



## The Truman Experiment

BY ELIZABETH NECKA  
Columnist

Moving day, freshman year: I'm decked out in my Truman T-shirt, ready to drag all of my boxes up five flights of un-air-conditioned stairs (family in tow), and my biggest concern isn't about classes or being on my own. I'm most concerned about how I'll get along with my roommate.

It's a concern most freshmen have, though how far up it rests on their totem pole, I'm not sure. For me, it was paramount, especially considering that my Facebook research mostly highlighted our differences. My sister and I, despite being different as well, managed not to kill each other while sharing a room — but there's something to be said about having Mom and Dad looming just down the hall that keeps you in line.

A psychological study published this summer suggested that a satisfactory living arrangement depends not so much on the person with whom you are paired, but your approach to co-habitation.

Good roommate relation-

ships are greatly influenced by how responsive you are to your roommate, according to research in July's *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Responsive roommates pay attention to how their roommate feels, show that they understand and care about their roommate, are sensitive to their roommate's feelings and basically make their roommate feel valued. If you're responsive, you make your roommate feel comfortable at home. I know, this seems like a challenge, especially considering you have no past obligations to this person and they're likely to pull at least one stunt that will drive you crazy as you adjust to living together. Why should you care about them?

The fact of the matter is, whether you think you'll like them or not, your roommate will know you more intimately than many of the people you meet. They'll know that you talk in your sleep, that you sometimes pull a pair of jeans out of the dirty clothes hamper when laundry day approaches and you're running low and that you

have ooey-goey 'I love you more' wars with your long-distance significant other. If you're in a suite style room, they'll even know your bathroom habits.

But that's why it's so imperative to establish and maintain a good relationship with that person — that's sensitive information you want to be able to trust them with!

Our own behaviors toward our roommates influence our perceptions of how they're treating us, according to the study. Through a process called projection, we attribute our own emotions and traits to another person, unconsciously assuming the people we interact with all function under the same principles that we do. Freshman-year, randomly-assigned roommate pairs were examined, in the study. If one of the roommates had compassionate interpersonal goals, wanting to make their living situation hospitable for the sake of the other person's well-being, the pair tended to have a better relationship with their living partner

than pairs where one of the roommates had self-image interpersonal goals, concerns with self-presentation and psychological entitlement, sometimes at the expense of others. Although people with more self-image goals tend to report higher levels of

loneliness and lower levels of trust in other people, individuals with compassionate goals are aware that both people can receive the greatest fulfillment from a relationship if they work together and look out for one another.

The type of goal the freshmen exhibited, in turn, influenced their responsiveness to their roommates' concerns and worries, which influenced how responsive they perceived

their roommates to be toward them, which influenced how they responded, fueling a magnificently upward rising or devastatingly downward falling cycle through which they established their relationship. The study suggests a truth in the golden rule — treat

others the way you'd like to be treated, because you'll perceive that they're treating you the way you treat them.

From my various living situations throughout college, I can validate the statistical data with my real life experience. When I equally met my roommate's concerns about her grandfather's health, it seemed as though she was just as concerned with my family. When I gave little heed to a different roommate's relationship issues,

I shouldn't have been surprised when he practically ignored my own. Whether my roommates actually reacted this way or I just felt they did is debatable, but the point is, you really do get a dose of your own medicine. These little interactions may seem insignificant at the time, but they go a long way toward developing a hospitable or distrustful relationship.

My freshman year, moving day ran more smoothly than I expected — and the year followed the same. I was awkward as I met my roommate, polite as I folded my clothes into drawers. She rushed a sorority, I joined the theater crowd. She expressed interest in science, while I expressed an aversion to it. But throughout the situations we faced freshman year, we were perceptive of and responsive to one another's thoughts and feelings. I don't promise that it was all smooth sailing, but we're still friendly today. I can think back on freshman year fondly. We, too, managed not to kill each other, and Mom and Dad were hundreds of miles away.

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## Carell plays idiotic guest, endears viewers in "Schmucks"

"Dinner for Schmucks"



BY KEN DUSOLD  
Staff Reviewer

Tim Conrad has the luxury car, condo and envy-worthy girlfriend. Now he wants the newly-vacated corner office to complement his great life. Lucky for Tim (Paul Rudd), his chances of getting what he wants hinges on a dinner to be hosted by his slick, sadistic boss, Lance Fender (Bruce Greenwood). A dinner would seem simple enough, except for one minor detail: Tim must find the most extreme kind of idiot and bring him along as part of an insensitive dinner party game, where the hosts secretly make fun of the guests.

Enter Barry Speck, a naïve and completely moronic man with the impossibly perfect timing that could be found only in a terrific modern slapstick comedy.

In "Dinner for Schmucks," Steve Carell proves that he gets funnier with each new role by giving a truly hilarious and uniquely simple performance as Barry, a man whose profession is tax collecting and whose passion is staging elaborate re-creations of famous paintings and historic scenes using dead mice. While this might sound creepy — and it is at first — the plot quickly shows this strange hobby to be a bittersweet channel by which Barry can continually repress a deep, inner sadness. As it turns out, he needs Tim as much as Tim needs him ... only on a much more human level.

What Tim could not know is that by welcoming Barry into his world, he is welcoming one of the most destructive and ignorantly stupid men in film history.

Despite having moral objections to this ridiculously cruel party, almost losing his girlfriend Julie (Stephanie Szostak) to an egotistical artist (Jemaine Clement) through a series of predictable misunderstandings and almost ruining a valuable business deal, Tim still goes through with the dinner. One would think he'd give up on the dinner after being attacked by a murderous stalker, who was given his address by his dim-witted new pal, or after insulting Barry's equally stupid boss (Zach Galifianakis) to the point of being warned that an Internal Revenue Service audit is imminent. But, of course, he has to go to Fender's gathering. The dinner is the punch line for which the entire plot acts as the build-up. You paid for a ticket to "Dinner for Schmucks," and a dinner you shall get.



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com  
Steve Carell plays Barry Speck, an oblivious and unintelligent dinner guest, in the summer 2010 comedy, "Dinner for Schmucks."

The dinner, which is the most enjoyable part of the film, is filled with a menagerie of Barry Speck-level "talent," all of whom are competing for the honor of being called the most interesting person Fender has ever encountered — a.k.a. the biggest idiot award. Beyond the antics of the dinner, a refreshingly admirable Barry presents one last reason to unconditionally root for him in life. Despite being forewarned about Fender's true intentions by Tim, Barry remains steadfastly determined to win the contest and make his new friend proud. This aspect — Barry's simplicity as a lesson for what is most important — is what makes "Dinner for Schmucks" a new victory for director Jay Roach (of "Meet the Parents" fame). Barry puts Tim first and never moves from this morally-tormented man's side. Sure, Barry slowly unravels Tim's loosely-bound life, but it serves as a turn away from the fake world with which Tim is most familiar and toward a friendship-filled world, loaded with bitter truth and uncompromising loyalty.

Carell's presence combined with the brilliantly original performances of Galifianakis and Clement as

two colorfully repulsive adversaries make this a very funny comedy, rich with quotable lines and conversation-starting character interaction. Unfortunately, the script and supporting characters leave little from which to build.

The character of Darla the stalker sets up jokes for Carell to hit out of the park, but falls short of adding any humor or substance to the story. David Williams and Lucy Davenport as the multi-million dollar Müeller couple are so over-the-top, they seem like a cheap farce that fails to pay off. Even Rudd's performance as the straight man is too straight. His physical humor, seen early in the film, fades into blandness, without even a variation in facial reactions. A "Schmucks" version of "I drink your milkshake" — a reference to Daniel Day-Lewis' now famous line from the 2007 Oscar-winner, "There Will Be Blood" — is in bad taste, unoriginal and not funny.

What "Schmucks" does correctly is offer a humorous variant on a famous idiom we would all do good to remember: He who laughs first is a schmuck, while he who laughs last is a hero. And the Barry Specks of the world are the real winners.



Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Ouanes  
From left to right, Chris Koza, Peter Sieve, Linnea Mohn, Luke Anderson and Joey Kantor make up Rogue Valley.

## Koza to perform at Summer on Square

BY ALEX CARLSON  
Staff Reporter

The 2010 season of Summer on the Square aims to go out with a bang. The concert series has enlisted folk and indie-rock band Rogue Valley for the final performance slot Aug. 27 on the Adair County Courthouse lawn.

Rogue Valley is the newest music project from fan favorite Chris Koza, whose mixture of indie-rock and folk has proven commercially successful and brings in fans across the country. The band is comprised of Koza, Peter Sieve, Luke Anderson, Joey Kantor and Linnea Mohn.

Previous shows in Kirksville have gathered support from students and residents alike. Enthusiasm for Rogue Valley's latest Kirksville appearance has earned the band the coveted final slot of the concert series.

"[We] came down and performed a couple years ago," Koza said. "It was one of the best out-of-town shows we've done. People buying CDs, shirts, and having a good time. As a performer, it was good seeing everyone support you."

The Summer on the Square sponsors a number of diverse and unique artists ranging from rock to jazz to country. The Kirksville Arts Association founded the series 10 years ago and works with sponsor Kirksville Rocks'

website to promote the events. Past performers have included the Kirksville Community Chorus, blues group Blue Voodoo and the Chris Koza band, Koza's project before forming Rogue Valley.

"There's a range of performers and styles," said Royce Kallerud, Kirksville Arts Association committee member. "It reaches out to the whole community, both local and musicians from all

across the country."

The Truman State University student body has contributed to the success of the Summer on the Square event in the past, especially once the beginning of the fall semester arrives.

"We try to gear toward our returning students with the last show," said Judy Neuweg, executive director of the Kirksville Arts Association. "One of our goals is to involve and attract students to the show. The last [show] we want to use as a 'welcome back!'"

Rogue Valley ambitiously aims to release four studio albums during the course of a year, each one representing a different season. The band's first studio album of the four, Crater Lake, is available now.

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Rogue Valley