Relationship Initiation on Facebook: Understanding the Role of Personality

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Studies have shown that some individuals use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships, but few have investigated the motivations for using Facebook to form relationships. As discussed via the Cybernetic Big Five Theory, a potential explanation may be personality, which is associated with general social media use. The current study examines the association between the Big Five personality traits and motivations to initiate romantic relationships using Facebook. Data comes from 177 undergraduate students from two universities in the United States who completed an online survey assessing the Big Five and motivations to and behaviors for which they use Facebook for relationship initiation. Using multiple regression analyses, conscientiousness and neuroticism predicted motivations to initiate relationships via Facebook to learn more about a potential partner without asking, to provide a neutral environment to start a conversation, to pace the progress of the relationship, and to give more control over the interaction. Openness was inconsistently positively associated with initiation motivations whereas extraversion and agreeableness were not associated with motivations to use Facebook for relationship initiation. Findings indicate that personality may explain why some individuals, particularly college students, use Facebook to form romantic relationships.

Keywords: Facebook, Big Five, Relationship Initiation, Cybernetic Big Five Theory

Facebook remains the most popular social media networking website in the world with 1.13 billion users frequenting the website daily, representing 1 out of 7 individuals in the world (Facebook, 2016; Lenhart, 2015). Due to the high usage rate of Facebook, several studies have demonstrated that it plays a significant role in the development of romantic relationships (Fox & Anderegg, 2014; Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013; LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015; Park, Jin, & Jin, 2011). Although studies have found that Facebook users are motivated to use the site to increase feelings of belongingness and for self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Blind Citation), few studies have examined empirically why some individuals use Facebook to

form romantic relationships (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). These motivations may be explained by personality, as supported by the Cybernetic Big Five Theory (DeYoung, 2015), as different personality traits have been shown to impact general motivations for using Facebook (Blind Citation; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Thus, the goal of this study is to quantitatively examine the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and motivations to initiate romantic relationships using Facebook.

Initiating Romantic Relationships using Facebook

Several studies have demonstrated the role that Facebook plays in the initiation of romantic relationships (Fox & Warber, 2013; Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013; LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2014). Among young adults, monitoring and communication with potential partners on Facebook is more common than phone calls when individuals become romantically interested. Fox and colleagues used focus groups to identify why individuals use Facebook in this context. Results demonstrated that individuals may use Facebook to privately learn about potential partners without having to interact face-to-face (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). Subsequently, Fox and Warber (2013) outlined the use of Facebook to initiate romantic relationships based on findings from multiple focus groups. First, young adults see someone they are interested in offline. Next, individuals attempt to find the prospective partner on Facebook, send him or her a friend request, and examine the potential partner's profile. Following, they request the potential partner's phone number. Fourth, they begin texting and invite the potential partner to spend time together with their friends offline. Fifth, individuals begin to post on the potential partner's Facebook wall and message each other on Facebook. Last, they would go on a date with each other (Fox & Warber, 2013). Traditionally, an individual would meet someone, request his or her phone number, and call to arrange a date (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2009). According to Fox and Warber (2013), individuals use Facebook to meet, learn about, and communicate with potential partners to initiate offline interactions rather than communicate face-to-face. However, to date, we are unaware of empirical investigations examining the motivations to use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships.

There is theoretical support for the benefits of using Facebook to form romantic relationships. Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) describes how self-disclosure forms during the course of romantic relationship initiation. According to this

theory, when individuals first meet, they get to know each other by discussing broad, typically superficial topics. Over time, individuals not only increase in the breadth of these topics, but also the depth of topics (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Facebook provides individuals a way to learn and discuss broad topics with potential romantic partners, such as their common interests and their friends, which can be used to identify similarities. Additionally, using Facebook may ease the process of self-disclosure by providing online communication that can be planned and thought out before sharing. Based on this theory, Facebook is likely to assist relationship initiation by promoting self-disclosure.

Consequently, Facebook offers advantages to the relationship initiation process that were not previously available. First, Facebook provides an expanded option of potential dating partners due to the high number of people on Facebook (Facebook, 2016; Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). Second, Facebook offers the unique opportunity to protect against rejection (Park, Jin, & Jin, 2011; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). If an individual is worried about being rejected, he or she can examine a potential partner's Facebook profile to examine compatibility, such as similar interests, mutual friends, and ensuring the individual is single as described by a potential partner's relationship status. Subsequently, using Facebook allows individuals to discretely learn about a potential partner without having to talk to him or her. Next, participants may use Facebook to provide a neutral environment to start a conversation, allow control over the pace of relationship formation, and to communicate with less stress during relationship initiation (Fox & Anderegg, 2014; Fox & Warber, 2013; Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). Initiating conversations with potential partners can be daunting, and Facebook provides an opportunity to communicate with less anxiety. Last, communicating via Facebook provides individuals control over their interactions. Individuals are better able to plan out what to say during relationship initiation.

Personality and Using Facebook to Initiate Romantic Relationships

A variable that could predict why some use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships is personality. Most researchers agree that personality is best explained by the Five Factor Model ("Big Five"; Funder, 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1997). The Big Five traits are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism. Extraversion is described by gregariousness and energy; agreeableness as helpfulness and

cordiality; conscientiousness as orderliness and discipline; openness as creativity and an interest in novelty; and neuroticism as emotional instability and anxiety (Funder, 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

The Cybernetic Big Five Theory (CB5T; DeYoung, 2015) provides a theoretical foundation for how each personality trait could be related to relationship initiation on Facebook. The basis of CB5T is that personality is centered on goal-directed, self-regulatory systems. As individuals work towards their goals, they receive feedback regarding their progress towards their goals, and based on this feedback, individuals adapt or adjust their behavior to continue to pursue their goals (DeYoung, 2010; 2015). According to CB5T, each of the Big Five traits is associated with various aspects of this cybernetic process (see DeYoung, 2015 for more details). Extraversion is associated with goal activation, as goal-oriented behaviors encourage exploration and engagement with potential rewards. Neuroticism reflects goal comparison, where individuals may experience negative emotions, such as anxiety and irritability, as a result of sensitivity and reactivity when their goal is not yet achieved or inconsistent with their expected goal. Openness is associated with cognitive exploration and engagement with information when making progress towards goals. Conscientiousness involves individuals' attempts at following rules when achieving goals, as well as adapting behaviors to plan for future goals. Agreeableness reflects individuals coordinating their goals with others in order to promote goal attainment (DeYoung, 2015). CB5T is useful for understanding the link between the Big Five and Facebook use in relationship initiation as the emphasis is on action and goal-attaining behaviors, and relationship initiation is a specific goal that individuals may pursue via Facebook. For the current study, the action under examination is the formation of romantic relationships using Facebook. Thus, according to this theory each personality trait may be associated with how and why individuals use Facebook during the relationship initiation process. First, we focus on neuroticism and conscientiousness as these traits have been consistently linked with social media use.

Past studies have shown that individuals exhibiting conscientiousness and neuroticism report higher use of Facebook, which may be associated with motivations for using Facebook to initiate romantic relationships (Moore & McElroy, 2012; Blind Citation). First, conscientious individuals are cautious when it comes to interacting online.

Given that conscientiousness is associated with responsibility and planning subsequent behaviors according to CB5T, individuals are likely to use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships as this approach provides them more control over what might be communicated to a potential partner and when it is communicated compared to face-to-face relationship initiation. There is empirical support for this claim as [Blind Citation] found that conscientious people are more cautious in their online presentation. Conscientious individuals are also likely to evaluate the consequences of their behaviors to help them towards goal achievement. Moore and McElroy (2012) found that conscientious individuals were more likely to express regret over inappropriate Facebook posts compared to other personality traits. Based on CB5T and past studies, conscientious individuals may be motivated to use Facebook during relationship initiation as a means of caution and control.

Hypothesis 1: Conscientiousness will be positively associated with (a) using Facebook to provide control over the interaction and (b) to communicate with less stress in the early stages of relationship formation.

Second, neuroticism may predict motivations for using Facebook to initiate relationships. According to CB5T, neuroticism is associated with defensive responses to uncertainty and potential threats. Studies have linked neuroticism to anxiety and sensitivity to rejection (e.g., Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012). Given the uncertainty of forming relationships face-to-face, as well as the potential threat of rejection, neurotic individuals may be likely to use Facebook to form relationships and seek acceptance to assist with these social fears. Studies have found that Facebook provides opportunities to connect with and receive support from others, which assists neurotic individuals with fears that they would upset someone offline (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012; Blind Citation). Additionally, neurotic individuals report comfort when they have control over their environment (Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012). Thus, neurotic individuals may use Facebook to decrease anxieties associated with relationship initiation.

Hypothesis 2: Neuroticism will be positively associated with the motivation to use Facebook to (a) decrease rejection and (b) to communicate with less stress in the early stages of relationship formation.

Literature concerning the other Big Five traits are inconsistent in regards to social media use, but they might play a role in initiating relationships via Facebook according to CB5T. First, individuals high in openness express a need to try new activities and meet new people. According to CB5T, individuals who are high in this trait tend to seek, explore, and understand sensory and abstract information in order to decipher feedback towards goal attainment (DeYoung, 2015). Although individuals may use Facebook to cognitively explore and learn about relationship initiation, they may also be just as likely to engage with potential partners in offline contexts for this purpose. CB5T also states that openness is associated with the richness of emotional experience (DeYoung, Grazioplene, & Peterson, 2012), which is likely to be associated with online and offline processes of relationship initiation. While research has shown that openness is associated with the tendency to reveal personal information on Facebook, recent studies did not find links between openness and social media use (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010; Blind Citation). Additionally, [Blind Citation] describes that social media use is so ubiquitous that it does not require high degrees of openness to be a frequent user, especially among young people. Although individuals scoring high in openness may report offline motivations for initiating relationships, given the link between information-seeking and openness via CB5T, we proposed the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 3:** Openness will be positively associated with the motivation to use Facebook for relationship initiation to discretely learn about a potential partner.

Second, as previously mentioned extraversion is linked to goal activation through CB5T. Extraverts engage in behavioral exploration with specific rewards that promote goal attainment (DeYoung, 2015). If the goal is to form a romantic relationship, an initial step would be to find rewards that may promote this goal. Examples of potential rewards would be discovering if potential partners are available for a relationship or detecting if there is compatibility between romantic partners. Individuals high in extraversion could use Facebook to find this information, such as adding potential partners as friends on Facebook or sending potential partners messages on Facebook. But these individuals are also just as likely, if not more so, to find this information offline through face-to-face communication. Studies have found that extraverts are more likely to communicate with

others offline than online (Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Rudnicka, 2013; Moore & McElroy, 2012). Yet, these individuals might be more likely to use Facebook to form relationships because of increased levels of sociability. On the other hand, introverts might prefer to use Facebook as a way to aid in relationship initiation because they have fewer opportunities to initiate relationships in their offline lives. Provided this information, we propose the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 4:** Extraversion will not be related with motivations to use Facebook for relationship initiation.

Last, individuals high in agreeableness are likely to connect better with others offline so they might not need Facebook to form relationships. But on the other hand, their sociability may increase Facebook use during relationship initiation. According to CB5T, this trait is associated with the coordination of goals and interpretations of those goals with others (DeYoung, 2015). In other words, agreeableness is associated with cooperation and altruism. These tasks require at least some understanding of others' (including potential partners) emotions and goals. Facebook may be a mechanism by which agreeable individuals learn this information about potential partners. However, agreeable individuals may be just as likely to obtain this information through offline interaction. The offline approach to coordinating goals with others may explain why past studies have not found a connection between agreeableness and social media use (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010; Wang, 2013). Nonetheless, no studies to our knowledge have examined Facebook use during the relationship initiation process attending to agreeableness. Thus, based on the information discussed, we proffer the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 5:** Agreeableness will be positively associated with the motivation to use Facebook for relationship initiation to communicate with less stress during the initiation process.

METHODS

Participants

Data for this study came from undergraduate college students recruited from two institutions, a liberal arts college in the Northeastern U.S. and a midsize university in the

Midwestern U.S. ($N = 177$). Most participants were female (89.3%) ranging from 18 to 34 years old ($M = 19.61$, $SD = 2.05$). Participants' ethnicities were White (72.9%), Black (13.6%), Hispanic (7.9%), Asian (5.1%), and other (0.5%). Class composition was freshman (38.4%), sophomores (22.6%), juniors (22.6%), seniors (14.1%), or having been enrolled five years or more (2.3%). Most participants were heterosexual (91.0%), whereas some reported their sexual orientation as homosexual (4.0%), bisexual (2.8%), or other (2.2%). Of the 177 participants, 84 were single (47.5%), 13 were casually dating (7.3%), 62 were in a committed relationship but not living together (35.1%), 13 were cohabiting (7.3%), and 5 were married (2.8%). For participants who were in a romantic relationship, relationship length averaged 1.66 years ($SD = 2.30$), and 35.5% were long-distance. Comparing demographic information by institution, participants from the Midwestern university were significantly older than participants from the Northeastern college ($F(1,176) = 10.01$, $p < .01$) and reported longer relationships ($F(1,176) = 5.52$, $p < .05$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a midsize Midwestern university ($n = 76$) and a small liberal arts college in the northeastern United States ($n = 101$). The primary investigators sent e-mails to classes recruiting students to complete an online survey. Participants were asked questions regarding their personality, their motivations to use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships, demographic information, frequency of using Facebook, and other information not pertaining to the current investigation. Participants were awarded extra credit for completing the survey. All aspects of this study were approved by the appropriate institutional review board.

Measures

Motivation to use Facebook for Relationship Initiation. Participants were asked to rate their motivation for using Facebook to initiate relationships on a scale of 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). This seven item scale included seven motivations, such as "to decrease rejection" and "to discretely learn about a potential partner." Reliability for this measure was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .81). Means and standard deviations for each motivation are presented in Table 1.

Facebook Behaviors during Relationship Initiation. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with three items specifying Facebook use to initiate romantic

relationships on a scale of 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). An example item was "Facebook plays a large role in my learning about a potential partner". Reliability for this measure was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .83). Means and standard deviations for each item are presented in Table 1.

Big Five. Participants completed Saucier's brief version of Goldberg's Big Five personality traits (Saucier, 1994). This scale requires participants to rate themselves on 40 traits (8 per Big Five trait), using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all accurate*, 5 = *very accurate*). Internal consistency was adequate for this measure (Cronbach's alpha = .75). Averages for each personality trait are as follows: extraversion ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .74$); agreeableness ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .63$); conscientiousness ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .58$); openness ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .58$); and neuroticism ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .64$).

Control Variables. For all analyses, we controlled for age, sex, class, university, ethnicity (dichotomized; White = 0; other ethnicities = 1), sexual orientation (dichotomized; heterosexual = 0; other orientations = 1), average number of hours on Facebook, number of Facebook friends, frequency of checking Facebook profile, and frequency of posting to Facebook. Facebook use variables were included because they are likely to be associated with the initiation variables. Including these variables as control variables helps rule out any variability that is simply due to personality difference and overall Facebook use. Demographic variables were included due to their importance in relationship processes (e.g., Kurdek, 2005; Shallcross, Ford, Floerke, & Mauss, 2013). University was included as control variable due to mean differences aforementioned.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Motivations and Behaviors for Using Facebook for Relationship Initiation (N = 177).

Initiation Motives	Mean	*SD*
To decrease rejection	2.74	1.25
To learn more about a potential partner without asking	3.95	1.07
To provide a neutral environment to start a conversation	3.67	1.08
To allow me to pace the progress of the relationship	3.11	1.17
To communicate with less stress in the early stages	3.39	1.26
To give me more control over the interaction	3.19	1.20
To discretely learn about a potential partner	4.05	1.07
Facebook plays a large role in my learning about a potential partner	3.52	1.24
Facebook is used to monitor behavior of a potential partner	2.90	1.28
Facebook plays a large role in initiating romantic relationships	2.46	1.12

Notes. All measures are on a scale of 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

Data Analytic Approach

We conducted regression analyses using each motivation to use Facebook for relationship initiation and each Facebook behavior during relationship initiation as dependent variables. For each regression model, control variables were entered in Step 1 and predictor variables (Big Five personality traits) were entered in Step 2. For all regression analyses, we examined changes in R^2 when adding personality at Step 2 for each model to measure variance beyond the control variables.

RESULTS

Before conducting our main analyses, we examined mean differences across each independent variable using repeated measures ANOVAs. There were significant differences across the motivations for using Facebook to initiate romantic relationships, Wilks' Lambda = .40, $F(6,164) = 128.03$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons were used to make post-hoc comparisons across motivations. The motivation to use Facebook to decrease rejection was significantly lower than all other motivations. Additionally, the means for the motivation to use Facebook to learn more about a potential partner without asking and to use Facebook to discretely learn about a potential partner were significantly higher

than other motivations. There were also significant differences across the behaviors for using Facebook to initiate romantic relationships, Wilks' Lambda = .58, $F(2,172) = 61.66$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that the means of each Facebook behavior were significantly different from each other, with the belief that Facebook plays a large role in learning about potential partners demonstrating the highest mean and the belief that Facebook plays a large role in initiating romantic relationships displaying the lowest.

Results of main analyses are presented in Table 2. Six of the ten dependent variables were significant based on changes in R^2: to provide a neutral environment to start a conversation, to allow pacing of the progress of the relationship, to communicate with less stress in the early stages, to give more control over the interaction, to discretely learn about a potential partner, and Facebook plays a large role in learning about a potential partner. For these motivations, personality explained a significant amount of variance beyond the control variables. In addition, conscientiousness and neuroticism were positively associated with many motivations to use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships and Facebook behaviors to initiate romantic relationships.

Table 2
Examining Motivations for using Facebook for Relationship Initiation be Personality (N = 177)

Initiation Motives	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Openness	Neuroticism	ΔR^2
To decrease rejection	.06 (.15)	-.04 (.17)	.15(.18)†	.06 (.18)	.21 (.16)*	.058†
To learn more about a potential partner without asking	.03 (.13)	-.01 (.15)	.18 (.15)*	.13 (.16)	.18 (.14)*	.064†
To provide a neutral environment to start a conversation	.06 (.13)	.04 (.15)	.14 (.15)†	.16 (.16)†	.23 (.14)**	.085*
To allow me to pace the progress of the relationship	-.13 (.13)	-.04 (.16)	.18 (.16)*	.21 (.17)**	.24 (.14)**	.131***
To communicate with less stress in the early stages	-.12 (.15)	-.02 (.17)	.14 (.18)†	.22 (.19)*	.15 (.16)†	.087*
To give me more control over the interaction	-.02 (.14)	-.13 (.16)	.26 (.17)***	.19 (.17)*	.19 (.17)*	.119**
To discretely learn about a potential partner	.02 (.12)	-.02 (.14)	.18 (.14)*	.17 (.15)*	.10 (.13)	.065*
Facebook plays a large role in my learning about a potential partner	.07 (.14)	-.02 (.16)	.18 (.16)*	.10 (.17)	.21 (.15)**	.072*
Facebook is used to monitor behavior of a potential partner	.12 (.15)	-.03 (.17)	.07 (.18)	-.01 (.19)	.22 (.16)**	.047
Facebook plays a large role in initiating romantic relationships	-.01 (.13)	-.02 (.15)	.09 (.16)	-.12 (.17)	.05 (.14)	.020

Notes. Statistics are presented as standardized Betas with standard errors in parentheses. Analyses controlled for age, sex, class, university, ethnicity (dichotomized), sexual orientation (dichotomized), Facebook hours, Facebook friends, Facebook profile check frequency, and Facebook post frequency.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

Conscientiousness was positively associated with the motivation to use Facebook to learn more about a potential partner without asking, to allow pacing of the progress of the relationship, to give more control over the interaction, and to discretely learn about a potential partner. Conscientiousness was also positively associated with the belief that Facebook plays a large role in learning about a potential partner. Neuroticism was related to increased motivations to use Facebook for relationship initiation, specifically to decrease rejection, to learn more about a potential partner without asking, to provide a neutral environment to start a conversation, to allow pacing of the progress of the relationship, and to give more control over the interaction. Neuroticism was also positively associated with the beliefs that Facebook plays a large role in learning about a potential partner and is used to monitor behavior of a potential partner. Extraversion and agreeableness were not significantly associated with any of the dependent variables. However, openness was positively associated with motivations to use Facebook to allow pacing of the relationship, to communicate with less stress, to give more control over the interaction, and to discretely learn about a potential partner.

DISCUSSION

Many individuals use Facebook to form romantic relationships (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013; LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015). According to social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), Facebook provides an opportunity to develop self-disclosure that can promote the initiation of romantic relationships. Additionally, CB5T provides a theoretical rationale linking the Big Five to social media use, as behaviors of these personality traits are centered on goal-oriented actions, feedback, and comparison. The following study is the first to provide empirical data linking the motivation to use Facebook to form romantic relationships to the Big Five traits. Based on the results of this study, the Big Five provides some explanation for why individuals, specifically college students, use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships. Individuals who are conscientious or neurotic are more likely to report using Facebook to assist with relationship initiation. The most significant motivations for these personalities were to provide a neutral environment to start a conversation, to allow pacing of the progress of the relationship, and to give more control over the interaction. Extraversion,

agreeableness, and openness were not consistently predictive of motivations to use Facebook to initiate relationships, which is consistent with past studies on personality and Facebook use (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Blind Citation; Wang, 2013).

Conscientious individuals are cautious, particularly during relationship initiation, which helps promote goal attainment (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010; DeYoung, 2015). Facebook provides conscientious individuals some control over the speed and quality of relationship formation that they may not have if communicating face-to-face. Although studies have found that conscientious individuals spend less time on social media (Ryan & Xenos, 2011), when conscientious individuals use Facebook to form romantic relationships, they may be concerned about what and when they say something to potential partners. This cautiousness may promote goal attainment, a central component of cybernetic systems (DeYoung, 2015), with the goal being relationship initiation. Control over the interaction and pace of the relationship via Facebook coincides with thoughtfulness and carefulness that characterize conscientious individuals.

Neurotic individuals tend to be anxious during relationship initiation and appear likely to use Facebook to assuage this stress. Based on CB5T, behaviors reflective of this trait represent attempts to ward off uncertainty and threats (DeYoung, 2015). Using Facebook to initiate romantic relationships may provide opportunities to defend against these fears in the romantic context. Facebook provides opportunities for individuals to defend against rejection by increasing control over interactions with potential partners. Additionally, rejection online is viewed as less threatening than being rejected in person (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). Study findings are consistent with past studies that illustrate that self-esteem and neuroticism are associated with the belief that Facebook provides opportunities to connect with others in a context that decreases fear of burdening others (Forest & Wood, 2012; Blind Citation). Using Facebook during relationship initiation helps decrease anxieties about social rejection, possibly by giving them more control over their interactions with potential partners.

Generally, neuroticism and conscientiousness are associated with greater likelihood of using Facebook during relationship initiation, but associations with other traits were limited. Although openness was inconsistently associated with motivations to initiate

romantic relationships, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness may be associated more with offline methods of relationship initiation than online. According to CB5T, extraversion and openness are associated with behavioral and cognitive exploration, which initiates and promotes the goal-attaining process. It is likely that in order to maximize this exploration process, both on and offline examinations of and with potential partners are needed during relationship initiation. For instance, extraversion may be associated with offline methods of relationship initiation as the goal of relationship initiation may offer more rewards than when initiation occurs via Facebook, as there is direct interaction between extraverts and potential partners. Additionally, for individuals high in openness, interacting offline with potential partners provides a more precise cognitive exploration during relationship initiation, as they are able to process nonverbal behaviors. For both of these traits, offline interactions provides more exploration that may benefit relationship initiation. For openness, these offline interactions may complement online interactions, as partial support was found for openness and the motivations to use Facebook for relationship initiation. What is different from openness and extraversion is the type of exploration, whether behavioral or cognitive. Extraverts may be more likely to primarily rely on offline interactions during relationship initiation provided the action-oriented behaviors associated with this trait. Yet, openness may utilize both online and offline approaches to initiate romantic relationships, as this maximizes intake and interpretation of information that represents cognitive exploration.

Consequently, agreeableness was not linked to any motivations to use Facebook for relationship initiation, which is consistent with past studies examining agreeableness and social media use (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010; Wang, 2013). Agreeableness is linked with coordination of goals with others (DeYoung, 2015), which is likely to occur more often offline than online, given the direct presence of others in the offline context. It is difficult to precisely coordinate and understand the emotions and goals of others, including potential partners, through Facebook. Although some potential partners may provide some details of their lives on Facebook, potential partners with low self-esteem or with a less coherent sense of who they are may present themselves falsely on Facebook (Michikyan, Dennis, & Subrahmanyam, 2015), making the process of cooperation difficult for individuals high in agreeableness. It is easier to obtain accurate information

concerning an individuals' mental state in an offline context than an online context, given that individuals may present themselves inaccurately or idealistically. Given the findings between personality and using Facebook to initiate romantic relationships, follow-up studies should examine if personality influences how and why individuals use applications that are specifically aimed at forming relationships, such as eHarmony and Tinder.

Although the current study expands knowledge on personality and relationship initiation via Facebook, it is not without its limitations. First, the method of self-report is prone to bias (Ash, 2009; Bradfield & Wells, 2005). Second, the motivations for using Facebook for relationship initiation were created for the purpose of this study and therefore their reliability and validity are not well-established. In addition, the current study was limited to only college students, who may use Facebook at different rates than other populations. We advise that generalizations not go beyond this sample. It is also important that we acknowledge that there are many alternatives to Facebook for finding and forming romantic relationships, particularly online dating applications, such as Tinder and Bumble. Facebook has even recently created a dating feature that allows for relationship formation. Despite these limitations and potential alternative platforms for relationship formation, the current study extends research on Facebook and the Big Five by providing empirical data for why individuals use Facebook to initiate romantic relationships. Using CB5T, the current study illustrates that the Big Five explains why some individuals, particularly college students, are likely to use Facebook to assist with the relationship initiation process.

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