

Final Report – Professional Development Grant  
Southeastern Psychological Association 2009 Annual Conference

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**Restatement of Problem**

This grant allowed me to attend the annual conference of the Southeastern Psychological Association on February 17-21 in New Orleans, LA.

**Review of the Work / Procedure**

In conjunction with several graduate and undergraduate students, I presented poster presentations\* on original research conducted in the areas of social networking use among undergraduate students, social aggression in college females, and negative consequences of physical attractiveness. Attending the conference not only allowed me to present this research and discuss my findings with others doing work on similar problems, but also allowed me to attend numerous presentations in my research areas as well as ways to improve my teaching abilities at the graduate and undergraduate level.

**Outcomes**

I attended the conference, met with others in the field, and discussed options for publishing the work. We had a very strong reception to and interest in our work, particularly the research that examined use of social networking (Facebook) in undergraduates. The presentations are currently being reworked into manuscripts for publication, with expected submissions before the end of the semester. In addition, many of the talks and presentations I attended have helped inform my teaching regarding empirically supported therapies to both my graduate and undergraduate students and recruitment strategies for our Master's program.

**Conclusions**

This grant allowed me to attend a conference, gain knowledge, and meet other researchers that would not have been possible otherwise. I plan to apply for similar grants in the future to allow me to continue my scholarship.

\* I have attached a copy of the posters as presented at the conference.

# Use of Social Networking by Undergraduate Psychology Majors

Caleb W. Lack, Ph.D., Lisa Beck, & Danielle Hoover



## Introduction

Given the ease with which people can now obtain an online presence for no- or low-cost, either through social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, or Bebo or weblogging entries such as Google+, it is important to help students understand how to use such abilities responsibly. With over 150 million registered users, Facebook is one of the most widely used social networking tools with college students, but little research has been conducted on how students use the site and what type of information they reveal.

Previous research examining how undergraduate education majors (Coutts, Dawson, Boyer, & Ferdig, 2007) and medical students and residents (Thompson et al., 2008) use Facebook have found high rates of disclosure of personal information and unprofessional use, as well as a low number of people choosing to keep their information restricted and private. The current study was undertaken to examine how undergraduate psychology majors use social networking, specifically the website Facebook.com, and what information they are making publicly available.

Hypotheses for the study were that a) the majority of students would have a Facebook account; b) most students with an account would not restrict access to it; and c) a minority of students would have content of a questionable or possibly negative nature.

## Method

### Procedure

Prior to study onset, the Arkansas Tech University (ATU) Human Subjects Committee reviewed and gave approval for the study to proceed. Facebook, unlike other social network sites, requires users to give their first and last name, allowing searching by those parameters. In addition, profiles not made private on purpose are by default open to viewing by other members of your network, such as a university or college.

This study first obtained the names of all undergraduate psychology majors at ATU ( $n = 199$ ) from publicly available lists of majors. Study authors (L.B. and D.H.) used personally created Facebook registrations under their ATU email addresses, automatically enrolling them in the ATU network. They then searched for the participants' profiles by first and last name, or email address if the first search returned no results. It was then determined whether the profile was "public" or "private", a setting that limits the amount of information available to be viewed at the owner's discretion. For public profiles, the following personal information, when applicable, was collected, including: hometown, street address, phone number, the presence of a profile photo, email address, and an instant messenger address. Other information included sexual orientation, relationship status, birthday, field of study, and religious and political views. The number of "friends" each participant had, meaning the number of people that they allowed into their personal network, the number of photo albums they had, and the number of social groups they joined were also collected.

Finally, those participants with publicly available profiles were then examined more qualitatively. Information on the presence of unprofessional material, subjectively defined, was then gathered from each profile. The categories for unprofessional material were display of alcohol or drug use, highly sexualized dress, or overt sexuality, and use of foul language.



## Results

### Use of Social Networking

Of the 199 undergraduate psychology majors, 62.3% ( $n = 124$ ) had existing Facebook accounts at the time of the data collection. Of those, 73.4% ( $n = 91$ ) had open profiles that were available for viewing by any member of their particular network (in this case, the Arkansas Tech network). All further information presented below was gathered only on those 91 students with open profiles (see Table 1). Of the public profiles, they were split relatively evenly between males (54.9%) and females (45.1%).

Table 1

Descriptive information obtained from public Facebook profiles.

Personal information revealed	Total ( $n = 91$ )	Female ( $n = 41$ )	Male ( $n = 50$ )
Birthdate	95.6%	97.6%	94.0%
Hometown	70.3%	61.0%	78.0%
Relationship status	79.1%	82.9%	76.0%
Political views	59.3%	48.8%	68.0%
Religious views	54.9%	51.2%	58.0%
Sexual orientation	76.9%	68.3%	84.0%
Personal photograph	92.3%	90.2%	94.0%
Field of study	48.4%	43.9%	52.0%
Home address	15.4%	9.8%	20.0%
Email address	60.4%	53.7%	66.0%
IM address	17.6%	24.4%	12.0%
Mean # friends (Range)	359.3 (0-1330)	330.2 (0-961)	395.7 (0-1330)
Mean # photo albums (Range)	68.6 (0-975)	112.0 (0-975)	15.6 (0-178)
Mean # social groups (Range)	33.8 (0-269)	28.4 (0-180)	40.46 (0-269)

## Results (cont.)

### Gender Differences

To examine possible gender differences in reveal of personal information, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted. No statistically significant differences were found on any of the variables of interest, although reveal of political views ( $p = .064$ ) and sexual orientation ( $p = .078$ ) approached significance. There was a significant difference in the number of photo albums between males and females, but when the outliers were deleted, no difference was found.

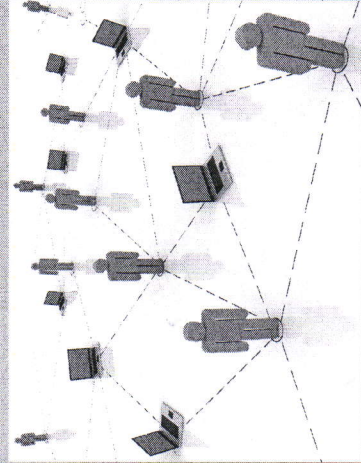
### Qualitative Analyses

Each of those students who had an openly accessible profile on Facebook ( $n = 91$ ) was a participant in the qualitative analyses. Their profiles were examined in depth for content that could be viewed negatively, either by future employers, clients, or graduate schools. References to alcohol or drug use, displays of risqué dress or overt sexuality, and use of foul language were all examined. Of the original 91, 10 students changed their profiles to private between collection of quantitative and qualitative data, leaving a total sample of 81 students. Of those, 22 (27.2%) had questionable content displayed on their profiles (see Table 2).

Table 2

Presence of questionable content on public Facebook profiles.

Questionable content type	Percentage ( $n = 81$ )
Alcohol use	14.8
Drug use	2.4
Risqué dress	3.7
Overt sexuality	6.2
Foul language	18.5



## Discussion

Today's undergraduate student has more opportunity to reveal personal information to large numbers of people than ever before, thanks to the internet. As with past studies, the current research found that large numbers of students use the social networking site Facebook, and that a great percentage make their profiles publicly available, with the resultant reveal of personal information that entails. Both genders appear to disclose personal information at equal rates, with a large amount of information revealed by the average student.

Given the sheer number of students using such sites, and the fact that many of them choose to leave their information publicly viewable, it is not surprising that some would have questionable or potentially offensive content on their profiles. However, these students appear to be in the minority, with the use of foul language and portrayal of alcohol use only appearing on less than 20% of profiles and other content appearing at very small percentages.

Using social networking sites responsibly should be something everyone is given information about, both before and during college. Further, college professors could actually use such sites to connect with students in innovative ways or use them to help teach concepts of professionalism, through discussion of appropriate usage or mentoring.

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# Relationship of Personality Traits to Social Aggression in College Females

Haden J. Shepherd, M.S. & Caleb W. Lack, Ph.D.



## Introduction

Social aggression involves utilizing behaviors to harm the friendships and social status of others (Underwood, 2003a). While research supports that both males and females use socially aggressive tactics (e.g., Kupersmidt, Bryant, & Willoughby, 2000), females tend to engage in social aggression at a higher rate than their male peers do, with gender being the strongest predictor of whether someone will aggress socially or physically (Park, Essex, Zahn-Waxler, Armstrong, Klein, et al., 2005). In addition to gender differences, social aggression is also associated with psychosocial maladjustment in both children (Chick and Grotpeter, 1995) and adults (Storch, Werner, & Storch, 2003). One area often investigated for psychosocial maladjustment is personality assessment. However, the literature on personality and social aggression is virtually nonexistent, with a literature review revealing only one study on personality and relational aggression (i.e., Burton, Hafeez, Henninger, 2007). Even so, the primary focus of that particular study was not personality, but rather establishing gender differences in relational and physical aggression. Therefore, investigating the relationship between personality and social aggression is long overdue, as this relationship currently remains unsettled. Therefore, the current study seeks to understand the relationship between social aggression and the Five-Factor model of personality.

## Method

**Procedure**  
Prior to study onset, the Arkansas Tech University institutional review board with participants being given extra credit in their psychology course for their participation. Measurement administration was counterbalanced with approximately 50% of families being administered the YGTSS before completing child- and parent-report measures. A trained research assistant provided instructions for each measure and was available for assistance. Masters or doctoral level clinical psychology trainees, trained in administration by the first author, administered the YGTSS to both the child and parent jointly in a private clinical office. YGTSS training consisted of an instructional meeting about the YGTSS, four practice interviews, and four directly observed interviews.

## Measures

Participants completed a series of questionnaires that included a demographic questionnaire, an aggression questionnaire of both social and physically aggressive behaviors (Loudin, Loukas, & Robinson, 2003), and the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

## Participants

Participants in this study were females, selected from a small, state university, who were currently enrolled in an undergraduate psychology course. Participation was voluntary, with participants obtaining extra credit as an incentive. The sample included 127 female participants that successfully completed the entire survey. The majority of participants were in the 18-19 year age range (67.7%), followed by those in the 20-21 year age range (13.4%) and those 24 years of age or older (13.4%). The sample was also mostly Caucasian (89.7%), with African-American and Hispanic/Latino each making up 4.8% of the sample population. Furthermore, the majority of participants were freshmen (47.6%) or sophomores (30.2%), followed by juniors at 15.9% and seniors at 6.3%. Most participants indicated either a "b" (47.6%) or an "a" (39.7%) grade point average.

## Results

**The NEO-FFI**  
The professional manual for the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992) list the means and standard deviations for college-age females as 25.83 and 7.59 for Neuroticism, Extraversion has a mean of 31.27 and a SD of 5.64, Openness has a mean of 27.94 and a SD of 5.72, Agreeableness has a mean of 31.00 and a SD of 5.33, and Conscientiousness has a mean of 31.02 and a SD of 6.53. The descriptive statistics for the current research participants on the NEO-FFI are similar to those found in the professional manual. In general, scores were distributed evenly for Neuroticism ( $M = 22.62$ ,  $SD = 6.79$ ), Extraversion ( $M = 29.32$ ,  $SD = 5.56$ ), Openness to Experience ( $M = 29.32$ ,  $SD = 5.56$ ), Agreeableness ( $M = 28.41$ ,  $SD = 4.42$ ), and Conscientiousness ( $M = 31.35$ ,  $SD = 5.80$ ) (see Table 1).

## Aggression questionnaire

Social aggression had a mean of 5.77 ( $SD = 3.49$ ), while physical aggression had a mean of 3.80 ( $SD = 2.19$ ). Loudin, Loukas, and Robinson (2003) reported their social aggression mean for females as 5.82 ( $SD = 3.14$ ) and the mean for physical aggression as 4.33 ( $SD = 2.05$ ). For the current sample, both social aggression and physical aggression had a slight positive skew, with Kurtosis listed as -.658 ( $SEK = .427$ ) for social aggression and 1.30 ( $SEK = .427$ ) for physical aggression (Table 2). This was expected considering participant characteristics and the assessment of aggression, as aggression in general tends to decrease as students transition from high school to college (Fromme, Corbin, & Kruse, 2008), and self-report measures of aggression are highly subject to underreporting and response bias (Hilton, Harris, & Rice, 2003).

Table 1

NEO-FFI Domain	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Neuroticism	22.62	23.00	20.00	6.78
Extraversion	29.32	29.00	29.00	5.55
Openness	22.06	22.00	18.00	5.14
Agreeableness	28.40	28.00	29.00	4.92
Conscientiousness	31.35	32.00	34.00	5.80

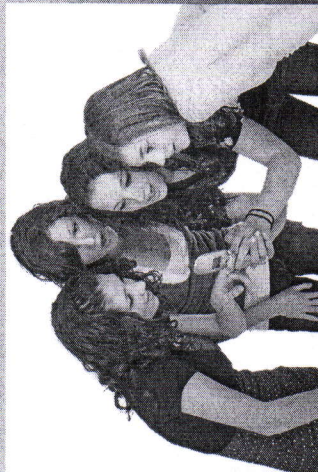


Table 2

Descriptive statistics for self-report aggression

	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Kurtosis	SEK	N
Social Aggression	5.77	5.00	3.49	3.49	-.658	-.427	127
Physical Aggression	3.80	4.00	2.00	2.19	1.30	.427	127

## Results (cont.)

### Regression Analyses

To test the hypothesis that social aggression is associated with high Neuroticism, low Agreeableness, and low Conscientiousness, a series of analyses were undertaken. First, a series of correlational analyses were conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the personality domains and social aggression. The Pearson Product-Moment correlations reveal a significant relationship between social aggression and the personality variables of Neuroticism ( $r = .257$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and Conscientiousness ( $r = -.275$ ,  $p = .002$ ), as well as reported level of physical aggression ( $r = .371$ ,  $p = .000$ ), Table 3.

Next, stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to examine the best predictors of social aggression, as measured by the social aggression questions on the aggression questionnaire. By using all of the five personality factors assessed by the NEO-FFI and the physical aggression section of the aggression questionnaire, all possible models were considered. As such, physical aggression was the largest predictor of a participant reporting that she engages in social aggression and accounted for 13.3% of the variance in social aggression. Next, Conscientiousness was entered into the second step and accounted for an additional 5.3% of the variance in social aggression for a total  $R^2 = .199$  for the model. High Neuroticism and low Agreeableness did not add significantly to the predictive ability of the equation. Therefore, the combination of physical aggression and low Conscientiousness was found to be the best predictor of social aggression (see Table 4).

Table 3

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(1) Age		.17*	.65**	.47**	-.04	-.13**	.126	.102	-.132	-.113	-.194**
(2) Base		.139	.132	-.181*	-.056	.082	.139	-.086	-.115	-.024	
(3) Neuroticism			.375**			.008	.170	-.254**	.107	-.112	
(4) GPA				.166	-.107	.085	-.175	-.306**	.257**	.199	
(5) Neuroticism					.152	.055	-.058	.110	.060	.019	
(6) Neuroticism						-.084	.204*	-.124	-.107		
(7) Neuroticism									-.271**	-.086	
(8) Neuroticism											.371**
(9) Neuroticism											
(10) Neuroticism											
(11) Neuroticism											

Note. \* $p < .05$  in Model 9. \*\* $p < .001$  in Model 9. Base = Constant. (1) Age, (2) Base, (3) Neuroticism, (4) GPA, (5) Neuroticism, (6) Neuroticism, (7) Neuroticism, (8) Neuroticism, (9) Neuroticism, (10) Neuroticism, (11) Neuroticism.

Table 4  
Summary of Stepwise Regression Analyses for Physical Aggression and Conscientiousness Predicting Frequency of Social Aggression

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Significance of F
Step 1	.374	.140	.133	20.200	.000
Step 2	.446	.199	.186	15.236	.000
NEC					

Note. SAFA = Physical aggression, NEC = Conscientiousness  
Excluded variables for Step 1: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, age, race  
Excluded variables for Step 2: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, age, race

## Discussion

Previous research has shown that the personality traits of high Neuroticism, low Agreeableness, and low Conscientiousness are major contributors to the exhibition of physical aggression (Anderson, Tapert, Meadab, Crowley, & Brown, 2007). Research on the personality correlates of social aggression, however, is relatively nonexistent. The major hypothesis of the current study was a proposed relationship between the previously mentioned personality factors and the occurrence of social aggression. This specific hypothesis was only partially supported by the data. While high Neuroticism and low Conscientiousness were associated with social aggression, low Agreeableness was not. Statistical analyses examining the prediction of social aggression, meanwhile, showed that, in addition to Neuroticism and Conscientiousness, physical aggression was significantly related to exhibiting social aggression. In particular, the combination of self-reported use of physical aggression and low Conscientiousness traits was the largest predictor of self-reported social aggression.

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