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## Opposite Sex Friendship Initiation: Dispositional Differences in Self-Monitoring

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SELF MONITORING AND OPPOSITE SEX FRIENDSHIP

OPPOSITE SEX FRIENDSHIP INITIATION: DISPOSTIONAL DIFFERENCES OF SELF-MONITORING

by

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## Abstract

Based on the self-monitoring and friendship literature (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010) it was predicted that compared to low self-monitors, high self-monitors have an unrestricted orientation to sexual liaisons and view friendships as activity-based. These two tendencies suggest high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to initiate opposite sex friendships for sexual purposes whereas low self-monitors are more likely than high self-monitors to initiate opposite sex friendships for companionship purposes. To evaluate this prediction, 133 male and 135 female heterosexuals completed the 25 item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974), the Reasons for Friendship Initiation Scale (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001), and the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). While controlling for sociosexuality, high self-monitors more often than low self-monitors initiated opposite sex friendships for sexual gratification, while there was no significant relationship between self-monitoring and companionship. Limitations (e.g., nonexperimental design, self-report, unrepresentative sample), and future directions (e.g., longitudinal designs, behavioral observations, diverse samples) are discussed.

**Opposite-Sex Friendship Initiation: Effects of Dispositional Differences in Self-Monitoring**

Friendships across the lifespan are important to individual's life satisfaction and mental and physical health (Amati et al., 2018; Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Sias & Bartoo, 2007). The role of individual differences and interpersonal processes within friendship have been studied within same sex friendship, but there is little known about these differences within opposite-sex friendships (Duck & Craig, 1978; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014; Snyder & Smith, 1986).

Specifically, there is little known about personality's involvement with opposite-sex friendship initiation. While previous studies have investigated friendship and some individual differences, they have not specifically examined opposite-sex friendship initiation and self-monitoring.

**Self-Monitoring**

Self-monitoring involves stable individual differences in the way people view themselves as well as in the way they manage their social networks (Snyder, 1974, 1979). According to Snyder's univariate model, self-monitoring is categorical in nature. That is, there are high self-monitors and low self-monitors. Underlying these two categories of self-monitoring are differences in motivation, ability, attention, use of ability, and behavioral stability/variability (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974, 1979).

***Univariate Model***

People who are high in self-monitoring base their behavior on the situation as they alter their behavior based on others' self-presentation (Snyder, 1979). In other words, high self-monitors are motivated by social appropriateness. High self-monitors are more socially adept than low self-monitors and focus on situational cues. High self-monitors are concerned with their self-presentation, so they are likely to present themselves based their current situation, meaning their behavior is likely to change cross-situationally (Snyder, 1974, 1979).

However, people who are low in self-monitoring alter their behavior in more of a dispositional approach (Snyder, 1979). That is, low self-monitors are motivated by their own attitudes and values and use them as a basis of their behavior and care about maintaining congruence between the two. Low self-monitors are likely to present themselves based their dispositions since they are concerned with self-verification, meaning their behavior is likely to remain constant cross-situationally. (Snyder, 1974, 1979).

### ***Bivariate Model***

While self-monitoring is a construct highly studied in psychology, not all theorists agreed with Snyder's view of self-monitoring. Arkin (1981) and Lennox (1988) suggested self-monitoring was not unidimensional but instead bidimensional. To properly assess this bivariate model, items on the original Self-Monitoring Scale were divided into two independent subscales: acquisitive and protective (Lennox, 1988). The acquisitive subscale of self-monitoring was developed by combining the acting and extra version subscales derived from the original Self-Monitoring Scale. Other-directedness was used to assess protective self-monitoring (Lennox, 1988).

Acquisitive self-monitoring consists of "attraction-seeking" and the process of self-presentation is a means of achieving social success (Arkin, 1981). When individuals present using an acquisitive style, they are presenting themselves in a favorable light to gain social approval. Acquisitive self-monitoring is consistent with a traditional view of high self-monitors – people who are concerned with getting along and getting ahead (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010; Wilmot, 2015).

Protective self-monitoring was defined as impression management designed to avoid social rejection (Arkin, 1981). Protective self-monitors approach social situations pessimistically



and attempt to avoid social disapproval (Lennox, 1988). They are concerned with social conformity and the most common expression of protective self-monitoring is to either prevent challenges from others or create an invulnerable impression (Arkin, 1981).

To assess acquisitive and protective self-monitoring, separate scales were developed (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). To assess acquisitive self-monitoring, researchers developed a revised 13-item version of the Self-Monitoring Scale which evaluates one's ability to "modify self-presentation and sensitivity to others' expressive behavior" (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984, p. 1360). To assess protective self-monitoring, Lennox and Wolfe developed a scale titled Concern for Appropriateness which was designed to assess cross-situational behavior and "protective social comparison" (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Since the development of these scales, another measure of acquisitive and protective self-monitoring has been designed.

Using contemporary taxometric analysis, Wilmot (2015) found evidence that the conceptualization of self-monitoring as categorical was not supported. Based on his analyses, Wilmot concluded that self-monitoring consisted of two dimensions: acquisitive self-monitoring and protective self-monitoring. He also identified subsets of items in the original Self-Monitoring Scale that reflect these dimensions. Unlike Lennox and Wolfe, Wilmot did not develop an entirely new set of measures to assess acquisitive objective self-monitoring.

Following this reconceptualization, researchers sought to identify correlates of protective and acquisitive self-monitoring. Wilmot and his colleagues examined the connection between these two forms of self-monitoring and meta-traits (Wilmot et al., 2016). Metatraits are traits that account for shared variance between the Big Five personality traits (DeYoung, 2006; Digman, 1997; Olson, 2005). There are two metatraits: alpha and beta. Stability (alpha) reflects the "tendency to be well socialized" (DeYoung, 2015). Stability is composed of shared variance of

conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability (neuroticism reversed). Plasticity (beta) is composed of shared variance of extraversion and openness. It reflects a “tendency toward personal growth” (DeYoung, 2015). Acquisitive self-monitoring was found to be positively correlated with Plasticity, while protective self-monitoring was negatively correlated to Stability (Wilmot et al., 2017).

### **Self-Monitoring and Friendship**

Most of the literature regarding self-monitoring and friendship is based around the original conceptualization of self-monitoring. Researchers found there are five dimensions of friendships on which self-monitors can be contrasted: friendship basis, friendship depth, friendship longevity, perceived compatibility, and emotional support (Snyder & Smith, 1986). High self-monitors base their friendships on activities, have a shallower relationship, have little perception of compatibility and how long the friendship will last, and have little perception of sympathy or nurture. Low self-monitors base their friendships on affect, have a more emotionally in-depth relationship, have high perceived compatibility and believe the friendship will endure, and perceive sympathy and nurturing behavior. Consistent with these different conceptions of friendship high self-monitors choose friends as activity partners, while low self-monitors choose friends based on shared attitudes and values (Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder et al., 1983).

High self-monitors tend to have more positive attributes that people seek in friendship than do low self-monitors (Howells, 1993). When asked to choose a more desirable friend, students chose high self-monitors due to low self-monitor’s lack of social competency and lack of risk-taking. Another potential reason for high self-monitors being more desirable is they have more expressive emotional control over less desirable traits (Lippa & Mash, 1981).

Low self-monitor's relationships are less likely than high self-monitor's friendships to dissolve over time (Bhardwaj et al., 2016). This lack of dissolution could be due to cross-situational stability within low self-monitors or their typical secure attachment (Gaines et al., 2000). Cross-situational stability in low self-monitors is linked to lower likelihood to feel subjective ambivalence between liked and disliked familiar people (Cowley & Czellar, 2011).

Regarding initiation of friendships, high and low self-monitors conceptualize and behave in different ways. In early stages of friendship formation, high self-monitors compared to low self-monitors pay closer attention to emotions of others and will reciprocate those emotions (Shaffer et al., 1982; Toegel et al., 2007). High self-monitors tend to attract more friendship partners than do low self-monitors due to this perceived empathy and their social intellect (Bhardwaj et al., 2016; Sasovova et al., 2010). However, as friendships continue and evolve, high self-monitors are likely to encounter issues regarding cross-situationally consistent behavior and ambivalence towards discrepancies with friends (Cowley & Czellar, 2011). In combination, cross situationally inconsistent behavior and ambivalence can result in friendship dissolution.

On the other hand, low self-monitors are less likely than high self-monitors to reciprocate emotions and provide emotional help to an acquaintance due to their lack of consideration of future situations (Shaffer et al., 1982; Toegel et al., 2007). Low self-monitors are less likely to attract new friends than are high self-monitors (Sasovova et al., 2010). While low self-monitors are less likely to attract new friends, they are also less likely to lose the friends they have (Bhardwaj et al., 2016). People also tend to have similar behavior to that of their friends, especially those high in self-monitoring (Guidetti et al., 2016). High self-monitors tend to imitate behavior within friendships: they will act like their friends in order to fit in.

Within children, self-monitoring is related to their birth order in the family, with middle born children being higher in self-monitoring than only children or first-born children (Musser & Browne, 1991). In boys specifically, their self-monitoring is positively correlated with their number of friendships (Musser & Browne, 1991). Boy's self-monitoring style being tied to their friendships may be related to peer acceptance and boy's choosing friends as activity partners (Aukett et al., 1988). In early adolescence, however, girls had higher levels of self-monitoring than boys and were more likely to be in a reciprocal friendship (Broderick & Beltz, 1996). In high school students, regardless of gender, high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to engage in delinquent and homophobic potentially offensive sexual behaviors when provided with peer approval (Jewell et al., 2014; Wong & Lau, 1993). It is interesting to note these differences in self-monitoring may be tied to acceptable behavior within different developmental stages.

Although high self-monitors have better interpersonal skills compared to low self-monitors, self-monitoring in some groups is not related to perceived social or emotional loneliness (Malikiosi-Loizos & Anderson, 1999). In African-Americans, however, social loneliness was inversely related to ability to modify self-presentation (a facet of self-monitoring) (Clinton & Anderson, 1999).

Self-monitoring and conflict management within friendships correlates with attachment style (Gaines et al., 2000). High self-monitors tend to have an avoidant attachment style in which they use a passive approach to conflict management. Low self-monitors, however, tend to have secure attachment style in which they use an active approach to conflict management. These differences in conflict management do not always transcend gender differences (Haferkamp, 1991-1992). Males use denial-avoidant strategies to deal with conflict, but they also score higher

in self-monitoring. Women use cooperative strategies and tend to score lower in self-monitoring. An interesting thing to note here is the sex differences tied to attributions for friend's behavior. In terms of sources of conflict, men made dispositional attributions for behavior, women made situational attributions (Haferkamp, 1991-1992).

Within large social networks, those high in self-monitoring were more likely to be trusted by their friends, have a central network position, and occupy large brokerage roles compared to low self-monitors (Mehra et al., 2001; Oh & Kilduff, 2008; Tasselli & Kilduff, 2018). High self-monitors also established ties to ingroup and outgroup members. Whereas high self-monitors had an advantage within brokerage circles, low self-monitors have the advantage of increased trust from friends in small groups.

A great deal is known about the friendships of high self-monitors and low self-monitors. Nonetheless, there is more to be learned about friendship differences in self-monitoring. Specifically, little is known about the connection between self-monitoring and opposite sex friendships.

### ***Implications for Opposite-Sex Friendships***

A potential relationship between self-monitoring and opposite sex friendships can be gleaned from the connection between self-monitoring and romantic relationships. Regarding romantic relationships, high self-monitors have a more unrestricted mating style, meaning they are open to more partners, whereas low self-monitors have a restricted mating style, meaning fewer partners (Snyder et al., 1986). High self-monitors are more likely to have casual sex than low self-monitors. High self-monitors do not feel a need to be committed before engaging in sexual activities, whereas low self-monitors do need to be committed. This concept mirrors sociosexuality.

Sociosexuality is variability in attitude and behavior regarding sexual activities (Snyder et al., 1986). This variability in attitudes and behavior is known as unrestricted and restricted sociosexual orientation. People with an unrestricted orientation are uncommitted in their sexual relationships and claim they could easily have sexual relations if they are not close with that person; People with a restricted orientation, however, are committed in their sexual relationships and claim they must be close to a person to engage in sexual relations (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986). Consequentially, high self-monitors are more likely to have a one-time sexual encounter and larger number of sexual partners than are low self-monitors (Snyder et al., 1986). It is thus reasonable to propose that high self-monitors tend to seek out “friends with benefits” relationships with the opposite sex more so than low self-monitors.

### **Opposite-Sex Friendships**

Opposite-sex friendship prevalence increases in adolescence and emerging adulthood (Connolly et al., 2004; Sharabany et al., 1981). Into middle and late adulthood, there is little known about opposite-sex friendships. In the recent past, it was not culturally acceptable for a man and a woman to be friends outside of marriage (Booth & Hess, 1974). This cohort cultural difference could be why an investigation on opposite-sex friendships in middle and late adulthood found they were infrequent (Booth & Hess, 1974). That opposite-sex friendships seem to diminish across the lifespan could be due to a cohort effect or a biological one meaning it is either more socially acceptable for young people to have opposite-sex friends or it is an evolved mechanism to facilitate reproduction. Opposite-sex friendships are thought to aid sexual and romantic involvement (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2000) which is more important in young adults for said reproductive facilitation. When married or in old age people are not trying to find a mate, so opposite-sex friendships would therefore be less important.

Opposite sex friendships are a historically new concept and highly influenced by cultural norms (Rawlins, 1982). Until recently, it was extremely rare for men and women to have opposite sex friendships outside of their spouses or relatives (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2012; Booth & Hess, 1974). Evolutionarily speaking, the rarity of opposite sex friendships may be the result of concerns (e.g., jealousy) related to mating strategies (O'Meara, 1989). It has been consistently found that both sexual attraction and behavior is typical of opposite-sex friendships (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Bleske-Rechek et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2007).

There are sex differences in the value of opposite sex friendships. Regarding sex differences in initiation and value of an opposite-sex friendship, men perceive more of their emotional support comes from opposite-sex friendships rather than same sex friendships (Aukett et al., 1988). Men perceive their opposite-sex friendships as more fulfilling than women do (Elkins & Peterson, 1993). This sex difference could be a result of deeper intimacy that women receive from their SSFs and men only receive from opposite-sex friendships.

### ***Evolutionary Basis and Sex Differences***

So why do opposite sex friendships occur? There are two evolutionary perspectives as to why men and women tend to pursue opposite sex friendships. First, opposite sex friendships are a psychologically specific friendship type independent of mating behavior (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000). This viewpoint construes opposite-sex friendships simply as a platonic friendship just as a same-sex friendship. Second, opposite sex friendships are relationships highly influenced by mating strategies (Bleske-Recheck & Buss, 2000; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2017). It is thought while men pursue sexual access, females seek physical protection and long-term mate potential in opposite sex friendships (Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014).

An important sex difference to consider is that men and women have differing mating styles due to parental investment (Trivers, 1972). For instance, women invest more effort in raising offspring (e.g., pregnancy, labor) than men do meaning women tend to be choosier in mate selection than men, especially in short term mating. Men in contrast, have much to gain with short term mating (e.g., potential offspring) and thus would be less choosy of potential partners. Men overall display a stronger affinity to short term mating than women (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt, 2005) and want more sexual partners than women do (Schmitt et al., 2001) which is thought to be due to reproductive fitness. Within the context of initiating opposite sex friendships men wanting sexual partners and women wanting protection supports the idea that men want to gain as many offspring as possible and women want to have a protector for her and future offspring (Geary, 2000).

Even though the sexes use different motives for why they initiate opposite sex friendships, attraction is commonly experienced in opposite sex friendships by both sexes (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2000; Bleske-Rechek et al., 2012; Kaplan & Keys, 1997). Both sexes also initiate opposite-sex friendships for mate potential (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014). Opposite sex friendships can also provide protection and emotional support (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2000).

### **Current Study**

Opposite sex friendships are a historically novel occurrence with two evolutionary purposes: reproductive fitness and protection (Salkicevic-Pisonic 2014, 2017). Men and women initiate opposite-sex friendships due to physical attraction or protection seeking (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Bleske-Rechek et al., 2012; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014). Although a great deal is known about sex differences in opposite sex friendships, little is known about a relationship



between opposite sex friendship initiation and the influence of personality traits, namely self-monitoring. We aim to bridge the gap in the literature by examining the relationship between self-monitoring and why opposite-sex friendship initiation occurs.

Given that high self-monitors have an unrestricted orientation to romantic relationships, it is reasonable to suppose that they might have the same orientation to opposite sex friendships. To the extent that low self-monitors have a restricted orientation to romantic relationships, it is sensible to assume that they have the same orientation to opposite sex friendships. Both high self-monitors and people high in sociosexuality have similar reasons for why they initiate a friendship (Lewis et al., 2012; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014; Fehr & Harasymchuk, 2018). We therefore hypothesize that 1) self-monitoring will be positively correlated with sexual gratification within opposite sex friendships and 2) self-monitoring will be negatively correlated with companionship within opposite sex friendships.

## Method

### Participants

Using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a survey was conducted using participants from the U.S. and Canada. A total of 268 participants were recruited for a study of "Individual Differences in Opposite Sex Friendship Initiation". We determined a priori 150 participants will be needed to achieve adequate power ( $\geq .80$  at  $\alpha = .05$ ) assuming a small effect size ( $r = .2$ ). For their completion of an online anonymous survey, participants were compensated with \$2.00. To participate, participants had to be at least 18 years of age and had one close opposite sex friendship.

In our final sample, we had 133 male and 135 female participants. Ages ranged from 19 to 65 years ( $M = 35.04$ ,  $SD = 9.45$ ). Regarding race, our sample identified themselves as

White/Caucasian (72.40%), Asian/Pacific Islander (8.20%), Hispanic/Latino (7.10%), Black/African American (11.60%), or Other (0.70%). Sexual orientation of this sample was predominantly heterosexual (83.6%) with the rest of the sample being bisexual (16.40%). The length of participants' opposite sex friendships ranged from less than 1 month (12.6%), 1-6 months (14.1%), more than 6 months to a year (4.0%), and more than a year (64.1%) ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ). 73.90% of participants reported they were currently in a committed or exclusive romantic relationship outside of that friendship. Of those participants, 55.10% were married, 24.20% dating, and 20.70% cohabitating.

Participants were given an informed consent form electronically and were required to agree to all requirements before beginning. Participants that indicated they did not have a current opposite sex friendship were excluded from our study. Other participants' data was removed if they provided answers that were impossible (e.g., 200 years old) or if they took the survey in an unrealistic amount of time (e.g., 3 minutes). We abided by The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct regarding our treatment of participants (APA, 2017).

### **Procedure and Measures**

Participants completed a survey via MTurk. The advertisement for this study indicated that participants must be of the sex required for our survey (e.g., male for the survey titled, "Reasons why men initiation opposite sex friendships") and have a current opposite sex friendship. Participants provided an electronic informed consent. If participants were either the wrong sex or did not have an opposite sex friend, they were not allowed to participate in our survey.

### ***Demographic Information***

After participants consented, they were first asked to report their age in years. Race of participants was reported by selecting one of six categories: *White/Caucasian, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and Other*. Participants reported their sex and sexual orientation from a selection of *heterosexual male, heterosexual female, bisexual male, bisexual female, and other*. To ensure our participants could have opposite sex friends involving potential romantic/sexual attraction, participants who answered *other* were then directed to the end of our survey. Participants were asked if they were in a committed or exclusive relationship with someone other than their opposite sex friend. If they answered yes to this question, then they were prompted to indicate *their partner's age in years, partner's sexual orientation, length of their relationship, and nature of their relationship* (i.e., dating and not cohabitating, dating and cohabitating, or married).

### ***Opposite Sex Friendship Initiation***

Participants a friendship primer where they were asked to write the initials of a current opposite sex friend and to then think of that friend for the remainder of our study. They then indicated the sex of that friend (*male or female*). Participants were then asked to indicate how long they have been friends using the following answer options: *not applicable; do not currently have an opposite sex friend; less than one month; one to six months; more than six months to a year; more than a year*. If participants chose not applicable, they were directed to the end of our survey.

To measure reasons for initiation, we used the Reasons for Initiation Scale (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). Participants were instructed to “Think of your closest opposite-sex friend whose initials you wrote at the beginning of the survey. How important was each of the

following benefits to you when you became friends with that person?" They were then given a list of 63 items that assessed 16 categories of benefits such as "advice about the opposite sex, common interests, companionship, conversation, desire for sex, emotional support, physical protection, resource acquisition, self-esteem boost, and sexual attraction" (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). They then used a 7-point rating scale (1 = *not at all important* to 7 = *very important*) to indicate how important those benefits were to them when they began the friendship.

We created eleven subscales from the original measure: *companionship, networking, self-esteem boost, sexual gratification, protection, information about the opposite-sex, mate potential, resource gain, social status, sexual desirability, and sexual accessibility*. These subscales were based on the categories listed in the original measure (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). Scores for participants' responses to items in these categories were summed to produce separate indices of networking, self-esteem boost, protection, advice about the opposite-sex, mate potential, resource gain, social status, sexual desirability, and sexual access as reasons for friendship initiation. Higher scores are indicative of increasing importance.

Even though Bleske-Rechek and Buss (2001) has been cited over 200 times there is virtually no psychometric information about this measure. For our sample the alpha coefficients are as follows: companionship ( $\alpha = .77$ ), networking ( $\alpha = .77$ ), self-esteem boost ( $\alpha = .62$ ), sexual gratification ( $\alpha = .82$ ) protection ( $\alpha = .54$ ), information about the opposite-sex ( $\alpha = .59$ ), mate potential ( $\alpha = .87$ ), resource gain ( $\alpha = .74$ ), social status ( $\alpha = .75$ ), sexual desirability, and sexual access. Although there is no information about the psychometric properties (e.g., reliability, and factor structure) of the Reasons for Initiation Scale, there is evidence for validity in the form of "known groups."

In the seminal article in which the measure was reported, the authors suggested opposite-sex friendship is a strategy that men use to gain sex, women use to gain protection, and both sexes use to gain potential mates (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). This finding has been replicated more recently (Graham & Leri, 2019; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014). Just as in the seminal study, men find physical and sexual attraction and desire for intercourse important compared to women and women find physical protection important compared to men (Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014). Graham and Leri (2019) found physical attraction, desire for sex, love and dating potential, advice about the opposite sex, talking about the opposite sex, and introduction to other potential mates were all more important for men than women when initiating an opposite sex friendship (Graham & Leri, 2019). For women on the other hand, only feelings of security and protection were significant compared to men when initiating an opposite sex friendship.

### ***Self-Monitoring***

Individual differences in self-monitoring were measured using the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). This scale is comprised of positively (e.g., “I would probably make a good actor”) and negatively (e.g., “I find it hard to imitate behavior of other people”) worded items assessing five dimensions. The five dimensions are concern for social appropriateness (e.g., “I rarely need the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music”), attention to social comparison (e.g., “I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone”), ability to control behavior (e.g., “I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people”), use of ability (e.g., “Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time”), and behavioral consistency (e.g., “In different situations with different people, I often act like very different persons”). Items on this scale were answered in *true* or *false* format. High self-monitoring responses were given a 2, while low self-monitoring responses were given

a 1. To create an index of self-monitoring as conceptualized in the univariate model, assigned scores were summed for a total score ranging from 25-50. Those who scored lower were lower in self-monitoring, while those who scored higher were higher in self-monitoring.

Responses to this scale were also scored according to the bivariate model (i.e., acquisitive and protective) (Wilmot et al., 2016; Wilmot et al., 2017). Scores were created from responses to seven items of the original measure to create scores for protective self-monitoring. A sample item is “My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs”. To assess acquisitive self-monitoring, responses to six other items were scored. A sample item is “I have considered being an entertainer”. Scores for participants’ responses to items in these two subscales were summed to produce separate indices of protective and acquisitive self-monitoring. For protective self-monitoring, individuals were given a score from 7 to 14. For acquisitive self-monitoring, individuals were given a score from 6 to 12.

Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale have a test-retest value of .83 across a one-month period indicating temporal reliability (Snyder, 1974). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were highly correlated ( $r = .73$ ) across a two-month time period (Girvan et al., 2010). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale are internally reliable as well ( $KR20 = .70$ ) (Snyder, 1974). Zaccaro and colleagues (1991) found a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.67 and Ahmed and colleagues (1986) found a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.75 and a  $KR20$  of .72. Our measure of the aggregate self-monitoring scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Scores on this scale were also internally reliable for protective ( $\alpha = .63$ ) and acquisitive ( $\alpha = .63$ ) self-monitoring.

There is evidence of convergent validity for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. Higher scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale correlate with increased scores on measures of self-control over emotional expression (Snyder, 1974). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale have been used

to accurately distinguish between people more prone to self-monitoring behaviors (e.g., professional actors) and those who were not (e.g., those high in psychopathy) (Snyder, 1974). Furthermore, researchers have found scores on the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS) are positively correlated ( $r = .53$ ) to scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale (Flynn et al., 2006; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). More recently, researchers found scores of protective self-monitoring are negatively correlated with scores on stability measures (a metatrait derived from the Big 5 comprised of emotional stability (inverse neuroticism), conscientiousness, and agreeableness) (Wilmot et al., 2017). Also, scores of acquisitive self-monitoring are positively correlated with scores on plasticity measures (a metatrait derived from the Big 5 comprised of variance shared between openness/intellect and extraversion).

Evidence of discriminant validity of scores for the Self-Monitoring Scale was found by multiple researchers. The Self-Monitoring Scale was investigated in relation to other individual differences such as need to belong ( $\beta = .11$ ), Machiavellianism ( $r = -.09$ ), and locus of control ( $r = .19$ ), and there were no robust correlations between scores on measures of these constructs (Rose & Kim, 2011; Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Monson, 1975). Scores of the Self-Monitoring Scale are not correlated with scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ( $r = -.17$ ) nor The Shyness Scale ( $r = -.11$ ; Briggs & Cheek, 1988). Self-monitoring is not related to socially desirable responding ( $r = -.19$ ) nor other-deception ( $r = -.02$ ; Paulhus, 1982; Snyder, 1974). Regarding the acquisitive and protective subscales, there are no robust correlations with measures of cognitive ability (Wilmot et al., 2017).

### ***Sociosexuality***

To assess sociosexuality, we used two measures: The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) and the Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI-R)

(Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). In our study, we combined the SOI and SOIR and found scores were internally reliable in the present study ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

**Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** The SOI contains seven items (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Three items were written to assess participants' behavior (e.g., "With how many different partners have you had sex (sexual intercourse) within the past year"), and four items were written to assess their attitudes (e.g., "I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying "casual" sex with different partners"). The answer format for these items consisted of three fill in the blanks, three rating scales, and one multiple choice question (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Scores for responses to the SOI were calculated according to instructions given in the original publication.

SOI scores have temporal reliability as seen through a high test-retest reliability over two months ( $r = .94$ ; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Researchers have demonstrated internal reliability in U.S. ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and international samples; but in international samples, alpha levels varied considerably between .31 and .86 (Schmitt, 2005; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

Convergent validity of the SOI scores is evident by findings that compared to individuals with restricted sociosexuality, persons with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation (1) have sex sooner in a romantic relationship, (2) are more likely to be consensually non-monogamous, and (3) tend to have less commitment, investment, and weaker affection in their sexual relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). In an international sample (Schmitt, 2005), there were correlations between scores on the SOI and consent to sex ( $r = .17 - .54$ ), attempt to (mate) poach ( $r = .15 - .53$ ), and went along with (mate) poach ( $r = .14 - .62$ ).

Sociosexuality measured in the SOI is unrelated to sex drive (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). This finding demonstrates discriminant validity by showing sociosexuality a



psychological rather than a biological construct. Scores on the SOI scale are also orthogonal to scores on measures of sexual satisfaction, sex-related anxiety, and sex-related guilt measures (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Scores on the SOI are independent of scores on measures of general sexual interest (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

**The Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** The SOI-R was developed to ameliorate some of the psychometric issues with the SOI and tease apart the behavioral, attitudinal, and desire elements of sociosexual orientation (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). These elements were found to be independent of one another and did not need to be congruent as thought in the original measure. A new three factor model fit the data better than both one-factor (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) and two-factor models (Webster & Bryan, 2007),  $\chi^2(24, N=2,708) = 224.69, p < .001$  (CFI = .99, NFI = .98, SRMR = .04). The authors added five new sociosexuality items and kept four original items (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008).

Of the nine items, three items were written to assess participants' behavior. A sample item is "With how many different partners have you had sex with in the past three months?" This question was accompanied by an answer format response options range from 0 to 20. Three questions were used to assess attitudes (e.g., "Sex without love is ok") and these questions were accompanied by a rating scale with responses ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 9 (*Strongly agree*). And finally, three questions were used to assess desire (e.g., "In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?") where answers for these questions were on a rating scale from 1 (*never*) – 9 (*at least once a day*). The total scores for the SOI-R were calculated according to instructions given in the original publication (see Penke & Asendorpf, 2008).

Regarding sex differences, the SOI-R has a much higher effect size ( $d = .61$ ) compared to the SOI ( $d = .27$ ). When examined further, (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008), it was not behavioral facet scores ( $d = .06$ ) that drove this sex differences but rather attitudinal ( $d = .43$ ) and desire ( $d = .86$ ) facets scores. Compared to the SOI, scores on the SOI-R were significantly affected by sex differences ( $\eta^2_p = .08$ ) as well as relationship status ( $\eta^2_p = .01$ ) and their interaction ( $\eta^2_p = .004$ ). Going further into this finding, there were significant sex differences regarding attitude ( $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .04$ ) and desire ( $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .16$ ) meaning men were more open to and more motivated to put effort towards unrestricted sexual relationships compared to women. Relationship status also had a significant effect on desire ( $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .11$ ) and a slight effect on behavior ( $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .004$ ) meaning that individuals in a relationship were more restricted in their desire and were slightly more unrestricted in their behavior than single people. The interaction between relationship status and sex were significant for desire ( $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .005$ ) and attitude ( $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .003$ ) meaning men and women in a relationship had more restricted desires than singles and men were slightly more unrestricted in their attitudes when in relationships compared to women.

In a Spanish population, scores on the SOI-R was internally reliable for behavior ( $\alpha = .93$ ), attitude ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and desire ( $\alpha = .84$ ) (Barrada et al., 2018). Internal reliability was similar in a Portuguese population where the scores on the aggregate SOI-R were reliable ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and similarly reliable across all categories: behavior ( $\alpha = .85$ ), attitudes ( $\alpha = .70$ ), and desire ( $\alpha = .84$ ) (Neto, 2016). Internal reliability for scores on the SOI-R have also replicated in a Hungarian population with an internal consistency coefficient of .85 for a total score on the SOI-R and

internal consistency coefficients greater than or equal to .82 for the SOI-R subscales (Meskó et al., 2014).

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

The univariate statistics for all variables in the study are included in Table 1. Preliminary analysis indicates no violation of the assumption of normality. All means, standard deviations, and ranges were within expected values, and there were minimal issues with kurtosis and skewness.

**Table 1**

#### *Univariate Statistics*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Kurtosis	Skewness	Range
Univariate Self-Monitoring	35.73	4.46	-0.04	-0.08	23.00
Acquisitive Self-Monitoring	8.16	1.71	-0.80	0.33	6.00
Protective Self-Monitoring	10.19	1.86	-1.01	0.04	7.00
Sociosexual Orientation	32.17	13.66	-0.80	0.16	59.00
Sex Gratification	15.77	8.22	-1.03	0.20	30.00
Companionship	70.66	15.28	-0.49	0.33	76.00
Protection	7.85	3.62	-1.05	-0.07	12.00
Networking	8.89	5.49	-1.25	0.34	18.00
Self-esteem Boost	21.06	6.75	-0.46	-0.21	30.00
Opposite Sex Information	7.01	3.73	-1.08	0.17	12.00
Mate Potential	12.24	7.82	-1.37	0.32	24.00
Resource Gain	5.00	3.74	-0.62	0.87	12.00
Status Gain	7.07	4.10	-1.34	0.19	12.00
Desirability Assessment	3.05	2.24	-1.29	0.54	6.00
Sexual Accessibility	2.23	1.96	0.56	1.41	6.00
Average Sex Gratification	3.15	1.64	-1.03	0.20	6.00
Average Companionship	4.16	0.90	-0.49	0.33	4.47
Average Protection	3.93	1.81	-1.05	-0.07	6.00
Average Networking	2.96	1.83	-1.25	0.34	6.00
Average Self-esteem Boost	4.21	1.35	-0.46	-0.21	6.00
Average Opposite Sex Info	3.51	1.86	-1.08	0.17	6.00
Average Mate Potential	3.06	1.95	-1.37	0.32	6.00
Average Resource Gain	2.50	1.87	-0.62	0.87	6.00

Average Status Gain	3.54	2.05	-1.34	0.19	6.00
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Due to the correlational nature of this study, multicollinearity was assessed (see Table 2). There were no statistically reliable sex differences in self-monitoring scores derived from the univariate and bivariate models. However, sex was significantly correlated with scores on the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory ( $t = 5.69, p < .001$ ).

In other investigations (e.g., Sakaguchi et al., 2007), sociosexuality was related to self-monitoring. In our sample, there also was a reliable relationship between sociosexuality and both the univariate and bivariate indices of self-monitoring (see column 4 in Table 2). Therefore, sociosexuality was included as a covariate in subsequent analyses.

One finding to note is that average scores for only two of the reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation – self-esteem boost and companionship – were above the scalar midpoint (i.e., 4). This means that only these two reasons were generally seen as important motives to initiate an opposite sex friendship. Companionship was the most important reason.

**Table 2**

*Bivariate Correlations*

	USM	ASM	PSM	SOI	SG	PR	NET	SE	OSI	MP	RG	SG	DA	SA	COM
USM		.71**	.69**	.20**	.27**	.19**	.25**	.20**	.20**	.27**	.19**	.31**	.19**	.15**	.09
ASM			.25**	.21**	.24**	.11	.24**	.05	.12*	.24**	.25**	.17**	.21**	.24**	-.02
PSM				.25**	.29**	.21**	.25**	.22**	.27**	.31**	.20**	.30**	.18**	.19**	.18**
SOI					.38**	.01	.27**	.09	.23**	.30**	.19**	.14*	.14*	.31**	-.01
SG						.28**	.62**	.41**	.42**	.75**	.56**	.37**	.39**	.52**	.26***
PR							.32**	.46**	.32**	.32**	.34**	.32**	.27**	.31**	.38***
NET								.41**	.65**	.64**	.63**	.53**	.59**	.53**	.24***
SE									.42**	.36**	.33**	.40**	.28**	.29**	.41***
OSI										.45**	.43**	.38**	.51**	.36**	.19**
MP											.63**	.40**	.47**	.57**	.25***
RG												.45**	.48**	.62**	.30***
SG													.41**	.32**	.22***
DA														.32**	.12
SA															.29***
COM															

*Note:* USM = Univariate Self-Monitoring, ASM = Acquisitive Self-Monitoring, PSM = Protective Self-Monitoring, SOI= Sociosexuality, SG = Sexual Gratification, PR = Protection, NET = Networking, SE = Self-esteem Boost, OSI = Opposite-sex information, MP = Mate Potential, RG = Resource Gain, SG = Status Gain, DA = Desirability Assessment, SA = Sexual Accessibility, COM = Companionship.

\*p <.05. \*\*p <.01.

## Main Analyses

### *Univariate Model*

Hypotheses were evaluated using hierarchical regression. We used 95% confidence intervals to determine the significance of our effects. If zero was not included within these intervals, then an effect was significant. Our predictor variable is self-monitoring. Our outcome variable was reasons for initiating an opposite sex friendship. Our control variable was sociosexual orientation.

We predicted high self-monitors would initiate an opposite sex friendship for sexual gratification reasons. In other words, the univariate model of self-monitoring scores would be positively related to scores on a measure of the importance of sexual gratification as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships. This hypothesis was supported (see the first row in the right-hand column of the upper panel of Table 3), meaning as self-monitoring increased so did sexual gratification being rated an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship. Our second prediction was low self-monitors would initiate an opposite sex friendship, for reasons of companionship. That is, self-monitoring scores would be negatively related to scores on a measure of importance of companionship as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships. This hypothesis was not supported (see the second row in the right-hand column of the upper panel of Table 3). There was no reliable connection between self-monitoring scores and companionship.

Table 3

### *Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Sexual Gratification and Companionship as Reasons for Initiating Opposite Sex Friendships*

#### Univariate Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Self-Monitoring
Sexual Gratification	$t = 6.07, [+0.14, +0.27]$	$t = 3.56, [+0.16, +0.58]$
Companionship	$t = -0.39, [-0.16, +0.11]$	$t = 1.52, [-0.10, +0.75]$

## Acquisitive Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Self-Monitoring
Sexual Gratification	$t = 6.09, [+0.14, +0.28]$	$t = 3.00, [+0.28, +1.37]$
Companionship	$t = -0.02, [-0.14, +0.14]$	$t = -0.30, [-1.28, +0.94]$

## Protective Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Self-Monitoring
Sexual Gratification	$t = 5.82, [+0.13, +0.27]$	$t = 3.61, [+0.42, +1.41]$
Companionship	$t = -0.85, [-0.20, +0.08]$	$t = 3.09, [+0.57, +2.59]$

Note: Information in brackets are 95% confidence intervals. For all analyses, *dfs* are 1 and 266.

***Bivariate Model***

We predicted acquisitive self-monitors would be likely to initiate an opposite sex friendship for sexual gratification reasons. In other words, acquisitive self-monitoring scores would be positively related to scores on a measure of the importance of sexual gratification as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships. This hypothesis was supported (see the first row in the right-hand column of the middle panel of Table 3), meaning as acquisitive self-monitoring increased so did sexual gratification being rated an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship. Acquisitive self-monitoring scores were not related to companionship (the right-hand column of the fourth row Table 3).

Our second prediction was protective self-monitors would be likely to initiate an opposite sex friendship for companionship reasons. In other words, protective self-monitoring scores would be positively related to scores on a measure of the importance of companionship as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships. This hypothesis was supported (see the second row in the right-hand column of the lower panel in Table 3), meaning as protective self-monitoring increased so did companionship being rated an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship. There was, however, an unexpected connection between scores on a measure of

protective self-monitoring and scores on a measure of the importance of sexual gratification as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships (see the first row in the right-hand column of the lower panel in Table 3). In other words, as protective self-monitoring scores increased, so did the importance of sexual gratification and companionship as reasons for initiating opposite sex friendships.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

We were interested in learning about other potential relationships between self-monitoring and reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation not addressed in our main hypotheses. We did not have any specific hypotheses for the exploratory analyses but again evaluated the data using hierarchical regression analyses. We used 95% confidence intervals to determine the significance of our effects. If zero was not included within these intervals, then an effect was significant. Our predictor variable is self-monitoring. Our outcome variables were the importance of other reasons for initiating an opposite sex friendship. Our control variable was sociosexual orientation.

### ***Univariate Model***

Based on a series of hierarchical regression analyses, the importance of protection, networking, self-esteem boost, gaining information about the opposite sex, mate potential, resource gain, status gain, and sexual desirability were all positively related to self-monitoring (see the right hand columns of the upper panel in Table 4). People higher in self-monitoring were more likely than those lower in self-monitoring to initiate an opposite sex friendship for all the aforementioned reasons.



**Table 4***Hierarchical Regression Analyses Concerning Other Reasons for Initiating Opposite Sex Friendships*

## Univariate Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Univariate Self-Monitoring
Protection	$t = -0.48, [-0.04, +0.02]$	$t = 3.23, [+0.06, +0.26]$
Networking	$t = 3.81, [+0.04, +0.14]$	$t = 3.51, [+0.11, +0.40]$
Self-Esteem Boost	$t = 0.92, [-0.03, +0.09]$	$t = 3.12, [+0.11, +0.47]$
Info re: Opposite Sex	$t = 3.36, [+0.02, +0.09]$	$t = 2.61, [+0.03, +0.23]$
Mate Potential	$t = 3.81, [+0.04, +0.14]$	$t = 3.71, [+0.18, +0.58]$
Resource Gain	$t = 2.67, [+0.01, +0.08]$	$t = 2.62, [+0.03, +0.23]$
Status Gain	$t = 1.34, [-0.01, +0.06]$	$t = 4.91, [+0.16, +0.38]$
Sexual Desirability	$t = 1.74, [-0.002, +0.04]$	$t = 2.72, [+0.02, +0.14]$
Sexual Accessibility	$t = 4.92, [+0.03, +0.06]$	$t = 1.53, [-0.01, +0.09]$

## Acquisitive Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Acquisitive Self-Monitoring
Protection	$t = -0.23, [-0.04, +0.03]$	$t = 1.85, [-0.02, +0.51]$
Networking	$t = 3.82, [+0.04, +0.14]$	$t = 3.16, [+0.23, +0.98]$
Self-Esteem Boost	$t = 1.42, [-0.02, +0.10]$	$t = 0.45, [-0.38, +0.60]$
Info re: Opposite Sex	$t = 3.58, [+0.03, +0.09]$	$t = 1.23, [-0.10, +0.43]$
Mate Potential	$t = 4.48, [+0.08, +0.22]$	$t = 3.10, [+0.30, +1.36]$
Resource Gain	$t = 2.47, [+0.01, +0.07]$	$t = 3.61, [+0.22, +0.73]$
Status Gain	$t = 1.75, [-0.004, +0.07]$	$t = 2.36, [+0.06, +0.64]$
Sexual Desirability	$t = 1.65, [-0.003, +0.04]$	$t = 3.03, [+0.08, +0.40]$
Sexual Accessibility	$t = 4.63, [+0.02, +0.06]$	$t = 3.09, [+0.08, +0.34]$

**Table 4** (continued)

## Protective Self-Monitoring

	Sociosexuality	Protective Self-Monitoring
Protection	$t = -0.72, [-0.04, +0.02]$	$t = 3.55, [+0.19, +0.67]$
Networking	$t = 3.65, [+0.04, +0.14]$	$t = 3.26, [+0.23, +0.92]$
Self-Esteem Boost	$t = 0.71, [-0.04, +0.08]$	$t = 3.32, [+0.30, +1.19]$
Info re: Opposite Sex	$t = 2.98, [+0.02, +0.08]$	$t = 3.69, [+0.21, +0.68]$
Mate Potential	$t = 4.11, [+0.07, +0.20]$	$t = 4.25, [+0.56, +1.53]$
Resource Gain	$t = 2.51, [+0.01, +0.08]$	$t = 2.64, [+0.08, +0.57]$
Status Gain	$t = 1.18, [-0.01, +0.06]$	$t = 4.49, [+0.34, +0.86]$
Sexual Desirability	$t = 1.63, [-0.003, +0.04]$	$t = 2.54, [+0.04, +0.34]$
Sexual Accessibility	$t = 4.67, [+0.02, +0.06]$	$t = 2.06, [+0.01, +0.25]$

Note: Information in brackets are 95% confidence intervals. For all analyses, *dfs* are 1 and 266.

***Bivariate Model***

To investigate the connection - if any – between (a) the acquisitive and protective forms of self-monitoring and (b) the importance of other reasons for initiating opposite sex friendships, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses (see the right-hand columns of the middle and lower panels of Table 4). Acquisitive self-monitoring scores were positively related to status gain, networking, mate potential, resource gain, sexual desirability, and sexual accessibility scores on the opposite sex friendship initiation measure. Acquisitive self-monitoring scores were not significantly related to protection, information about the opposite sex, or self-esteem boost scores. Protective self-monitoring scores were positively related to protection, networking, self-esteem boost, gaining information about the opposite sex, mate potential, resource gain, status, sexual desirability, and sexual accessibility scores on the opposite sex friendship initiation measure.

***Sociosexuality***

For reasons mentioned previously, we included sociosexuality as a covariate. Hence, we did not generate hypotheses concerning sociosexual orientation. Nonetheless, we report the results for sociosexuality for interested readers. Sociosexuality scores were positively related to scores on a measure of the importance of sexual gratification (see the first rows of the left-hand column in Table 3), networking, opposite sex information, mate potential, resource gain, desirability assessment, sexual access (see the left-hand column in the upper, middle, and lower panels of Table 4). Sociosexuality was not related to protection, self-esteem boost, or status gain. That is, as individuals had an increasingly unrestricted orientation to sexual relationships, they were more likely to initiate opposite sex friendships for sexual gratification, networking,

opposite sex information, mate potential, resource gain, assessing desirability, or sexual accessibility.

## **Discussion**

### **Summary of Results**

In the present study, we examined the relationship between self-monitoring and importance of specific reasons why initiate opposite sex friendships. Because high self-monitors tend to have more unrestricted orientations to sexual relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), we predicted self-monitoring would be positively related to sexual gratification as being an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship. This hypothesis was confirmed as there was a positive relationship between self-monitoring and the importance of sexual gratification as a reason for opposite sex friendship initiation. This relationship held even after controlling for sociosexuality.

Because low self-monitors tend to choose based on companionship for the sake of companionship (Snyder & Smith, 1986), we predicted self-monitoring would be negatively related to companionship as being an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship. Our second hypothesis was not confirmed, however, because we found there was no significant relationship between self-monitoring and the importance of companionship as a reason for opposite sex friendship initiation. Although we did not expect to find an insignificant relationship between self-monitoring and companionship as an important reason for initiating an opposite sex friendship, there are some possible explanations for these null results.

A potential reason is that maybe people in this sample thought initiating opposite sex friendships for sexual reasons were more important than companionship reasons regardless of self-monitoring style. Friends with benefits relationships consist of a dyad who are close friends

who also engage in sexual activities (Lehmiller et al., 2014). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer people were engaging in casual sex with strangers; however, almost 25% of single people had sex with a nonromantic roommate within the past six months (Singles in America, 2021). This finding suggests that while people were unable to leave their homes due to quarantine, they might have initiated a friendship with a roommate which evolved into sex being a greater reason for their friendship than simply companionship.

The COVID-19 pandemic also made it more difficult to be in social situations. Due to this difficulty, video dating and technology usage became a large platform in which single people could engage (Singles in America, 2021). One in five people made a new edition to their sex life over the lockdown and some of these behaviors included sexting, having cybersex, and sending nude photos (Lehmiller et al., 2020). It is possible that people initiated opposite sex friendships to gain sexual gratification via technology rather than for companionship.

In this study, we also examined the bivariate model of self-monitoring and its association with specific reasons why people initiate opposite sex friendships. Acquisitive self-monitoring was positively related to the importance of sexual gratification but not the importance of companionship as a reason for initiating opposite sex friendships. This finding is consistent with the idea that people high in acquisitive self-monitoring are similar to people high in the traditional form of self-monitoring (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010; Wilmot, 2015). It could be that people high in acquisitive self-monitoring are more likely to initiate an opposite sex friendship for sexual gratification reasons because they have a more unrestricted sexual orientation. Consistent with this speculation, there was a positive correlation between scores on the acquisitive self-monitoring subscale and our measure of sociosexuality in the sample.

Protective self-monitoring was positively related to both the importance of sexual gratification and companionship as reasons for initiation opposite sex friendships. This latter finding is consistent with the idea that people high in protective self-monitoring are – at least in one sense - also similar to people high in the traditional form of self-monitoring (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010; Wilmot, 2015).

That is, people high in protective self-monitoring initiate opposite sex friendships for companionship. However, people high protective self-monitoring are similar to people high traditional self-monitoring in that they initiate opposite sex friendships for sexual gratification. Consistent with this speculation, there was a positive correlation between scores on the protective self-monitoring subscale and scores on our measure of sociosexuality.

As an exploratory research question, we examined self-monitoring's relationship with other potential reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation. Protection, networking, self-esteem boost, information about the opposite sex, mate potential, resource acquisition, status gain, sexual accessibility, and sexual desirability were all positively associated with self-monitoring as reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation. For all reasons except sexual accessibility, these effects remained after controlling for sociosexuality. Given the number and breadth of these reasons, it is possible high self-monitors see more utility than do low self-monitors for opposite sex friendships.

We also examined the relationship between the aforementioned reasons and acquisitive as well as protective self-monitoring. Networking, information about the opposite sex, mate potential, resource acquisition, status gain, sexual accessibility, and sexual desirability were all positively related to acquisitive self-monitoring. These findings make sense as the reasons cited by those high in acquisitive self-monitoring are highly related to the reasons cited by those high

in the univariate form of self-monitoring. Protective self-monitoring was positively related to networking, information about the opposite sex, mate potential, resource acquisition, status gain, sexual accessibility, sexual desirability, and self-esteem boost. These findings are surprising as people who are high in protective self-monitoring in the past have not cited gaining resources or status as important (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010).

Although we used sociosexuality as a covariate in our sample, it is important to note that it is a predictor on its own (Lewis et al., 2012). Sociosexuality scores were positively related to sexual gratification, networking, opposite sex information, mate potential, resource gain, desirability assessment, and sexual access as important reasons to initiate an opposite sex friendship. These results are consistent with the literature in which it has been found that those with a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation are more likely to desire and actively engage in uncommitted sexual relationships than those with a more restricted orientation (Barrada et al., 2018; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

## **Implications**

### ***Self-Monitoring***

The findings of this study extend the personality literature regarding self-monitoring and friendship. Self-monitoring research suggests there are five dimensions on which self-monitors can be contrasted: friendship depth, friendship basis, emotional support, perceived compatibility, and friendship longevity (Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Snyder & Smith, 1986). High self-monitors base their friendships on shared activities while low self-monitors base their friendships on shared attitudes (Snyder et al., 1983; Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Concerning opposite sex friendships, however, little is known about reasons why high and low self-monitors would initiate a friendship. It is expected because high self-monitors have an unrestricted mating style

(Snyder et al., 1986), they would initiate friendships for sexual reasons. And this was indeed observed in our study. Low self-monitors, however, have a restricted mating style (Snyder et al., 1986) so they were expected to initiate an opposite sex friendship for companionship reasons. However, this is not what we found.

The self-monitoring literature is further expanded by including the bivariate model within our study. Self-monitoring has been debated as being either a single dichotomous trait or two continuous traits (Lennox, 1988; Wilmot, 2015; Wilmot et al., 2017). Snyder (1974) proposed self-monitoring was a single dichotomous trait and that high self-monitors were more motivated to get ahead in social situations while low self-monitors were more motivated to be self-congruent. Wilmot and colleagues (2017) however proposed that self-monitoring is rather two continuous traits: individuals high in acquisitive self-monitoring are motivated to acquire social status while individuals high in protective self-monitoring are motivated to protect the resources they have. Our findings suggest that the results involving self-monitoring in its conventional and acquisitive forms parallel one another. However, the results for the protective form of self-monitoring parallel - at least in one sense (i.e., valuing companionship) - conventional low self-monitoring. Taken together, these findings suggest that self-monitoring may indeed be multidimensional rather than unidimensional.

Consistent with this assertion, there were some differences in the connection found between acquisitive versus protective self-monitoring and the importance of reasons for initiating opposite sex friendships. Specifically, protective self-monitoring was associated with companionship, protection, and self-esteem boost as reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation. Acquisitive self-monitoring, however, was not associated with any of the aforementioned reasons.

### ***Friendship***

By showing that self-monitoring is related to the importance of various reasons for opposite sex friendship initiation, we also expand the friendship literature. Although it is thought opposite-sex friendships serve to aid sexual and romantic involvement (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001), little is known why people choose the friends that they do within opposite-sex friendships. It is known there are sex differences with why men and women choose opposite sex friends. Men tend to choose these relationships for sexual and emotional reasons, while women tend to choose them for protective reasons (Aukett et al., 1988; Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Graham & Leri, 2019; Salkicevic-Pisonic, 2014).

Our study suggests there are multiple personality traits that come into play with respect to the initiation of these friendships. In addition to self-monitoring, dispositional differences in sociosexual orientation were related to the initiation of opposite sex friendships. Sociosexuality in our sample was related to sexual gratification, networking, opposite sex information, mate potential, resource gain, desirability assessment, and sexual access. These findings are consistent with previous research that those with a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation are more likely to place physical attractiveness and physical prowess as important within an opposite sex friendship (Lewis et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2012). By understanding the correlation between certain personality traits and opposite-sex friend choice, we can better understand why people choose the opposite sex friends they do.

### **Limitations**

This study was correlational. That is, none of the variables were manipulated in this study. There are some limitations in the way the results could be interpreted: temporal precedence and third variables.



Temporal precedence cannot be established because all of the data was collected at one point in time (Leary & Hoyle, 2010; Nestler, 2018). Without establishing temporal precedence, it is not clear whether differences in self-monitoring differentially motivated individuals to initiate opposite sex friendships or whether differences in the initiation of opposite sex friendships altered people's perceptions of themselves as high or low self-monitors.

A causal interpretation of our results is also limited by third variables. That is, it may be the case that neither self-monitoring nor the reasons for initiating opposite sex friendships were a cause for the other. Both of these variables might have been related because they shared a common cause.

Although we did control for sociosexuality as a potential third variable, there are other potential third variables that could influence our data. It is important to note the relationship between (a) acquisitive and protective self-monitoring, (b) the Big 5, and (c) sexual behavior. Acquisitive self-monitoring is positively correlated with extraversion and openness, while protective self-monitoring is negatively correlated with conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability (Wilmot et al., 2017). The Big 5 personality traits have all been linked to short-term mating (Hoyle et al., 2000; Shafer, 2001). Extraversion, low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness are all related to short-term mating across the world, while neuroticism and openness were also related to short term mating in only some nations (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). These variables could have influenced our results as self-monitoring has also been linked to the Big 5 personality traits and without controlling for these variables we do not know how much variance they account for over self-monitoring.

This was a self-report survey; thus, this study data was vulnerable to socially desirable reporting (Shadish et al., 2005). Participants might engage in socially desirable responding to

make themselves look better to others and/or themselves (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008; Paulhus, 2017). Self-report is subject to participant's memory and memory is fallible (Schacter, 1999). For example, individuals who are in a current sexual relationship with a friend might list that was the reason for initiating their friendship even though it may not have been the initial intention.

This study was conducted via Amazon's Mechanical Turk online. This means our sample was WEIRD (white, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) (Henrich et al., 2010) and thus the results may not be generalizable to the overall population (Dotson & Duarte, 2019). We also only included heterosexual and bisexual individuals within our study as to understand opposite sex friendships for potential mating reasons. It is important to replicate this study within different racial and ethnic populations as well as within the LGBTQ community. Greater diversity within research is important in order to enhance study replicability and overall generalizability of findings (Dotson & Duarte, 2019).

It is important to note that these data were collected in March and April of the Coronavirus pandemic. Thus, the data might be influenced by the mental stressors due to stringent lockdown periods and overall pandemic itself. Isolation specifically might drive people to engage in sexual situations with current friends or initiate new friendships with the goal of having a sexual relationship. For example, video dating has become increasingly common, with one fifth of singles going on at least one video date during the pandemic (Singles in America, 2021). Also there is evidence that people had less sex amid the lockdown in general (Lehmiller et al., 2020). Of singles who were having sex, almost one in four had sex with a nonromantic roommate in the past six months (Singles in America, 2021).

### **Future Directions**

To address temporal precedence, in future research, investigators could incorporate a longitudinal design (Shadish et al., 2005). A longitudinal design could be used to assess participants over long periods of time to see if self-monitoring differences predict the initiation of opposite sex friendships and/or the initiation of opposite sex friendships predicts alterations and self-monitoring. Statistical control for third variables, however, would still be necessary (Leary & Hoyle, 2010). Some third variables that should be controlled for are the Big 5 and age of participants. As stated above, the Big 5 might have been the driving force for the relationship between self-monitoring and reasons for opposite-sex friendship as they are both correlated with the Big 5 (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008; Wilmot et al., 2017). Age is another important third variable that should be controlled for. The reasons for initiating an opposite sex friendship in older adulthood might be different than the reasons for initiating one in young adulthood, especially as opposite-sex friendships decrease with age due to marriage (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2012).

This study should be replicated using an experimental design. Such a design could help erase bidirectionality issues and allow for causal claims. In addition, adding a laboratory or real-life component where participants interacted with their opposite-sex friends would allow for less data vulnerability due to socially desirable responding. Using the study design of Snyder and colleagues (1985), researchers could assess participants' levels of self-monitoring and give them a set of descriptions and see who they would choose to be an opposite sex friend. Then they could ask the participants why they would initiate said friendship.

Another future direction would be to investigate self-monitoring within established friends with benefits relationships. Friends with benefits relationships are friendships that consist

of a sexual component and people in these relationships engage in sexual activity on occasion but are otherwise in a platonic relationship (Vanderdrift et al., 2011). Because it is known that high self-monitors have a more unrestricted mating style compared to low self-monitors (Snyder et al., 1986), it is possible that high self-monitors would engage in more friends with benefits relationships and thus have more opposite-sex friendships than would low self-monitors.

Within future studies a more diverse sample across multiple platforms should be used. Doing so will aid in the generalizability of the findings. Collecting information from diverse age, racial/ethnic, and sexual orientation groups may further the understanding of self-monitoring and opposite-sex friendships in a larger proportion of the population.

This study should be replicated once the COVID-19 pandemic is over to determine if isolation during lockdown manipulated our findings. As mentioned above, this data was collected the first couple months of lockdown. The isolation felt during this period of time might have led to people initiating opposite sex friendships for any reason regardless of self-monitoring style.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides evidence that people high in self-monitoring initiate opposite sex-friendships for both sexual and non-sexual reasons. Quality of close relationships is related to mental and physical health and overall life satisfaction (Amati et al., 2018; Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Sias & Bartoo, 2007). Thus, we believe that individual differences in personality should be investigated in understanding why people choose the friends that they do to attempt to improve mental and physical health outcomes and life satisfaction.

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