Personality and its Effects on Facebook and Self-Disclosure

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Multiple researchers have looked into the effects of personality qualities and their effects on self-disclosure on the Internet. All such research has been based off of the Five Factor Model of personality and how the aspects of openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism impact an individual's tendencies to self-disclose on social networking sites like Facebook. This article aims to expand that research by looking for impacts of personality factors derived from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Researchers have claimed the test is merely a cognitive assessment and isn't intended for use in research, thus discrediting the MBTI test as a whole. However, this study found that the dimensions represented in the MBTI (extroversion and introversion, intuition and sensory, thinking and feeling, and judging and perceiving) do, in fact, account for patterns in self-disclosure on Facebook. This research is a mere beginning of the plethora of studies that could branch off and expand the conversation of personality and self-disclosure.

Introduction

Facebook is an ever-growing social networking website through which millions of people share information and interact with others on a daily basis. The publicness of a site like this raises concerns and questions relating to self-disclosure and how much one should or shouldn't share on the Internet. Additionally, with the social nature of the site, personality comes into play in how individuals portray themselves and use the different arenas of Facebook on a regular basis. Researchers have started to look into these two aspects together to see if personality and self-disclosure have any relationship on Facebook usage. There have been many agreements and disagreements regarding which personality tests are valid, which personality traits attribute to different Internet usage, and whether or not extroversion or introversion play the biggest role in self-disclosure.

The Five Factor Model of personality is used repeatedly in every study pertaining to personality and Facebook usage that I have reviewed. However, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been used as a valid personality assessment for other relational purposes throughout the years. I have personally seen it prove effective in leadership environments as it helped mobilize a team with different strengths, helping them figure out how to best work together. I have also seen it aid in personal relationships, giving the individuals more insight into the other's perceptions and how to better communicate. Kelly Moore and James C. McElroy specifically state that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was an unreliable and irrelevant test of personality when pertaining to Facebook

usage and self-disclosure (268). However, when researching the credibility of the MBTI, Carlyn stated that the validity of the profiles stand consistent with the person's personality not only at the time of the test, but also throughout that person's lifetime (461). After reading Carlyn's research, I took the MBTI test again two years after taking it the first time, and my profile stood consistent over time like she said. Other researchers point to a similar belief as Moore by only using the Five Factor Model and not venturing into any other personality test (Ryan and Xenos 1658; Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 1289; Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel 174; Opt and Loffredo 560). Orr et al. also used the Five Factor Model, but claim that it didn't play as big of a role on Facebook use as other research had claimed (Orr et al. 582). While many people researched personality within the same filter, I believe there is room to look for patterns in a different light. I think that many of the researchers used the Five Factor Model simply so they could compare and contrast their results with other researchers' findings.

The Five Factor Model of personality encompasses the following qualities: Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism or Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience. Some of the research resulted in similar findings in regards to each personality category in the Five Factor Model, while some led to divergent results. Extroversion and Introversion were discussed in multiple articles outside of those that analyzed the Five Factor Model and will be discussed separately later on.

1.1 Agreeableness

Moore and McElroy and Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky present similar findings in regards to Agreeableness. Both groups found that people high in Agreeableness were more likely to make postings about themselves and upload more pictures (Moore and McElroy 270; Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 1289). Moore and McElroy also found that those same individuals were more likely to regret posting inappropriate content, which is consistent with Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel's findings that they are less likely to post about things deemed immoral or wrong (Moore and McElroy 271; Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel 180). However, Orr et al. found that Agreeableness had no relation to Facebook usage (582).

1.2 Conscientiousness

Moore and McElroy stated that Conscientiousness was unrelated to the amount of photos one posted or the number of friends they had, while Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky recorded that individuals high in Conscientiousness had more friends and less picture uploads, and Karl found that they were also less likely to post about things deemed immoral or wrong (Moore and McElroy 271; Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 1293; Karl 182).

1.3 Neuroticism

Robert Orr et al. and Ryan and Xenos agreed that those high in neuroticism preferred using the Facebook wall to posting pictures (Orr et al. 582; Ryan and Xenos 1660). However, Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky's research found that the more unstable a person is, the more they will upload pictures (1290). This disagreement could simply be due to a different research style or a cultural difference in the people being studied. Moore and McElroy and Ryan both found that high levels of neuroticism accounted for increased amounts of time spent on Facebook (Moore and McElroy 268; Ryan and Xenos 1661).

1.4 Openness to Experience

Several researchers found that openness was insignificant to Facebook usage at any dimension (Moore and McElroy 268; Orr et al. 582; Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel 182). Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky, however, found a pattern of increased features being used in the personal information section (1292).

Extroversion is one aspect of the Five Factor Model that has been studied in isolation many times. It is also a dimension of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator that is used in my research. Several researchers all found that extroverts tend to have more friends on Facebook than introverts, which is contrary to Orr et al.'s belief that extroversion is insignificant in the amount of friends on Facebook (Moore and McElroy 273; Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 1293; Opt and Loffredo 564; Tosun and Timo164). Moore and McElroy and Orr et al. both believe that Extroversion has no relationship with the amount of time one spends on Facebook, but Ryan and Xenos found that extroverts are more likely to use Facebook than introverts (Moore and McElroy 273; Orr et al. 582; Ryan and Xenos 1662). Moore and McElroy and Tosun and Timo had differing findings in regards to an extrovert's motivation to use Facebook. Tosun and Timo claim that extroverted people use Facebook to maintain relationships already formed by face-to-face encounters, while Moore and McElroy says that they use it less frequently as a means of keeping up with people (Moore and McElroy 274; Tosun and Timo 164). Orr et al. and Moore and McElroy believe that Extroversion doesn't account for any patterns in the amount of posts or photos one puts up (Orr et al. 580; Moore and McElroy 270). However, Ryan and Xenos found that extroverts are more likely to use all of the communication tools Facebook provides on a regular basis (1662). Amichai-Hamburger Vinitzky and Moore and McElroy found that extroverted people post less personal information and have less regret over what they post (Amichai-Hamburger Vinitzky 1293; Moore and McElroy 271). Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel found, though, that Extroversion was insignificant in regards to the information individuals posted on their profiles (176).

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There is much debate over this topic, and different assumptions and findings probably result from the fact that each study was composed in a different way with a different group of subjects. Also, Quenk's explanation of extroversion and introversion raises the possibility for conflicting findings. She argues that, since introverts are more comfortable "inside their heads," there could be a connection between introversion and time spent in their own thoughts on the Internet (Quenk 103). However, she also notes that extroverts are stimulated by "outer environments," which could also relate to Facebook usage in that it's actually not just thoughts inside of their own heads (Quenk 104). Individuals' comfort in using the Internet, therefore, depends on their own sense of whether it's something personal and "inside their head" or if they view it as a social and "outer" medium with which to communicate.

All of this research is based around similar aspects of personality laid out in the Five Factor Model of personality. Extroversion is a quality discussed in both the Five Factor Model and the MBTI; however, several other personality dimensions considered in the MBTI are not discussed in the Five Factor Model. The MBTI also considers whether people are perceivers or judgers and feelers or thinkers in addition to assessing their preference towards either sensing or intuition. I aim to look for patterns in self-disclosure on Facebook related to these additional dimensions. I think that because the MBTI has been proven as a credible personality indicator, it is important to look into trends in this test in order to further research personality and Internet usage. By omitting qualities of personality that are represented with the MBTI, we are ignoring possible trends in Facebook usage and putting an unnecessary cap on research.

Hypothesis 1: Extroversion vs. Introversion
I believe that my research will reveal that extroverts self-disclose more information than introverts. According to McCauley, extroverted people prefer environments that "require frequent interactions, quick action, and communication," and that introverts desire less communication (17). This drives me to believe that extroverts will use Facebook on a more frequent basis, therefore

posting more statuses and disclosing more information. I also think that introverts will share less personal information in their "About Me" section due to shyness.

Hypothesis 2: Intuition vs. Sensory

I assume that those who lean towards the sensory mindset will use Facebook more and disclose more than their intuitive counterparts. They are more interested in present experience than intuitive people, leading me to believe that they will share more detailed information about what they are doing, where they are doing it, and who they are with (McCauley 20). I assume that the self-disclosure scores of those with "S" personalities will be much higher than those with "N" personalities. I also predict that intuitive people will share more information in their "About Me" sections than their sensory counterparts.

Hypothesis 3: Feelers vs. Thinkers

Feelers enjoy tasks that involve a human component (McCauley 21). Because of the assumed extra time that would lead said "feeler" to use a social entity like Facebook, I predict they would post more and thus disclose more. I also think that since feelers are very open and people-focused, they will share more personal information in their "About Me" section in order to create opportunities for others to share more of their information. I believe that thinkers will only share what is necessary and practical.

Hypothesis 4: Judgers vs. Perceivers

Perceivers are known to be more receptive to new and changing environments than judgers (McCauley 21). This leads me to believe that a perceiver would enjoy keeping updated on the changing statuses of their friends and what they are doing, therefore joining in and keeping their friends updated as well. Judgers like steady, unchanging information, leading me to expect that the information they share in their "About Me" would be information that is practical and unchanging. I imagine they would be less likely to share their favorites and more likely to share their hometown or high school.

Method

For my research, I conducted textual analyses of sixteen different Facebook profiles. I asked sixteen friends, all within the ages of 18-24, to take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test. Each person selected was someone I already had a relationship with and with whom I was friends on Facebook. This created trust as the subjects allowed me to view and analyze their Facebook information and profiles. The subjects were also chosen by willingness to complete the 70 question Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and by being within the age frame I was looking at. Not all participants in the study are from the same geographical area or school. This diversity allowed me to look for trends regardless of subcultures. I scored their tests personally, assuring the accuracy and consistency of scores, and recorded their varying four-letter personality types. I then organized each person in groups based on identical four-letter profiles, as well as by each individual letter.

Next, I went on each person's profile and examined his or her "About Me" section. This is a section of Facebook where one can share information on multiple different avenues, from birthdays to family members to home addresses and phone numbers. I recorded what each person chose to share, and then made a table tallying which personality types shared what personal information. Then, I looked at each person's profile over a span of two weeks and examined his or her Facebook statuses. Statuses can be used to update "friends" on what a person is doing, where she's going, how she's feeling, or even a song she likes or a quote she's heard. I then created a scale by which to compare the self-disclosure amounts. Subjects who posted one to three statuses received a score of

one, those who posted four to seven received a two, those who posted eight to eleven a three, and subjects who posted twelve or more statuses received a four.

I then went back over those same statuses and recorded how many shared where the subject was or who they were with—a quality of a status that I think represents high self-disclosure. Because everyone had a different number of posts, I looked at this in terms of percentages. If a subject shared where they were or who they were with 1-25% of the time, they received a score of one, those who shared this 26-50% received a two, those who shared this 51-74% a three, and subjects who shared this info 75-100% of the time received a four. I then combined these two scores and looked at them on a scale of one through a possible eight. These scores were then recorded based on all four letters as well as each letter individually. Once both the "About Me" section and the statuses were scored and tallied, the results were analyzed and cross-examined for connections.

Results

In regards to the "About Me" section on Facebook, I found many correlations. Introverts were more likely to share their college information, family members, religious preferences, and an alternate website (e.g. a separate blog) than extroverts. This information is more intimate than what the typical extrovert was inclined to share, such as birthday or favorite books and movies. However, extroverts did share their relationship statuses more than introverts.. In the N and S, or intuition and sensing, domains, there were no significant differences in the information shared with the people who viewed their profiles. Feelers tended to share much less information than thinkers did—less than 50%. However, when they did share, they shared about familial, intimate subjects like their hometown and their family members. Thinkers in this study shared their religious preferences and favorites 100% of the time while also disclosing phone numbers, addresses, employers, and relationship statuses. Judgers are also much more inclined to share more information on their profiles than perceivers. On average, they shared information in 12 out of the 16 areas available on Facebook while perceivers only averaged about five or six. No differences were found in willingness to share one's high school, email, or city of residence at any dimension of personality. One interesting finding involved the ESTJ personality profile. The only people in the study that shared their address and phone number had the type of ESTJ. These details are very personal and potentially dangerous to share, as they could give away a person's location, therefore the self-disclosure is very high.

In regards to status updates and content, there were not nearly as many correlations. All personality types averaged at least a six out of eight on a self-disclosure scale. The only person that got a score of an eight was an ENFJ with their other ENFJ's having scores of seven. The only person that shared who they were with or where they were on every status posted was an ESFP. This person was the only one in the study with that specific personality profile, so I am unable to compare and draw conclusions about it. ENFJ personalities have the highest average self-disclosure score (7.3) while ESFJ's have the lowest (4.5). Extroverts have an average score of 5.6 while introverts land at 4.6, showing a slight, but not highly noticeable difference. Those with preference towards intuition averaged a score of 7 while sensors only brought in a score of 4.75. Feelers on average seemed to disclose much more than thinkers (F=6, T=4.16) and perceivers more than judgers (P=6.3, J=5.07).

Discussion

In researching the effects of personality on self-disclosure on social networking sites, all researchers have used the same assessment of personality, the Five Factor Model. My goal was to prove that correlations could be found using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator when analyzing Facebook posts and profiles. Ultimately, I did find some patterns in certain dimensions of the MBTI.

Extroverts did end up having slightly higher self-disclosure scores than introverts. as I assumed in Hypothesis 1. However, I found that introverts shared more intimate information on their "About Me" section than extroverts, which is the opposite of what I predicted. This goes along with Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky's results showing that extroverts post less personal information about themselves. It is puzzling, though, that extroverts self-disclose more on their statuses but less in their "About Me" section. This may be due to the fact that extroverts enjoy posting who they are with and what they are doing socially for others to see, and are less concerned with sharing personal information about themselves. Introverts, however, are less socially driven and therefore less likely to post details about their everyday plans.

In Hypothesis 2, I predicted that sensors would disclose more information than their intuitive counterparts due to their interest in present experiences and situations. However, my research concluded that those who lean towards a more intuitive outlook scored significantly higher in self-disclosure through status updates. My prediction that there would be a difference in the information shared in their "About Me" sections was proven wrong by my data. There was no significant difference in the preferred information shared nor the amount of it. I assume that these findings, or lack thereof, are due to the fact that the "S" and "N" components of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator more assess the way that one tends to think rather than how those thoughts lead one to act. They are more focused on how one takes in information and processes it than how they put it into practice, explaining the lack of impact on Facebook usage.

Feelers did, in fact, tend to disclose more than thinkers did in their Facebook statuses, as previously hypothesized. They tagged and mentioned more of their friends and where and what they were doing than any thinkers did. However, feelers shared a lot less information in their "About Me" section than thinkers. In fact, this trait accounted for the least amount of information shared on their profiles as opposed to any other. Surprisingly, thinkers shared the most personal information available to share on Facebook—addresses and phone numbers. The only explanation I can find to justify this is that thinkers like to use their technical skill, so it's a possibility that they filled out more of the "About Me" section simply because they knew how.

Hypothesis 4 was partially proven by my research. Perceivers did score slightly higher on the self-disclosure scale than judgers. This confirms the belief that perceivers enjoy keeping up with changes and updated information. However, my presumption that judgers would stick to few, practical pieces of information in their "About Me" sections was proved incorrect. They averaged sharing information in 75% of the areas provided by Facebook, including favorites. This shows that while they like steady and unchanging information, that desire doesn't necessarily carry over into their social networking habits.

> In most categories, I found an inconsistent pattern of self-disclosure between subjects' "About Me" sections and their coinciding Facebook statuses. . . . It seems as though users of Facebook view these two avenues of self-disclosure as different types of information to be shared.

In most categories, I found an inconsistent pattern of self-disclosure between subjects' "About Me" sections and their coinciding Facebook statuses. Future research could go into the reasoning behind this. It seems as though users of Facebook view these two avenues of self-disclosure as different types of information to be shared. Some felt comfortable sharing both, some one over the other. Future researchers might conduct surveys soliciting people's views on the different avenues of Facebook and why they use or don't use each one.

Overall, it is clearly shown that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator does account for patterns in behavior on Facebook like the Five Factor Model does. Neither test shows patterns in every single dimension of the test, showing equal credibility between the two. Because of the patterns found in my small-scale research, it seems more, larger scaled research is called for. My research

was limited to only sixteen subjects over a two-week span of time. I also didn't have every single personality type represented in my study, with some types only being represented by one person, limiting my ability to make assumptions. With greater research tools and a broader collection of people, I believe significant attributions of Facebook behavior could be connected to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

The MBTI has been discredited for use in scientific studies in the past, but I argue that it does have a place in the research world, and therefore should be researched on a more complex level. In order to have a complete conversation and database of research, researchers need to recognize that there are more attributes to personality that aren't accounted for in the Five Factor Model, but are in other tests like the MBTI. More research could also branch into other factors such as gender, culture, and age groups and correlate those with MBTI results.

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