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Faculty Mentor: Dr. Jeffrey Goodman, Ph.D.

**Midwest Nice, Southern Hospitality, and Coastal Cool**

**Introduction**
- Personality influences on friendship quantity and perceived quality differ based on the region of the United States an individual lives in.
- Previous research discovered that the majority of individuals residing in the central region of the United States exhibit more friendly and conventional personality traits. Additionally, individuals residing in the western region of the United States display relaxed and creative personality traits. Individuals residing in the southern and north eastern regions of the United States present more temperamental and uninhibited personality traits (Rentfrow et al., 2013).
- Our study aims to expand on those findings as they pertain to friendship quantity and the level of closeness in those friendships. We do not expect there to be regional or personality differences in the number of, or level of closeness in, best or close friends. Where we expect to see differences, on the basis of hypotheses derived from variability in underlying personality, is in the quantity, and level of perceived closeness of, casual friends and acquaintances. If supported, our findings will contribute to the scientific understanding of personality influences on interpersonal friendships.

**Methods**

**Participants**
- Two-hundred twenty-three participants (166 from Wisconsin or Minnesota; 57 from other US states) completed all measures. The sample was 67% female, 83% Caucasian (3.6% Asian American, 2.2% African American, 1.8% Latino) and 88% heterosexual with a mean age of 22.4.

**Procedure**
- We distributed an online survey sampling populations from different regions of the country, from a UWEC student sample and a non-probability national sample obtained through an online psychological research site.
- Participants were presented with an informed consent form, which ended asking if they were a resident of the United States (those who were not were thanked and sent to the end of the survey).
- Participants were then provided with the definitions of best friend, close friend, casual friend/peer, and acquaintance for clarity, as these definitions can be somewhat ambiguous.
- For each category of friendship, participants were asked to estimate their number of friends in that category, then list up to three people who best represent that category, and finally to choose one to answer a number of items about. The order in which participants were presented with the different levels of friendship (best friend, close friend, casual friend/peer, and acquaintance) was randomized.

**Big 5 Personality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Closeness</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
<th>Openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.00*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.06*</td>
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</tbody>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.02*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.06*</td>
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<td>Casual</td>
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<td>-.18</td>
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<td>.07*</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Connection Scale</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
<th>Openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Connection</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>-.39*</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**
- The results of our study at this point are interesting and shed some light on friendship relations in the Upper Midwest region.
- Participants of the region feel closer to those best friends than all other states.
- Participants or the region feel closer to those best friends than all other states, but marginally less close to acquaintances.
- Participants of the region score higher on social connectedness and lower on openness than other states.
- It is worthy to note that although the effect sizes are small, regional differences in personality are consistent with Rentfrow et al. (2013).
- Our results should be considered tentative as we need a larger sample size of non-Midwesterners.

**Conclusions**

**Methods**

**Participants**
- A 12-item Relationship Closeness Scale (Diblle et al., 2011) was used to measure the degree of intimacy between participants and each friend type (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree, α = .89).
  - e.g., My relationship with ___ is close.
  - e.g., My ___ is a priority in my life.
- An 8-item scale adapted from the Relationship Closeness Inventory (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) the Friendship Closeness Inventory (Polimeni et al., 2002), measured the frequency with which participants engaged in various activities with each friend type (1 = Never; 7 = Every Time, α = .95).
  - e.g., Go to a restaurant (eat together);
  - e.g., Talk or communicate
- A 45-item Big Five Personality Inventory (John and Srivastava, 1999) measured five personality traits (i.e., Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience, α = .87, .79, .79, .80, .75, respectively).
  - e.g., I see myself as someone who is talkative.
  - e.g., I see myself as someone who is generally trusting.
  - e.g., I see myself as someone who can be moody.
- A 20-item Social Connectedness Scale (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001, α = .94) provided a global measure of the degree to which participants felt connected to others.
  - e.g., I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers.
  - e.g., Even around people I know, I don’t feel like I really belong.
- To finish, participants completed a number of demographic items and then were debriefed.
  - e.g., Sex/gender, Age, Socioeconomic Status, Race/Ethnicity

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