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Self-Monitoring and Partner Knowledge Structures

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SELF-MONITORING AND PARTNER KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife, Miriam. I want to thank her for her love and support. She has been the steadfast source of encouragement that has kept me going through many hours of research and writing.

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Abstract

A connection between self-monitoring, which is an individual difference in concern about self-presentation, and partner knowledge structures, which is how people organize thoughts about their current romantic partner, is explored in this study. There were two competing hypotheses. If people structure thoughts about their partner in a way similar to how they structure their social worlds, then low self-monitors would have integrated partner knowledge structures and high self-monitors would have compartmentalized partner knowledge structures. If people structure thoughts about their partner in a way that reflects their relationship motivations and needs then we would find the opposite pattern of results. We used a measure of compartmentalization and integration as well as Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale to explore our hypotheses. Although both low self-monitors and high self-monitors had relatively compartmentalized partner knowledge structures, we found support for the relationship motivations and needs hypothesis. Low self-monitors had more compartmentalized partner knowledge structures than did high self-monitors. In fact, low self-monitors were more likely than high self-monitors to have completely compartmentalized views of their partners. Reasons for these findings, limitations of this study, and future directions are discussed.

Self-Monitoring and Partner Knowledge Structures

Self-Monitoring

People differ in how they present themselves in social situations. Some people are motivated to present the appropriate persona in differing social situations and are skilled at doing so. Other people are motivated to be themselves in differing social situations and are skilled at doing so. These differences are conceptualized as stable individual differences in self-monitoring. People are classified as either high self-monitors or low self-monitors, and these differences in self-presentation are evident across five dimensions: motivation, attention, ability, use of ability and behavior (cf. Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Snyder, 1974, 1987).

High self-monitors are motivated to portray the appropriate persona that each situation requires (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), and they prefer environments in which appropriate social personas are clearly defined (Jones & Baumeister, 1976; Snyder & Harkness, 1984). To determine what persona is appropriate for each social situation, high self-monitors use social referencing. They focus their attention outward, observe others' behavior, and attend to relevant cues in each social situation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Over time, high self-monitors develop a broad social knowledge and an extensive inventory of social personas (cf. Leary & Allen, 2011). High self-monitors have an ability to select and use the appropriate persona for each social situation and then effectively control their behavior in that social situation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). High self-monitors use these abilities to present the best persona in each different situation. In other words, they engage in strategic self-presentation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Cantor, 1980). Consequently, high self-monitors' behavior is different from situation

to situation, or situationally specific, because they portray different social personas in differing social situations (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

Low self-monitors want to be themselves in each social situation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000) and prefer environments in which they can be themselves (Jones & Baumeister, 1976; Snyder & Harkness, 1984). To determine how to be themselves in social situations, low self-monitors use introspection. They focus their attention inward on their own thoughts, beliefs and feelings (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Over time, low self-monitors accumulate a great amount of self-knowledge. Low self-monitors have an ability to draw upon this self-knowledge to be self-congruent in different situations. Low self-monitors use their abilities to consistently present what they believe is a self-congruent of themselves in differing social situations. In other words, they engage in self-verification (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Cantor, 1980). Low self-monitors' behavior is cross-situationally consistent, or similar across different situations, because they are driven by dispositions which do not differ from one situation to another (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

High self-monitors and low self-monitors have different self-concepts (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Sampson, 1978; Snyder, 1979). High self-monitors are "pragmatic." They adapt to and define themselves in terms of situations. In fact, high self-monitors will go so far as to misrepresent themselves to potential online dating partners in terms of their assets, goals, interests, attributes, and past relationships (Hall, Song, Park, & Cody, 2010). Low self-monitors are "principled." They remain true to their values and define themselves in terms of dispositions. Low self-monitors do not demonstrate a tendency to misrepresent themselves to potential online dating partners (Hall et al., 2010).

High self-monitors and low self-monitors differ in terms of their social worlds (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). High self-monitors prefer friends who are experts in specific areas, and there is little opportunity for a high self-monitors' friends to come into contact with one another because high self-monitors are often doing different things with different people (Jamieson, Lydon, & Zanna, 1987; Snyder, Gangestad & Simpson, 1983). Consequently, high self-monitors have large social networks that are compartmentalized and segmented. For example, a high self-monitor will have one friend who is a good basketball player, another who is an excellent cook, and another who is a trained violinist. This high self-monitor will play a game with the basketball player, go over to the cook's house for a great meal, and then out to a concert with the violinist. Each of these high self-monitor's friends seldom meets his or her other friends. This high self-monitor's friends seldom come into contact with each other.

Low self-monitors prefer friends who are similar to them in a number of different areas. There is ample opportunity for low self-monitors' friends to come into contact with one another because low self-monitors are often doing the same things with the same people (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983). Consequently, low self-monitors have small social networks that are integrated and homogenous. For example, a low self-monitor will have one friend who is a good basketball player, a lousy cook, and an average violinist. All of the low self-monitor's friends will join in on the basketball game. They will then dine out together and then all go to the concert. All of this low self-monitor's friends know each other, and they often hang out together.

Self-Monitoring and Romantic Relationships

Differences between high and low self-monitors are found in relationship initiation (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Snyder, 1987). In a study by Berscheid,

Graziano, Monson, and Dermer (1976), participants had an opportunity to view potential dates and non-dates on a video monitor. Compared to low self-monitors, high self-monitors remembered more details about their potential dates and made dispositional attributions that were stronger and more favorable. High self-monitors as compared to low-self-monitors, were also more confident in their assessments of their dating partners.

High self-monitors are motivated by extrinsic factors to initiate and maintain dating relationships (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987). High self-monitors prefer dates with positive external characteristics such as attractiveness, sex appeal, and social status (Jones, 1993). High self-monitors choose physically attractive partners over partners with a similar personality (Glick, 1985; Snyder, Berscheid, & Glick, 1985). High self-monitors are attracted to persons with similar recreational interests and choose to go out with a partner who is skilled in a specific area rather than with a current partner who is unskilled in that particular area (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

High self-monitors have a large number of dating partners (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder, Simpson, & Gangstad, 1986). Consequently, high self-monitors have many alternatives to their current dating partner. High self-monitors also have unrestricted socio-sexuality (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986; Sakaguchi, Sakai, Keisuke, & Hasegawa, 2007). That is, they are open to changing their partner and are willing to engage in casual sex with individuals other than their current partner. Consequently, high self-monitors' romantic relationships tend to be shorter in length when compared to low self-monitors' relationships (Snyder & Simpson, 1984). Not surprisingly, high self-monitors believe that people can have more than one "true" love (Neto, 1993).

Low self-monitors are motivated by intrinsic factors to initiate and maintain existing dating relationships (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987). Low self-monitors prefer dates with positive dispositional qualities such as responsibility, loyalty, and being similar in educational level, beliefs and values (Jones, 1993). Low self-monitors choose potential partners with similar personalities over potential partners who are attractive (Glick, 1985; Snyder et al., 1985). Low self-monitors are attracted to persons with similar personalities and prefer to go out with a current partner rather than a partner who is skilled in a particular activity (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

Low self-monitors have a small number of dating partners (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986). Consequently, they have few alternatives to their current dating partner. Low self-monitors also have restricted socio-sexuality (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986; Sakaguchi et al., 2007). That is, they are not willing to change their partner and are uncomfortable with engaging in casual sex with individuals other than their current partner. Consequently, low self-monitors' romantic relationships are longer in length when compared to high self-monitors' relationships (Snyder & Simpson, 1984). Not surprisingly, low self-monitors believe that people can have only one "true" love (Neto, 1993).

There are differences between high and low self-monitors in ongoing romantic relationships (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Snyder, 1987). In a relationship's early stages, high self-monitors have a greater degree of intimacy with their partner than do low self-monitors (Snyder & Simpson, 1984). Over time, high self-monitors grow closer to their current partner at a slower rate than do low self-monitors. Later in relationships, low self-monitors have a greater degree of intimacy than do high self-monitors. High self-monitors are also less committed to their relationships than are low self-monitors, and

high self-monitors have a stronger desire to develop a relationship with someone else than do low self-monitors (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999; Snyder et al., 1986; Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

High and low self-monitors differ in terms of a balance of power in their romantic relationships (Oyamot, Fuglestad, & Snyder, 2010). High self-monitors view their relationships as being hierarchical. In other words, high self-monitors believe that one partner has more power than the other partner in their relationship. The partner in power may or may not be a high self-monitor. For high self-monitors, these power asymmetries are not strongly related to relationship quality or closeness, level of emotional investment or amount of anticipated distress should their relationship end. Low self-monitors view their relationships as being egalitarian. In other words, low self-monitors believe that both partners have a similar amount of power in their relationship. For low self-monitors, power symmetry is strongly related to relationship quality and closeness, level of emotional investment, as well as amount of anticipated distress should their relationship end.

High self-monitors and low self-monitors manage accommodative dilemmas differently. Accommodative dilemmas are situations in which partners' needs are in conflict (Gaines, Work, Johnson, Youn, & Lai, 2000). High self-monitors use passive responses of loyalty and neglect. In other words, high self-monitors do not deliberately sabotage their relationships, but they also do not actively try to repair their relationships. In contrast, low self-monitors use an active response of voice when confronted with accommodative dilemmas. In other words, they take active efforts to deal with problems in their relationships.

High self-monitors and low self-monitors also differ in future time orientation in romantic relationships. Low self-monitors think more about their relationships' futures than do high self-monitors. Low self-monitors are more likely than high self-monitors to report that their

relationships will lead to marriage (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999; Öner, 2002). When married, low self-monitors report more satisfaction in their relationships than do high self-monitors. Not surprisingly, low self-monitors are less likely to have experienced divorce than are high self-monitors (Leone & Hall, 2003).

Partner Knowledge Structures

High self-monitors and low self-monitors may also differ in strategies they use to maintain their existing romantic relationships. Many individuals develop positive illusions about their romantic partner and relationship (Gagne & Lydon, 2004; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2003). Positive illusions are instrumental in allaying concerns about a partner's faults and sustaining a belief that an individual is in a relationship with the right person. In fact, the use of positive illusions has been found to be predictive of happy, satisfying, and stable romantic relationships (Murray Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, and Griffin, 2000; Murray et al., 2003). Individuals who use positive illusions about their relationships have overly favorable appraisals of their romantic partner, markedly optimistic outlooks about their relationship's future and believe that they have more control over negative events in their relationship than others do (Gagne & Lydon, 2004, Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray et al., 2003).

To maintain positive illusions individuals may strategically organize information about their romantic partner (Graham & Clark, 2006; Murray & Holmes, 1999; Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). Individuals develop what Showers and Kevlyn (1999) call "partner knowledge structures" by mentally storing a partner's virtues and faults with different situations in which they encounter their partner. This knowledge structure may be comprised of different combinations of virtues and faults for different situations such as work, school, or out

on the tennis court. Individuals have an integrated view of a partner in a particular situation when both virtues and faults are stored with that situation. For example, when Tom thinks about Mary at work, he first thinks about how self-assured she is (a virtue). Next, Tom remembers her intelligence, her controlling and domineering nature as well as her sense of humor (virtues and faults).

Positively biased views of a partner are generated when links between virtues and faults are asymmetrical and unbalanced (Murray et al., 2003). When a partner's fault becomes apparent, that fault is linked to virtues which are then activated. In contrast, when a virtue becomes apparent, that virtue is linked to only other virtues which are then activated. Faults are not linked to that virtue, so none are activated. For example, when Mary sees Tom yelling at his tennis partner (a fault), she remembers how good of a tennis player he is and how he expects only the best from himself and others (virtues). On the other hand, when Mary sees Tom tutoring other students at school (a virtue), she only thinks about how witty and intelligent he is (other virtues). She does not think about how critical he is (a fault).

Individuals have a compartmentalized view of a partner in a particular situation when only virtues *or* faults are stored with a situation (Graham & Clark, 2006; Murray & Holmes, 1999; Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). For instance, when Susie thinks about Bill out on a date, she thinks only about how patient, understanding and responsive he is to her needs (all virtues). Conversely, when Susie thinks about Bill at home, she can only think about how lazy, moody and emotional he is (all faults). When individuals develop compartmentalized partner knowledge structures, they typically only maintain either a positive impression or a negative impression of their partners at a single point in time.

High and low self-monitors may differ in their predominant type of partner knowledge structure. There are two possible reasons for why they may differ. First, high self-monitors and low self-monitors may differ in their predominant type of partner knowledge structure because they structure their views of their partners (a micro level process) similarly to the way they structure their social worlds (a macro level process). High self-monitors may be more inclined than low self-monitors to have compartmentalized partner knowledge structures because high self-monitors have compartmentalized social worlds (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983). High self-monitors may pragmatically order their world such that all like things go together: friends and partners with their corresponding activities as well as faults with faults and virtues with virtues. Conversely, low self-monitors may be more inclined than high self-monitors to have integrated partner knowledge structures because low self-monitors have integrated social worlds (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983). Low self-monitors may order their world in a principled manner such that friends are friends and partners are partners no matter what their skills, faults or virtues.

Second, high self-monitors and low self-monitors may differ in their partner knowledge structures because of differing motivations and needs. In a direction opposite of the former hypothesis, high self-monitors may be more inclined than low self-monitors to have integrated partner knowledge structures. High self-monitors are less concerned than low self-monitors about a loss of their romantic partner because high self-monitors have many alternatives to their partner (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986). Furthermore, high self-monitors are concerned about being socially appropriate, so they need to be aware of a partner's strengths and weaknesses (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Balanced, integrated partner knowledge structures would provide a high self-monitor ready access to a partner's faults and virtues thereby enabling

that high self-monitor to make an informed decision about whether a partner was an appropriate fit for a particular activity. A high self-monitor would know that his or her partner would be a great companion at an opera because of that partner's knowledge of music, and that a friend would be a better choice for a party tomorrow night because their partner is extremely shy and introverted.

Low self-monitors may be more inclined than high self-monitors to have compartmentalized partner knowledge structures. Low self-monitors are more concerned than high self-monitors about a loss of their romantic partner because low self-monitors have few alternatives to their current partner. Low self-monitors are concerned about maintaining their romantic relationships so they need to use strategies that help them maintain positive views of their partner and relationship (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). A compartmentalized partner knowledge structure would provide a low self-monitor with ready access to a partner's many apparent virtues without having to frequently acknowledge a partner's few mild faults. A low self-monitor can then maintain a positive view of his or her partner which in turn helps that low self-monitor maintain a needed relationship. A low self-monitor could easily recall that his or her partner is kind and affectionate when out on a date as well as sociable and witty when out with friends, but seldom recognize that his or her partner is lazy, childish and distant when at home.

Of course, it is possible that there is not a relationship between how individuals present themselves in social situations and how individuals organize information about their current romantic partners. We have shown, however, that there are theoretical reasons why low self-monitors would have integrated partner knowledge structures while high self-monitors would have compartmentalized partner knowledge structures as well as why high self-monitors would have integrated partner knowledge structures while low self-monitors have compartmentalized

partner knowledge structures. We believe that one of these two patterns will be apparent between self-monitoring and partner knowledge structures.

Method

Participants

Participants were 166 students from the University of North Florida enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses who participated in a study entitled "Individual Differences in Perceptions of Romantic Partners." Participants were recruited using the university's online Psychology Research Participation System. Only students at least 18 years of age and who had been in a romantic relationship that had lasted at least three weeks were allowed to participate. Participants received credit toward their grade in an undergraduate psychology class for participation in this study. There were 34 males (20.5%) and 132 females (79.5%) in this study. A majority of participants were between 18 and 22 years of age. Most participants were Caucasian (71.1%). Forty-one percent of participants reported that they were currently in a relationship that had lasted one year or longer.

We used data from all participants in our analyses. No participants became emotionally distressed or asked to be excused from this study. All participants completed written informed consent. All participants were treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2008).

Procedure

Participants signed up for specific one-hour timeslots and attended sessions in which there were typically between two and four students present. All participants completed this study within one hour. Either a male or female researcher met each participant and directed that participant to a seat in front of a computer. When all participants scheduled for a session were

present, this researcher explained that he or she was interested in how people differed in their perceptions of their current romantic partners.

As participants read an informed consent form, this researcher explained that participation was completely voluntary, that they could withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, and that all of their responses would be anonymous. Participants were instructed to notify this researcher if they began to experience any emotional distress. This researcher then told participants that they would be completing a survey on a computer and to carefully follow directions on each screen. Finally, participants were asked to write the initials of their current romantic partner on a post-it note and to focus on this person as they completed this survey. At this study's conclusion, participants were given a debriefing form and dismissed.

We used Snyder's (1974) 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale to assess individual differences in self-monitoring. In this scale, there were five dimensions of self-monitoring, and there were five items for each dimension: motivation (e.g., "At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like."), attention (e.g., "When I am uncertain how to act in social situations, I look to the behavior of others for cues."), ability (e.g., "I would probably make a good actor."), use of ability (e.g., "In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else."), and behavior (e.g., "In different situations and with different people, I often act like different persons."). Thirteen items were worded such that agreement with that item was characteristic of high self-monitoring (e.g., "I'm not always the person I appear to be."). Twelve items were worded such that disagreement with that item was characteristic of high self-monitoring (e.g., "I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.").

We instructed participants to answer *True* if they felt that an item was true or mostly true about themselves, and *False* if they felt that an item was false or mostly false about themselves. High self-monitoring responses were scored with a value of "1", and low self-monitoring responses were scored with a value of "0". We summed assigned values for all 25 responses. A higher total score was an indication of higher self-monitoring. We initially classified participants as either high self-monitors or low self-monitors based on a median split of participants' total scores (*Mdn* = 12).

There is evidence of reliability in scores for the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). Internal reliability is a measure of consistency in scores on a scale between items (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Snyder (1974) found a KR20 of .70 for the Self-Monitoring Scale. Briggs, Cheek and Buss (1980) obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .69 and .67 for two different samples. In a meta-analysis, Day, Shleicher, Unckless, and Hiller (2002) calculated an average alpha of .71. More recently, Girvin, Weaver, & Snyder (2010) reported alphas of .72 and .73 for two different samples. In our sample, we found a Cronbach's alpha of .74. Test-retest reliability is a measure of consistency in scores on a scale across time (Shadish et al., 2002). Snyder (1974) found a test-retest reliability of .83 for a one-month interval. Girvin, Weaver, & Snyder (2010) reported a test-retest reliability of .73 across a one to two month period.

Scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale are supported by evidence of convergent validity. Convergent validity means that scores on different measures of the same construct are similar (Shadish et al., 2002). Researchers have found that scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale and scores on the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale are highly correlated. Snyder and Gangestad (1986) found a correlation of .52 and an estimated correlation of .72 when reliability adjustments were made. More recently, Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, and Ames (2006) reported

a correlation of .53 between scores on the two scales. Groups of people known to demonstrate behaviors characteristic of high self-monitors and low self-monitors score high and low respectively on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Snyder (1974) found that psychiatric patients, who demonstrate behaviors characteristic of low self-monitors, had low scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale relative to a group of undergraduate students. Professional actors, who demonstrate behaviors of high self-monitors, had high scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale relative to this same group of undergraduate students.

Scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale are also supported by evidence of discriminant validity. Discriminant validity means that scores on different measures of different constructs are dissimilar (Shadish et al., 2002). Researchers have found no evidence that the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale is conceptually related to measures of other constructs. Snyder and Monson (1975) found that scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale are not correlated with scores on measures of extraversion (Lippa, 1976, 1978), inner-other directedness (Kassarjian, 1962), or Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970). Scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) and scores on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory Psychopathic Deviate Scale are only weakly correlated with scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale.

There is also evidence of construct validity for scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Construct validity means that individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions can be explained by a particular construct (Shadish et al., 2002). There are relationships between scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale and measures used to assess aspects of romantic relationships. High self-monitors and low self-monitors differ in their initial assessments of potential dating partners (Berscheid et al., 1976), in their dating preferences (Glick, 1985; Jamieson et al., 1987; Jones,

1993; Snyder et al., 1985; Snyder & Simpson, 1984), and in their number of dating partners (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986). Differences are found between high self-monitors and low self-monitors in terms of their sociosexuality (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986; Sakaguchi et al., 2007) and in their conceptualizations of love (Neto, 1993).

In ongoing relationships, there are differences between high self-monitors and low self-monitors in levels of relationship satisfaction (Oyamot et al., 2010), intimacy (Snyder & Simpson, 1984), and commitment (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999; Snyder et al., 1986; Snyder & Simpson, 1984). High self-monitors and low self-monitors also have different approaches to dealing with conflicts in their relationships (Gaines et al., 2000), have different views on how power in relationships should be balanced (Oyamot et al., 2010), and have different orientations toward their future (Öner, 2002). Finally, high self-monitors and low self-monitors differ in their levels of marital satisfaction and in their likelihood of being divorced (Leone & Hall, 2003).

We used a measure of compartmentalization and integration to assess participants' partner knowledge structures (i.e., their mental organization of information about their partners). This measure was an adaptation of a card-sort method used by Showers and Zeigler-Hall (2004). Each participant was asked to think about different social situations in which his or her partner might be involved in a typical week. After thinking about these social situations for as long as they wished, a participant entered them one at a time into a computer. A participant had to enter at least one situation and could enter up to nine situations. The mean number of situations that participants listed was 2.22 (SD = 1.42). After a participant entered situations, we presented each participant with a screen which displayed a situation that participant had entered. Below that situation, we listed 10 positive and 10 negative traits from the Interpersonal Qualities Scale (Murray & Holmes, 1997) in an alternating order (e.g., patient, lazy, self-assured, moody). A

participant checked a box beside a trait if that trait was characteristic of his or her partner in that situation. A participant had to check at least one trait, but could check all 20 traits if that participant wished. This procedure was repeated for each situation that participant entered. The mean number of traits that participants selected–across all situations to which they responded–was 12.37 (*SD* = 10.07).

We computed a partner knowledge structure score (i.e., a measure of compartmentalization and integration) for each situation by calculating the difference between the number of positive and negative traits that participants listed for that situation. We divided the absolute value of this difference by the total number of traits participants selected for that situation. A total score of "0" was an indication of a completely integrated partner knowledge structure. In other words, a participant would have selected only positive or only negative traits to describe his or her partner in that situation. A total score of "1" was an indication of a completely compartmentalized partner knowledge structure. In other words, a participant would have selected an equal number of positive and negative traits to describe his or her partner in that situation. Scores between "0" and "1" were an indication of a combination of positive and negative traits (e.g., "0.2" - three positive and two negative traits).

We computed a mean partner knowledge structure score for each participant by adding together the partner knowledge structure scores for each situation and dividing by the total number of situations. The mean partner knowledge structure score for all participants was 0.70 (SD = 0.29) and the median partner knowledge structure score was 0.75. One-third of all participants had completely compartmentalized views of their current romantic partners and 31.3% of all participants had completely compartmentalized positive views of their partners.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Self-monitoring is an individual difference and as such cannot be manipulated. Personality variables can only be measured. Consequently, there may be confounds or other variables which are responsible for a relationship among the variables of interest in this study. Day et al. (2002) found that males were more likely to be high self-monitors than they were to be low self-monitors, and that females were more likely to be low self-monitors than they were to be high self-monitors. Therefore, we investigated participant sex as a potential confound in this study.

We used a median split of the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale to classify participants as high self-monitors or low self-monitors. We used a total score of 12 and above to classify a participant as a high self-monitor and a total score of 11 and below to classify a participant as a low self-monitor. We conducted a chi-square analysis to determine if males were more likely to be high self-monitors than low self-monitors and if females were more likely to be low self-monitors than high self-monitors.[1] We found that males were not significantly more likely to be high self-monitors (53%) than low self-monitors (47%), and that females were not significantly more likely to be low self-monitors (50%) than high self-monitors (50%), $X^2(1) = 0.094$, $p = .760$. In our study, sex was not confounded with self-monitoring.

We were also concerned that there were other experiential differences between low self-monitors and high self-monitors which could be responsible for differences in partner knowledge structures. We conducted several *t*-tests to address these concerns.[2] We used high self-monitoring versus low self-monitoring as a predictor for the number of situations participants listed, the mean level of importance participants reported for these situations, the length of

current relationship, and the number of previous committed romantic relationships in which participants reported being involved. We also used high self-monitoring versus low self-monitoring as a predictor for relationship satisfaction using participants' scores on the Murray and Holmes (1997) Satisfaction Scale and relationship conflict using participants' scores on the Conflict-Negativity Subscale of Braiker and Kelly's (1992) Themes of Relationship Development Scale. There was no difference between low self-monitors and high self-monitors for any of these variables (see Table 1). Because there were no significant differences between low self-monitors and high self-monitors for any of the aforementioned variables we tested, these variables are not confounded with self-monitoring and partner knowledge structures.

Main Analyses

Our independent variable was self-monitoring. Our dependent variable was a mean partner knowledge structure score (i.e., the degree to which participants compartmentalized their overall view of their current romantic partner.) This score was a proportion which could range from 0 (completely integrated) to 1 (completely compartmentalized). We conducted a *t*-test to compare participants' partner knowledge structure scores based on whether they were classified as high self-monitors or low self-monitors. For all analyses, we set a two-tailed alpha level of $p < .05$.

Recall that there were two competing hypotheses. If individuals have views of their partners that are similar in structure to that of their social worlds, then low self-monitors should have integrated views of their partners and high self-monitors should have compartmentalized views of their partners. Alternatively, if individuals have views of their partners that are based on differing motivations and needs concerning romantic relationships, then low self-monitors

should have compartmentalized views of their partners and high self-monitors should have integrated views of their partners.

We first evaluated our hypotheses in a quantitative manner. There was a significant difference between partner knowledge structure scores for low self-monitors and high self-monitors, $t(164) = 2.54$, $p = .012$. [3] Partner knowledge structure scores for low self-monitors ($M = 0.76$, $SD = 0.25$) were higher than partner knowledge structure scores for high self-monitors ($M = 0.65$, $SD = 0.31$). That is, low self-monitors had more compartmentalized partner knowledge structures than did high self-monitors. Because partner knowledge structure scores for both low self-monitors and high self-monitors were relatively compartmentalized, we cannot say that either hypothesis was unequivocally supported. The evidence was, however, consistent with the hypothesis that partner knowledge structures for low self-monitors and high self-monitors are based on differing motivations and needs concerning romantic relationships.

We then evaluated our hypotheses in a qualitative manner. We examined the number of low self-monitors versus high self-monitors who had completely compartmentalized views of their partners by dichotomizing partner knowledge structure scores into completely compartmentalized and not completely compartmentalized. Low self-monitors were more likely than high self-monitors to have partner knowledge structures that were completely compartmentalized, $X^2(1) = 5.07$, $p = .024$. Forty-one percent of low self-monitors compared to only 25% of high self-monitors had completely compartmentalized partner knowledge structures.

We also examined the number of low self-monitors versus high self-monitors who had completely positive views of their partners by dichotomizing partner knowledge structure scores into completely positive and not completely positive. Low self-monitors were more likely than high self-monitors to have completely positive views of their current romantic partner, $X^2(1) =$

7.74, $p = .005$. Forty-two percent of low self-monitors had completely positive views of their partners whereas only 21% of high self-monitors had completely positive views of their partners.

Ancillary Analyses

Other researchers have found that there are associations between length of relationship, level of conflict in a relationship, and partner knowledge structure (Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). We wondered if these variables would moderate the connection between self-monitoring status and partner knowledge structure. We conducted two ANOVAs to explore this possibility.[4] We first conducted a 2 × 2 (Self-Monitoring × Relationship Length) ANOVA for partner knowledge structure scores. Using a median split, we dichotomized length of relationship into short-term–15 months or less– and long-term–more than 15 months. There was no main effect for relationship length, $F(1,162) = 1.74$, $p = .189$, and no interaction between self-monitoring and relationship length, $F(1,162) = 0.13$, $p = .717$.

We then conducted a 2 × 2 (Self-Monitoring × Relationship Conflict) ANOVA for partner knowledge structure scores. Using a median split, we dichotomized scores on the Conflict-Negativity Subscale into low conflict and high conflict. There was a main effect for conflict, $F(1,162) = 6.31$, $p = .013$. Individuals who were in relationships with low conflict ($M = 0.76$) had more compartmentalized partner knowledge structures than individuals who were in relationships with high conflict ($M = 0.65$). There was not an interaction between self-monitoring and relationship conflict, $F(1,162) = 0.3$, $p = .586$.

We also thought that relationship satisfaction might moderate the connection as well. We conducted a third 2 × 2 (Self-Monitoring × Relationship Satisfaction) ANOVA for partner knowledge structure scores. Using a median split, we dichotomized scores on the Satisfaction Scale into low satisfaction and high satisfaction. There was a main effect for satisfaction,

$F(1,162) = 11.65$, $p = .001$. Individuals who were in relationships with low satisfaction ($M = 0.77$) had more compartmentalized partner knowledge structures than individuals who were in relationships with high satisfaction ($M = 0.65$). There was not an interaction between self-monitoring and relationship satisfaction, $F(1,162) = 0.69$, $p = .406$.

Discussion

In this study we explored a possible association between the way people present themselves in social situations and the way people organize their thoughts about their current romantic partners. We believed that one of two different associations would be found. Our first line of reasoning was that low self-monitors and high self-monitors would have views of their partners that were similar in structure to their social worlds. Namely, that low self-monitors would have integrated views of their partners and that high self-monitors would have compartmentalized views of their partners. Alternatively, we reasoned that low self-monitors and high self-monitors would have views of their partners that were based on their needs and motivations in regard to romantic relationships. Specifically, low self-monitors would have compartmentalized views of their partners because of their motivation to maintain their romantic relationships. High self-monitors would have integrated views of their partners because they are less motivated to maintain their romantic relationships than low self-monitors, and because as high self-monitors, they are interested in maintaining balanced views of their romantic partners.

Taken as a whole, we found support for the latter hypothesis that low self-monitors' and high self-monitors' partner knowledge structures are based on relationship needs and motivations. Low self-monitors had more compartmentalized views of their partners than did high self-monitors. In fact, low self-monitors were considerably more likely than high self-

monitors to have both completely compartmentalized views of their partners and completely positive views of their partners.

We were also able to determine that these results were not due to several other possible confounds. We examined the number of situations that participants listed and the level of importance they placed on those situations as well as the length of current their current relationship and the number of previous committed romantic relationships in which they had been involved. Using participants' scores on the Satisfaction Scale (Murray & Holmes, 1997) and the Conflict-Negativity Subscale of Braiker and Kelly's (1992) Themes of Relationship Development Scale, we also examined relationship satisfaction and relationship conflict. We found no differences between low self-monitors and high self-monitors for any of these variables, so these variables should not be responsible for differences in partner knowledge structures.

Interestingly, both low self-monitors and high self-monitors had relatively compartmentalized views of their current romantic partners and these views were overwhelmingly positive. Showers and Zeigler-Hall (2004) also found that such positive views of a current partner were associated with compartmentalized partner knowledge structures. When an individual has a positive compartmentalized partner knowledge structure they may be denying any negative traits that their partner possesses. Denial is an effective short-term strategy in developing positive illusions of one's partner (McNulty, O'Mara, & Karney, 2008; Murray et al., 2003; Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). Such a strategy is consistent with low self-monitors' motivations to maintain their romantic relationships. High self-monitors, while still concerned about their romantic relationships, are less motivated to maintain their relationships than low self-monitors because high self-monitors can more easily tolerate a loss of

a romantic partner than a low self-monitor. High self-monitors also need to maintain more balanced views of partners than do low self-monitors because high self-monitors need to be aware of their partner's strengths *and* weaknesses (Gaines et al., 2000; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

Limitations

There are several limitations to our study. First, some researchers (Charania & Ickes, 2006; Schwarz, Groves, & Schuman, 1998; Sears, 1986) have voiced concerns that college students are not a good sample. College students are not representative of the general population because they may be more skilled at thinking and more likely to comply with authority as well as have an unstable self-image and attitudes that are not well formed. Although these concerns may be valid, individuals this age may also have transitory relationships. This is why college students are ideal for studying romantic relationships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Snyder & Simpson, 1987). It is precisely these relatively short-term relationships which are of interest in this study.

Second, we used only a self-report method to assess self-monitoring and partner knowledge structures. There are several concerns about self-report measures (Cooper & Sheldon, 2002; Feeny, 2006, Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Individuals may not remember the past correctly and their recollections may be biased because they are seeing events from their point of view. Furthermore, individuals may be positively or negatively biased in their views about themselves. On the other hand, self-report is a way to access individuals' subjective, personal, and private thoughts across a large span of time (Charania & Ickes, 2006; Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). These thoughts are integral to understanding individuals' personalities and why they respond the way they do in social interactions, specifically interactions between individuals and their partners

(Reis, Capobianco, & Tsai, 2002). So in this study, bias, specifically positive bias in the way participant's viewed their partners, was a fundamental part of the design.

Third, we could not manipulate self-monitoring; we could only measure self-monitoring. When an independent variable is measured, only correlations between variables can be found. No claims of causality can be made because there is a question of directionality. We do not know if our independent variable is affecting our dependent variable, or if our dependent variable is affecting our independent variable (Aronson, Wilson, & Brewer, 1998; Reis et al., 2002). It is theorized that differences in self-monitoring are responsible for differences in ways that individuals view their romantic relationships. It is also possible, however, that differences in ways that individuals view their relationships are responsible for individual differences in self-monitoring.

One way to overcome a problem of directionality is to use a cross-lagged design (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963). In this type of design, self-monitoring and partner knowledge structure are measured at one point in time. At a latter point in time, both variables are measured again. Correlations between variables are then examined. If there is a correlation between self-monitoring at time one and partner knowledge structure at time two, but little or no correlation between partner knowledge structure at time one and self-monitoring at time two, then there would be evidence that self-monitoring is affecting partner knowledge structure rather than the other way around.

Additionally, no claims of causality can be made because we also have a question of a third variable. There may be an unmeasured variable that is responsible for both differences in our independent variable and differences our dependent variable (Aronson et al., 1998; Reis et al., 2002). For example, it is possible that sociosexuality is responsible for both differences in

self-monitoring and differences in partner knowledge structures. Sociosexuality is correlated with both self-monitoring and ways in which individuals view their romantic relationships (Sakaguchi et al., 2007; Snyder et al., 1986). Because we cannot manipulate these individual difference variables, we cannot make claims of causality.

If we manipulate our independent variable experimentally, we can rule out third variables. Self-monitoring cannot be manipulated as a trait, but it can be manipulated as a state. We could devise an experiment with two conditions. In a high self-monitoring condition, participants' self-presentational concerns could be activated by telling them they performed poorly on a job interview which they had been instructed to take part in. In a low self-monitoring condition, participants' self-congruence concerns could be activated by giving them feedback which indicates that their behavior in a job interview was incongruent with values and beliefs that they had mentioned before the interview. After each of these manipulations, we would assess participants' partner knowledge structures. We could then attribute any differences in partner knowledge structures to the independent variable.

Future Directions

Relationships are interactions between two people, so it is beneficial to gather data from both partners. Each partner has different traits and characteristics which have an effect on interactions in that relationship (Charania & Ickes, 2006; Cooper & Sheldon, 2002; Feeney, 2006). In fact, the arrangement of these factors is considered by some to be more important to the success of a relationship than these factors themselves (Reis et al., 2002). For example, increases in partners' similarity or perceived similarity in terms dispositions, beliefs and values, is associated with increases in relationship satisfaction and stability. (Caspi & Herbener, 1990; Reis et al., 2002).

The similarity-attraction model is an effective explanation for some of these effects (Morry, 2005, 2007), but there is some preliminary evidence that married couples with similar partner knowledge structures have higher marital quality than those who do not share similar partner knowledge structures (Campbell, Butzer, & Wong, 2008). These differences in satisfaction and stability could be due to differences in pairings of low and high self-monitors in romantic relationships (Leone & Hall, 2003). For example, if a high self-monitor is paired with a high self-monitor or a low self-monitor is paired with a low self-monitor then both partners would have similar partner knowledge structures. This similarity in partner knowledge structures could result in greater relationship satisfaction and stability. Conversely, if a high self-monitor is paired with a low self-monitor then these partners would have dissimilar partner knowledge structures. This divergence in the way partners view each other could result in less relationship satisfaction and stability.

Relationships are dynamic and fluid, changing over time, so it is important to examine relationships using longitudinal studies (Cooper & Sheldon, 2002; Duck & Sants, 1983; Reis et al., 2002). Individuals may change partner knowledge structures over time in response to relationship stressors such as conflict or increased negativity (Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). It is possible that low self-monitors and high self-monitors develop their partner knowledge structures in a similar way as they develop intimacy in their relationships (Snyder & Simpson, 1984). In addition, a particular partner knowledge structure may be effective in fostering positive views of partners early in relationships but may not be effective maintaining these views long term (McNulty et al., 2008; Showers & Zeigler-Hall, 2004). Relationship outcomes for low self-monitors and high self-monitors may differ because of failures to make shifts in partner knowledge structures.

Relationships are sometimes terminated by one partner or by mutual agreement. When these relationships end, there is evidence that individuals continue to be biased in their views toward their partner. These post-relationship views are, however, often *negatively* biased (Gray and Silver, 1990; Rollie & Duck, 2006). As of yet, there has been no research conducted on partner knowledge structures and former romantic partners. Perhaps low self-monitors and high self-monitors will have partner knowledge structures reflecting differing motivations in regard to former romantic partners just as they appear to do with their current romantic partners. Distressed over losing their romantic partner and lacking a suitable alternative, low self-monitors may be motivated to compartmentalize their negative views of their partner. On the other hand, high self-monitors may be ready to move on to a new relationship and thereby retain a more balanced view of their former partner.

Conclusion

In this study we examined differences between high self-monitors and low self-monitors and the way they view their current romantic partners. We found that low and high self-monitors organize their thoughts about their partners differently and that these differences may be related to different motivations in regard to romantic relationships. Low self-monitors tend to have views of their partners that are compartmentalized, comprised mainly of positive thoughts about their partner across different situations. This style of cognitive organization is evidence of a low self-monitor's need to maintain an overly favorable view of their partner, because losing a romantic partner would be a substantial blow to his or her social world. High self-monitors tend to have less compartmentalized views of their partners, comprised of both positive and negative thoughts about their partners across different situations. This style of cognitive organization is an

indication of the relatively small role that a romantic partner plays in a high self-monitor's social world and that high self-monitor's need to maintain a balanced view of his or her partner.

Although a couple's future is not entirely dependent upon qualities that two partners bring to their relationship (Duck & Sants, 1983; Reis et al., 2002), the extent to which these individual partners utilize strategies to maintain their relationship is certainly contingent upon individual differences (Graham & Clark, 2006; Snyder & Simpson, 1984). Self-monitoring is one of these differences, and its role in how people view their partner is becoming more clear. The ability to maintain positive views of romantic partners is an important part of having healthy and happy relationships (Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray et al., 2000; Murray et al., 2003), and we must continue searching for reasons why some people are more successful at maintaining these views than are others.

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Footnotes

[1] In addition to our analyses using self-monitoring as a dichotomous variable, we also conducted analyses using the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. We conducted a Pearson Product Moment Correlation to examine the relationship between the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale and participant sex. The results obtained using this correlational analysis were the same as the chi-square analysis.

[2] We conducted Pearson Product Moment Correlations to examine relationships between the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale and these continuous variables. The results obtained using these correlational analyses mirrored exactly the results obtained using *t*-tests.

[3] There was a negative correlation between the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale and partner knowledge structure scores, $r(164) = -.20$, $p = .011$. Participants higher in self-monitoring tended to have more integrated partner knowledge structures.

[4] We also ran regression analyses for these variables using the full range of scores for the Self-Monitoring Scale. The statistics as well as the pattern of responses were similar to those obtained using the ANOVAs.

Table 1

Analysis of Potential Confounds Between Self-Monitoring, Partner Knowledge Factors, and Relationship Variables

Variable	Low self-monitors		High self-monitors			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(164)	*p*
Number of situations	2.02	1.32	2.42	1.48	-1.8	.074
Mean level of importance	2.55	0.89	2.48	0.86	0.55	.585
Length of relationship	21.15	25.88	27.83	31.91	-1.48	.141
Number of previous relationships	2.12	1.19	2.24	1.7	-0.51	.611
Relationship satisfaction	17.41	3.74	17.06	3.75	0.61	.542
Relationship conflict	16.52	7.05	18.21	7.99	-1.44	.151

Curriculum Vita

Ronald Lee Gainey II was born to Ronald and Angela Gainey. Lee graduated from Stanton College Preparatory School and began his college education at Florida State College of Jacksonville (FCSJ). He was a member of the Army Reserve and served as a Military Police Officer in the first Persian Gulf War. On January 30, 1998, Lee married the love of his life, Miriam Boyd.

After working in the audiovisual and building management fields for a number of years, Lee resumed work on his Associates of Arts degree and graduated from FSCJ with High Honors. He then transferred to the University of North Florida (UNF) where he became a member of the University Scholars Honor Society and The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. While initially planning to pursue a career in counseling, Lee found that his real interest was in doing research, specifically research on close relationships. As an undergraduate, he joined the Person by Situation Interaction Research Team and completed an Honors Thesis. In 2010, he graduated Summa Cum Laude with his Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree. Lee then began work on his Masters Degree in General Psychology at UNF where he taught Research Methods Lab as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Lee plans to pursue a doctorate in family social science and hopes to continue teaching and conducting research on close relationships.