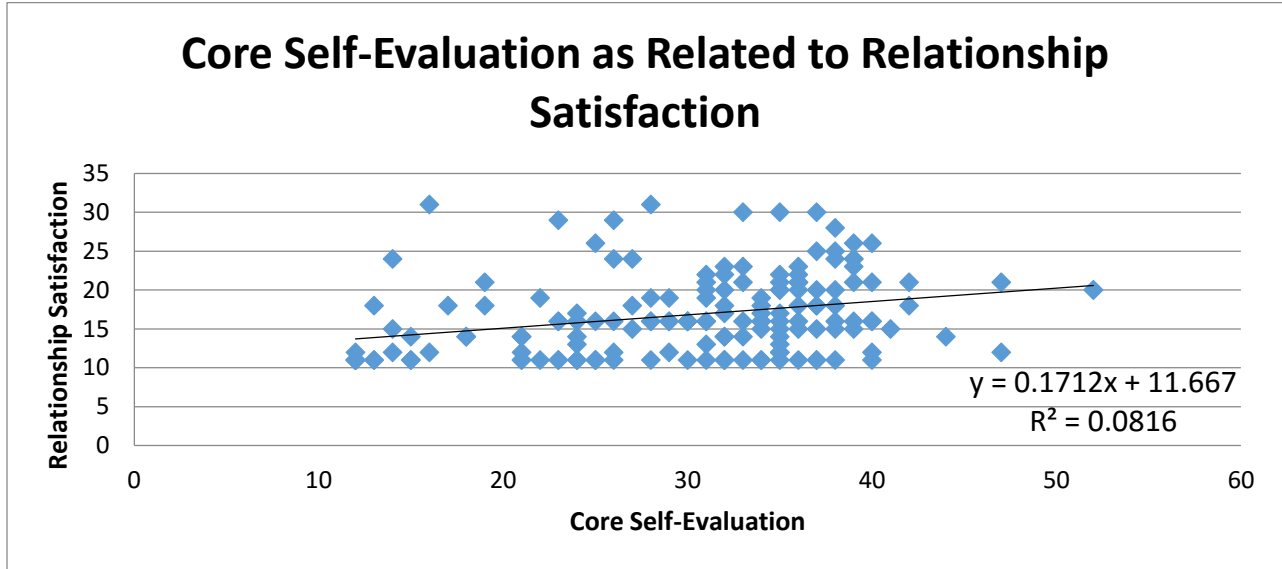
H3: CSE individuals exhibit more problem-solving coping skills.

Next, Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between core self-evaluation and coping skills. The relationship was found to be statistically significant and positive, with $y = 0.1466x + 22.904$, $p<.05$.

Figure 3: Core Self-Evaluation as Related to Coping Skills
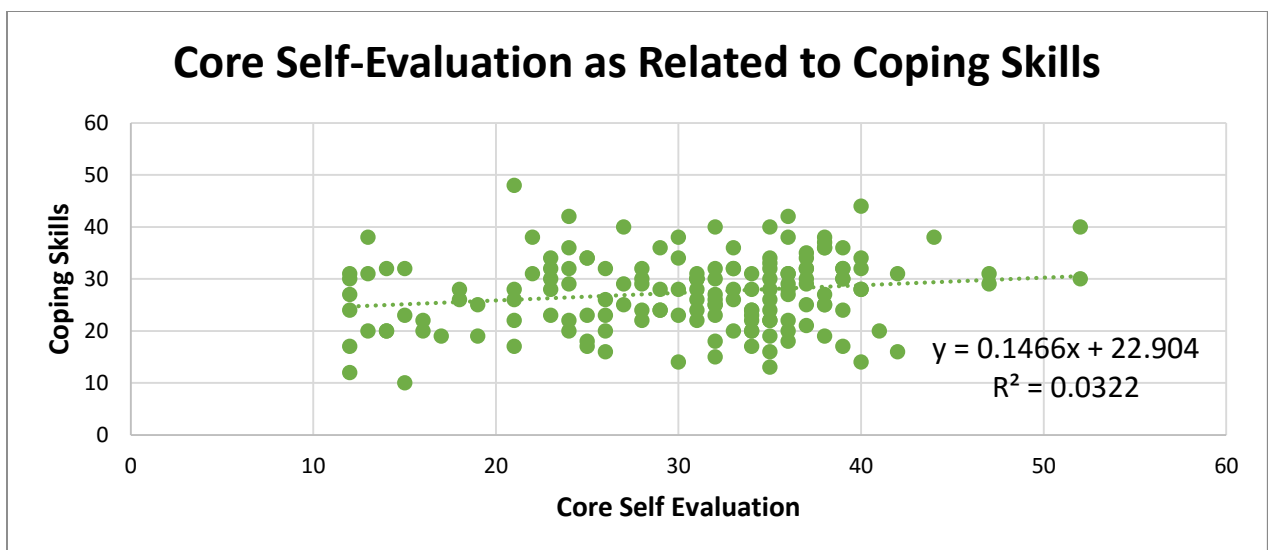
Core Self-Evaluation as Related to Coping Skills

$y = 0.1466x + 22.904$
$R^2 = 0.0322$

H4: Women will score higher for college satisfaction than men.

H5: Women will score higher for relationship satisfaction than men.

Figure 6 details the core results from the two sample t-tests assuming unequal variances for Hypotheses 4 and 5. Women were found to have greater college satisfaction than men, with a (p<.05), thus supporting Hypothesis 4. However, there was no statistically significant difference found between men and women regarding relationship satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Table 4: Two sample t-test results

Measure	Relationship	College
t-stat	0.5141	1.8709
p-value	0.3039	0.0316
Decision	Reject	Do not reject

H6: Lower college satisfaction is negatively related to relationship satisfaction.

The correlation between college satisfaction and relationship satisfaction was r = 0.33, thus supporting Hypothesis 6 that having more (or less) of college satisfaction would result in more (or less) relationship satisfaction.

5. DISCUSSION

Key takeaways

The results of this study have several implications. First, based on support for the first three hypotheses, it can be concluded that there is evidence for relationships between core self-evaluation and college satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and coping skills among college students. In fact, the application of coping skills to relationships was also found - in terms of the spillover effect with college satisfaction transferring over to relationship satisfaction. However,

the grounds for gender differences are unclear; there was only a statistical difference with women being more satisfied with college satisfaction, not relationship satisfaction.

The application of core self-evaluation among the college population is important because it provides a different, but useful context that can help determine not just general life, but also college satisfaction. This is important, as current studies on college student happiness and success largely focus on the personality factors of self-esteem and emotional stability (Coccia & Darling, 2012). This is largely due to the recent increase in attention to student mental health, stress management, and happiness and its effects on college success.

The application of Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) Job Satisfaction Scale to college students only had reliability of 0.631. This was much lower than the reliability of the other scales utilized, which suggests that the scale did not accurately reflect job satisfaction as related college satisfaction. This could be due to personal factors, such as college students' perceptions that they have lower individual self-efficacy and self-esteem in regards to challenging life tasks, such as jobs (Coccia & Darling, 2012). In turn, this could skew the reliability of the Brayfield and Rothe (1951) Job Satisfaction Scale.

The differences among the results for the relationships relative to core self-evaluation can be explored by current literature. For example, for core self-evaluation relative to college satisfaction, R^2 was 0.35, which was in the ballpark of other core self-evaluation and job satisfaction studies in a meta-analysis conducted by Lemelle (2012). However, R^2 for relationship satisfaction was only .08. While there were no direct studies for core self-evaluation as related to relationship satisfaction (only interpersonal factors), this would suggest that core self-evaluation is not as appropriate a construct for relationship satisfaction as it is for employment related concepts. Lastly, R^2 for coping skills was a low .03. This could be due to the fact that I used the

Core General Self-Efficacy Scale; while it is reliable in measuring coping skills, it might not have been appropriate to use it as a scale directly relevant to core self-evaluation. While self-efficacy and self-esteem are both part of core self-evaluation and used as determinants of life and, therefore, job satisfaction, coping skills are likely a small part of satisfaction as determined by core self-evaluation.

There was varying support for gender differences. Women were only found to be more satisfied than men for college satisfaction. Interestingly, there is consistent evidence in literature that shows women are happier than men at work (Clark, 1997; Lucht, 2012). However, the fact women are more satisfied than men in college is especially consistent; women tend to base their job satisfaction on interpersonal relationships and perceived contributions, while men value financial rewards and self-satisfaction (Lucht, 2012). Since college is a time where frugality and social life is emphasized, it makes sense that women would be more satisfied than men. However, there was no statistically significant support for women being more satisfied with relationships than men. One explanation by Coccia and Darling (2012) is that college is often a time where people have their first relationships, which tend to be "rose colored" and less likely to see the faults of one's partner. Another explanation is that as a whole, one gender is not more satisfied than the other with relationships during college. While there is support from literature that relationship satisfaction dynamics change as couples become more established in their lives in terms of children and marriage, young couples in college likely, as a whole, do not have such issues. However, there was a positive correlation between college satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, thus supporting the premise of spillover effects. This inherently makes sense, as it is supported by aspects of literature regarding general life commitments, not just relationship literature.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Future research should look at two aspects in the college segment: how the four personality factors of core self-evaluation differ among college students relative to adults and how college students' core self-evaluations are related to their job performance. According to Seiffge-Krenke (2011), young adults score differently for self-esteem and emotional stability. Since self-esteem is considered the fundamental, base trait of core self-evaluation and all research on core self-evaluation has been done on adults, it would be important to have comparison studies to determine the differences between the demographics and their impacts on job and life satisfaction.

Furthermore, core self-evaluation, particularly self-efficacy, is a useful determinant of job performance and could be integrated into the current framework in schools for assessing success factors in college students. Because this study was cross-sectional in design, it could only capture data points at one point in time, thus making satisfaction the research focus. However, because universities often have greater resources, particularly with numerous graduate students and research labs, a longitudinal sample could easily be captured. As a result, the relationship between core self-evaluation and performance could be better understood to determine success factors. And through better understanding their students, college administrators would be able to better help their students in the future.

LIST OF SOURCES

Aguinis, H. (2013). Performance Management (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Baumeister R.F., Twenge, J.M., & Nuss, C.K. (2002). Effects of social exclusion on cognitive processes: Anticipated aloneness reduces intelligent thought. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 817–827.

Bono, J. E., & Judge, T. A. (2003). Core Self-Evaluations: A review of the trait and its role in job satisfaction and job performance. *European Journal of Personality, 17*, 5–18.

Boxall, P., & Macky, K. (2014). High-involvement work processes, work intensification and employee well-being. *Work Employment and Society, 28*, 963-984. doi: 10.1177/0950017013512714

Boyar, S., & Mosley, D. (2007). The relationship between core self-evaluations and work and family satisfaction: The mediating role of work–family conflict and facilitation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 71(2),* 265-281.

Chang, C.-H., Ferris, D. L., Johnson, R. E., Rosen, C. C., & Tan, J. A. (2012). Core self-evaluations: A review and evaluation of the literature. *Journal of Management, 38*, 81–128.

Clark, Andrew E. "Job Satisfaction and Gender: Why Are Women so Happy at Work?" Labour Economics 4.4 (1997): 341-72. Web.

Coccia, C., and Darling, C. A. (2016) Having the Time of Their Life: College Student Stress, Dating and Satisfaction with Life. *Stress Health, 32*: 28–35

Eysenck, H. J., & Eysenck, S. B. G. (1968). Manual for the Eysenck Personality Inventory. San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service.

Gonzaga, G. C., Campos, B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2007). Similarity, convergence, and relationship satisfaction in dating and married couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*, 34–48

Haines, V. Y., Harvey, S., Durand, P. and Marchand, A. (2013), Core Self-Evaluations, Work–Family Conflict, and Burnout. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 75*: 778–793. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12026

Harris, K. J., Harvey, P., & Kacmar, K. M. (2009). Do Social Stressors Impact Everyone Equally? An Examination of the Moderating Impact of Core Self-evaluations. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 24(2),* 153–164

Hendrick, S. S., Hendrick, C., & Adler, N. L. (1988). Romantic relationships: Love, satisfaction, and staying together. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 980–988

Judge, T. A. & Bono, J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluation traits- self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability to job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 80-92.

Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2002). Are measures of self-esteem, neuroticism, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy indicators of a common core construct? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 693–710.

Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2003). The Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES): Development of a measure. *Personnel Psychology, 56*, 303–331.

Judge, Locke, & Durham (1997). The dispositional causes of job satisfaction: A core evaluations approach. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 19*, 151-188.

Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Judge, T. A., & Scott, B. A. (2009).The role of core self -evaluation in the coping process. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94(1)*, 177-195

Lavee, Y., & Ben-Ari, A. (2007). Relationship of dyadic closeness with work-related stress: A daily diary study. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*, 1021-1035.

Lemelle, C. J., & Scielzo, S. A. (2012). How you feel about yourself can affect how you feel about your job: A meta-analysis examining the relationship of core self-evaluations and job satisfaction. *The Journal of Business Diversity, 12(3),* 116-133.

Lucht, T. "Job Satisfaction and Gender: Qualitative Differences at Iowa Newspapers" Journalism Practice (2015) p. 1 - 20

Moksnes, U., Moljord, I., Espnes, G., & Byrne, D. (2010). The association between stress and emotional states in adolescents: The role of gender and self-esteem. *Personality and Individual Differences, 49*, 430-435. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.04.012

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.

Scott, B., & Judge, T. (2009). The popularity contest at work: Who wins, why, and what do they receive? *Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol 94(1),* Jan 2009, 20-33.

Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2011). Coping with relationship stressors: A decade review. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 21,* 196-210. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795. 2010.00723.x

College Background Questions

How many credits are you taking?

Click here to enter text.

How many hours do you study per week?

Click here to enter text.

College Satisfaction Questions

I feel fairly satisfied with college.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

Most days I am enthusiastic about college.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

Each day of college seems like it will never end.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

I find real enjoyment in college.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

I consider college rather unpleasant.

1 2 3 4 5

Core Self-Evaluation Questions

<u>Neuroticism</u>

"I often feel inferior to others"

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

"Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up."

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

"Sometimes I feel depressed."

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

<u>Self Esteem</u>

"I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

"I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others."

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

"Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless."

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Generalized Self Efficacy

"When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

"If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

"I am capable of coping with most of my problems."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

Locus of Control

"When I get what I want, it is usually because I worked hard for it."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

"My life is determined by my own actions."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

"There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me."

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

Relationship Background Questions

How long have you been in your current relationship (in months)? ⬚ Click here to enter text.

How many relationships have you been in before? ⬚ Click here to enter text.

Relationship Satisfaction Questions

What is your relationship status?

Exclusive Relationship	Open Relationship	Engaged	Married	Domestic Partnership	Unsure, in Relationship	Other
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How well does your partner meet your needs?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	High

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	High

How good is your relationship compared to most?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	High

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	High

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

```
                    1    2    3    4    5
         Low        ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    High
```

How much do you love your partner?

```
                    1    2    3    4    5
         Low        ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    High
```

How many problems are there in your relationship?

```
                    1    2    3    4    5
         Low        ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    High
```

Coping Skills Questions

I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

```
                         1    2    3    4
         Not at all true ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    Exactly true
```

If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

```
                         1    2    3    4
         Not at all true ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    Exactly true
```

It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

```
                         1    2    3    4
         Not at all true ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    Exactly true
```

I am confident I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

1   2   3   4

Not at all true ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Exactly true

General Questions

What is your current status in the school program?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior

What is your age (in years)?

Click here to enter text.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer Not to Say

What is your race?

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Two or More Races
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer Not to Say