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## **The indirect nature of social motives: the relation of social approach and avoidance motives with likeability via extraversion and agreeableness**

Nikitin, Jana ; Freund, Alexandra M

**Abstract:** The current study tested assumptions derived from the whole-trait theory (Fleeson, 2012), which proposes a connection between personality and motivation. We hypothesized that individual differences in social approach and avoidance motives are associated with personality as observed by others. In addition, we expected that observed personality links social approach and avoidance motives to interpersonal outcomes. The sample was composed of 83 young adults (25.3% males, Mage = 21.66 years) who had recently moved into a shared apartment. Roommates (N = 83; 50.6% males, Mage = 22.83 years) evaluated the newcomers on Extraversion, Agreeableness, and likeability. Approach motives had an indirect positive effect on likeability through other-reported Extraversion and Agreeableness. Although avoidance motives had some negative effects on likeability mediated through low Extraversion, they were positively associated with Agreeableness. These results demonstrate the complexity of social approach and avoidance motives. Moreover, they highlight the importance of motivational factors for observed personality.

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The Indirect Nature of Social Motives: The Relation of Social Approach and Avoidance

Motives with Likeability Via Extraversion and Agreeableness

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## 1 Abstract

2 **Objective:** The current study tested assumptions derived from the whole-trait theory  
3 (Fleeson, 2012) that proposes a connection between personality and motivation. We  
4 hypothesized that individual differences in social approach and avoidance motives are  
5 associated with personality as observed by others. In addition, we expected that observed  
6 personality links social approach and avoidance motives to interpersonal outcomes.

7 **Method:** The sample was comprised of  $N = 83$  young adults (25.3% males,  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.66$   
8 years) who had recently moved into a shared apartment. Roommates ( $N = 83$ , 50.6% males,  
9 age  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.83$  years) evaluated the newcomers on extraversion, agreeableness, and  
10 likeability.

11 **Results:** Approach motives had an indirect positive effect on likeability through other-  
12 reported extraversion and agreeableness. Although avoidance motives had some negative  
13 effects on likeability mediated through low extraversion, they were positively associated with  
14 agreeableness.

15 **Conclusions:** These results demonstrate the complexity of social approach and avoidance  
16 motives. Moreover, they highlight the importance of motivational factors for observed  
17 personality.

18 *Keywords:* social approach and avoidance motives, person perception, extraversion  
19 and agreeableness

20

1 The Indirect Nature of Social Motives: The Relation of Social Approach and Avoidance  
2 Motives with Likeability Via Extraversion and Agreeableness

3 Recently, McCabe and Fleeson (2012) provided a new theoretical conception of and  
4 empirical evidence for the relationship between personality and motivation. Based on the  
5 whole-trait theory (Fleeson, 2012), McCabe and Fleeson argued that personality has a  
6 functional role in facilitating goals. According to the whole-trait theory, people do not act in  
7 trait-relevant ways “just because that is who they are” (McCabe & Fleeson, 2012, p. 2) but  
8 because the behavior serves their goals. McCabe and Fleeson demonstrated that variations in  
9 self-reported personality (e.g., extraversion) can be explained for the most part by self-  
10 reported goals (e.g., trying to make new friends).

11 The current research builds on the proposed connection between motivation and  
12 personality and expands it by (a) using *other-report* for personality, and (b) investigating  
13 *interpersonal outcomes* (such as likeability) of the observed personality. We hypothesize that  
14 individual differences in social approach and avoidance motives are associated with different  
15 personality as observed by others. In addition, we expect that observed personality links  
16 social approach and avoidance motives to interpersonal outcomes.

17 *Social approach motives* are defined as the dispositional motivation to approach  
18 positive social outcomes such as making new friends; *social avoidance motives* are defined as  
19 the dispositional motivation to avoid negative social outcomes such as being rejected (e.g.,  
20 Gable & Berkman, 2008). We hypothesize that social approach motives are positively  
21 associated with observed *extraversion*. This should be the case because extraverted behavior  
22 facilitates building social relationships (Wolff & Kim, 2012), the core of social approach  
23 motives. In contrast, social avoidance motives should be negatively associated with observed  
24 extraversion because being extraverted does not only facilitate shaping social environment but  
25 also bears the risk of rejection. Avoidance of rejection is at the core of social avoidance

1 motives. We further hypothesize that both social approach and avoidance motives are  
2 positively associated with observed *agreeableness*. This hypothesis is based on the  
3 assumption that both social approach and avoidance motives are expressions of the need to  
4 belong (Nikitin & Freund, 2008). Agreeableness-related behaviors, in turn, should serve the  
5 need to belong. Finally, we expect that both extraversion and agreeableness are positively  
6 related to interpersonal outcomes such as likeability (e.g., van der Linden, Scholte, Cillesen,  
7 te Nijenhuis, & Segers, 2010).

8 We tested these hypotheses with students who were new roommates in a shared  
9 apartment. The new roommates reported their social approach and avoidance motives.  
10 Observers were roommates in the shared apartment who provided information about the  
11 personality and likeability of the newcomer.

### 12 **Social Approach and Avoidance Motives**

13 Although both social approach and avoidance motives express the need to belong, they  
14 are associated with different social goals and behaviors. Social approach motives are likely to  
15 predispose people to adopt short-term approach goals (e.g., "I want to make a good  
16 impression on my new roommate"), whereas social avoidance motives are likely to  
17 predispose people to adopt short-term avoidance goals (such as "I don't want to make a fool of  
18 myself"; Gable, 2006). Accordingly, persons who score high on measures of social approach  
19 motives report making greater efforts to affiliate with others (Miller, Rossbach, & Munson,  
20 1981) and having more social contacts (Gable, 2006; Nikitin, Burgermeister, & Freund, 2012)  
21 than people low on social approach motives. In contrast, persons high on social avoidance  
22 motives report stronger reactivity to negative social encounters than persons low on social  
23 avoidance motives (Gable, 2006). Consequently, people high on social avoidance motives  
24 avoid negative encounters by keeping a low profile in potentially stressful social situations  
25 (Ksionzky & Mehrabian, 1980; Nikitin & Freund, 2010, Study 2).



1 The whole-trait theory (Fleeson, 2012) proposes that each personality trait has an underlying  
2 motivational aspect (McCabe & Fleeson, 2012). Following this theory, we assume that social  
3 approach and avoidance motives are associated with specific personality traits. More  
4 concretely, we hypothesize that social approach and avoidance motives are reflected in  
5 *extraversion* and *agreeableness*.

6 There is high consensus that two of the “Big Five” personality factors, extraversion  
7 and agreeableness, are closely linked to interpersonal behavior (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009;  
8 Ashton, Lee, & Paunonen, 2002; Ashton & Lee, 2001; McCrae & Costa, 1989). Extraversion  
9 is typically inferred from a person’s general tendency to approach social situations, whereas  
10 agreeableness refers to the mode of relating to others (Costa & McCrae, 1988). Attributes  
11 related to extraversion are being gregarious, active, and assertive. Attributes related to  
12 agreeableness attributes are being trusting, cooperative, good-natured, and tolerant (e.g.,  
13 Borkenau & Ostendorf, 2008).

#### 14 **Social Motives and Agreeableness**

15 Social approach and avoidance motives both should be positively associated with  
16 agreeableness given that they are both expressions of the need to belong (Leary, Kelly,  
17 Cottrell, & Schreindorfer, 2007). Although approach and avoidance motives differ in their  
18 orientation towards positive or away from negative social outcomes, affiliation is the main  
19 concern of both motives. To satisfy the overarching need to belong, social approach and  
20 avoidance motives are both concerned to relate to others and, consequently, with  
21 agreeableness-related attributes. This assumption is supported by results of a self-report study  
22 with  $N = 587$  students who reported their social motives and personality (Engeser & Langens,  
23 2010). In this study, agreeableness was positively correlated with both social approach and  
24 avoidance motives. We assume that we will find the same positive association with other-  
25 reported agreeableness.

## 1 **Social Motives and Extraversion**

2           We hypothesize that social approach motives are positively associated with  
3 extraversion-related attributes. This assumption is based on the observation that social  
4 approach motives are positively correlated with self-reported active approach of others  
5 (Gable, 2006; Nikitin et al., 2012) and with taking an active part in social situations  
6 (Ksionzky & Mehrabian, 1980; Miller et al., 1981; Nikitin & Freund, 2010, Study 2).  
7 According to Gable and colleagues (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000), positive social encounters  
8 do not simply happen, they have to be actively pursued and created. Attributes such as being  
9 gregarious, active, and assertive might help persons in actively shaping social encounters and  
10 thereby should serve social approach motives.

11           Being extraverted might also bear some risks. People who “go out on a limb” might  
12 easily disgrace themselves, particularly if they do not possess the necessary social  
13 competencies (Fast & Chen, 2009). As persons high on social avoidance motives report  
14 lower interpersonal competences (Butler, Doherty, & Potter, 2007), they might try to keep a  
15 low profile than expose themselves. In fact, social avoidance motives correlate with self-  
16 reported behavioral inhibition in social interactions, particularly in interactions with  
17 unfamiliar persons (Ksionzky & Mehrabian, 1980; Nikitin & Freund, 2010, Study 2). Thus,  
18 we hypothesize that social avoidance motives are negatively associated with extraversion-  
19 related attributes. Supporting this assumption, Engeser and Langens (2010) found in a self-  
20 report study that extraversion was associated positively with social approach motives but  
21 negatively with social avoidance motives.

## 22 **Interpersonal Outcomes of Extraversion and Agreeableness**

23           With respect to the connection between perceived extraversion and agreeableness and  
24 interpersonal outcomes, we expect that both extraversion and agreeableness lead to positive  
25 interpersonal outcomes such as likeability. This assumption is based on findings that persons



1 who are extraverted and agreeable are typically more popular with social interaction partners  
2 than those who score low on these traits (Mervielde & de Fruyt, 2000; van der Linden et al.,  
3 2010). Thus, we hypothesize that social approach and avoidance motives are associated with  
4 interpersonal outcomes through perceived extraversion and agreeableness, respectively.

### 5 **The Current Study**

6 The current study investigated the link between self-reported motives, other-reported  
7 personality, and interpersonal outcomes. We assessed personality and interpersonal outcomes  
8 by other-report because, as already mentioned, self-reports of social outcomes are  
9 systematically related to differences in information processing depending on social approach  
10 and avoidance motives (Downey et al., 2004; Gable & Poore, 2008; Nikitin & Freund, 2011;  
11 Strachman & Gable, 2006). Moreover, reports by others seem to be particularly relevant  
12 when studying the social effects of approach and avoidance motives because persons' day-to-  
13 day behavior is infused with traces of their dispositions and interaction partners make good  
14 use of these cues when making inferences about their personality and likeability (Funder,  
15 2012; Mehl, Gosling, & Pennebaker, 2006; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). To capture such  
16 inferences, we asked roommates of students who had just moved into shared apartments to  
17 report about their personality and likeability several weeks after the move. As argued by  
18 Nikitin et al. (2012), social approach and avoidance motives are most influential in the first  
19 weeks after a social transition. Moreover, relatively close relationships that comprise multiple  
20 social interactions in various situations are usually associated with relatively more accurate  
21 inferences of personality (i.e., they show higher convergence of self- and other-rated  
22 personality) from social behavior than new social relationships (Biesanz, West, & Millevoi,  
23 2007; Carney, Colvin, & Hall, 2007). Thus, by asking acquaintances who were already  
24 somewhat familiar but still relatively new, we aimed at assessing the impact of social

1 approach and avoidance motives on their roommates personality evaluations as well as  
2 relatively accurate reports.

3 In addition to social approach and avoidance motives, we also assessed (a) how long  
4 the newcomer and the roommate knew each other, (b) their contact frequency, and (c) their  
5 gender as predictors of personality inferences and likeability. As reported above, closeness is  
6 associated with higher convergence of self- and other-rated personality. In addition, on the  
7 basis of classical findings that proximity facilitates liking (Festinger, Schachter, & Back,  
8 1950), the length of the relationship might lead to more positive attitudes towards the social  
9 partner. For the same reason, we also included contact frequency as predictor of observed  
10 personality and likeability. Finally, we assumed that men and women might evaluate each  
11 other differently than members of the same sex (Zimmer-Gembeck, Waters, Kindermann,  
12 2010).

### 13 Method

#### 14 Participants

15 This study is based on a subsample of a larger project on developmental transitions in  
16 younger and older adulthood (Nikitin et al., 2012). The current analyses are based on data of  
17 university students who had recently moved out of their parental home into a shared  
18 apartment ( $N = 83$ , 25.3% male, age  $M = 21.66$  years,  $SD = 2.23$ , range 18–30). Half of these  
19 participants (50.6%) reported to be in a committed relationship, 48.2% to be single, and one  
20 person to be married. We asked the newcomers to provide contact details of a roommate who  
21 was willing to complete a questionnaire about the participant. The roommates (50.6% males)  
22 were on average  $M = 22.83$  years old ( $SD = 3.15$ , range 18–33). Half of them (51.8%)  
23 reported to be in a committed relationship, 45.8% to be single, and two persons to be married.  
24 At the time of the survey, newcomers lived in the shared apartments for  $M = 52.80$  days ( $SD$   
25  $= 59.40$ ) and the roommates on average more than a year ( $M = 16.10$  months,  $SD = 18.80$ ).

1 The gender-pairs distribution was as follows: Both males (19.3%), both females (43.4%),  
2 male roommate and female newcomer (31.3%), and female roommate and male newcomer  
3 (6%).

#### 4 **Procedure**

5 Newcomers completed an online-questionnaire (run on  
6 <http://www.surveymonkey.com>), first providing informed consent, and then filling out  
7 questionnaires assessing social approach and avoidance motives. The completion of the  
8 questionnaire took up to 30 minutes and contained sociodemographic information and other  
9 questionnaires not relevant for the current manuscript. Approximately one week later (if they  
10 already lived in the shared apartment at that time) or one week after they moved into the  
11 shared apartment, newcomers sent us the email address of one of their roommates. We then  
12 contacted the roommate and sent him or her a link to the questionnaire. After providing  
13 informed consent, the roommates filled out a questionnaire about how they perceived the  
14 newcomers. This took approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

#### 15 **Self-reported Social Approach and Avoidance Motives**

16 Social motives of the newcomer were assessed using the Affiliation Tendency and  
17 Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (Mehrabian, 1970; German version Sokolowski, 1986). The  
18 affiliation tendency subscale (25 items) measures social approach motives and the rejection  
19 sensitivity subscale (25 items) social avoidance motives. Items of the affiliation tendency  
20 scale reflect a preference for friends and attachments over independence from others, a  
21 preference for groups over individual activities, positive feelings associated with the presence  
22 of many people, and a preference for expressing affection toward people. Items of the  
23 sensitivity to rejection scale reflect a preference for behaviors or situations which minimize  
24 negative feedback from others, a preference for warm and accepting people, an inability to  
25 refuse favors, a concern about being liked, and negative feelings associated with the presence

1 of many people. Social approach ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .77$ ) and avoidance  
2 motives ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ) were negatively correlated ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p =$   
3  $.01$ ).

#### 4 **Other-reported Likeability**

5 We asked the roommate to indicate his or her impression of the newcomer using  
6 following single items: "What is your general impression of your roommate?" (0 = very  
7 negative, 6 = very positive), "How likeable is your roommate?" (0 = very unlikable, 6 = very  
8 likeable), and "How pleasant was the majority of the interactions with your roommate in the  
9 last two weeks?" (0 = very unpleasant, 6 = very pleasant).

10 Likeability was further assessed by interpersonal attraction. We used seven items built  
11 on the basis of the social-attraction subscale of the Interpersonal Attraction Scales  
12 (McCroskey & McCain, 1974, own German translation). The items were adapted to the  
13 cohabitation context: "I would like to meet my roommate also in the future," "I could imagine  
14 to work together with my roommate on different tasks," "I probably would not talk to my  
15 roommate if I met him/her at a party" (reversed), "I would discuss even controversial topics  
16 with my roommate," "I would like to get to know my roommate better," and "I enjoy the  
17 company of my roommate." Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly  
18 disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

19 Finally, we asked the roommate if he/she would have accepted the newcomer for the  
20 shared apartment, could he/she decide again. Roommates gave their responses on a Likert  
21 scale ranging from 0 (certainly not) to 6 (certainly yes). The aggregated likeability scale ( $M =$   
22  $4.94$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) had a good internal consistency, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ .

#### 23 **Other-reported Extraversion and Agreeableness**

24 We used the subscales extraversion and agreeableness of the short version  
25 (Schallberger & Venetz, 1999) of the German Big-Five Inventory (Ostendorf, 1990) to assess

1 perceptions of the newcomer's extraversion and agreeableness by the roommate. We asked  
2 the roommate "How would you describe your roommate based on the following adjectives?"  
3 Perceptions of the newcomer's extraversion were measured by five adjectives pairs (e.g.,  
4 "reluctant – sociable") and an additional item "shy" (reversed) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 3.90$ ,  
5  $SD = 1.27$ ). Perceptions of the newcomer's agreeableness were measured by five adjective  
6 pairs (e.g., "quarrelsome – peaceable";  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .72$ ). Responses  
7 were given on a Likert scale ranging from -3 to 3 and were recoded to scales ranging from 0  
8 to 6 for the analyses.

### 9 **Control Variables**

10 Both newcomers and roommates reported their gender (-1 = male, 1 = female).  
11 Additionally, we asked if the roommate had known the newcomer already before the move  
12 (-1 = did not know before, 1 = knew before). Half of the roommates (51.8%) had known the  
13 newcomer before the move. Finally, roommates indicated on a Likert scale ranging from 0  
14 (few times a week) to 6 (several times a day) how often they have had contact to the  
15 newcomer in the last two weeks ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ).

## 16 **Results**

### 17 **Predictors of Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Likeability**

18 We ran hierarchical regression analyses with gender of the newcomer, gender of the  
19 roommate, their interaction, previous acquaintance, and contact frequency as control variables  
20 in the first step, and self-reported social approach and avoidance motives in the second step as  
21 predictors of other-reported likeability, extraversion, and agreeableness. Gender of the  
22 newcomer, gender of the roommate, and previous acquaintance were included as dummy  
23 variables (-1 = male, 1 = female; -1 = did not know before, 1 = knew before). Results of the  
24 regression analyses are presented in Table 2.<sup>1</sup>

1           As expected, self-reported social approach motives were positively and self-reported  
2 social avoidance motives negatively related to other-reported extraversion. Both, social  
3 approach and avoidance motives were positively related to other-reported agreeableness. The  
4 newcomer's motives did not predict his or her likeability directly.

### 5 **Mediation Analysis**

6           Although social approach and avoidance motives were not directly related to  
7 likeability, we tested if there was an indirect effect of social approach and avoidance motives  
8 on likeability through extraversion and agreeableness as perceived by the roommate (see  
9 Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011, for a similar suggestion). We used the macro  
10 MEDIATE (Hayes & Preacher, 2012; available on [http://www.afhayes.com/spss-sas-and-  
12 mplus-macros-and-code.html](http://www.afhayes.com/spss-sas-and-<br/>11 mplus-macros-and-code.html)) for the estimation of total, direct, and indirect effects of social  
13 approach and avoidance motives on likeability through extraversion and agreeableness. The  
14 mediation model was significant ( $R^2 = .50$ ,  $F[9,73] = 8.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the data  
15 are consistent with the model depicted in Figure 1. Social approach and avoidance motives  
16 were not directly associated with likeability but there was a significant indirect effect of social  
17 approach and avoidance motives on likeability through extraversion and agreeableness  
18 (extraversion: social approach motives .14, CI [.06/.24], social avoidance motives -.09,  
19 CI [-.18/-.02]; agreeableness: social approach motives .07, CI [.05/.24], social avoidance  
20 motives .05, CI [.03/.20]). Social approach motives were positively and social avoidance  
21 motives were negatively associated with extraversion. In contrast, both social approach and  
22 avoidance motives were positively associated with agreeableness. Extraversion and  
23 agreeableness, in turn, were positively related to likeability.

### 23 **Discussion**

24           The current research tested hypotheses derived from the whole-trait theory by Fleeson  
25 (2012) that proposes a connection between personality and motivation (McCabe & Fleeson,

1 2012). We applied this theory to social motives. More specifically, we predicted that  
2 individual differences in social approach and avoidance motives are associated with  
3 personality as observed by others. In addition, we expected that personality links social  
4 approach and avoidance motives to interpersonal outcomes. Using relationships between  
5 roommates in a shared apartment as a testing ground for these hypotheses, we found that self-  
6 reported social approach and avoidance motives were indirectly associated with likeability  
7 through other-reported extraversion and agreeableness. Social approach motives had a  
8 positive effect on likeability through high extraversion and high agreeableness as perceived  
9 by the roommate. The association between social avoidance motives and likeability was  
10 complex in that social avoidance motives were positively associated with agreeableness but  
11 negatively associated with extraversion. It seems that people who score high on social  
12 approach motives can satisfy their need to belong by being extraverted and, at the same time,  
13 agreeable. People who score high on social avoidance motives can satisfy their need to  
14 belong by agreeable behaviors. However, their low extraversion – as perceived by others – is  
15 less beneficial for others' affective response.

16         These results are in line with previous findings that students who score high on social  
17 approach motives experience a social transition such as starting university positively from the  
18 very beginning (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Nikitin et al., 2012). High extraversion and  
19 agreeableness as expressions of social approach motives might help to actively shape a  
20 positive social environment and to experience the transition positively. Students who score  
21 high on social avoidance motives, in contrast, experience some initial difficulties in  
22 socializing (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Cutrona, 1982; Nikitin et al., 2012). One possible  
23 explanation for this observation is that people high on social avoidance motives initially keep  
24 a low profile because they are confronted with challenging new and unpredictable social  
25 situations that they experience as threatening. Keeping a low profile might help them not to

1 make mistakes but, at the same time, such inhibited behaviors might be taken as aloofness and  
2 make it more difficult for new acquaintances to get to know – and like – them. Over time, the  
3 agreeable behavior exhibited by people with high social avoidance motives might compensate  
4 for their initial aloofness and might help to make friends. In other words, high agreeableness  
5 and low extraversion might not make people appear very likeable in the beginning of getting  
6 to know them, but it might help them to slowly make new friends over time.

7       Taking a functional perspective, the low extraversion associated with social avoidance  
8 motives might serve to avoid rejection. As pointed out earlier, being extraverted involves the  
9 risk of exposing oneself to the scrutiny of others and, thereby, of not being liked – and  
10 rejection is exactly what people who are high on social avoidance motives fear and try to  
11 avoid. In addition, persons high on social avoidance motives report lower interpersonal  
12 competences (Butler et al., 2007), which might motivate them further to do very little in  
13 social situations in order to avoid being disliked. Unfortunately, not showing yourself in  
14 social interactions and being withdrawn might cause what socially avoidant persons try to  
15 avoid, namely not being liked. Nevertheless, this kind of behavior might still help to avoid  
16 overt rejections and being positively disliked. Future research needs to test this functional  
17 hypothesis by investigating if extraverted behavior is socially counterproductive for persons  
18 high in social avoidance motives because they lack interpersonal competencies.

19       The results of the current study do not support previous findings from self-report  
20 studies that social avoidance motives are directly associated with low likeability. In the  
21 current study, social avoidance motives and other-reported likeability were only indirectly  
22 related. The low self-reported likeability of social avoidance motives might be at least partly  
23 the result of biased information processing. Social avoidance motives are associated with  
24 attention to negative social information (Nikitin & Freund, 2011) and a negative interpretation  
25 of social information (Strachman & Gable, 2006). Not surprisingly, seeing signs of social



1 rejection rather than signs of social acceptance and interpreting ambiguous cues as social  
2 rejection leads to feelings of rejection. However, the picture is more complex. The current  
3 findings suggest that there are also personality traits associated with social avoidance motives  
4 that lead to not being liked, such as being low on extraversion. It seems, then, that the fear of  
5 socially avoidant people not to be liked is, to some degree, based on a fairly accurate  
6 perception of other people's reactions – they actually do not seem to like persons low on  
7 extraversion all that much. Such perceptions might then be amplified by biased information  
8 processing associated with avoidance motives.

### 9 **Limitations and Future Directions**

10 This study was the first to test the consequences of self-reported social approach and  
11 avoidance motives for other-reported personality and likeability. We used reports by others  
12 because they seem to be particularly relevant when studying social effects of approach and  
13 avoidance motives (Funder, 2012; Mehl et al., 2006; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). Although we  
14 controlled for possible factors that might influence the evaluations of the roommates such as  
15 gender, previous acquaintance, or contact frequency, we cannot exclude the possibility that  
16 there might be additional factors affecting the differences in the evaluations. For example,  
17 social motives might have predicted who the participant asked for the evaluation. Asking for  
18 a favor such as the completion of a questionnaire might be difficult for participants with high  
19 social avoidance motives because the other person might reject to comply. Students high on  
20 social avoidance motives might have preferred to ask roommates who are helpful and warm  
21 which could have led to systematic biases in their social evaluations. One possibility to  
22 counteract such biases would be to ask more than one roommate for the evaluation.

23 In a similar vein, the unequal distribution of the participants across the different  
24 gender-pair groups might be a result of self-selection. In the current study, fewer male  
25 newcomers asked female roommates for participation than vice versa. In fact, we found some

1 evidence for gender-related interaction effects and therefore controlled for gender in all  
2 analyses. However, more research is needed to investigate potential gender effects more  
3 systematically. For example, agreeableness seems to have different impact on likeability for  
4 men and women (e.g., Ciarrochi & Heaven, 2009).

5         It remains an open question if the results of the current study can be generalized to  
6 other social relationships. As previously discussed, social approach and avoidance motives  
7 might have different consequences in intimate relationships than in a relationship between  
8 roommates because partners in intimate relationships are highly interdependent. In fact, it  
9 seems that social avoidance motives have far more negative consequences in intimate  
10 relationships (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1998; Gable & Impett, 2012; Gable  
11 & Poore, 2008; Impett, Gable et al., 2005; Impett et al., 2010; Impett, Peplau et al., 2005)  
12 than among roommates as suggested by the present study. It is an interesting theoretical  
13 question which factors lead to different consequences of social approach and avoidance  
14 motives in different kinds of social relationships.

15         Finally, the correlational design of the current study does not allow for causal  
16 interpretation of the findings. Although we tested observed personality as a mediator of the  
17 association between social motives and likeability, one could consider other causal directions  
18 such as likeability mediating the relationship between observed personality and social  
19 motives. Certain personality dimensions might make people more or less likeable, which then  
20 might change their social approach and avoidance motives. We could not test this alternative  
21 hypothesis in the current study because likeability was not directly associated with social  
22 motives. Tests of the causal direction would require experimental or longitudinal designs.

### 23 **Conclusions**

24         The present findings add to the existing research on the motivation-personality link  
25 (McCabe & Fleeson, 2012) by showing that social motives are associated with observed

1 personality traits. Social approach motives were associated with traits that serve to quickly  
2 build and shape social relationships. Social avoidance motives were associated with traits  
3 that minimize the risk of rejection. Both social approach and avoidance motives were  
4 associated with traits that facilitate positive social interactions. The present findings suggest  
5 that social motives have different social consequences through different observed traits.  
6 Lacking experimental evidence, the correlational design of the current study provides only  
7 tentative support of the whole-trait theory (Fleeson, 2012). This being said, the current study  
8 provides first evidence that the whole-trait theory does not only apply to the link between  
9 personality and goals but also to the association between social motives and personality.  
10

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15

## 1 Footnotes

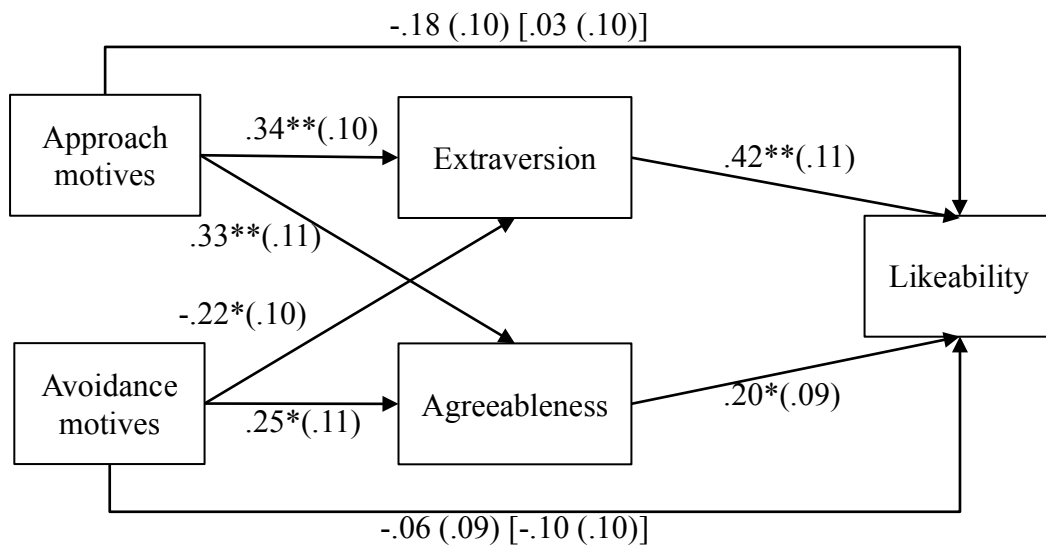
2 <sup>1</sup>Some of the control variables predicted likeability, extraversion, and agreeableness.  
3 Likeability was predicted by the interaction of the newcomer's and the roommate's gender ( $b$   
4  $= -.27, p = .03$ ). Male roommates evaluated female newcomers more positively than male  
5 newcomers ( $b = .32, p = .01$ ), but female roommates did not evaluate male newcomers  
6 significantly more positively than female newcomers ( $b = -.14, p = .38$ ). Contact frequency  
7 was a positive predictor of likeability ( $b = .34, p = .001$ ). Newcomers' gender further  
8 predicted extraversion with females being evaluated as more extraverted than males ( $b = .28,$   
9  $p = .02$ ). Agreeableness was predicted by previous acquaintance ( $b = -.25, p = .04$ ) and the  
10 interaction of newcomer's and roommate's gender ( $b = -.28, p = .047$ ). Female roommates  
11 evaluated female newcomers as less agreeable than male newcomers ( $b = -.31, p = .02$ ), but  
12 male roommates did not evaluate female and male newcomers differently on the  
13 agreeableness dimension ( $b = .07, p = .69$ ). No other predictions were significant.

Table 1

*Regression Analyses Predicting Roommate's View of the Newcomer From Newcomer's Social Motives*

Predictors	<u>Roommate's view of the newcomer</u>					
	<u>Likeability</u>		<u>Extraversion</u>		<u>Agreeableness</u>	
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1 (Control variables)	.34***		.15*		.10	
Step 2	.01		.19***		.12**	
Self-reported approach motives		.03		.34**		.33**
Self-reported avoidance motives		-.10		-.22*		.25*

*Note.* \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$ .



*Figure 1.* Direct and indirect effects of self-reported social approach and avoidance motives on other-reported likeability. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Direct effects of social approach and avoidance motives are reported in brackets. Controlled for gender of the newcomer ( $b = .10$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .40$ ), gender of the roommate ( $b = .18$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .15$ ), the interaction of gender of the newcomers and gender of the roommate ( $b = -.26$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .04$ ), previous acquaintance ( $b = .16$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .11$ ), and contact frequency ( $b = .34$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .002$ ).  $***p < .001$ .  $**p < .01$ .  $*p < .05$ .