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Privacy in Public: Personality and Eriksonian Theory as Applied to College Students' Facebook Disclosure

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Privacy in Public: Personality and Eriksonian Theory as Applied to College Students’ Facebook Disclosure

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Background
- **Extroversion:** Gaining energy from others vs. from self
- **Neuroticism:** Worrying, emotionally unstable
- **Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development:**
  - People must deal with certain decisions (“crises”) at specific life stages
  - **Identity vs. Role Confusion**
  - **Intimacy vs. Isolation**
- Research is divided in how each of these aspects of a person affect what they disclose on their Facebook profiles.

Project Description
- “What effect do personality and stage of development according to Erikson’s theory have on Facebook disclosure?”
- Hypotheses:
  - High extroversion  $\rightarrow$ High Facebook disclosure
  - High neuroticism  $\rightarrow$ High Facebook disclosure
  - Strong identity  $\rightarrow$ High Facebook disclosure
  - Strong intimacy  $\rightarrow$ Low Facebook disclosure
- Participants: 56 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology class
- Independent variables: extroversion, neuroticism, identity, intimacy, social support
- Dependent variables: total number of categories in “Info” section and results on “Real Me” questionnaire (secondary dependent variable)

Method
Steps:
1) Questionnaire on Facebook use
2) NEO-PI-R Five-Factor Inventory of Personality: Extraversion and Neuroticism
(Costa & McCrae, 1992)
3) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
(Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988)
4) “Real Me” questionnaire
(Amichai-Hamburger; Wainapel; & Fox, 2002)
5) Identity and intimacy sections of the Erikson Psychosocial Inventory Scale
(Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981)
6) Logged onto Facebook & used checklist!

Results
- Extroversion significantly negatively correlated with number of items in “Info” section—did not support hypothesis
- None of the other factors of interest had a significant effect on the total number of categories.
- Surprising findings:
  - Correlations between “Real Me” and other measures of interest

Future Research
- Continue exploring internet self vs. offline self using a different measure
- Encompass a greater variety of ages to explore Eriksonian psychosocial stages
- Analyze other parts of Facebook profile for disclosure

Correlations among all measures of interest.
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

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