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## Self-Monitoring and Friendship: Individual Differences in Relationship Dissolution

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SELF-MONITORING AND FRIENDSHIP: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES  
IN RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

by

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## SELF-MONITORING AND FRIENDSHIP DISSOLUTION

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## SELF-MONITORING AND FRIENDSHIP DISSOLUTION

## Abstract

High self-monitors choose as friends skilled activity partners, whereas low self-monitors select friends who are similar in attitude and values. We hypothesized that (a) as self-monitoring increased, individuals would identify the loss of shared interest as the cause for dissolving a former friendship and (b) as self-monitoring decreased, individuals would identify the loss of shared attitudes and values as the cause for dissolving a former friendship. One-hundred sixty one (82 males, 79 females) participants were recruited from MTurk. Participants were prompted with a forced choice measure to identify one of two reasons why a past close friendship dissolved. For one response participants could identify a loss of shared activities, for the other a loss of shared values. Participants then completed the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. For exploratory purposes, participants then completed a measure of the strategies they used to terminate that relationship of a best friend. Our results were consistent with our predictions, as self-monitoring appeared to influence the cause of dissolution in former close friendships. Additionally, as self-monitoring tendencies increased, participants were more likely to report using cost escalation, manipulation, distant/mediated communication, and de-escalation as strategies for ending a friendship. Explanations for these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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### Self-Monitoring and Friendship: Individual Differences in Relationship Dissolution

Relationships are a fundamental ingredient of the human experience. Not all individuals think of relationships in the same way and different people have different motivations for initiating, maintaining, and terminating these relationships. Individual differences in these motivations lead some to mold their behavior to accommodate changes in social status while other individuals find themselves motivated to strive for personal compatibility in their relationships (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). These differential social motivations are conceptualized by an individual's self-monitoring orientation (Snyder, 1974).

Self-monitoring is a stable individual difference in the ability and motivation to monitor and manage one's self-presentation (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974, 1979, 1987). Snyder proposes that there are two types of people concerning self-monitoring. The first type is high self-monitors, who strive to appear socially appropriate by tailoring their behaviors to the social situation. The behavior of high self-monitors depends on social context and impressions of others. The second type, low self-monitors, are motivated by self-congruence. Prototypical low self-monitor behavior relies on self-identity and personal dispositions. These two types of individuals differ across five dimensions of self-monitoring: motivation, attention, ability, use of ability, and behavioral consistency (Snyder, 1974).

Individuals high in self-monitoring enact a variety of roles to appear competent and situationally appropriate to others (Girvan, Weaver, & Snyder, 2010). In addition, high self-monitors are highly developed in their ability to create, cultivate, and project socially impressive appearances (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Therefore, the attention of high self-monitors is externally orientated such that they reference other people in an environment for social information (Estow, Jamieson, & Yates, 2007). High self-monitors report more variability across

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situations for their own behavior than do other people (Snyder & Monson, 1975). Their outward focus provides high self-monitors with the insight to navigate varying interpersonal roles (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). This sensitivity to interpersonal situations facilitates high self-monitors to compartmentalize their social worlds to easily actualize various social roles (Snyder, Gangestad, & Simpson, 1983). High self-monitors strategically present themselves depending on the situation (Ickes, Holloway, Stinson, & Hoodenpyle, 2006). Across different friend groups, a high self-monitor acts differently based on impressions they receive from others. For their tennis team they may act stern and professional, but for their laid-back swim club they may act as an entertaining joker.

In contrast, low self-monitors are motivated by self-congruence. Behavior of low self-monitors is, for the most part, not influenced by attempts to best fit social situations; instead, they attend to their own self-image and base their behavior on their beliefs, values, and past actions (Jamieson, Lydon, & Zanna, 1987). In a study by Snyder and Monson (1975), persons low in self-monitoring reported more consistency in their behavior across situations. Their inward focus facilitates homogenization of their social groups to minimize divergences in their social worlds (Snyder et al., 1983). They are introspective and thereby develop a strong self-identity and self-knowledge which is used to remain self-congruent (Perrine & Aloise-Young, 2004). Prototypical low self-monitors exhibit a limited acting ability and are therefore unable to engage in behaviors inconsistent with their self-concept (Buchanan, 2000). Over time, this self-concept is shaped into a solid identity, as low self-monitors explain their behavior according to stable characteristics (Snyder & Cantor, 1980).

### **Self-Monitoring and Friendships**

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Differences in social motivation between high and low self-monitors translate to significant contrasts regarding their choice of friends and management of close relationships. High and low self-monitors also differ in how they manage and interact within their social networks (Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Snyder, 1987). Snyder, et al. (1983) found that high self-monitors categorize friends by shared activities (preferring friends who are proficient in a niche activity). High self-monitors tend to describe interactions with their friends through utility. In a high self-monitor's social world most interactions are context-specific and short-term. Thus, these exchanges result in restricted emotional support for their friendships (Snyder & Smith 1986). High self-monitors compartmentalize their social networks which leads them to rarely interact with their friends outside of a specific context (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983). This compartmentalized social network allows high self-monitors to manage and individually interact with various relationships with reduced threat from negative social impressions (Leone & Hawkins, 2006).

A low self-monitor's social networks depend on shared dispositions (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Low self-monitors describe interactions with friends in terms of time spent together rather than shared activities (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Additionally, their exchanges are profound long-term interactions that are generalizable across situations. Typically interactions are unrestricted in terms of emotional support provided to one another (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Low self-monitors homogenize their social networks leading them to interact with the same friends in a variety of contexts (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983). This homogenized social network allows low self-monitors to remain behaviorally consistent across many situations with minimal interpersonal conflict (Leone & Hawkins, 2006).

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Differences between high and low self-monitors extend into social networks at their workplace. Sasovova, Mehra, Borgatti, and Schippers (2010) found high self-monitors were more likely than low self-monitors to attract new friends and fill new bridging/management positions over time. These network connections of high self-monitors tended to involve new friends who were unrelated to former friends (Sasovova et al., 2010). Friendship networks of high self-monitors tend to be larger than those of low self-monitors, though these connections are not as tight-knit and personal as the prototypical low self-monitor's network. Adaptive behaviors of high self-monitors aid them in occupying central positions in organizations where most social relationships are informal (Fang et al., 2015; Sasovova et al., 2010).

Despite their ability to create larger social networks than low self-monitors, high self-monitors' social networks also tend to be more dynamic. For high self-monitors, social connections come and go based on utility rather than personal compatibility. This results in more relationship dissolution than what is experienced by their low self-monitor counterparts (Sasovova et al., 2010). Researchers performing a two-wave social network study found high self-monitors' behavioral specificity provides benefits in a general socializing network and that these benefits fade over time for more personal relationships (Bhardwaj, Qureshi, Konrad, & Lee, 2015). In other words, a high self-monitors' ability to regulate social impressions facilitates maintenance of both casual and close relationships, however, these benefits only fade over time for close relationships.

High and low self-monitors are alike in one manner. Both are influenced by the similarity-attraction rule, in which similarity in attitudes or personality positively relates to attraction (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Jamieson et al., 1987). Consistent with this tendency, best friends of high self-monitors tend to also be high self-monitors, whereas best friends of low self-

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monitors also tend to be low self-monitors (Snyder, Simpson, & Smith, 1984). Otherwise, high and low self-monitors have many differences in how they manage their social networks.

Although a great deal is known about self-monitoring differences in the initiation and maintenance of friendships, little if anything is known about these differences as they might pertain to friendship dissolution (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Transitions that involve major life events (e.g., college entrance, marriage, parenthood) may involve the reorganization and reevaluation of friendship networks (Fischer & Oliner, 1983; Reis, Lin, Bennett, & Nezlek, 1993; Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985). Friendships of high self-monitors and low self-monitors can therefore be expected to change with the environmental situation and passage of time. Self-monitoring status likely contributes to whether relationships undergoing problems from life transitions endure or dissolve.

### **Friendship Dissolution and Disengagement**

There are several taxonomies and models of friendship dissolution. Rose (1984) proposed a taxonomy involving four patterns of friendship termination concerning a close same-sex friendship: physical separation, replacement, dislike, and interference. Physical separation was the most frequent cause leading to friendship dissolution. Disliking a behavior/revealing information, replaced by new friends, and dating or marriage following behind in highest to lowest order of frequency.

Models of friendship dissolution that specifically cover the disengagement of friendships are few compared to the literature on romantic and marriage relationships. Models from Duck (1982) and Baxter (1984) involve both friendships and romantic relationships. Duck's (1982) model covers four phases of dissolution: (1) intra-psychoic phase, (2) dyadic phase, (3) social phase, and (4) grave-dressing phase. The first phase of dissolution is the intra-psychoic phase. In

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this phase, the individual struggles in private with current relationship dissatisfaction. Second is the dyadic phase. In this phase, the individual negotiates potential dissolution with his/her partner. In the third phase, the social phase, individuals engage in a public presentation of the relationship dissolution to others in his/her social network. In other words, friendship termination is advertised and made public. Fourth and last, is the grave-dressing phase in which individuals reappraise the importance of a relationship as well as potential recovery of said relationship (Duck, 1982; Duck, Hay, Hobfoll, Ickes, & Montgomery, 1988).

Baxter's (1984) disengagement model lists six critical features of the dissolution process: (1) gradual versus sudden onset of relationship problems, (2) unilateral versus bilateral desire to exit the relationship, (3) use of direct versus indirect actions to accomplish dissolution, (4) rapid versus protracted nature of negotiation, (5) presence versus absence of attempted recovery, (6) outcome of termination versus continuation. According to Baxter (1987), these features can be used to predict the course of relationship disengagement. In the conflict of unilateral versus bilateral desire to exit the relationship, a shared (bilateral) inclination to terminate a relationship results in further actions to disengage from the relationship. For a relationship the effects of a unilateral (one-sided) desire to disengage vary depending on the circumstances but often lead to delays in the dissolution process. The use of direct versus indirect actions to accomplish dissolution leads to various options for termination versus recovery of a relationship. Individuals taking indirect options, such as withdrawal/avoidance, cost escalation, and de-escalation, usually lead to stagnation in the disengagement process. Individuals who perform direct strategies, state-of-the-relationship talk and fait accompli, quickly advance to the final processes of relationship disengagement. Quick decisions by individuals typically result in more direct strategies, whereas a delayed negotiation can lead more indirect strategies. The presence versus absence of

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relationship repair/maintenance attempts is crucial to the decision to recover or dissolve a relationship. Absence of maintenance attempts will likely lead to dissolution; while the presence itself of relationship repair/maintenance can be enough on its own to assist with recovery of a relationship.

In addition to taxonomies and models of relationship dissolution, there is a great deal of information about precursors to friendship dissolution. Many of the factors involved in the initiation of friendships are also influences on the dissolution of such relationships (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Zimmerman, 2009). These environmental, individual, situational, and dyadic factors are involved in the friendship disengagement process (Fehr, 2000, 1996).

Environmental factors, such as lack of frequent contact, damage friendships (Fehr, 2000; Rose & Serafica, 1986). When an individual moves away, retires, or changes professions, connections are usually left behind (Rose, 1984). Often it is too difficult to maintain a long-distance friendship, and costs outweigh rewards for attempting to maintain such relationships (Baxter, 1982; Fehr, 1996, 2000). However, online contact through email or social media sites may reduce the damage from a lack of physical proximity (Fehr, 2000).

Individual factors include the perceived flaws and negative characteristics of a friend (Fehr, 1996, 2000). Qualities or dispositions viewed as unattractive - specifically qualities unnoticed until later in a friendship - contribute to relationship dissolution. Individual factors known to hasten the dissolution of a friendship include breaches of trust, lack of commitment, and disloyalty (Duck, 1990, 2008; Rose, 1984; Rose & Serafica, 1986; Simpson, 1987).

Situational factors concern availability (Benner, Boyle, & Bakhtiari, 2017; Duck et al., 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986). As opposed to proximity, these factors primarily involve a lack of resources to prioritize the friendship and put effort into continuing it (Fehr, 1996). Emerging

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interests, new social circles, family requirements, and other social circumstances require resources that an individual may not want to contribute to an old friendship or already deteriorating friendship (Baxter, 1984, 1987; Fehr, 2000). Situational factors are known to predict the dissolution of friendship, whether they involve insufficient contact, a lack of shared activities, a lack of time or energy for maintenance repair (Becker et al., 2009; Bowker, 2011).

Dyadic factors involve familiarity, similarity, and liking. Similarity is one of the best predictors of friendship formation (Baxter & Philpott, 1982). As dissimilarity increases, friendship dissolution increases (Baxter, 1984; Perlman & Fehr, 1986). As friendships develop, new interests come to light while older interests are abandoned. The development of new interests can result in a loss of common ground which composed an initial foundation for a friendship (Bowker, 2011). Dissolution can also occur if friends are no longer willing to disclose intimate information or reciprocate feelings of intimacy with each other (Baxter, 1987; Oswald, Clark, & Kelly, 2004). Friends that are familiar with one another, similar in attitude, and responsive to his/her partner are likely to resist pressures that result in friendship dissolution (Fehr, 2000, 1996). A lack communication/response to initial problems could be the first step in the dissolution of friendship.

### **The Current Study**

Much of the research on friendship dissolution omits any consideration of individual differences in a friendship that cause it to dissolve. The proposed study is designed in part to address this oversight. The current study examined the relationship between self-monitoring differences and friendship dissolution. We explored the possibility that differences in social motivations in high and low self-monitors may predict a contrast in participants' perceptions of former friendships. High self-monitors tailor their behaviors to the social environment to appear

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socially appropriate (gain status, cultivate desirable images) whereas low self-monitors attempt to remain self-congruent in their behaviors independent of the situation. High self-monitors were predicted to more frequently associate his/her friendship ending when his/her close friend began losing interest in previously shared activities. Low self-monitors, however, are predicted to more frequently identify his/her friendship ended when his/her friend appeared to change in shared values. We hypothesized that as self-monitoring increased, individuals would identify the loss of shared interest as the cause for dissolving a former friendship and as self-monitoring decreased, individuals would identify the loss of shared attitudes and values as the cause for dissolving a former friendship.

### Method

#### Participants

Using Amazon's MTurk system, 161 (82 Males, 79 Females) participants were recruited for a study of "Individual Differences in Friendship Experiences." For completing the online survey, participants were compensated with \$2.00. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and have at least one close friendship that dissolved to participate in our study.

Participants in our sample identified as primarily middle-aged ( $M = 31.00$ ,  $SD = 8.56$ ). Participants described themselves as White/Caucasian (47.5%), Black/African American (17.5%), Hispanic/Latino (3.8%), American Indian/Alaska Native (5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (24.4%), and Other/Mixed (1.9%).

Participants reported the sex of former close friend as 81 male and 79 female; former close friends were typically same-sex for both male (87.65%) and female (87.34%) participants. The former friend's age was similar to mean age of participants ( $M = 30.66$ ,  $SD = 12.61$ ). Close friend's race was reported as White/Caucasian (46.5%), Black/African American (16.4%),

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Hispanic/Latino (6.9%), American Indian/Alaska Native (3.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (25.8%), and Other/Mixed (0.6%). Mean length of former friendship was 12 years ( $M = 12.49$ ,  $SD = 25.37$ ). More participants reported it had been more than one year (70.6%) rather than less than one year (29.4%) since the former friendship ended.

Data from all participants was retained for our analyses. Missing data was handled by substituting the grand mean from our sample (only one or two missing response were found from our measures). Participants' rights were protected by researchers' use of The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2010)

### **Procedure**

Participants completed our questionnaire individually via MTurk. In our advertisement, participants were informed that to be eligible for the study, they must have had at least one close friendship that was terminated sometime in the past. Participants provided informed consent electronically.

**Friendship Dissolution.** After participants had given their consent, they were instructed as follows:

“Even the best of friends can eventually part ways. We want you to think of your former best friend who is no longer your friend (the person whose initials you recorded in the previous question). When answering our survey about friendship, please keep that one person in mind throughout the questions. There are, of course, many reasons why any relationship including a best friendship may end. For this survey, consider which of the following two reasons BEST describes the overall cause of the end of your relationship with your former best friend:”

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(a) The two of us **no longer shared an interest in the same activities** (e.g., playing or watching sports, going to concerts, going to the beach, going to parties, playing video games, doing charitable activities,...). We developed interests in different activities and no longer enjoyed doing things together. We invested our energies in different things. We found ourselves no longer spending time doing things together.

(b) The two of us **no longer shared the same attitudes and values** (e.g., politics, religion, family, standards of behavior, ethics, moral standards,...). We disagreed about important issues and no longer saw matters the same way. We no longer shared the same principles. We no longer thought the same things were important in life.

**Self-Monitoring.** Individual differences in self-monitoring were measured using Snyder's 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Snyder (1974) included five items to reflect five dimensions: (1) motivation (e.g., "At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like."), (2) attention (e.g., "When I am uncertain how to act in social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues."), (3) ability (e.g., "I would probably make a good actor."), (4) 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 (5) behavioral consistency (e.g., "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons."). Participants responded with a *true-false* answer format.

Of the 25 items, 13 were positively worded (e.g., "I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information") and 12 items were negatively worded (e.g., "I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people. High self-monitoring responses were assigned a score of 2 and low self-monitoring responses were assigned a score of 1. Scores for responses to each item were summed such that total scores could range from 25 to 50. This sum

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was used as an index of self-monitoring in its conventional form. Following recommendations elsewhere in the literature (Wilmot, Kostal, Stillwell, & Kosinski, 2017), subsets of the aforementioned 25 items were used to create scores for acquisitive (6 items) and protective self-monitoring (7 items).

Researchers have found evidence of reliability in Snyder's 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale scores (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Snyder, 1974). Internal reliability concerns consistency across an index of scores (Furr, 2011). Snyder (1974) found a KR20 of .70 for scores in the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Gangestad and Snyder (1985) reported a KR20 of .66 on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Based on their meta-analysis, Day and his colleagues found other researchers have discovered Cronbach's alphas of .69 or larger for scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Day et al., 2002). Previous research by Wilmot, Kostal, Stillwell, and Kosinski (2017) found internal consistency scores for acquisitive self-monitoring subscales were adequate ( $\alpha = .71$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ). The subscale for protective self-monitoring was relatively low in internal consistency ( $\alpha = .63$ ,  $\alpha = .68$ ). For our current study, we obtained an alpha of .63 for the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale, .41 for scores on the acquisitive subscale, and .61 for scores on the protective subscale.

Researchers have shown evidence of temporal reliability in Snyder's 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Temporal reliability involves a consistency of scores across time (Furr, 2011). Snyder (1974) found a temporal reliability correlation of .83 in a one-month interval for scores on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale and Girvan, Weaver, and Snyder (2010) reported a reliability of .73 across a one to two-month period. Researchers (Day et al., 2002) found that self-monitoring and sex were confounded, thus any findings relating to the effects of self-monitoring should perform analyses to control for this confound.

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Multiple researchers have discovered evidence of convergent validity in scores for the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. When two measures of a conceptually similar construct have positively correlated scores as well as negative correlations of a sufficient magnitude of reliability, these measures are considered to have convergent validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Furr, 2011). Convergent validity was found observing groups of individuals whose behaviors parallel the self-monitoring construct (Snyder, 1974). Professional actors scored significantly higher on the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale than participants who were not professional actors. Additionally, psychiatric patients who demonstrated behaviors similar to a prototypical low self-monitor scored significantly lower on the scale than non-hospitalized participants (Snyder, 1974). When self-monitoring is split into the acquisitive and protective subscales both share convergent validity with Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness factors of the Five-Factor Model of personality traits (DeYoung, 2006; Wilmot, 2015; Wilmot et al., 2017). Authors also found acquisitive self-monitoring covaries with Beta or Plasticity, a metatrait created from covariance of Extraversion and Openness/Intellect (Wilmot, 2015).

Several researchers have supplied evidence for discriminant validity for scores in the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. When two measures of conceptually unrelated constructs have null correlations, the measures are considered to have discriminant validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Furr, 2011). Snyder (1974) found no robust correlation between scores on his Self-Monitoring Scale and scores on Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970). Snyder and Monson (1975) found no significant correlation with self-monitoring scores and extraversion scores. Researchers found weak negative correlations between Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) and the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder & Monson,

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1975). Acquisitive and protective subscales both exhibit discriminant validity with measures of cognitive ability (Wilmot et al., 2017).

**Breakup Strategies.** For exploratory purposes, differences in strategies used in friendship dissolution were measured through a modified 43-item scale (Collins & Gillath, 2012). The original scale by Baxter (1982) contained only four types of disengagement strategies: avoidance/withdrawal, manipulation, positive tone, and open confrontation. Collins and Gillath (2012) included 37-items from the original scale and added six more items to comprise the questionnaire. It includes seven types of disengagement strategies: (1) *avoidance/withdrawal* (e.g., “I kept our conversation brief whenever we talked”), (2) *positive tone/self-blame* (e.g., “I avoided blaming my friend at all costs, even if my friend was to blame”), (3) *open confrontation* (e.g., “I verbally explained to my friend my reasons for desiring to hang out less”), (4) *cost escalation* (e.g., “I became unpleasant to my friend in the hope that s/he would take the hint”), (5) *manipulation* (e.g., “I gave hints of my desire to no longer be friends to people who know the other person”), (6) *distant/mediated communication* (e.g., “I terminated the friendship indirectly (through e-mail, text-messaging, or other unidirectional methods of communication”), (7) *de-escalation* (e.g., “I ‘waited it out’ until conditions were conducive to ‘breakup’”). Participants were asked to approximate the frequency with which they had used each strategy to terminate or weaken a relationship with a former best friend on a 1 (*never*) to 7 (*extremely often*) scale (Collins & Gillath, 2012). Some of the questions on the questionnaire were slightly modified (e.g., I ceased doing favors for my friend) to address a close friendship rather than a romantic relationship.

For previous versions of this measure (see Baxter, 1982), researchers have found evidence of reliability of scores for each factor: avoidance/withdrawal ( $\alpha=.91$ ), positive tone

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( $\alpha=.85$ ), open confrontation, ( $\alpha=.75$ ), manipulation ( $\alpha=.85$ ), distant communication ( $\alpha=.82$ ) (Cody, 1982). Other researchers have found similar reliability estimates in analyses of related measures of strategies used to terminate relationships (Banks, Altendorf, Greene, & Cody, 1987; Baxter, 1982; Lambert & Hughes, 2010; Sprecher; Wilmot, Carbaugh, & Baxter, 1985). The alpha coefficients for our current study were calculated for avoidance/withdrawal ( $\alpha=.89$ ), positive tone ( $\alpha=.89$ ), open confrontation, ( $\alpha=.83$ ), cost escalation ( $\alpha=.85$ ), manipulation ( $\alpha=.82$ ), distant communication ( $\alpha=.82$ ), and de-escalation ( $\alpha=.79$ ).

**Demographic Information.** Participants reported their sex selecting: *male* or *female*. Age of participants was collected in years. Participants reported racial/ethnic background by selecting one of the six categories: *White/Caucasian*, *Black/African American*, *Hispanic/Latino*, *American Indian/Alaska Native*, *Asian/Pacific Islander*, *Other/Mixed*. Sex of former best/close friend was reported as: *male* or *female*. Age of former best/close friend was reported in years. Race/ethnic background of participant's former best/close friend was selected from one of the six categories: *White/Caucasian*, *Black/African American*, *Hispanic/Latino*, *American Indian/Alaskan Native*, *Asian/Pacific Islander*, *Other/Mixed*. Participants reported length of the former relationship in years. Participants also reported years since the relationship ended: *Less than one year* or *more than one year*.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics Concerning Friendships

Regarding information about former friendships, participants reported former friends tended to be similar in age,  $r(161) = 0.94, p < .001$ . These former best/close friends also tended to be the same sex as participants,  $\chi^2(1, N = 161) = 89.99, p < .001$ , and overwhelmingly the same race,  $\chi^2(5, N = 161) = 440.64, p < .001$ . The age of participants and their former best/close

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friend was positively related to the length of their friendship as would be expected,  $r(161) = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r(161) = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively. The time since the relationship ended was not reliably nor robustly related to the length of former friendship,  $r(161) = 0.14$ ,  $p = .079$ .

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Researchers have found that self-monitoring orientation is confounded with sex (e.g., Day et al., 2002). Because of this association between self-monitoring and biological sex, individual differences in friendship dissolution in the current study may be explained by sex rather than self-monitoring. To determine if sex and self-monitoring were confounded, three *t*-tests (one for each index of self-monitoring) were performed. Self-monitoring and sex were not statistically related: full range of scores,  $t(159) = 0.62$ ,  $p = .538$ ; acquisitive subscale,  $t(159) = 0.65$ ,  $p = .517$ ; protective subscale,  $t(159) = -0.10$ ,  $p = .917$ . Because participant's self-monitoring and sex were not confounded in this sample, sex differences were not used as a covariate in subsequent analyses.

Researchers have found that self-monitoring orientation is related to a variety of relationship phenomena (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). To determine if any of the relationship variables assessed in this study were potential third variables, a series of analyses were conducted. The former friend's sex was not reliably related to self-monitoring: full range of scores,  $t(159) = 0.45$ ,  $p = .651$ ; acquisitive subscale,  $t(159) = 0.96$ ,  $p = .341$ ; protective subscale,  $t(159) = -0.40$ ,  $p = .692$ . Similarly, the length of the former friendship was not related to self-monitoring: full range of scores,  $r(161) = 0.07$ ,  $p = .364$ ; acquisitive subscale,  $r(161) = 0.13$ ,  $p = .104$ ; protective subscale,  $r(161) = 0.01$ ,  $p = .888$ .

However, there was a connection (albeit not at traditional levels of statistical significance) between time since the relationship ended and self-monitoring: full range of scores,

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$t(159) = 1.70, p = .091$ ; acquisitive subscale,  $t(159) = 1.90, p = .061$ ; protective subscale,  $t(159) = 1.91, p = .058$ . More importantly, there were weak (albeit reliable) associations between the age of the former friend and to self-monitoring: full range of scores,  $r(161) = -0.18, p = .023$ ; acquisitive subscale,  $r(161) = -0.12, p = .137$ ; protective subscale,  $r(161) = -0.25, p = .001$ . As suggested elsewhere (Cohen et al. 2003), correlations of this magnitude are not sufficient to constitute multicollinearity. Hence, none of the relationship variables were include in subsequent analyses.

### Main Analyses

We hypothesized that as self-monitoring tendencies increased, individuals would more frequently identify the loss of shared interest as the cause for dissolution of their former best friendship. We also hypothesized that is self-monitoring tendencies decreased, individuals would identify the loss of shared attitudes and values as the cause for dissolution of their former friendship. Due to the dichotomous nature of our criterion variable (i.e., participant's choice of reasons for dissolution), we performed three logistic regression analyses (one for each index of self-monitoring. Following recommendations elsewhere in the literature (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), scores were mean-centered as continuous predictor variables before being entered into analyses. Also following recommendations elsewhere in the literature (Agresti, 2002), we report a Wald chi-square as well as 95% confidence intervals for the parameter estimates associated with the chi-square value.

There was a significant effect of self-monitoring as indexed by the full range of scores,  $\chi^2(1, N = 161) = 6.24, p = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.02, 1.22]$ , and the protective subscale,  $\chi^2(1, N = 161) = 6.24, p = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.02, 1.22]$ , but not the acquisitive subscale,  $\chi^2(1, N = 161) = 6.24, p = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.02, 1.22]$ . A correlation between participant's choice of reasons for dissolution

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and the full range of self-monitoring scores,  $r = -0.20$ ,  $p = .010$ , and the protective subscale scores,  $r = -0.30$ ,  $p < .001$ , revealed this effect was in the predicted direction. As self-monitoring increased, participants more frequently identified that the dissolution of former close friendship was caused by a lack of shared interest in the same activities. Conversely, as self-monitoring decreased, participants more frequently identified the cause of a former close friendship as no longer sharing the same attitude and values.

### Exploratory Analyses

Descriptive statistics for the breakup strategies questionnaire subscales are provided in Table 1. Using cutoffs ( $\pm .75$ ) recommended by Tabachnick & Fidell (2007), an examination of the coefficients of skewness and kurtosis indicates that scores on the subscales were by and large normally distributed.

Table 1

#### *Descriptive Statistics for Breakup Strategies*

Breakup Strategy Item	Full-Range of Scores				
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	Range
Avoidance/Withdrawal	36.05	9.50	-0.18	-0.29	11-55
Positive Tone/Self-Blame	29.57	9.19	-0.16	-0.55	10-50
Open Confrontation	12.21	4.35	-0.19	-0.72	4-20
Cost escalation	11.19	4.45	-0.02	-1.03	4-20
Manipulation	13.64	5.07	-0.02	-0.84	5-25
Distant/mediated Communication	11.11	4.46	-0.16	-1.01	4-20
De-escalation	14.73	4.77	-0.12	-0.50	5-25

Several regression analyses were performed between subscale scores for a measure of relationship dissolution strategies and self-monitoring indices (mean-centered). Results of the conventional conceptualization of self-monitoring and the strategies hierarchical regressions are provided in Table 2. As self-monitoring tendencies increased, participants were more likely to report using cost escalation, manipulation, distant/mediated communication, and de-escalation as

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strategies for ending a friendship. There were no reliable self-monitoring differences for avoidance/withdrawal, positive tone/self-blame, and open confrontation. However, we note that the effect of scores on the positive tone/self-blame subscale approach conventional levels of statistical significance.

Table 2

*Standard Linear Regression of Breakup Strategies as a Function of the Full Range of Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale*

Breakup Strategy Item	B	<i>p</i>	Confidence Interval
Avoidance/Withdrawal	-.08	.336	[-.57, +.19]
Positive tone/self-blame	+.15	.055	[-.01, +.73]
Open Confrontation	+.08	.366	[-.09, +.26]
Cost escalation	+.27	.001	[+.14, +.48]
Manipulation	+.29	.001	[+.19, +.58]
Distant/mediated Communication	+.24	.002	[+.10, +.46]
De-escalation	+.20	.010	[+.06, +.46]

When self-monitoring scores were indexed in terms of acquisitive self-monitoring, there were no reliable self-monitoring differences for scores on any of the breakup strategy subscales. These results are provided in Table 3. Participants were no more or less likely to report using any of the breakup strategies we assessed regardless of those participants' self-monitoring tendencies.

Table 3

*Standard Linear Regression of Breakup Strategies as a Function of Scores on the Acquisitive Self-Monitoring subscale.*

Breakup Strategy Item	B	<i>p</i>	Confidence Interval
Avoidance/Withdrawal	-.12	.119	[-1.69, +0.22]
Positive tone/self-blame	+.05	.517	[-0.62, +1.24]
Open Confrontation	+.09	.234	[-0.17, +0.70]
Cost escalation	+.09	.220	[-0.17, +0.73]
Manipulation	+.06	.435	[-0.31, +0.72]
Distant/mediated Communication	+.07	.395	[-0.26, +0.65]
De-escalation	+.02	.770	[-0.41, +0.55]

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When self-monitoring score were indexed in terms of protective self-monitoring, we found results similar to the findings obtained using the full range of scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. The results of protective self-monitoring differences are found in Table 4. As protective self-monitoring tendencies increased, participants were more likely to report using positive tone/self-blame, cost escalation, manipulation, distant/mediated communication, and de-escalation as strategies for ending a friendship.

Table 4

*Standard Linear Regression of Breakup Strategies as a Function of Participants' Protective Self-Monitoring*

Breakup Strategy Item	B	<i>p</i>	Confidence Interval
Avoidance/Withdrawal	+.08	.291	[-0.43, +1.41]
Positive tone/self-blame	+.28	.001	[+0.74, +2.46]
Open Confrontation	+.12	.115	[-0.08, +0.75]
Cost escalation	+.47	.001	[+0.91, +1.68]
Manipulation	+.46	.001	[+0.99, +1.87]
Distant/mediated Communication	+.39	.001	[+0.71, +1.50]
De-escalation	+.38	.001	[+0.68, +1.54]

### Discussion

To contribute to better understanding the dynamic of friendships, the goal of the current study was to investigate high and low self-monitors in their orientations to friendship dissolution. Although little if anything is known about self-monitoring differences in the dissolution of friendships, much is known about these differences in terms of friendship initiation. Low self-monitors choose friends based on personal compatibility, whereas high self-monitors are motivated by others' social impressions (Jamieson et al., 1987). High self-monitors tend to describe interactions with friends through utility, where low self-monitors describe interactions on emotional support (Snyder et al., 1983). These differences in social motivation were

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theorized to affect friendship dissolution processes. We hypothesized that high self-monitors would more frequently identify the loss of shared interests as the cause for dissolution of their former best friendship, whereas low self-monitors would identify the loss of shared attitudes and values as the cause for dissolution of their former best friendship. Results supported our hypothesis. Moreover, self-monitoring differences were not the product of a confound with sex differences

In addition to identifying divergent motives for dissolving friendships, we also identified pathways to dissolution that relate to self-monitoring differences. As conventional self-monitoring tendencies increased, participants were more likely to report using cost escalation, manipulation, distant/mediated communication, and de-escalation as strategies for ending a friendship- at least when self-monitoring was conceptualized in a conventional manner. These strategies are considered more passive/indirect and typically result in gradual exit from the relationship (Baxter, 1984). These findings parallel other work on self-monitoring differences in relationship accommodations. Gaines, Work, Johnson, Youn, and Lai (2000) found that self-monitoring, specifically other-directedness, was negatively related to constructive-active responses, positively related to constructive-passive responses, and negatively related to destructive passive-responses when dealing with dilemmas involving friendships. Individuals higher in conventional self-monitoring may value a gradual exit from a relationship. Active exit strategies, open confrontation, typically result in direct conflict which can be compromising to social images or presentations.

As protective self-monitoring tendencies increased, participants were more likely to report using positive tone/self-blame, cost escalation, manipulation, distant/mediated communication, and de-escalation as strategies for ending a friendship. These results for

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protective self-monitoring parallel our findings for self-monitoring in its original conceptualization. However, the use of positive tone/self-blame was predicted only by protective self-monitoring. This result may indicate a willingness in individuals high in the protective dimension to appear/act humble in order to avoid negative social evaluation. Regardless of how it was indexed, self-monitoring was unrelated to avoidance/withdrawal and open confrontation as strategies for ending a friendship.

Differentiating protective versus acquisitive self-monitoring from a traditional conceptualization of self-monitoring allows for a more thorough examination of convergence and/or divergence in the effects predicted by self-monitoring differences. Self-monitoring in its conventional as well as protective forms were related to relationship dissolution causes and processes, whereas acquisitive self-monitoring was related to neither the reasons for relationship dissolution nor to the strategies for accomplishing this dissolution. In theory, acquisitive individuals who prioritize status gain would more likely perform dissolution strategies that further this end. Strategies that make an individual appear sincere and avoid emotionally charged confrontations, such as positive tone and de-escalation, should be preferred by individuals motivated by acquiring status (Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Cody, 1982). However, use of disengagement strategies may vary in effectiveness based on the situation. Individuals high in acquisitive self-monitoring may be less concerned with how dissolution is done. Instead, they may be more preoccupied creating new social bridges only managing dissolution if specific advantages are to be gained (e.g., maintaining career connections, maximize rewards, avoid precipitating disengagements, etc.).

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### **Limitations**

A limitation of the current study is an inability to make causal inferences. Self-monitoring is an individual difference variable. Our study is non-experimental in design; self-monitoring differences and friendship variables were not systematically manipulated in our analyses. Therefore, our study is vulnerable to problems concerning direction of influence and the impact of certain variables (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

Regarding the issues of directionality, it was not possible in our study to establish temporal precedence of self-monitoring versus friendship experiences. Interactions at an early age involving dissolution or maintenance of close/best friendships may influence an individual's perceptions of themselves as low or high self-monitors. Self-monitoring orientation may instead influence friendship dissolution and maintenance of close/best friendships. Longitudinal designs may determine how friendship dissolution at an early age may influence self-monitoring propensities, and how self-monitoring in turn may influence future friendship dissolution/disengagement strategies (Feeney, 2013).

With certain exceptions (self-consciousness and the traditional conceptualization self-monitoring, plasticity and stability and acquisitive versus protective self-monitoring), researchers have not found other individual differences that consistently share variance with the self-monitoring measure (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Another personality factor is, therefore, not likely responsible for differences in friendship dissolution found in our results. However, biological sex does appear to have a small but consistent relation to self-monitoring across several studies (for a meta analysis, see Day et al., 2002). Analysis of our sample revealed sex was not a reliable confound with self-monitoring scores. The same conclusion can be drawn for other variables such as friends' age and sex as well as the length of

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friendships. There still remains plausibility that the results of the current study are influenced by unknown uncontrolled factors (Shadish et al., 2002).

Participants were instructed to think of former close friendship when responding to survey questions. However, closeness may not be equivalent phenomenological experience for high and low self-monitors. What a high self-monitor defines as a close friend may not be the same as what a close friend is to a prototypical low self-monitor. As discussed previously, high and low self-monitors describe their friends by utility and by emotional value respectively (Snyder et al., 1983). Without confirmation from participants' friends, we can only see one side of these relationships. Did these former close friends reciprocate similar reasoning for the cause of relationship dissolution? Did these former friends view the relationship by its utility or emotional value? In its conventional as well as protective forms, self-monitoring was related to relationship dissolution. However, it is unclear if these 'close' relationships were dissolved due to an actual lack of shared activities or emotional connection. Our findings are only a small window into the relationship from only one side. The disengagement process is rarely a linear process (Baxter, 1987). In the future, researchers can utilize designs, like the Actor-Partner Independence Model, to address these issues and better analyze how self-monitoring differences play into causes and process of friendship dissolution (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006).

### **Future Directions**

Future investigations should focus on self-monitoring differences in strategy use and other reasons for dissolution. The Collins and Gillath (2012) measure of relationship dissolution was originally based on Baxter's (1982) disengagement strategies which is intended for romantic relationships. The dynamic between friendship dissolution and self-monitoring is likely more complex than previously hypothesized. In the future, researchers could investigate verbal versus

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nonverbal methods of disengagement, high versus low compassionate strategies in disengagement, and external (employment opportunity) or internal (self to blame) causes of disengagement. (Cody, 1982; Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Wilmot et al., 1985). Researchers should investigate these alternative strategies for dissolution in a longitudinal context. The dissolution process is complex chain of events rather than a single breakup event with multiple different strategies used by both individuals at different points in time and in different social contexts (Baxter, 1987; Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Duck, 1982; Perlman & Fehr, 1986).

Life transitions as well as network shifts may moderate dissolution and strategies used to weaken a friendship (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Individuals going through life transitions are known to have more frequent rates of dissolution in relationships compared to individuals who are not transitioning (Baxter, 1987). For individuals low in self-monitoring, personal incompatibility or mismanagement of social group integration during life/network transitions may influence a higher rate of dissolution. For individuals high in self-monitoring, difficulty in keeping relationships neatly compartmentalized may influence a higher rate of dissolution. Understanding self-monitoring differences during major life events where dissolution is more frequent may assist in the creation of strategies to repair these terminated relationships.

Relationship dissolution is seen as a many-staged process in the current literature (Baxter, 1984; Duck, 2015). These models may capture only part of the dissolution process for friendships of high and low self-monitors. High self-monitors may prefer a gradual, bilateral desire to exit the relationship with the use of indirection actions, protracted negotiation, and absence of attempted recovery. While low self-monitors may prefer a sudden onset and rapid negotiation of relationship problems with a unilateral desire to exit the relationship using direct actions to accomplish dissolution.

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Historically, self-monitoring has been conceptualized as a class variable (for review of the literature, see Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010; Leone, 2006). Alternatively, self-monitoring can be defined in terms of acquisitive versus protective self-presentation (Arkin, 1981). Acquisitive self-monitors are more concerned with gaining status and are thus preoccupied with others' impressions of their worthiness for such status (Wilmot et al., 2017; Wilmot, 2015). Protective self-monitors are concerned with avoiding negative impressions and thus are preoccupied in managing their behaviors to avoid negative evaluation (Wilmot, 2015; Wilmot et al., 2017). Individuals higher in acquisitive self-monitoring may prefer neglectful exit strategies that allow for resources to focus on actions that facilitate status gain. Individuals higher in protective self-monitoring, as indicated by the results of the current study, appear to prefer strategies that focus on appearing sincere in interpersonal situations to avoid negative impressions. Appearing as humble or apologetic may influence others to curb negative evaluations of narcissism and arrogance.

### **Conclusions**

Researchers have investigated little regarding individual differences in friendship dissolution. Conflict and disagreements are not unheard of in friendships. Rose and Serafica (1986) reported that all participants had at one point lost a close friend through dissolution. Researching why certain friendships dissolve may help us understand individual differences in the way friendship dissolutions are experienced. Research on friendship dissolution can assist individuals to construct more enduring relationships that are more emotionally rewarding and secure over time. Overall, more empirical and theoretical work is still required.

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