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## Does Your Personality Trait Affect Behavior on Social Media

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# DOES YOUR PERSONALITY TRAIT AFFECT BEHAVIOR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Paige Brooks

BORN DIGITAL: VOICE OF THE NET GENERATION Dr. Buckley



## Introduction

I picked personality as my topic because it's been an interest of mine. My oldest sister and I have the same outgoing personality, whereas my other sister is more on the shyer side. I've also been interested in people's posting habits. This interest increased when we talked about teens and social media in class. This got me wondering if the use of computers has changed the personalities of people. If someone is shyer in person, would they be more outgoing online or vice versa?

In Dana Boyd's book, *"It's Complicated"* she talks about teens and their identity online. She mentions that teens try to fit in with their social groups and post things that help them fit in. A person might be willing to comment or post more if their social group calls for it, even though that may not be their personality in person. Also, the internet can be anonymous. So if a person is shy in real life situations, they might try and be outgoing online since nobody knows who they are. This act seems to be associated with video games and the creation of the avatar. A person has the freedom to be anyone that they want to be. An introvert might be more willing to open up and post more if they have a mask to hide behind.

Boyd also mentions context collapse and misinterpretation of posts. With this idea in mind, I was interested in seeing if this would prevent a personality trait from posting more or cause them to increase the amount of posting they do. Also, I was interested to see if a certain personality trait would be consciousness of their audience and future audience, such as schools or employers. I've noticed that pictures of people holding alcohol and wearing revealing clothing have increased. This caused me to wonder if that was correlated with a certain personality trait.

Since extroverts are more outgoing in person, I was interested in seeing if the internet helped them post more and escalate their posting habits.

I was also wondering about the activities each personality trait takes part in. For instance, introverts get labeled with the stereotype that they go online for long periods of time, playing games or watching TV, but never actually interact with anyone. Extroverts get labeled with the stereotype of going online and interacting with everyone through posts and pictures. I was interested to see if these stereotypes held true in this study, or if introvert and extrovert personalities engage in the same activities, post the same amount of pictures or comments, and talk to the same types of people. There is even the possibility that the introvert is more outgoing online because they can mask themselves.

With everything that we went over in class about teens and social media I came up with several hypotheses for my current study. The first hypothesis I came up with was; Extroverts use social media more than introverts. Secondly I came up with; Introverts will use entertainment sources more than extroverts. Thirdly; Extroverts will most likely post more frequently on social media than introverts. Fourthly; Introverts will spend the most time on the internet/preferred app(s). Finally; Introverts will talk to those that they already know and extroverts will be more likely to talk to new people.

## Materials and Methods

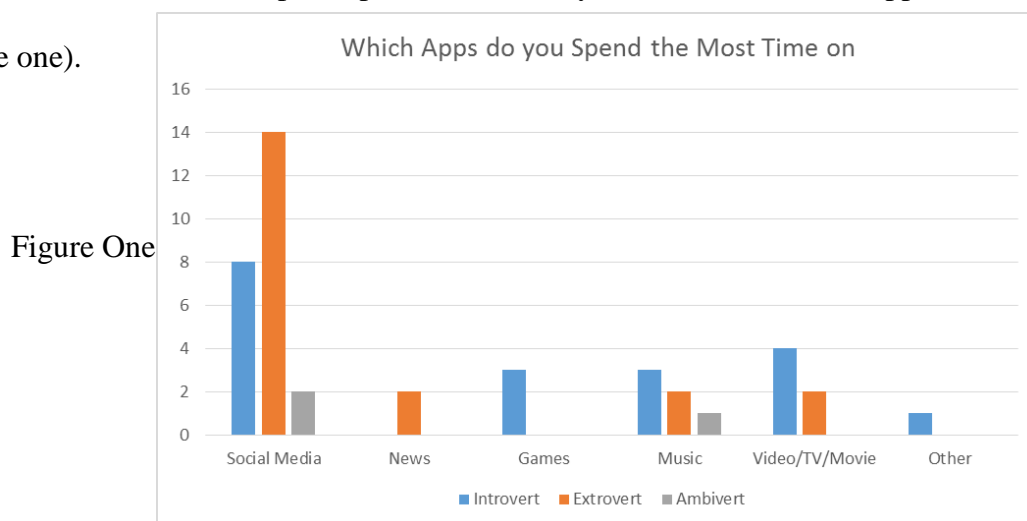
Data was collected through an online survey (see appendix A). Twenty-six participants participated in the survey. The participants were ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-eight. The survey consisted of nineteen questions. Within those questions, twelve of them were questions about personality and the other seven were questions about social media usage and

habits. The questions about personality were to pinpoint introvert or extrovert participants. The survey was posted onto Facebook and sent through email. I chose to use Facebook as my prime source of information gathering because the information I wanted to gather was about users of social media. If I had reached outside the bounds of social media, I might have gotten results that would've skewed the results I was trying to collect. Also, Facebook is one of the main social media websites people seem to use. Most people have Facebook over other social media sites, such as Twitter. The overall purpose of the study was to find out if a person's personality trait affected their social media usage and habits. Explicitly, to find out if there was a difference between introvert and extrovert personalities.

## Results

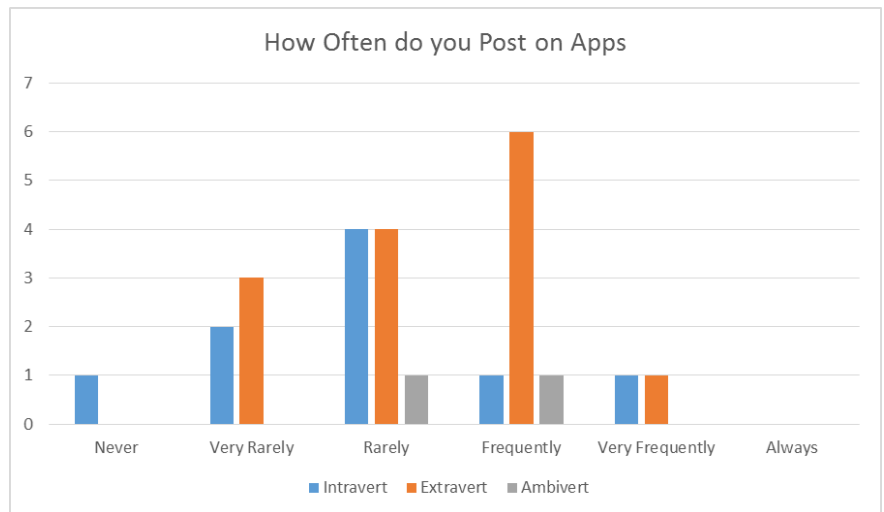
After analyzing the results of the twenty-six participants, ten were introvert, fourteen were extrovert, and two were ambivert. Ambivert is defined as having an equal amount of introvert and extrovert traits. In agreement with my first hypothesis, my data shows that extroverts use social media more than introverts. I found that introverts use news, music, and entertainment apps alongside with social media apps more than extroverts do, however not by very much. I found that they used about one more app than the extroverts did. As regards to my second hypothesis, introverts do use game, music, and entertainment apps a little more than extroverts do. One introvert participant said that they also use Pinterest and apps for reading

(Figure one).



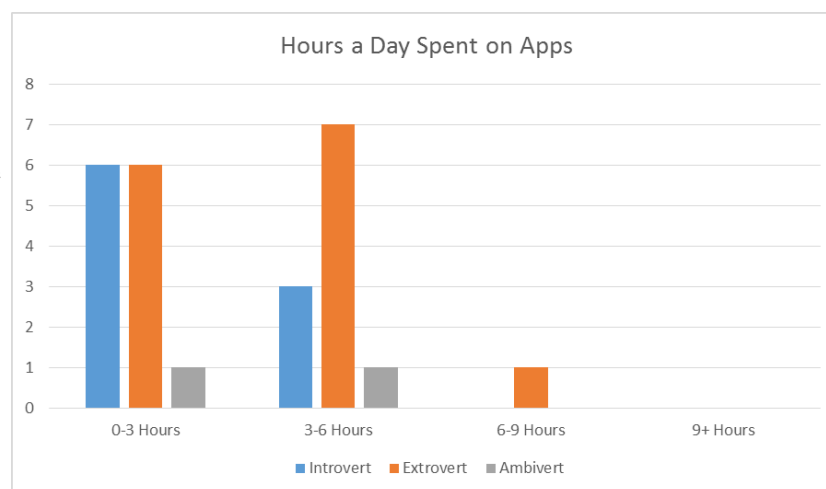
For my third hypothesis, I found that the data showed that extroverts do comment more than introverts. Extroverts were heavily concentrated in the frequently post and rarely post sections. They were also represented in the very frequently post and very rarely post sections. As predicted introverts were clustered in the very rarely post and rarely post sections. However, there was one or two that said that they never post and that they frequently and very frequently post on social media (figure two).

Figure Two



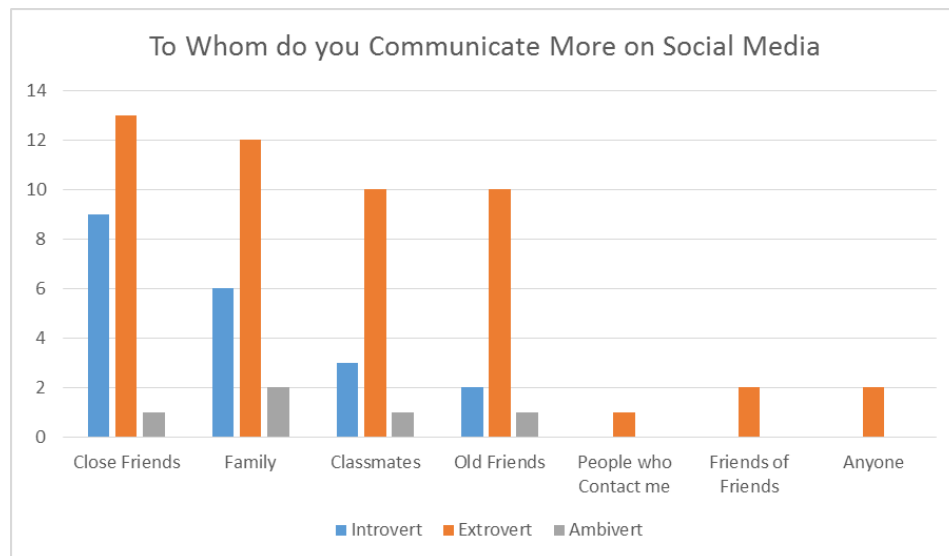
In contrast with what I predicted for my fourth hypothesis, I actually found out that extroverts spend the most time on apps they enjoy. Most extroverts spend three to six hours on apps. One extrovert even spends six to nine hours on apps. However, still a good deal of extroverts spend zero to three hours on apps. Unlike what I predicted, most introverts only spend zero to three hours on apps. There are only a few who said they spend three to six hours on apps and none that said they spend more than six hours on apps (figure three).

Figure Three



Regarding my fifth hypothesis, I did find as predicted that introverts tend to talk to those who are more familiar to them. They tend to talk more to close friends and family than in any other group. However, there is a few who talk to classmates and old friends. I also found that extroverts also talk to those who are more familiar to them along with people they don't know. Like introverts, extroverts talk to close friends and family, however the jump to classmates and old friends is a lesser jump down compared to introverts. I also found that extroverts keep in more contact with old friends than introverts do (figure four).

Figure Four



Other findings that I found in the study pertained to whether communication was different in person than in social media. I found that more extroverts believed that they communicate the same as in person and in social media. On the other hand introverts were a fifty-fifty split. Half of them said they feel that they do communicate differently in person than in social media and the other half said that they are no different between the two mediums (figure five). I also looked to see if participants thought that social media affected their personality. I found that extroverts and introverts take sort of the same stance to this question with most of them saying that social media could have affected their personality. Only two extroverts and one

ambivert said that social media has affected their personality (figure six). I also don't have any significant results that would tell me if ambiverts are more like extroverts or introverts on social media and if they are outliers in any of the questions. Ambiverts are pretty much in the middle and do not lean towards either side or create its own niche.

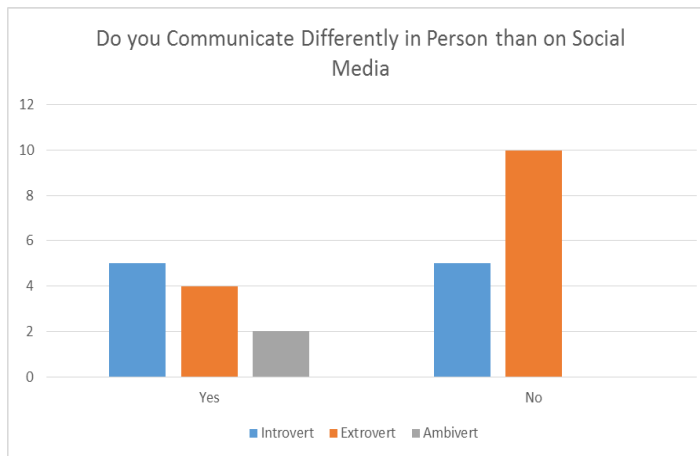


Figure Five

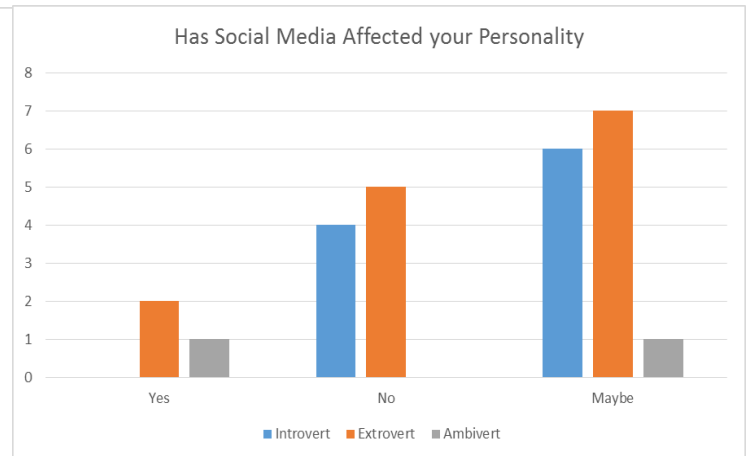


Figure Six

## Discussion

My first hypothesis rang true with the data. Extroverts did use social media more than introverts did. Extroverts most likely use social media more because they can talk to all of their friends and comment on posts they're in or that their friends are in. Their personality still shines through over social media. Also, over social media they have access to a lot of new people who they would never encounter in their everyday life. I also found that my second hypothesis was true, that introverts use other apps more heavily than extroverts. This may be true because introverts are shyer and don't have as strong a personality as extroverts do. They may not want to see all of the pictures that people post because they "feel out of the loop." Some may not want to share their personal moments all over social media. However, the data doesn't support the idea that introverts are antisocial and just sit in a dark room playing video games.



As for my third hypothesis focusing on posting habits, where I found that even some extroverts post very rarely. Some comments indicate as to why some people, introvert and extrovert, don't post often. For example, "I am not good at expressing tone over social media. I worry that something may be taken the wrong way and I will not realize this." This was also seen in Dana Boyd's book with the boy who posted gang symbols and got his Ivy League scholarship revoked because admissions didn't understand that he was trying to fit into his socio-economic background so he wouldn't get bullied. Also, one participant said that, "I don't like to share my personal business on the internet for everyone to see." With regards to some of the introverts dipping into the frequently and very frequently posting sections it might be due to the fact that they can post more freely because they feel secure and don't have to say some things face to face. One introvert participant said, "Speaking through social media, I think I am more outgoing, and say some things that I may not say in person."

I found that my fourth hypothesis was false. Instead of introverts spending the most time on apps, I found that extroverts are the ones that spend the most time on apps. This could be because they are posting more on social media. Also, they could be talking to people over social media for a longer time. They also spend time on news and entertainment apps. Extroverts could also be binge watching their favorite show on Netflix.

For my fifth hypothesis, focusing on who people talk to over social media, I found that the majority of extroverts and introverts talk to people they know. I was able to get two comments from introverts as to why they generally talk to people they know. The first person said, "We are keeping in touch and catching up on the last time we were together." The second person said more bluntly, "I really only talk to people that I would actually talk to in person."

Unfortunately I do not have any comments from extroverts for why they talk mainly to people they know and as to why they talk to people they don't know. Introverts may not be as likely to keep in touch with old friends more than extroverts do, because introverts may feel like they can't nurture the type of relationship they want with an old friend over social media, so the friendship withers away. An introvert commented, "In person, I like longer conversations and more in depth discussion than when I am communicating through social media."

For the question that pertained to communicating in person and in social media, I saw that more extroverts said that there was no difference in their communication in person and in social media. This could be due to the fact that since they are more outgoing they are more willing to say whatever comes to mind and not care so much as to what people think about them. One participant said, "I don't want people to think I'm someone I'm not." This will lead a person to communicate the same between the two mediums. This question also relates back to my third hypothesis about posting habits. People may communicate differently in person then and in social media because they don't want things to get misinterpreted since they are unable to express a certain tone. A participant commented, "I'm not very good at expressing myself through text or post."

For the findings of the question, has social media affected your personality?, I found that many people, introvert and extrovert, said that social media could have affected their personality. Some going back to the issue about interpretation, "It makes me think more about how people perceive me, because of things I do or say." This could prevent a person from posting something that is part of their personality because they don't want people to judge them. Also, one participant writes, "I try not to let what other people say on the internet change my personality

because what they say is not always true.” For the few people that did say that social media has affected their personality it could have caused them to feel more outgoing or to feel “out of the loop.”

As an extension off of this research, I would see if age and gender affect personality online. I would see if the personalities of certain ages and gender groups would still hold true to my five hypotheses or if the results would change. Furthermore, research would be about behaviors of posting and if personality affects that. So instead of just asking about the frequency of posting I would instead ask what they were posting. I would see if a certain personality type would be more likely to post pictures, comments, or news links. I would also see if a certain personalities would post more controversial things on social media. This might include controversial news articles or pictures that are taken at parties with alcoholic beverages.

## Conclusion

At the start of my research I had five hypotheses about whether personality affects behavior on social media. Out of my five hypotheses four of them were supported with the data I collected. I found that extroverts spend the most time on social media and introverts spend most time on other apps. I also found that extroverts are more likely to post on social media than introverts are. Extroverts will also talk to people they haven't seen in a while and to those they don't even know in person. My fourth hypothesis was proven false by the data. I predicted that introverts would spend more time on apps than extroverts. I found that extroverts are the ones that spend the most time on apps. I also found that most extroverts don't think that they communicate differently over social media. Half of the introvert participants believe that they don't communicate differently, but the other half believe they do communicate differently over

social media. Extroverts and introverts also feel that social media might have affected their personality. A few extroverts believed that social media has affected their personality. Finally, there was no difference among ambiverts. They fell evenly within introverts and extroverts.