**From Facebook to Face-to-Face: How College Roommates use Facebook to Form First Impressions**

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With the new age of social media, impression formation has taken on additional forms. Before social networking sites, such as Facebook, initial impression formation occurred through direct communication, primarily face-to-face interactions. Today, initial impressions can be formed through indirect forms of communication such as observing the content of one’s Facebook profile. If a face-to-face meeting occurs after the initial Facebook impression, then a second impression will be formed. This second impression could vary in its similarity to the Facebook impression, influencing the development of the relationship.

The study we present examines the similarity or disparity between Facebook and face-to-face impressions, specifically in college roommate relationships. The following sections discuss previous research in the areas of impression formation, the rise of social media, and factors that influence roommate success. Description of the survey, methods, results, and discussion will follow.

**General Impression Formation**

General Impression Formation Theory is in essence just that—a theory for the way people create and develop their impressions of others. The theory is comprised of four basic stages through which one’s impression is shaped: observation, attribution, impression formation, and evaluation (Pavitt, 2007). During the observation stage, the individual unitizes the interaction into smaller pieces, dependent upon the interaction goal. Once the interaction is broken down, the person can label each unit as positive or negative. The way that the perceiver labels the behavior plays into the perceiver’s impression formation of that person.

The attribution stage asks why the person behaved in a given way. The premise is that people give responsibility to the person—the sender of the message and the object of impression formation—rather than the person’s environment. Realistically, possible explanations for a person’s behavior include the actor’s intentions, personal characteristics, response to a situation, and more. Potential biases in the attribution process are priming effects, in which past relationships and interactions color interpretations of often unrelated behaviors (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979).

Third is the impression formation stage, in which traits are assigned to the actor by the perceiver. If the person was seen as responsible for a behavior, the assignment of a relevant trait will likely follow. As implicit personality theory states, people hold beliefs about what traits and behaviors go together. This is where the halo and horns effects come into play—when a person witnesses positive traits or behaviors, he infers other positive traits or behaviors, while observation of negative behaviors imply other negative traits or behaviors, respectively. Lastly, the evaluation stage is where the observer makes an overarching evaluation about the actor—either positive or negative, or sometimes neutral. A positive impression implies a positive evaluation; a negative impression implies a negative evaluation; a mixed impression implies a neutral evaluation.

**Roommate Impression Formation**

In the event of a freshman coming to college and receiving a roommate, impression formation has strong bearing on both parties’ lives for the next year, making their respective impressions crucial to roommate success. In the impression formation process, people draw upon past information or experiences (that may or may not be relevant) to explain current interactions. Other factors, from computer-mediated communication beforehand to each party’s level of face-to-face self-disclosure upon meeting, influence the process as well (Broder, 1982; Jacobson, 1999). As Broder (1982) explains, liking may be affected by the level of disclosure of self and partner in female roommate dyads, so that inappropriate or out-of-context self-disclosure may result in the formation of a negative impression.

This information--gathered in the beginning stages of impression formation--can motivate priming effects (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979). For example, if a college freshman has grown up with an inconsiderate sibling whose room was like a pigsty and who took advantage of his congeniality, when his freshman roommate fails to take out the trash, he may assume that his roommate will be inconsiderate, as well. This assumption may stand even if the roommate is actually very amicable, but simply forgets to take out the trash. However, in making judgments, these primes must be somewhat applicable to the target for them to stick (Fazio, Powell, & Herr, 1983). Further, according to the principle of perceptual confirmation, an individual’s anticipation of an interaction colors their view of the interaction. People may choose their behaviors based on their expectation of the other’s response, often unintentionally. For example, when an individual has power--expert (academic, social, or other), reference (peer or group desirability), or informational (knowledge, tools)--they are perceived as more valuable to the relationship (Snyder & Kiviniemi, 2001). This perception may occur in the early stages of impression formation, shaping the relationship before it even develops.

**Roommate Success**

Roommate success can be defined through how satisfied both roommates are with their relationship. How successful or unsuccessful a roommate relationship is can have a positive or negative effect on both the student’s academic achievement and the overall perception of their college experience (Pace, 1970). A dissatisfying roommate relationship can be so detrimental that it leads to a withdrawal from the university (Cangemi, 1979). The variables that influence satisfaction or success among roommates have been popular topics of past research. Factors such as outcome of initial interactions, compatibility in personality traits, and degree of conflict have all been examined in relation to how well roommates do or do not get along. If the initial face-to-face interaction between roommates was positive, Marek and Wanzer (2004) established that the subsequent interactions would be more satisfying, leading to a more successful roommate relationship. Lovejoy, Perkins, and Collins (1995) further found that a high risk of roommate breakups can be predicted early in the academic year, further emphasizing the importance of initial interactions between roommates.

As for personality traits, the Big Five personality traits have been examined in the past, among many additional qualities. Dissimilarity in conscientiousness has been associated with a significantly lower relationship quality between roommates (Heckert, Mueller, Roberts, Hannah, Jones, Masters, & Bergman, 1999; Kertz & Sherker, 2003). Heckert et al. (1999) ascertained that roommates similar in neuroticism showed a significantly higher frequency of conflict (frequency of disagreements, tension, annoyance,and irritation than those roommate pairs who differed on a neuroticism scale, leading to less satisfactory roommates relationships. After analyzing first year roommate pairs, Fuller and Hall (1995) discovered that the Roommate Compatibility Questionnaire was a better predictor of roommate conflict than the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The results of the study indicate that the best way to reduce conflict between roommate is to match them based on the image they have of an ideal roommate. This idea is further supported by findings suggesting that self-selection type questionnaires produce successful roommate match-ups (Roby, Zelin, and Chechile, 1977).

Behaviors of roommates have also been examined as predictors of roommate success. As with research in most areas of interpersonal communication, Martin and Anderson (1995) discovered that roommates who were similar in their communication habits reported the highest roommate satisfaction, specifically those roommates that were both high in interpersonal communication competence and willingness to communicate, and low in verbal aggressiveness. High levels of communication between roommates is also linked to lower use of alcohol (Waldo, 1984). Roommates that had similar habits of when they both went to bed on the weekdays reported higher satisfaction with each other than those with disparate bedtimes (Jones, McCaa & Martecchini, 1980). A homogenous consistency of smoking habits has also proved to effect roommate satisfaction (Lovejoy et. al, 1995).

In some universities, roommates are given the option to personally select their roommate or the option to be randomly assigned a roommate after filling out a personal survey. Past research has presented that roommates who had chosen to live together rather than being randomly assigned, liked each other significantly more and had a much high success rating (Heckert et. al, 1999).

**General Facebook Information**

Facebook is the undisputed current leader of social media. With over 1.3 billion users worldwide, and 757 million daily users as of December 2013, its online presence cannot be ignored. Users share information, pictures, and everyday thoughts with everyone they tag as a ‘friend’ online. Launched in 2004, Facebook began as a way to connect college students to their peers. However, it took off within a year, allowing high school students and those well past their college years to create profiles and connect with friends across the nation.

The amount of personal information the average user places on Facebook is quite extensive. Users provide their name, birthday, occupation, education, current residence, phone number, and even a personal description of their personality. As this information could potentially be used by others with bad intentions, Facebook offers a number of privacy settings. Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) examined the use of privacy settings and concluded that the use of privacy settings is a response to both social influences and personal incentives. Those with friends who use privacy settings are more likely to use those same settings themselves. Females are more likely than males to use privacy settings, and privacy settings are typically indicative of a higher level of online activity. Additionally, students who have private profiles are “characterized by a unique set of cultural preferences,” typically involving more popular movies, music, and books (Lewis, Kaufman & Christakis, 2008)

The way people interact online is often quite different than the way they behave face to face. Christofides, Muise, and Desmerais (2009) discovered that their test subjects, despite saying privacy and information control were important to them, volunteered much more information on Facebook than they would in a face-to-face interaction. Their research, however, found that information control and disclosure were not governed by the same process. Disclosure was predominantly influenced by a “need for popularity,” whereas information control was governed by processes such as trust and self-esteem (Christofides, Muise & Desmerais, 2009).

Self-disclosure of personal information on Facebook has also been linked with uncertainty reduction processes (Berger & Calabrese, 1976). Gandley, Overton, Palmieri, Prestano, and Zhang (2012) noted, as one would expect, that more self-disclosures on a Facebook page increased certainty about an individual. These results coincide with earlier findings about computer-mediated communication in uncertainty reduction. Tidwell and Walther (2002) discerned that participants in their studies that used computer-mediated interactions were much more likely to undergo direct and intimate uncertainty reduction behaviors than those who met face to face. Sheldon (2009) discovered that, despite the absence of non-verbal cues, users still perceive a high predictability of their friends’ behaviors. This makes Facebook a strong tool for uncertainty reduction. Sheldon even found a sort of feedback loop. The more users talked, the more they trusted each other and the more users trusted each other, the more intimate details they disclosed.

**Impression Formation in Cyberspace**

Although most people use Facebook to stay in touch with friends, the social networking site also allows users to view the profiles of previously unacquainted individuals. In such cases, Facebook may be the primary basis for first impressions. Many factors that ordinarily influence in-person impression formation—including body language, physical appearance, and nonverbal cues—are often absent or reduced in online interactions. However, a number of other elements of an online profile can shape the perception of the profile owner’s offline characteristics (Jacobson, 1999). Marcus, Machilek, and Schutz (2006) found that observers on personal websites utilized photographs, various contact and personal information, and the amount and emotional quality of personal information to form impressions about the site owner’s standing on the Big Five, particularly on Extraversion, Openness to Experience, and Agreeableness. Observers typically rated site owners on these traits in the more desirable direction when they had a larger number of photographs or a more emotional style of self-related information.

Strangers are able to provide valid ratings on a “wide spectrum of personality traits based on minimal information” (Marcus et al., 2006). Of course, when provided with less information online than they might obtain face-to-face, observers might not be able to form as comprehensive of an impression. However, when identities are not made salient online, observers may make exaggerated attributions regarding the target individual’s personality (Walther, 1997). In fact, Hancock and Dunham (2001) found that even when observers could only make a few attributions about a target profile owner, those attributions were more extreme than attributions made by people communicating face-to-face. Even the absence of information on online profiles can shape impressions of the profile owner. For instance, when an website owner does not provide certain types of personal information or photographs, observers may infer that the owner is high in neuroticism (Marcus et al., 2006).

Just as people try to present themselves in a positive manner in person, they also try to carefully construct their self-presentation online. Because people can choose what to display about themselves online, impressions made online may seem inaccurate or biased. However, the rapidly increasing popularity of social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook has introduced an interesting component to online impression formation, as profiles on these sites offer a blend of interactive and static features. Observers can develop impressions about the profile owner based on cues provided not only by the target individual but also by the target’s friends and the system itself (Utz, 2010). For example, people other than the profile owner can contribute to the site, writing descriptions about the owner’s personality and conduct. Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, and Tong (2008) found that such information has a significant effect on impression formation, as profile owners were rated significantly more socially attractive when friends posted positive statements about the owner’s personality and behavior. Because such content is not as controllable by the target, the warranting principle may come into effect. This principle states that the “objectivity and validity of third-party information should be considered more reliable than self-disclosed claims” (Walther et al., 2008). Therefore, other-generated information about a SNS profile owner might be more compelling to an observer than self-generated information and may have a higher impact on impression formation.

When forming impressions on Facebook, observers do not limit themselves to information about the target individual but may also make evaluations based on the target’s friends. Previous studies regarding context effects show that people seem more attractive when paired with other attractive individuals (Walther et al., 2008). Consistent with this research, Walther et al. (2008) discovered that profile owners were rated significantly more physically attractive when they had attractive friends than when they had unattractive friends. Other research indicates that people expect people to have similar friends (Utz, 2010). In a 2010 study, Utz found that when friends make an extroverted and outgoing impression, the profile owner is also perceived as more extroverted, popular, and high in communal orientation than when friends make an introverted impression.

Another influencing factor on evaluations of Facebook profile owners’ attractiveness and extroversion is the owners’ number of friends. Walther, Tong, Van Der Heide, and Langwell (2008) found that individuals with two few friends or too many friends were perceived as less socially attractive and extroverted than those who have a more optimal number of friends. This finding suggests that an overabundance of friends may actually raise doubts about the profile owner’s popularity and desirability. Individuals with too many friends may appear to be focusing on Facebook too much, adding friends out of desperation rather than popularity or spending too much time “trying to make connections in a computer-mediated environment where they feel more comfortable than in face-to-face social interaction” (Walther et al., 2008).

**Differences in Impression Formation Pertaining to Gender**

Gender seems a critical avenue for examining roommate impressions online, since roommate relationships formed in a college setting are strictly male-male and female-female. In general, females tend to be better at judging nonverbal behavior (facial expression, posture, etc.) than are males (Hall, 1984). Even further, as observed by Chan, Rogers, Parisotto, and Biesanz (2011), females form better generalized impressions on targets than do males, due to their heightened ability to make more accurate normative assessments of personality than males.

If gender is a clear indicator of variance in impression formation, it implies that gender differences may carry over into the use of social networking sites (SNS). In a population of undergraduate students, Lewis et al. (2008) discovered a significant difference between males and females in the privacy settings of their Facebook profiles; females tended to have more privacy settings than males did, highlighting the important divergence of SNS usage by gender. Further, women were inclined to choose portrait photographs for their profiles, while men selected full-body shots (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis & Kruck, 2012). Women were also much more likely to attach romantic pictures and information, while males were more likely to have risqué pictures and comments (Peluchette & Karl, 2009). More generally, women are more likely to use SNS to compare themselves with others and search for information, while men more often use SNS to look for friends (Haferkamp et al., 2012). Findings of Jackson, Ervin, Gardner and Schmitt (2001) suggest that women’s behavior online is more interpersonally concerned, while men are more task- and information-seeking. For example, Jackson et al. revealed that women spend more time writing emails, while men search the Web for information in general.

When evaluating a person’s Facebook profile, Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman and Tong (2008) showed that wall posts about normatively undesirable behavior increased perceptions of physical attractiveness for men, but decreased the same for women. There have been many established findings which delineate the differences between male and female usage of SNS and Facebook, but further research is necessary to uncover how these differences affect impression formation online.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

This study will examine the following research questions and hypotheses.

RQ1: What do roommates focus on when forming a Facebook impression?

Previously discussed research suggests that females are judged more critically on Facebook than males (Walther et al., 2008). Given that college roommates are paired with the same gender, we predict that:

H1: Females will make more extreme judgments when forming a Facebook impression than males.

RQ2: How accurately do Facebook impressions predict face-to-face impressions?

H2: The more positive the Facebook impression: (A) the greater the predicted liking for the roommates, (B) the greater the predicted success of the roommate situation, (C) the greater the actual satisfaction with the roommate, and (D) the greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years.

RQ3: How confident were roommates in the accuracy of their Facebook impressions prior to face-to-face impressions?

RQ4: What do roommates focus on when forming a face-to-face impression?

Based on traditional gender stereotypes, we predict that:

H3: During face-to-face impressions: (A) Females will make more extreme judgments on room decor, physical appearance, and personal effects than males and (B) males will make more extreme judgments on activities.

H4: The more positive the face-to-face impression: (A) the greater the predicted liking for the roommates, (B) the greater the predicted success of the roommate situation, (C) the greater the actual satisfaction with the roommate, and (D) the greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years.

Because face-to-face impressions are not as filtered, we predict that:

H5: Face-to-face impressions are better predictors than Facebook impressions of (A) actual satisfaction between roommates and (B) greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years.

Following from Heckert et al.’s (1999) research described above:

H6: When roommates choose each other there is: (A) a greater similarity between Facebook impressions and face-to-face impressions, (B) more satisfaction between roommates, and (C) greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years than compared to assigned roommates.

**Methods**

Students in a Communication course at the University of Delaware were sent a survey in which they were given the rights to agree or disagree to participate in the study and to withdraw from the survey at any point. Extra credit in the course was offered to those that participated in the survey. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, and those that did not meet this requirement were given the opportunity to complete an alternative assignment, not included in the results section. There was a total number of 188 participants. 46 did not have roommates, and of the remaining 142, 27 did not find their roommate on Facebook before meeting them. This left us with 115 usable surveys. 31 participants were male and 84 were female. Of the 115 participants, 29.6% were freshmen (n=34), 30.4% were sophomores (n=35), 24.3% were juniors (n=25), and 15.7% were seniors (n=18).

The survey began with questions asking if participants lived in on-campus housing and had a roommate their first year at the University of Delaware. Those that did not fit both of these criteria were directed to the same alternative assignment as those younger than 18. Participants were then asked whether they personally selected or were assigned their roommate by the University. Regardless of their responses, they were then questioned if they had found their future roommate’s Facebook profile prior to meeting face-to-face, and if they did not, they were directed to the section of the survey dealing solely with face-to-face impression formation. Participants who successfully found their roommates’ Facebook profile prior to meeting them face-to-face completed sections of the survey dealing with Facebook impression formation before moving to questions about face-to-face impression formation.

Those participants who found their roommate’s Facebook profile prior to face-to-face meeting were asked to rank the importance of multiple Facebook factors on forming an impression of their future roommate. Each factor was rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from extremely important to not important at all, along with a not applicable response. These factors included profile picture/cover photo, tagged photos/albums, physical attractiveness of the roommate, physical attractiveness of roommate’s Facebook friends, activities portrayed in pictures, number of likes/comments on photos, number of Facebook friends, frequency/recency of friends’ posts on roommate’s Facebook wall, content of roommate’s friends’ posts on his or her Facebook wall, status updates posted by the roommate, likes/interests, relationship status, hometown, occupation, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and privacy settings. Participants were then asked how positively or negatively each of the previously listed factors affected their impression of their future roommates. This question used the same factors as the importance questions described above and were also rated on 7 point scales that ranged from extremely positively to extremely negatively.

Participants were then asked to rank their impression of their roommate prior to meeting face-to-face. The 7-point semantic differential scales ranged from extremely negatively to extremely positively, and addressed the following attributes: friendly/unfriendly, cold/compassionate, attractive/unattractive, easygoing/uptight, exciting/boring, shy/outgoing, popular/unpopular, aggressive/passive, organized/disorganized, clean/messy, serious/lighthearted, trustworthy/untrustworthy, independent/needy, anxious/calm, paranoid/stable, religious/non religious, and politically engaged/apathetic. The following group of questions addressed the likelihood that the participant’s roommate would engage in a variety of activities. Participants ranked their impression of their roommate (prior to meeting face-to-face) on a 7-point scale, ranging from very unlikely to very likely, based on the following activities: studying hard, participating in athletics, joining an RSO (registered student organization), joining Greek life, joining a musical or theater group, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and doing drugs. Finally, participants were asked to rank their impression of their roommate, prior to meeting face-to-face, on a 5-point scale in response to the following questions: “How confident were you in the accuracy of the impression you formed through Facebook?” (ranging from very confident to very doubtful), “How much did you think you would like your future roommate?” (ranging from very much to not at all), and “How successful did you think your roommate situation would be?” (ranging from very successful to very unsuccessful).

The survey then turned to questions on the first face-to-face encounter between the participant and his or her roommate. Participants were first to rate the importance of several observable factors, using the same 7-point scale plus “not applicable” scale format as the analogous Facebook impression formation group of questions. The factors included room decor, organization of room, roommate’s interactions with roommate’s family members, roommate’s interactions with participant’s family members, participant’s interactions with roommate’s family members, roommate’s clothing, roommate’s personal effects, roommate’s accent/dialect, roommate’s interactions with floormates, roommate’s physical attractiveness, ease of initial conversation, topic of initial conversation, and first day’s activities with roommate. Participants were then asked how positively or negatively they viewed those same factors during their initial face-to-face meeting with their roommate. They ranked each factor on a 7-point scale ranging from extremely negatively to extremely positively.

Next, participants were asked what their impression of their roommate was when meeting face-to-face for the first time using the same semantic differential scales as the analogous Facebook questions. The following set of questions addressed the likelihood that participants’ respective roommates would engage in a variety of activities, based on their initial face-to-face encounter. Participants ranked their impression of their roommate (after meeting face-to-face) on a 7-point scale, ranging from very unlikely to very likely, based on the following activities: studying hard, participating in athletics, joining an RSO (registered student organization), joining Greek life, joining a musical or theater group, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and doing drugs. The participants were then asked to rank their impression of their roommate, after to meeting face-to-face, on a 5-point scale in response to the following questions: “After meeting your roommate face-to-face for the first time, how confident were you in the accuracy of the impression you formed of your roommate?” (ranging from very confident to very doubtful), “How much did you think you would like your future roommate?” (ranging from very much to not at all), and “How successful did you think your roommate situation would be?” (ranging from very successful to very unsuccessful).

The end of the survey asked participants to identify their gender (male/female) and the number of years since they lived in their freshman dorm (0-3, or specify if more than 3). They were then asked to rate their long-term satisfaction with their roommate relationship on a 5-point scale (ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied). Finally, participants were asked if they continued or planned to continue living with their freshman year roommate. After completing these survey questions or the alternative assignment, participants were asked to provide their University Student ID number in order to guarantee extra credit in their course.

**Results**

Our first research question asked what roommates focus on when forming a Facebook impression. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for how participants rated the importance of different Facebook profile features. There were not any specific Facebook features that participants rated as ‘extremely important’; most features’ means fell between ‘not important at all’ and ‘moderately important’ on the 7-point scale provided (mean range of 2.51-4.78). Facebook profile picture/cover photo (mean=5.15) and activities portrayed in pictures (mean=5.62) were the only Facebook features rated above ‘moderately important.’

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for focus of Facebook features

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Facebook Features** | **N** | **Min.** | **Max.** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| Profile picture/cover photo | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.15 | 1.773 |
| Tagged pictures/albums | 115 | 1 | 8 | 4.78 | 1.986 |
| Physical attractiveness of roommate | 115 | 1 | 8 | 4.06 | 1.778 |
| Physical attractiveness of roommate’s Facebook friends | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.16 | 1.508 |
| Activities portrayed in pictures (sports teams, drinking habits, extracurricular activities, etc.) | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.62 | 1.663 |
| Number of “likes”/comments on photos | 115 | 1 | 7 | 2.96 | 1.404 |
| Number of Facebook friends | 115 | 1 | 7 | 2.69 | 1.314 |
| Frequency/recency of friends’ posts on Facebook wall | 115 | 1 | 8 | 2.84 | 1.405 |
| Content of friends’ posts on Facebook wall | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.74 | 1.753 |
| Status updates posted by roommate | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.96 | 1.880 |
| Likes/Interests (Music, Movies, Books, TV shows, etc.) | 115 | 1 | 8 | 4.16 | 2.003 |
| Relationship status | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.23 | 1.724 |
| Hometown | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.18 | 1.631 |
| Occupation | 115 | 1 | 8 | 2.72 | 1.367 |
| Religious beliefs | 115 | 1 | 7 | 2.76 | 1.514 |
| Political beliefs | 115 | 1 | 7 | 2.59 | 1.357 |
| Privacy settings | 115 | 1 | 8 | 2.51 | 1.372 |

Hypothesis 1 stated that females will make more extreme judgments than males when forming impressions on Facebook. Table 2 describes the gender differences in Facebook judgments. In the Means column, means for males are listed first and for females are listed second. Of the 59 Facebook factors, characteristics and activities we examined in the study, 17 were found to be significant. This hypothesis was supported because 16 out of the 17 significant findings were in the direction we hypothesized, that females made more extreme judgments. The one exception was that males made more extreme judgments about the likelihood of their future roommate joining Greek life.

**Table 2.** Gender Differences in Facebook Judgments

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Facebook Factor** | **t** | **DF** | **sig** | **Gender** | **Means** |
| Importance of profile picture/cover photo | -2.494 | 113 | 0.014 | Male | 4.48  5.39 |
| Female |
| Importance of tagged pictures/albums | -3.102 | 113 | 0.002 | Male  Female | 3.87  5.12 |
| Importance of physical attractiveness of the roommate | -4.300 | 113 | 0.000 | Male  Female | 2.97  4.46 |
| Importance of content of friends’ posts on Facebook wall | -2.056 | 113 | 0.042 | Male  Female | 3.19  3.94 |
| Importance of relationship status | -2.011 | 113 | 0.047 | Male  Female | 2.71  3.43 |
| Positivity of profile picture/cover photo | -2.937 | 113 | 0.004 | Male  Female | 4.26  5.02 |
| Positivity of tagged pictures/albums | -2.855 | 113 | 0.005 | Male  Female | 4.06  4.83 |
| Positivity of physical attractiveness of the roommate | -3.985 | 113 | 0.000 | Male  Female | 3.90  4.87 |
| Positivity of number of “likes”/comments on photos | -2.462 | 113 | 0.015 | Male  Female | 4.23  4.90 |
| Attractive vs. unattractive | 4.836 | 113 | 0.000 | Male  Female | 4.23  2.82 |
| Exciting vs boring | 2.674 | 113 | 0.009 | Male  Female | 3.68  2.85 |
| Shy vs. outgoing | -2.213 | 113 | 0.029 | Male  Female | 4.32  5.05 |
| Popular vs. unpopular | 3.077 | 113 | 0.003 | Male  Female | 4.03  3.06 |
| Organized vs. disorganized | 1.991 | 113 | 0.049 | Male  Female | 4.13  3.52 |
| Serious vs. lighthearted | -2.495 | 113 | 0.014 | Male  Female | 4.03  4.70 |
| Likelihood of joining Greek life | -3.318 | 113 | 0.001 | Male  Female | 3.10  4.33 |
| Likelihood of drinking alcohol | -2.808 | 113 | 0.006 | Male  Female | 4.61  5.54 |

**Table 3.** Facebook to Face-to-face Impression Formation Correlation

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Traits** | **Overall n=115** | **Choice n=60** | **No Choice n=55** |
| Friendly | 0.661 | 0.584 | 0.689 |
| Cold | 0.682 | 0.635 | 0.697 |
| Attractive | 0.729 | 0.704 | .706 |
| Easygoing | 0.702 | 0.624 | .760 |
| Exciting | 0.746 | 0.779 | .686 |
| Shy | 0.680 | 0.703 | .618 |
| Popular | 0.664 | 0.508 | .765 |
| Aggressive | 0.546 | 0.515 | .580 |
| Organized | 0.554 | 0.492 | .604 |
| Clean | 0.637 | 0.653 | .604 |
| Serious | 0.624 | 0.573 | .676 |
| Trustworthy | 0.511 | 0.438 | .568 |
| Independent | 0.480 | 0.661 | .261 (insignificant) |
| Anxious | 0.646 | 0.661 | .610 |
| Paranoid | 0.430 | 0.339 (sig at .01) | .564 |
| Religious | 0.657 | 0.557 | .781 |
| Politically Engaged | 0.713 | 0.610 | .847 |
| Studying | 0.663 | 0.650 | .651 |
| Athletics | 0.829 | 0.819 | .838 |
| RSOs | 0.775 | 0.784 | .763 |
| Greek | 0.822 | 0.834 | .800 |
| Music | 0.708 | 0.627 | .734 |
| Drinking | 0.714 | 0.692 | .728 |
| Smoking | 0.729 | 0.780 | .684 |
| Drugs | 0.843 | 0.795 | .874 |

Our second research question asked if Facebook impression formation was a good predictor of the first time face-to-face impression formation. We compared the results of trait evaluations on Facebook with the evaluations made face-to-face, and found that almost all traits were statistically significant at .001. Impressions made on Facebook seem to be a good indicator of how face-to-face impressions will be formed. The relevant data is in the first column of correlations in Table 3.

Our second hypothesis suggested the more positive the Facebook impression: (A) the greater the predicted liking for the roommates, (B) the greater the predicted success of the roommate situation, (C) the greater the actual satisfaction with the roommate, and (D) the greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years. Consistent with our hypothesis, students reported that they liked their roommate and anticipated a successful roommate situation after their initial Facebook impression, were satisfied with their roommate situation, and were likely to live with their roommates again when they considered their roommate to be: friendly, warm, attractive, easygoing, exciting, outgoing, popular, and trustworthy. However, results did not indicate that religion, political engagement, or cleanliness mattered to roommates. Results also did not indicate that Facebook impression of liking and prediction of roommate success were consistent with perceived aggression. Also inconsistent with our hypothesis, Facebook impression of perceived roommate success was not significantly affected by seriousness, organization, or paranoia. Apart from these few exceptions, the results supported our hypothesis. Hypothesis 2(A) was strongly supported. Of the 25 correlations listed under “Predicted Liking” in Table 4, 19 (76.0%) were significant. Hypothesis 2(B) was at best minimally supported, as only 12 of the 25 (48%) correlations for “Predicted Success” as shown in Table 4 were significant. Hypothesis 2(C) was moderately supported. The data displayed in the “Roommate Satisfaction” column of Table 4 shows that there were 14 significant correlations between a positive face-to-face impression and roommate satisfaction out of the 25 (56.0%) impression factors. Hypothesis 2(D) was minimally supported as shown in the “Continued Living” column of Table 4. There were 13 significant correlations between a positive face-to-face impression and continued living of the 25 (52.0%) impression factors.

Overall, predicted personality factors (friendly, cold, attractive, etc.) tended to have more significant correlations with positive Facebook impressions than predicted roommate activities. The personality factors had 14 out of 17 (82.4%) significant correlations for 2(A), 10 out of 17 (58.8%) for 2(B), 11 out of 17 (64.7%) for 2(C) and 10 out of 17 (58.8%) for 2(D). The predicted roommate activities had 5 out of 8 (62.5%) significant correlations for 2(A), 2 out of 8 (25.0%) for 2(B), 3 out of 8 (37.5%) for both 2(C) and 2(D). Across all four parts of the hypotheses, there were 45 out of 68 (66.2%) significant correlations for personality factors and 13 out of 24 (54.2%) for roommate activities.

**Table 4**. Facebook Impression and Roommate Satisfaction Correlation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Impression** | **Correlation/ Significance** | **Cont. Living** | **Roommate Satisfaction** | **Predicted Liking** | **Predicted Success** |
| Facebook: friendly | Pearson Correlation | 0.310 | 0.409 | 0.603 | 0.466 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: cold | Pearson Correlation | -0.437 | -0.482 | -0.397 | -0.319 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.001 |
| Facebook: attractive | Pearson Correlation | 0.320 | 0.387 | 0.509 | 0.404 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: easygoing | Pearson Correlation | 0.283 | 0.431 | 0.413 | 0.341 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.002 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: exciting | Pearson Correlation | 0.390 | 0.426 | 0.514 | 0.355 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: shy | Pearson Correlation | -0.290 | -0.360 | -0.427 | -0.332 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.002 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: popular | Pearson Correlation | 0.315 | 0.389 | 0.534 | 0.452 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: aggressive | Pearson Correlation | 0.077 | -0.022 | 0.034 | -0.006 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.415 | 0.817 | 0.715 | 0.946 |
| Facebook: organized | Pearson Correlation | 0.194 | 0.214 | 0.195 | 0.136 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.037 | 0.022 | 0.037 | 0.146 |
| Facebook: clean | Pearson Correlation | 0.144 | 0.177 | 0.205 | 0.115 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.124 | 0.059 | 0.028 | 0.220 |
| Facebook impression: serious | Pearson Correlation | -0.185 | -0.189 | -0.282 | -0.151 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.048 | 0.043 | 0.002 | 0.107 |
| Facebook: trustworthy | Pearson Correlation | 0.161 | 0.254 | 0.329 | 0.291 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.086 | 0.006 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| Facebook: independent | Pearson Correlation | 0.054 | 0.210 | 0.241 | 0.272 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.565 | 0.024 | 0.009 | 0.003 |
| Facebook: anxious | Pearson Correlation | -0.065 | -0.155 | -0.277 | -0.267 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.491 | 0.098 | 0.003 | 0.004 |
| Facebook: paranoid | Pearson Correlation | -0.193 | -0.153 | -0.229 | -0.143 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.039 | 0.102 | 0.014 | 0.126 |
| Facebook: religious | Pearson Correlation | -0.025 | 0.088 | -0.055 | -0.019 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.789 | 0.351 | 0.560 | 0.837 |
| Facebook: engaged | Pearson Correlation | 0.020 | 0.117 | 0.007 | -0.039 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.833 | 0.211 | 0.944 | 0.681 |
| Facebook: studying | Pearson Correlation | -0.121 | -0.131 | -0.239 | -0.104 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.197 | 0.162 | 0.010 | 0.270 |
| Facebook: athletics | Pearson Correlation | -0.240 | -0.328 | -0.243 | -0.101 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.010 | 0.000 | 0.009 | 0.284 |
| Facebook: RSOs | Pearson Correlation | -0.188 | -0.189 | -0.383 | -0.183 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.044 | 0.043 | 0.000 | 0.050 |
| Facebook: Greek | Pearson Correlation | -0.048 | -0.069 | -0.293 | -0.239 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.608 | 0.463 | 0.001 | 0.010 |
| Facebook: music | Pearson Correlation | 0.077 | 0.127 | 0.144 | 0.110 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.412 | 0.176 | 0.125 | 0.243 |
| Facebook: drinking | Pearson Correlation | -0.257 | -0.183 | -0.464 | -0.343 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.006 | 0.051 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Facebook: smoking | Pearson Correlation | 0.128 | 0.207 | 0.086 | 0.056 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.171 | 0.027 | 0.358 | 0.552 |
| Facebook: drugs | Pearson Correlation | 0.110 | 0.173 | 0.123 | 0.089 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.242 | 0.064 | 0.189 | 0.344 |

Our third research question asked how confident roommates were in the accuracy of their Facebook impressions. The participants of the survey could have selected to answer “very confident,” “somewhat confident,” “neither confident nor doubtful,” “somewhat doubtful,” or “very doubtful.” The data showed that the average Facebook impression left the person with a “somewhat confident” accuracy rating (mean=2.00, SD=0.858).

Our fourth research question asked what roommates focus on when forming a face-to-face impression of their roommate. Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics for which factors participants focused on most when meeting their roommates face-to-face. Similar to the results of Research Question 1, none of the face-to-face factors were rated near the ‘extremely important’ side of the 7-point scale. In contrast, there was a greater number of face-to-face factors that fell along the ‘moderately important’ point on the 7-point scale. The ease of initial conversation with roommate (mean=5.95) and the first day’s activities with roommate (mean=5.62) were the two most important factors participant’s focused on when forming an impression of their roommate face-to-face. Other face-to-face factors that fell above ‘moderately important’ on the 7-point scale were: organization of room (mean=5.06), roommate’s interactions with your family members (mean=5.19), your interactions with roommate’s family members (mean=5.02), interactions with floormates (mean=5.35), and topic of initial conversation (mean=5.35).

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics for face-to-face factors.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Face-to-face factor** | **N** | **Min.** | **Max.** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| Room decor (bedding, posters, pictures, etc.) | 115 | 1 | 8 | 4.17 | 1.767 |
| Organization of room | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.06 | 1.591 |
| Roommate’s interactions with their family members | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.00 | 1.589 |
| Roommate’s interactions with your family members | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.19 | 1.594 |
| Your interaction with roommates’ family members | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.02 | 1.633 |
| Clothing | 115 | 1 | 8 | 4.37 | 1.774 |
| Personal effects (phone, purse, sunglasses, jewelry, etc.) | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.97 | 1.779 |
| Accent/dialect | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.21 | 1.931 |
| Interactions with floormates | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.35 | 1.639 |
| Physical attractiveness | 115 | 1 | 8 | 3.83 | 1.879 |
| Ease of initial conversation with roommate | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.95 | 1.407 |
| Topic of initial conversation | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.35 | 1.601 |
| First day’s activities with roommate | 115 | 1 | 8 | 5.62 | 1.641 |

Hypothesis 3 stated that when forming face-to-face impressions (A) females will make more extreme judgments on room decor, physical appearance, and personal effects, while (B) males will make more extreme judgments on activities. Table 6 describes the gender differences in face-to-face judgments. Based on male and female means, part (A) of this hypothesis was weakly supported while part (B) was not supported at all. Although females did consider room decor, physical attractiveness, clothing, and personal effects more important than males did when forming initial face-to-face impressions of their roommates, these differences were not statistically significant. However, contrary to Hypothesis 3(B), females also found activities significantly more important than males did and made more extreme judgments based on these activities when forming impressions of their roommates.

**Table 6.** Gender differences in face-to-face judgments.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Face-to-face Factor** | **t** | **DF** | **Sig.** | **Gender** | **Mean** |
| Importance of room decor (bedding, posters, pictures, etc.) | -1.693 | 113 | .093 | Male  Female | 3.71  4.33 |
| Importance of organization of room | -1.717 | 113 | .089 | Male  Female | 4.65  5.21 |
| Importance of roommate’s interactions with their family members | -3.010 | 113 | .003 | Male  Female | 4.29  5.26 |
| Importance of roommate’s interactions with your family members | -2.272 | 113 | .025 | Male  Female | 4.65  5.39 |
| Importance of your interaction with roommate’s family members | -2.027 | 113 | .045 | Male  Female | 4.52  5.20 |
| Importance of clothing | -1.137 | 113 | .258 | Male  Female | 4.06  4.49 |
| Importance of personal effects (phone, purse, sunglasses, jewelry, etc.) | -.730 | 113 | .467 | Male  Female | 3.77  4.05 |
| Importance of accent/dialect | .600 | 113 | .550 | Male  Female | 3.39  3.14 |
| Importance of interaction with floormates | -1.918 | 113 | .058 | Male  Female | 4.87  5.52 |
| Importance of physical attractiveness | -1.878 | 113 | .063 | Male  Female | 3.29  4.02 |
| Importance of ease of initial conversation with roommate | -4.221 | 113 | .000 | Male  Female | 5.10  6.26 |
| Importance of topic of initial conversation | -2.382 | 113 | .019 | Male  Female | 4.77  5.56 |
| Importance of first day’s activities with roommate | -3.070 | 113 | .003 | Male  Female | 4.87  5.89 |

Our fourth hypothesis predicted that the more positive the face-to-face impression was, (A) the greater the predicted liking for the roommate, (B) the greater the predicted success of the roommate situation, (C) the more satisfied the roommates would be, and (D) a greater likelihood of the roommates continuing to live together in following years. Hypothesis 4(A) and Hypothesis 4(B) were both supported in the same strength. Table 7 displays in the “Predicted Liking” column that there were 18 significant correlations between positive face-to-face impression and predicted liking of the 25 (72.0%) impression factors. The “Predicted Success” column also produced 18 significant correlations between positive face-to-face impression and predicted success of the 25 (72.0%) impression factors. Hypothesis 4(C) was moderately supported. The data displayed in the “Roommate Satisfaction” column of Table 7 shows that there were 15 significant correlations between a positive face-to-face impression and roommate satisfaction out of the 25 (60.0%) impression factors. Hypothesis 4(D) was minimally supported as shown in the “Continued Living” column of Table 7. There were 13 significant correlations between a positive face-to-face impression and continued living of the 25 (52.0%) impression factors.

In total, predicted personality factors (friendly, cold, attractive, etc.) had more significant correlations with positive face-to-face impressions than predicted roommate activities did. The personality factors had 14 out of 17 (82.4%) significant correlations for both 4(A) and 4(B), 10 out of 17 (58.8%) for 4(C), and 12 out of 17 (70.6%) for 4(D). The predicted roommate activities had 4 out of 8 (50.0%) significant correlations for both 4(A) and 4(B), 3 out of 8 (37.5%) for both 4(C) and 4(D). Across all four parts of the hypotheses, there were 50 out of 68 (73.5%) significant correlations for personality factors and 14 out of 24 (58.3%) for roommate activities.

**Table 7.** How face-to-face impression predicted roommate satisfaction and continued living

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Impression** | **Correlation/ Significance** | **Cont. Living** | **Roommate Satisfaction** | **Predicted Liking** | **Predicted Success** |
| Face-to-face: friendly | Pearson Correlation | 0.284 | 0.504 | 0.644 | 0.732 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.002 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: cold | Pearson Correlation | -0.311 | -0.472 | -0.591 | -0.618 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: attractive | Pearson Correlation | 0.294 | 0.456 | 0.613 | 0.587 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: easygoing | Pearson Correlation | 0.375 | 0.548 | 0.513 | 0.603 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: exciting | Pearson Correlation | 0.425 | 0.562 | 0.604 | 0.590 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: shy | Pearson Correlation | -0.353 | -0.420 | -0.445 | -0.384 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: popular | Pearson Correlation | 0.383 | 0.558 | 0.655 | 0.645 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: aggressive | Pearson Correlation | 0.132 | 0.000 | -0.067 | -0.104 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.160 | 0.998 | 0.475 | 0.268 |
| Face-to-face: organized | Pearson Correlation | 0.149 | 0.007 | 0.253 | 0.299 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.113 | 0.415 | 0.014 | 0.006 |
| Face-to-face: clean | Pearson Correlation | 0.138 | 0.109 | 0.259 | 0.240 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.142 | 0.246 | 0.005 | 0.010 |
| Face-to-face: serious | Pearson Correlation | -0.197 | -0.323 | -0.279 | -0.310 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.035 | 0.000 | 0.001 | 0.003 |
| Face-to-face: trustworthy | Pearson Correlation | 0.374 | 0.512 | 0.436 | 0.458 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: independent | Pearson Correlation | 0.138 | 0.318 | 0.236 | 0.223 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.141 | 0.001 | 0.011 | 0.017 |
| Face-to-face: anxious | Pearson Correlation | -0.120 | -0.260 | -0.208 | -0.282 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.203 | 0.005 | 0.026 | 0.002 |
| Face-to-face: paranoid | Pearson Correlation | -0.358 | -0.434 | -0.389 | -0.385 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: religious | Pearson Correlation | -0.014 | 0.128 | 0.069 | 0.115 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.883 | 0.174 | 0.465 | 0.222 |
| Face-to-face: engaged | Pearson Correlation | 0.005 | 0.083 | 0.078 | 0.103 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.562 | 0.378 | 0.410 | 0.271 |
| Face-to-face: studying | Pearson Correlation | -0.158 | -0.269 | -0.341 | -0.405 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.091 | 0.004 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Face-to-face: athletics | Pearson Correlation | -0.214 | -0.270 | -0.191 | -0.194 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.022 | 0.004 | 0.041 | 0.038 |
| Face-to-face: RSOs | Pearson Correlation | -0.110 | -0.091 | -0.100 | -0.087 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.243 | 0.335 | 0.287 | 0.358 |
| Face-to-face: Greek | Pearson Correlation | -0.014 | -0.032 | -0.141 | -0.088 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.878 | 0.734 | 0.133 | 0.351 |
| Face-to-face: music | Pearson Correlation | 0.165 | 0.085 | 0.206 | 0.270 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.077 | 0.368 | 0.027 | 0.004 |
| Face-to-face: drinking | Pearson Correlation | -0.199 | -0.102 | -0.315 | -0.284 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.033 | 0.277 | 0.001 | 0.002 |
| Face-to-face: smoking | Pearson Correlation | 0.185 | 0.205 | 0.174 | 0.161 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.047 | 0.028 | 0.063 | 0.068 |
| Face-to-face: drugs | Pearson Correlation | 0.147 | 0.097 | 0.141 | 0.113 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.116 | 0.301 | 0.134 | 0.227 |

Our fifth hypothesis predicted that face-to-face impressions are better predictors than Facebook impressions of (A) satisfaction between roommates and (B) greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years. We compared the results from Hypothesis 2 with the results of Hypothesis 4 in order to analyze Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5(A) was supported, as the overall Pearson Correlation average for face-to-face impression and roommate satisfaction was 0.274, while the overall Pearson Correlation average for Facebook impression and roommate satisfaction was 0.235. Hypothesis 5(B) was also supported, as the overall Pearson Correlation average for face-to-face impression and continued living was 0.210--higher than the overall Pearson Correlation average for Facebook impression and roommate satisfaction of 0.185. To further support the validity of this hypothesis, we compared the average Pearson Correlation means of the only significant impression factors. The average Pearson Correlation of significant face-to-face impression factors and roommate satisfaction was 0.407, higher than the average Pearson Correlation of significant Facebook impression and roommate satisfaction, which was 0.320. The average Pearson Correlation of significant face-to-face impressions and continued living was 0.304, also higher than the Pearson Correlation of significant Facebook impression and roommate continued living.

Hypothesis 6(A) stated that participants who chose their roommate would have a greater similarity between Facebook and face-to-face impression formation. The data, listed in the second and third columns of Table 3, show this hypothesis is false. Of the 25 traits examined, respondents that had no choice in their future roommates had higher similarities in 17 instances.

Hypothesis 6(B) states that participants who choose their roommates will be more satisfied with their roommates. This hypothesis was supported. When asked if they were satisfied with their roommate, respondents who chose their roommates averaged 2.10 on satisfaction, whereas those who did not choose their roommates answered with a 2.82 (Choice 2 read “Satisfied” and choice 3 read “Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”). The standard deviation of those who chose roommates was 1.423 and of those who did not was 1.529.

Hypothesis 6(C) stated that roommates who choose each other are more likely to continue living together in following years than roommates who are assigned. This hypothesis was supported (χ2=6.223, df=1, sig=.013). Of the 60 participants who chose their freshman-year roommate, 50% (n=30) stated that they continued or plan to continue living with their roommate. Of the 55 who were assigned a freshman-year roommate, only 27.3% (n=15) said they continued or plan to continue living with their roommate.

**Discussion**

The basis of this study was to examine the similarity or disparity between Facebook and face-to-face impressions specifically in college roommate relationships. Our hypotheses and research questions looked at the importance of different Facebook and face-to-face factors in impression formation, gender differences, and how the formed impressions affected roommate satisfaction, success, liking, and continued living. The results of this study highlight certain implications which will be discussed in the following section.

Findings from both Research Question 1 and Research Question 4 suggest that in forming both Facebook and face-to-face impressions, participants do not rely heavily on any one, or few, specific factors. Participants were asked to rate Facebook and face-to-face features based on importance when forming impressions, and none of the features were rated ‘extremely important.’ The overall average fell between ‘not important’ and ‘moderately important’ on the scale. These results may signify one of two things: when forming impressions people tend to take everything into account to make overall impressions without assigning high values to any specific features, or the survey did not include the factors that the participants deem extremely important in forming impressions.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that females would make more extreme judgments about Facebook features. We found that of the 59 features we asked about, 17 had significant differences between male and female responses. Table 2 shows this data. Of those 17, 16 suggested that females make more extreme judgments, with the only exception being the importance males place on the likelihood of joining Greek life. We predicted that females would be more likely to place greater importance on Facebook based on initial research of gender differences in impression formation. For example, females have been found to be more likely to form accurate impressions in face to face contact, so it would make sense for this skill to carry over online. Furthermore, numerous studies have suggested that women use SNS for information gathering, whereas more men use it for tasks. For these reasons, we believed that females would place more importance on Facebook features than men simply because of the additional information they could potentially gain from each factor.

Findings from Research Question 2 demonstrated that Facebook impression formation significantly predicted roommates’ initial face-to-face impression. Interestingly, whether or not respondents chose their roommates did not affect the correlation between Facebook and face-to-face impression formation. While this could be due to people’s ability to interpret personalities from Facebook profiles, another factor may be that the impression was already formed from Facebook, and face-to-face interactions that followed did not cause the respondent to reconsider their initial assessment, because that assessment was already mentally solidified. Another factor could be that Facebook impression formation was actively sought out prior to coming to college, while face-to-face impression formation was more passive because the impression was already formed.

Findings from Hypothesis 2 indicate that the more positive the Facebook impression, the more roommates anticipate liking one another (strongly supported), the more they predict a successful roommate situation (minimally supported), the greater they actually are satisfied with their roommate situation (moderately supported), and the more likely they are to live together in following years (minimally supported). Results from Hypothesis 4 showed similar patterns. With a more positive initial face-to-face impression, there were higher ratings for predicted roommate liking (strongly supported), higher ratings for predicted roommate success (strongly supported), greater actual satisfaction with the roommate (moderately supported), and greater likelihood of the roommates continuing to live together in following years (minimally supported). For Hypothesis 2, it is likely that parts (B) and (D) were only minimally supported because roommate liking and roommate success are not synonymous, and many participants appear to distinguish between the two. Comparing the findings from Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4, it follows that people make more extreme judgments in face-to-face meetings than over Facebook because there were stronger correlations between positive face-to-face impressions in 4(A) and 4(C) than in 2(A) and 2(C). Overall, results seemed to indicate that personality and amicability (friendly, warm, attractive, easygoing, exciting, outgoing, popular, trustworthy) were more important to roommates than differing or similar lifestyle factors (seriousness, organization, paranoia, religion, political engagement, cleanliness). Additionally, these impressions seemed to be shaped more by personality than activities. It is important to note that none of the Facebook and face-to-face factors were ranked above moderately important. While the impression is still being made, it appears that it is not one specific factor is directing the impression, but rather multiple factors combined.

Research Question 3 asked how confident respondents were about the impression they formed on Facebook. The mean response fell exactly on the second highest confidence option (somewhat confident). This suggests that people place a lot of weight on what they discover about others on Facebook. Other data in this study found that Facebook and face-to-face impressions were highly correlated, so this high confidence seems warranted.

Hypothesis 3 was based on traditional gender stereotypes, predicting that (A) females would make more extreme judgments on their roommates’ physical appearance and belongings while (B) males would make more extreme judgments on the types of activities in which their roommates engaged. Our findings indicate that these stereotypes might not be completely accurate, as females seemed to make more extreme judgments on both physical appearance and activities. Though females did find room decor, clothing, personal effects, and physical attractiveness more important than males, these differences were not statistically significant, as both males and females stated that these factors were only moderately important when forming face-to-face impressions of their roommates. Contrary to stereotypes saying that women make judgments based on appearance more than men do, our results may indicate that men place a similar amount of importance on appearance when forming impressions of others.

The results supported our fifth hypothesis that face-to-face impressions are better predictors than Facebook impressions of (A) satisfaction between roommates and (B) greater likelihood of roommates continuing to live together in following years. These results implicate that face-to-face impressions provide a better sense of how a relationship may continue in the future as compared to a Facebook impression. In a new world of social media and people meeting online, these results emphasize the importance of face-to-face interactions for successful and satisfying relationships.

Findings from Hypothesis 6 did not support Hypothesis 6(A), though they did support Hypotheses (B) and (C). Findings reflected that, contrary to our prediction, roommates who chose one another were not more likely to report Facebook and face-to-face impression formation similarities. Rather, participants who had no choice in their roommates reported more similarity between Facebook and face-to-face impression formation. A factor contributing to this could be that participants had a stronger expectation of what their roommate would be like from Facebook because they selected that person themselves, so any discrepancy between online and real-world impressions was highlighted. Findings for Hypothesis (B) and (C) reflected that roommates who chose one another were more satisfied than those who were assigned a random roommate, and were also more likely to continue to live together in future years than those who were assigned a random roommate. This may be due in part to cognitive dissonance, making roommates work harder to make the situation work because it is what they chose for themselves.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Limitations of this portion of the study include missing factors that may affect roommate impression formation. Future studies could alleviate this by providing an open-ended or “other” option for survey respondents, allowing for additional Facebook and face-to-face factors to be considered in the data. Another limitation could be imperfect memory recall. For some survey respondents, it had been a few years since they lived with their freshman roommate. Additionally, the outcome of the roommate living situation could have led respondents to unwittingly modify their memories of their first impressions. For example, a detrimental event that occurred further into the roommate relationship may cause a negative bias in the recollection of the initial impression. To account for this, future studies should explore specific roommate situations on a more in-depth level, such as case studies including interviews with other roommates or mutual friends who observed the roommate relationship progression and/or impression formation.

Additional limitations include the potential of roommates communicating prior to move-in day via text or messaging. While we asked if roommates had met face-to-face and whether they knew one another prior to living together, future studies should also ask about the depth and frequency of roommate communication through other means prior to meeting face-to-face. Another possibility would be to do a cyberspace impression in general, rather than a Facebook impression, potentially contrasting the differences in the two forums. There are many other social media outlets further research can examine, such as Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. A further limitation would be that there can be successful roommate situations without mutual liking, or unsuccessful roommate situations with roommates that do like one another, yet simply can’t live well together. Future studies should examine these nuances, looking at the correlations between each, as well as what factors carried the most weight, and what factors were predictable from roommates’ Facebook impressions or known from their initial meeting/conversation.

Future studies could also examine whether roommate success is more likely between friends or those who simply “coexist” without having much of a relationship, as well as whether roommates having the same definition of “roommate success” made their success more likely. Regarding impression formation, future studies should look at non-roommate populations, including classmates, co-workers, colleagues, friends’ friends, dates, teammates, employees, and more. In each of these different populations, future studies should examine whether the weight of the impressions was influenced by the nature of the relationship the people were going to have, and the influence that the person held.

**Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated a great deal of information regarding impression formation based on both face-to-face situations and online sites--in this case, Facebook. Impressions made from Facebook correlate strongly with the face-to-face impressions that follow, proving to be good predictors of face-to-face impressions. Although in the end, face-to-face impressions are the best predictors for long-term relationship success and satisfaction.

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