The Great Facebook Stalking Experiment

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Lab Section: W/F 11:00 am

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Abstract:

First and foremost, our experiment was successful in replicating the results of the original experiment. My group members and I found a high correlation between our ratings and the self-ratings submitted by the participants of our survey. The degree to which they agreed, however, were slightly different from the original experiment. This could be due to a number of factors. The original experiment, for example, was able to have multiple people rate one person, which could allow for a more accurate judgment. The overall consensus is that because our correlations are so similar to the correlations in the original experiment, the use of Facebook specifically does not alter the results of the original experiment. Facebook does not make it easier to judge people than personal web pages did in the past.

Introduction:

During this experiment, we wanted to replicate the work of Simine Vazire and Samuel D. Gosling. They sought to “examine personality impressions based on personal websites” (Vazire 124). They then tested to see how accurate these impressions were by comparing them to self reports. As it happens, the results of their experiment showed that the impressions formed by strangers of a particular person based off a personal webpage tended to agree with that person’s self report. Their research was reproduced in 2006 and specifically tailored to measure for the big five personality traits. Self-Other agreement was also very high in this experiment, but it was specifically highest when measuring Openness to Experience (Marcus 1014).

With the invention of Facebook, personal websites have become far more advanced and popular than when the original experiment and its reproduction were done. Because of this, we chose to analyze peoples’ Facebooks to form our impressions. As people use Facebook more, and as a result upload more data with which to form an impression, our impressions should agree more with each individual’s self-report than they did in the previous experiments.

We also chose to specifically measure the big five personality traits. Surveys were then sent out to about fifty people so that they could rate themselves on several aspects of their personality. Multiple questions were used to measure each of the big five traits. To remove bias, a member of the group who did not know them then went on their Facebook and filled out the same questionnaire regarding the participant.

Method:

When selecting participants for the survey, my group members and I had to make sure that there were an even amount of people that none of us knew. With a total goal of around fifty participants, we each selected around seventeen people, half of which would be rated by one group member, and the other half of which would be rated by the third group member. We took care to ensure that the participants and the group member to whom they were assigned were strangers.

As all of the participants were drawn from people we know, they are mostly college students, or in the age range of an average college student. The exceptions are coworkers and family, but they account for around 12% of the participants. There are also approximately twice as many women as men. Overall, the group is fairly diverse, with a wide range of ethnicities and religions.

After the self-reports were submitted, each participant’s Facebook was analyzed through the use of a survey identical to the self-report, but was filled out by a group member. This second survey, we referred to as the “stalking survey”. We then pulled out the questions from the survey which best measured each of the five big personality traits. The survey asked for the participants to rate their responses to a statement on a scale of 1-4, which 1 being “disagree strongly”, and 4 being “agree strongly”. If the participant put the same number as the group member, we considered our rating to be in line with the self-report. However, we also considered the self-report and the stalking survey to be in agreement if the responses were on the same side of the scale, regardless of the degree to which the statement was made. For example, if the self-report was answered with a 4 and the stalking survey was answered with a 3, we considered the group member’s analysis to be accurate, since both the group member and the participant agreed to the statement to some degree.

Results:

Rows that are bolded indicate an agreement between the self-report and judgment ratings.

**Openness to new experiences**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Self-report** | **Judgement** |
| Janell Herrera | 2 | 4 |
| **Samantha Smith** | **4** | **3** |
| **Maha Toba** | **3** | **4** |
| Gregory McElmeel | 3 | 2 |
| Kelly Kaminsky | 2 | 3 |
| **Ashar Malik** | **3** | **3** |
| **Mikita Patel** | **3** | **3** |
| **Eric Moy** | **4** | **4** |
| **Katie Wellington** | **4** | **4** |
| **Jacalyn McElmeel** | **4** | **3** |
| **Tori Olson** | **3** | **3** |
| **Conor Rowley** | **4** | **4** |
| **Chris Ponicki** | **3** | **3** |
| **Brandon Summers** | **3** | **4** |
| **Trevor Evans** | **3** | **3** |
| Joann Marrocco | 4 | 2 |
| **Gino Frank** | **4** | **3** |
| **Mary Kate Flemming** | **3** | **3** |
| **Zohah Noor Beg** | **4** | **4** |
| **Maegan McElmeel** | **3** | **3** |
| Sarah Safe | 3 | 2 |
| Valerie Sant-Claire | 4 | 2 |
| **Misael Miranda** | **4** | **4** |
| Miranda Doyle | 2 | 4 |
| **Salman S** | **3** | **3** |
| **Mehak Hamid** | **2** | **2** |
| **Tricia Ponicki** | **4** | **3** |
| Nadia Hines | 2 | 3 |
| **Sarah Shelton** | **3** | **4** |
| Asma Tawil | 2 | 3 |
| **Mudassir Ali** | **4** | **3** |
| Akram Almasri | 3 | 2 |
| **Tasneem Aburezeq** | **4** | **4** |
| **Deema Martini** | **3** | **3** |
| **Hafsa Siddiqui** | **3** | **3** |
| **Sarah Weldy** | **3** | **3** |
| **Samra Matin** | **3** | **3** |
| **Nimra Burney** | **3** | **4** |
| Zarin Sultana | 3 | 2 |
| Layla Fattash | 3 | 2 |
| **Janeen Radwan** | **2** | **2** |
| **Tamara Nafe** | **2** | **2** |
| **Frank A. Barca** | **4** | **3** |
| **Muzammil Ali** | **3** | **3** |
| **Helena Sumbulla** | **4** | **4** |
| **Jessica Katz** | **4** | **3** |
| **Ahsan Ali** | **4** | **4** |
| **Susie Decker** | **3** | **4** |
| **Patrick Keefe** | **4** | **3** |

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Judgement** | 3.1020 | .71429 |
| **Self-report** | 3.2041 | .70651 |

**Correlations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pearson Correlation** | **Judgement** | **Self-report** |
| **Judgement** | 1.000 | .247 |
| **Self-report** | .247 | 1.000 |

Most people reported that they were open to new experiences, but didn’t often strongly agree. A 3 was the most common answer. On average, group members judged this trait with a 3 about as often as people judged themselves with a 3. This is reflected by the correlation, .247, which indicates strong agreement between the self-reports and the judgments. The standard deviation for this and all other traits is large because it indicates that these traits vary from person to person.

**Self-discipline (Conscientiousness)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Self-report** | **Judgement** |
| **Janell Herrera** | **1** | **2** |
| Samantha Smith | 2 | 3 |
| Maha Toba | 2 | 3 |
| Gregory McElmeel | 3 | 2 |
| **Kelly Kaminsky** | **3** | **3** |
| **Ashar Malik** | **3** | **4** |
| Mikita Patel | 3 | 2 |
| Eric Moy | 3 | 2 |
| **Katie Wellington** | **3** | **4** |
| **Jacalyn McElmeel** | **4** | **4** |
| **Tori Olson** | **3** | **4** |
| **Conor Rowley** | **1** | **2** |
| Chris Ponicki | 3 | 2 |
| Brandon Summers | 3 | 2 |
| **Trevor Evans** | **1** | **2** |
| **Joann Marrocco** | **4** | **3** |
| **Gino Frank** | **2** | **2** |
| **Mary Kate Flemming** | **2** | **1** |
| Zohah Noor Beg | 2 | 3 |
| **Maegan McElmeel** | **3** | **4** |
| **Sarah Safe** | **3** | **4** |
| Valerie Sant-Claire | 2 | 3 |
| Misael Miranda | 4 | 2 |
| **Miranda Doyle** | **3** | **3** |
| Salman S | 1 | 4 |
| Mehak Hamid | 1 | 4 |
| **Tricia Ponicki** | **3** | **4** |
| **Nadia Hines** | **2** | **2** |
| **Sarah Shelton** | **4** | **3** |
| Asma Tawil | 2 | 4 |
| **Mudassir Ali** | **3** | **4** |
| **Akram Almasri** | **3** | **3** |
| **Tasneem Aburezeq** | **4** | **4** |
| **Deema Martini** | **3** | **3** |
| Hafsa Siddiqui | 1 | 4 |
| Sarah Weldy | 2 | 3 |
| **Samra Matin** | **3** | **3** |
| Nimra Burney | 3 | 2 |
| Zarin Sultana | 2 | 4 |
| **Layla Fattash** | **3** | **4** |
| Janeen Radwan | 1 | 3 |
| Tamara Nafe | 2 | 3 |
| **Frank A. Barca** | **3** | **3** |
| **Muzammil Ali** | **4** | **3** |
| **Helena Sumbulla** | **1** | **2** |
| **Jessica Katz** | **4** | **3** |
| **Ahsan Ali** | **3** | **4** |
| Susie Decker | 2 | 4 |
| **Patrick Keefe** | **2** | **2** |

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Judgement** | 3.0204 | .85366 |
| **Self-report** | 2.5510 | .93678 |

**Correlations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pearson Correlation** | **Judgement** | **Self-report** |
| **Judgement** | 1.000 | .142 |
| **Self-report** | .142 | 1.000 |

When judging self-discipline, on average group members judged participants with a 3, indicating slight agreement. In contrast, however, most participants seemed to be split between slight agreement and slight disagreement, which can be gathered from the mean rating of 2.5. The differences in the two means shows that the group members and the self-reports didn’t agree that often, though they were close. The correlation also indicates this, as it is positive, but lower in value that the correlation from openness to new experiences.

**Extraversion**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Self-report** | **Judgement** |
| Janell Herrera | 2 | 4 |
| **Samantha Smith** | **4** | **4** |
| Maha Toba | 2 | 3 |
| **Gregory McElmeel** | **2** | **2** |
| Kelly Kaminsky | 4 | 2 |
| **Ashar Malik** | **3** | **3** |
| **Mikita Patel** | **3** | **4** |
| **Eric Moy** | **4** | **4** |
| **Katie Wellington** | **3** | **4** |
| **Jacalyn McElmeel** | **4** | **4** |
| **Tori Olson** | **4** | **4** |
| Conor Rowley | 1 | 4 |
| **Chris Ponicki** | **3** | **4** |
| **Brandon Summers** | **4** | **4** |
| Trevor Evans | 2 | 3 |
| **Joann Marrocco** | **4** | **3** |
| **Gino Frank** | **4** | **3** |
| Mary Kate Flemming | 2 | 4 |
| **Zohah Noor Beg** | **3** | **4** |
| **Maegan McElmeel** | **3** | **4** |
| **Sarah Safe** | **2** | **2** |
| **Valerie Sant-Claire** | **1** | **2** |
| **Misael Miranda** | **4** | **4** |
| Miranda Doyle | 2 | 3 |
| Salman S | 2 | 3 |
| Mehak Hamid | 3 | 1 |
| **Tricia Ponicki** | **4** | **4** |
| Nadia Hines | 2 | 3 |
| Sarah Shelton | 2 | 3 |
| **Asma Tawil** | **4** | **4** |
| Mudassir Ali | 4 | 2 |
| Akram Almasri | 3 | 2 |
| **Tasneem Aburezeq** | **3** | **3** |
| **Deema Martini** | **4** | **4** |
| **Hafsa Siddiqui** | **3** | **3** |
| **Sarah Weldy** | **4** | **4** |
| Samra Matin | 4 | 2 |
| **Nimra Burney** | **3** | **4** |
| **Zarin Sultana** | **1** | **2** |
| Layla Fattash | 3 | 2 |
| **Janeen Radwan** | **3** | **3** |
| Tamara Nafe | 2 | 3 |
| **Frank A. Barca** | **4** | **3** |
| Muzammil Ali | 2 | 3 |
| **Helena Sumbulla** | **4** | **3** |
| Jessica Katz | 3 | 2 |
| **Ahsan Ali** | **4** | **4** |
| **Susie Decker** | **3** | **4** |
| **Patrick Keefe** | **4** | **4** |

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Judgement** | 3.2041 | .84112 |
| **Self-report** | 3.0204 | .94626 |

**Correlations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pearson Correlation** | **Judgement** | **Self-report** |
| **Judgement** | 1.000 | .283 |
| **Self-report** | .283 | 1.000 |

The means of the self-reports and judgments are fairly close in value, indicating a good level of agreement between the two surveys. This is also reflected in the high correlation value, which is positive and large. Extraversion, as a result, is a trait that can be inferred from social media.

**Agreeableness (Sympathetic)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Self-report** | **Judgement** |
| **Janell Herrera** | **3** | **3** |
| **Samantha Smith** | **4** | **3** |
| **Maha Toba** | **4** | **4** |
| Gregory McElmeel | 3 | 2 |
| **Kelly Kaminsky** | **3** | **3** |
| **Ashar Malik** | **4** | **3** |
| **Mikita Patel** | **3** | **4** |
| **Eric Moy** | **4** | **4** |
| **Katie Wellington** | **3** | **4** |
| **Jacalyn McElmeel** | **4** | **3** |
| **Tori Olson** | **4** | **4** |
| **Conor Rowley** | **4** | **4** |
| **Chris Ponicki** | **3** | **3** |
| Brandon Summers | 4 | 2 |
| Trevor Evans | 2 | 3 |
| **Joann Marrocco** | **3** | **3** |
| **Gino Frank** | **4** | **3** |
| Mary Kate Flemming | 2 | 3 |
| **Zohah Noor Beg** | **4** | **4** |
| **Maegan McElmeel** | **3** | **3** |
| **Sarah Safe** | **4** | **4** |
| **Valerie Sant-Claire** | **4** | **3** |
| **Misael Miranda** | **4** | **3** |
| **Miranda Doyle** | **4** | **4** |
| **Salman S** | **3** | **3** |
| **Mehak Hamid** | **4** | **3** |
| **Tricia Ponicki** | **4** | **3** |
| **Nadia Hines** | **3** | **3** |
| **Sarah Shelton** | **4** | **4** |
| **Asma Tawil** | **3** | **3** |
| Mudassir Ali | 2 | 3 |
| **Akram Almasri** | **4** | **3** |
| **Tasneem Aburezeq** | **3** | **4** |
| **Deema Martini** | **4** | **4** |
| **Hafsa Siddiqui** | **4** | **4** |
| **Sarah Weldy** | **4** | **3** |
| **Samra Matin** | **4** | **4** |
| **Nimra Burney** | **3** | **4** |
| **Zarin Sultana** | **3** | **4** |
| **Layla Fattash** | **4** | **4** |
| **Janeen Radwan** | **4** | **4** |
| **Tamara Nafe** | **3** | **4** |
| **Frank A. Barca** | **4** | **4** |
| **Muzammil Ali** | **4** | **4** |
| **Helena Sumbulla** | **4** | **3** |
| **Jessica Katz** | **3** | **4** |
| **Ahsan Ali** | **4** | **4** |
| Susie Decker | 3 | 2 |
| **Patrick Keefe** | **3** | **3** |

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Judgement** | 3.4082 | .60959 |
| **Self-report** | 3.5102 | .61652 |

**Correlations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pearson Correlation** | **Judgement** | **Self-report** |
| **Judgement** | 1.000 | .266 |
| **Self-report** | .266 | 1.000 |

Most people indicated that they were agreeable, or strongly agreeable, as can be seen by the mean score of 3.5. The judgements have a similar mean of 3.4, which indicates that group members also thought that most people were agreeable to some degree. Because the means are both so close to 3.5, this means that both the self-reports and the group members put roughly the same amount of 3’s and the same amount of 4’s. This high level of agreement is backed up by the correlation, .266.

**Neuroticism (Easily upset)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Self-report** | **Judgement** |
| Janell Herrera | 3 | 2 |
| Samantha Smith | 2 | 3 |
| **Maha Toba** | **2** | **2** |
| Gregory McElmeel | 2 | 3 |
| **Kelly Kaminsky** | **3** | **3** |
| **Ashar Malik** | **2** | **1** |
| Mikita Patel | 2 | 3 |
| **Eric Moy** | **2** | **2** |
| **Katie Wellington** | **2** | **2** |
| **Jacalyn McElmeel** | **2** | **2** |
| **Tori Olson** | **3** | **3** |
| **Conor Rowley** | **1** | **2** |
| **Chris Ponicki** | **2** | **2** |
| **Brandon Summers** | **2** | **2** |
| **Trevor Evans** | **1** | **2** |
| Joann Marrocco | 2 | 3 |
| **Gino Frank** | **2** | **2** |
| **Mary Kate Flemming** | **2** | **2** |
| Zohah Noor Beg | 3 | 2 |
| Maegan McElmeel | 2 | 3 |
| **Sarah Safe** | **2** | **2** |
| **Valerie Sant-Claire** | **2** | **2** |
| Misael Miranda | 2 | 3 |
| **Miranda Doyle** | **1** | **2** |
| **Salman S** | **2** | **1** |
| **Mehak Hamid** | **2** | **1** |
| **Tricia Ponicki** | **2** | **2** |
| **Nadia Hines** | **3** | **3** |
| **Sarah Shelton** | **2** | **2** |
| Asma Tawil | 3 | 2 |
| **Mudassir Ali** | **2** | **1** |
| Akram Almasri | 3 | 1 |
| **Tasneem Aburezeq** | **2** | **2** |
| **Deema Martini** | **3** | **3** |
| Hafsa Siddiqui | 3 | 2 |
| **Sarah Weldy** | **3** | **3** |
| **Samra Matin** | **2** | **2** |
| **Nimra Burney** | **3** | **3** |
| **Zarin Sultana** | **1** | **1** |
| Layla Fattash | 3 | 1 |
| Janeen Radwan | 3 | 2 |
| **Tamara Nafe** | **3** | **3** |
| Frank A. Barca | 3 | 2 |
| **Muzammil Ali** | **1** | **1** |
| Helena Sumbulla | 3 | 2 |
| Jessica Katz | 2 | 3 |
| **Ahsan Ali** | **2** | **1** |
| Susie Decker | 3 | 2 |
| **Patrick Keefe** | **1** | **2** |

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Judgement** | 2.1020 | .68450 |
| **Self-report** | 2.2245 | .65400 |

**Correlations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pearson Correlation** | **Judgement** | **Self-report** |
| **Judgement** | 1.000 | .274 |
| **Self-report** | .274 | 1.000 |

Once again, the means are very close in value, which indicates a high level of agreement between the self-reports and the judgments. Most people disagreed that they were neurotic, and the group members tended to also think that the people they were judging were not neurotic. This relationship is further supported by the large, positive correlation between the two ratings.

Discussion:

From the degrees to which self-reports and judgment ratings agree or disagree, we can now tell whether or not it is possible to form an accurate judgment of a stranger from their social media page or personal website. The correlations are as follows: openness to new experience = .247, conscientiousness = .142, extraversion = .283, agreeableness = .266, and neuroticism = .274. These results replicate the findings of the initial study by showing a high rate of agreement between self-reports and judgments. Also, contrary to the study done by Marcus and his colleagues, we actually found that it was easiest to judge extraversion, rather than openness to new experiences.

Most of our correlations are either slightly higher or slightly lower than the correlations found in the original study, indicating that Facebook has not actually significantly impacted the ability to judge a person’s characteristics based off of a personal web page. The alternative conclusion to this, however, is that we were not as experienced in making these judgments as the people who made the judgments in the original experiment. Our own inexperience and lack of resources were a limitation to the reliability of our study. The original study also had multiple people rate one person’s page, which allows for a more accurate judgment.

In the future, it may be interesting to see how the accuracy of judgment depends on the type of social media used. For example, rather than using Facebook, one could make judgments based off Instagram or Twitter. The types of social media used could provide more insight into different types of traits. Certain forms of personal websites may be better for judging specific characteristic. Doing the experiment in this way may provide better insight into how these judgments are formed.

References

Marcus, B., Machilek, F., & Schutz, A. (n.d.). Personality in Cyberspace: Personal Web Sites as Media for Personality Expressions and Impressions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 1014-1031.

Vazire, S., & Gosling, S. (n.d.). E-Perceptions: Personality Impressions Based on Personal Websites. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 123-132.