2021

Friendship Dissolution Strategies Involving Former Best Friends

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by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Psychological Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

December 2021

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Abstract

Research suggests that high self-monitors will use strategies like denial-avoidance when ending friendships, whereas low self-monitors will use positive tone and openness as strategies for ending friendships. To assess friendship termination, participants completed the Friendship Disengagement Strategies (Sprecher et al., 2014). Self-monitoring was measured using the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). For exploratory purposes, we also examined whether the terminator (participant or former friend) in combination with self-monitoring was related to the use of different disengagement strategies. To evaluate our hypotheses, several regression analyses (one for each disengagement strategy) were performed in which self-monitoring was a continuous predictor and terminator was a categorical predictor. There were no effects of self-monitoring either alone or in combination with the nature of the relationship terminator on any of the disengagement strategies. Potential reasons for these null results (e.g., measurement error, inadequate statistical power) as well as future directions (e.g., phases of dissolution, mediation and/or moderation) are discussed.

Friendship Dissolution Strategies Involving Former Best Friends

Snyder (1974) defined self-monitoring as a personality construct that involves regulating behavior in social situations. Individuals differ in a process known as impression management when interacting with others. Impression management is changing behavior to influence an impression made upon others (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

Alternative Models of Self-Monitoring

High self-monitors are motivated to respond to situations based on their desire to perform in a situationally appropriate manner (Snyder, 1974). They have an ability to use impression-management to create a version of themselves that best fits a scenario (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). For instance, their use of ability can occur at a job interview by strategically enhancing self-presentation that best fits what a job interviewer is looking for in an applicant (Snyder, 1987). They pay attention to situational cues and look to their peers to decide how to behave. They do not typically have behavioral stability across situations and may change behavior to fit situational appropriateness (Snyder, 1979).

Low self-monitors are generally motivated to act in congruence with their beliefs, attitude, and values (Snyder, 1974). Their attention is focused inward on their own attitude and personality (Snyder, 1974). They tend to respond to social interactions based on their disposition (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). If a social interaction is incongruent with their values, their expression and behavior typically does not change. They have an ability to choose words and actions that align with their disposition. (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). They tend to have cross situational behavioral stability that stays in line with their beliefs and values (Snyder, 1987).

Extraversion is a personality trait that covers a disposition-oriented tendency to react with a high sociability tendency in social situations (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; Gangestad & Snyder,

2000). Although extraversion is related to self-monitoring, they are not the same (Lippa, 1978). One of the main differences between high self-monitoring and extraversion is that extraverts tend to maintain the same disposition across all situations (Snyder et al., 1985). Extraverts do not necessarily behave in accordance with the situation. A need for approval is not the same as self-monitoring. Although having a need for approval can mean that people may have a desire to conform to social situations (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), they may not modify their behavior due to a lack of ability to do so (Snyder, 1987). Self-monitoring is not Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is a cunning and deceptive personality trait (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Typically, those high in self-monitoring are not manipulative and do not alter their behavior or expression to take advantage of others (Ickes & Barnes, 1979). They typically change behavior for the benefit of themselves and others (Snyder, 1987).

Besides Snyder's univariate concept of self-monitoring, there exists an alternate view. Wilmot (2015) defined self-monitoring in terms of acquisitive and protective traits. Acquisitive self-monitoring is related to the meta-trait of plasticity; protective self-monitoring is related to the meta-trait of stability (Wilmot et al., 2016). Acquisitive self-monitors tend to be flexible and adjust their behavior to meet their goals such as achieving status (Wilmot et al., 2016). Protective self-monitors tend to seek stability and are motivated to adjust their behavior to attain their goals such as avoiding rejection (Wilmot et al., 2016). Unlike self-monitoring as conceptualized in the univariate model (Snyder, 1974), acquisitive self-monitoring is related to dispositions such as extraversion and openness while protective self-monitoring is positively related to neuroticism and it is negatively related to agreeableness (Wilmot et al., 2017).

Self-Monitoring and Friendship

Although there is not a great deal known about protective and acquisitive self-monitoring, much is known about self-monitoring in its univariate form and its connection to

friendships. Fehr & Harasymchuk (2005) stated friendship is under researched compared to marital and familial relationships. Friendship is usually defined in terms of a voluntary interdependent interaction that lasts over time (Hays, 1988). Policarpo (2015) described friendship as depending on closeness, self-disclosure, interdependence, instrumental or social support, shared interests, and shared affection. Often it involves social emotional bonding with varying degrees of intimacy, affection, and assistance (Fehr, 1999). Fehr (2004) cited sharing, caring, loyalty, reciprocity, proximity, and trust as qualities representative of an ideal friendship. Fehr (2008) cited environmental factors, situational factors, individual factors, and dyadic factors as important in the formation of an ideal friendship.

High self-monitors tend to have a large network of friends and engage in general social relationships usually with a higher rate of dissolution compared to low self-monitors (Snyder, 1987). General socializing is practical and superficial compared to intimate relationships (Snyder, 1987). They may acquire friends by convincing others of their own competence (Dolgova, 2013). High self-monitors are skilled at self-disclosure and reciprocating invitations and favors to help maintain friendships (Bhardwaj et al., 2015). They tend to choose best friends based on similar interests rather than similar personality. However, high self-monitors choose as best friends other high self-monitors even though their choice of other friends is dictated by shared interests. (Ickes et al., 2006; Jamieson et al., 1987; Snyder & Smith, 1986). In general, high self-monitors view friendship in a shallow way (Snyder &Smith, 1986). They rarely think in terms of friendship over time and tend to have a low amount of nurturance in their friendships (Snyder & Smith., 1986).

In terms of conflict resolution, high self-monitors tend to use denial-avoidance strategies (Gaines et al., 2000; Haferkamp, 1992). In terms of consumer behavior, high self-monitors tend

to spend money in the presence of friends rather than alone (Kurt et al., 2011). This spending tends to be focused towards donating to charity rather than spending on the self.

Low self-monitors tend to have close friendships and prefer intimate relationships over superficial and practical friendships (Sasovova et al., 2010). Low self-monitors tend to be affected by the dissolution of a friendship (Snyder & Smith, 1986), and dissolution may be due to a perception of inconsistent behavior demonstrated by that former friend in the relationship (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Low self-monitors do not make friends as easily as high self-monitors because they choose friends based on similar personality traits rather than interest (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Low self-monitors prefer to build stable relationships over time and tend to have best friends that are also low in self-monitoring (Snyder et al., 1984). Low self-monitors view friendship with more depth and nurturance than do high self-monitors (Snyder & Smith, 1986). They tend to choose friends based on attitude similarity and that last over time (Snyder et al., 1983).

In terms of conflict resolution, low self-monitors tend to use cooperative strategies (Gaines et al., 2000; Haferkamp, 1992). In terms of consumer behavior, low self-monitors spend more money when they are alone rather than with friends (Kurt et al., 2011).

Friendship Dissolution

Much is known about self-monitoring and friendship. There are, however, still some things about self-monitoring and friendship that remain unknown. One such matter is friendship dissolution.

Phases of Friendship Dissolution

Duck (1982) proposed four different phases that occur during friendship dissolution. The four dissolution phases are intrapsychic phase, dyadic phase, social phase, and grave-dressing phase. Intrapsychic phase is a sense from one of the dyads that something is wrong in the

relationship without proceeding to act on it. Dyadic phase is the confrontation of the friendship amongst the couple. Social phase is the effect the friendship dissolution has on the social network of the couple. Grave-dressing phase is the acknowledgement of the end of the friendship. Duck (2006) proposed a similar dissolution model that applies to marital relationships. The stages in the model proposed by Duck (2006) are emotional divorce, legal divorce, economic divorce, co-parental divorce, and community divorce. Each stage involves the effect of couple separation on the couple as well as other people in their social circle. Duck (2015) focused on known models of relationship disengagement and reviewed their limitations. In current times relationship dissolution still takes place in stages or varied patterns across different types of relationships. There are, however, different types of stages and patterns for dissolution. Due to use of technology and social media different disengagement methods exist such as dissolution over the internet or phone.

Baxter (1982) identified a five-stage model for relationship disengagement. The five stages are differentiating (e.g., "Increased salience of differences"), circumscribing (e.g., "Increased constriction of information exchange."), stagnating (e.g., "Lack of experimentation"), avoiding (e.g., "Increased communication avoidance.") and finally terminating the relationship. Situational factors can affect the order in which each relationship disengagement strategy is used when terminating a relationship (Baxter, 1982). The order in which the disengagement stages are experienced during dissolution are non-discrete (Baxter, 1982). Therefore, unless the relationship involves marriage, the degree of closeness can affect the sequence of stages undergone during friendship dissolution (Baxter, 1982). Baxter (1984) proposed that disengagement does not occur in stages; instead relationship dissolution occurs in different patterns.

Reasons for Friendship Dissolution

There are many reasons for the cause of friendship dissolution. In interdependence theory (Arriaga, 2013; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), relationships are based on a sense of cost and reward people feel they deserve. With respect to friendship dissolution, there are many potential costs or lack of rewards. Rose (1984) identified four reasons for friendship termination. These reasons include physical separation, replacement, dislike, and interference. Baxter (1987) proposed lack of shared information as the main reason for dissolution. Fehr (2000) cited moving away, perceived negative traits, and lack of contact as the main reasons for friendship dissolution. Becker (2009) and Bowker (2011) cited loss of shared interest as the main reason for friendship dissolution. Sprecher et al., 1998 cited the most common reasons for friendship dissolution as physical separation (e.g., "one friend moving away"), opportunity for better alternatives (e.g., "time, money, emotional energy"), lack of shared interests (e.g., "discovery of dissimilarities"), lack of communication (e.g., "communication problems") and involvement in a romantic relationship.

Strategies of Friendship Disengagement

Baxter (1982) identified forty strategies for disengagement (e.g., "Openly express my desire to the other person to disengage"). She subsequently classified these strategies as gradual versus sudden onset of relationship problems, unilateral versus bilateral desire to exit the relationship, use of indirect such as withdrawal/avoidance (e.g., "Avoid contact with the person as much as possible.") versus direct such as positive parting (e.g., "Tell the person that I didn't regret the time we had spent together in the relationship.") actions to accomplish dissolution, rapid versus protracted nature of negotiation, presence versus absence of attempted recovery, and outcomes of either termination or continuation (Baxter, 1984). Baxter (1982) also identified two withdrawal strategies: psychological distance and disassociation. Baxter (1982) hypothesized avoidance/withdrawal and manipulation strategies to be used in in the dissolution of non-close

relationships. In close relationships, positive tone, openness, and distant communication are likely to be the strategies used (Baxter, 1982). Baxter, (1982) recommended when individuals disengage from a friendship that they utilize three strategies for disengagement. These strategies are to untie the deep connections formed by their friendship, use an open and unambiguous termination strategy, and finally, to show concern for the reaction of the former friend. Baxter, (1982) proposed that individuals in a close relationship may be more likely to use an open and unambiguous termination. Individuals in a casual relationship may be more likely to use an indirect termination method such as avoidance (Baxter, 1982). Baxter (2009) identified strategies for dissolution used among different situational factors.

Building off the work of Baxter, Sprecher et al. (2014) identified five subscales of disengagement strategies which include: avoidance/withdrawal (e.g., "Avoid contact with the person."), manipulation (e.g., "Get a third party to break the news.") positive tone (e.g., Prevent the person from having hard feelings.") openness (e.g., "Openly express desire to break-up.") and distant communication (e.g., "Used e-mail or instant messenger to tell my partner how I felt."). Empathic individuals may be more likely to use positive tone and openness strategies as opposed to un-empathic individuals who may be more likely to use avoidance/withdrawal, manipulation, and distant communication strategies (Sprecher et al., 2014). Sprecher et al., (2010) identified that there were no sex differences in strategies used in their approach to end a relationship.

Hypotheses

Most of the research on self-monitoring and friendship involves the formation of friendships rather than the dissolution of them. Our study is meant to explore self-monitoring

differences and the extent to which each friendship disengagement strategy was used in the dissolution of friendship.

Recall that high self-monitors tend to have superficial friendships (Snyder & Smith, 1986) Moreover, high self-monitors have a large pool of friends and their friendships that are based on shared interests which often change readily (Snyder et al., 1983). Additionally, high self-monitors resolve conflict using passive and/or destructive strategies in romantic and marital relationships (Gaines et al., 2000; Haferkamp, 1992). Taken together, these empirical findings suggest that high self-monitors will use strategies like denial-avoidance when ending friendships. Low self-monitors tend to have intimate friendships (Snyder & Smith, 1986). They choose friendships based on shared values that are also low in self-monitoring (Snyder et al., 1983). Additionally, low self-monitors resolve conflict using cooperative strategies in romantic and martial relationships (Gaines et al., 2000; Haferkamp, 1992;). These empirical findings suggest that low self-monitors will use positive tone and openness as strategies for ending friendships.

Method

Participants

Data was collected from the UNF psychology department pool for a study titled "Individual Differences and Friendship Dissolution". Participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and to have experienced a friendship dissolution with a close friend.

Participants (19 males, 121 females, 3 other) were primarily in their early twenties ($M = 20.41$, $SD = 3.59$). Participants identified as follows: White/Caucasian (84%), Black/African American (15%), Hispanic/Latino (23%), American Indian/Alaska Native (2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (9%), or Other/Mixed (10%).

When asked about the sex of their best friend, more participants indicated their friend was female (*n* = 114) than male (*n* = 29). Former best friends were usually the same-sex-friends for male (20.3%) and female (79.7%) participants. Participants' age was like that of their former best friend's age *(M* = 20.48*, SD* = 3.77)*. Participants indicated their close friend's race as follows: White/Caucasian (86%), Black/African American (14%), Hispanic/Latino (21%), American Indian/Alaska Native (0%), Asian/Pacific Islander (12%), or Other/Mixed (10%). Participants' previous friendship lasted about five years (*M* = 4.97, *SD* = .14). When asked about the length of time that had passed since they experienced friendship dissolution, more participants reported it has been a year or more (69%) as opposed to a year or less (30%).

Participants electronically indicated their consent to participate in this study. Data was removed if participants did not complete at least 50% of the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) or the Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire (Sprecher et al., 2014). For missing data, the sample mean for any item was used as an estimate for that missing data. Participants were protected through use of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the APA guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Procedure

Friendship Disengagement Strategies

After consenting to participate, participants completed a questionnaire on the dissolution of a recent friendship. Participants were directed to complete the questionnaire based on whether they or their friend ended the relationship. The following questionnaire is the version completed by participants who initiated the end of their friendship. Participants indicated the extent to which each breakup strategy was representative of their dissolution on a 7-point response rating scale ranging from 1 = *not at all characteristic of my breakup* to 7 = *extremely characteristic of my breakup* (Sprecher et al., 2014). There are five subscales in this inventory. The

avoidance/withdrawal subscale included 9 items (e.g., ''I avoided contact with my partner as much as possible.''). The manipulation subscale included 11 items (e.g., ''I became unpleasant to my partner in the hopes that s/he would make the first move.''). The positive tone subscale included 7 items (e.g., ''I avoided hurting my partner's feelings at all costs.''). The openness subscale included 3 items (e.g., ''I openly expressed to my partner my desire to breakup.''). The distant communication subscale included 3 items (e.g., ''inform my partner of my feelings in an e-mail.''). Appropriate word changes were made for the version of the Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire in which participants' best friend was responsible for ending their relationship.

The Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire answers were combined for each subscale to produce five indices of friendship disengagement (avoidance/withdrawal, manipulation, positive tone, openness, and distant communication). Descriptive statistics for scores of the Disengagement Strategies subscales can be found in Table 1. Higher scores indicated how likely participants were to use each class of disengagement strategies

Internal reliability is consistency across items (Furr, 2011). Scores on the Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire have demonstrated internal consistency. Coefficients on the Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire were as follows: .88 for the avoidance/withdrawal subscale, .79 for the manipulation subscale .80 for the positive tone subscale, .67 for the openness subscale, and .83 for distant communication (Sprecher et al., 2014). For our study, the following alphas were obtained for answers when participants were responsible for ending their relationship and when their best friend was responsible for ending their relationship, respectively: .77, .75 for the avoidance/withdrawal, subscale, .71, .68 for the

manipulation subscale, .84, .87 for the positive tone subscale, .78, .59 for the openness subscale, and .72, .73 for the distant communication subscale.

Convergent validity occurs when scores on two or more measures of the same construct have a correlation; Discriminant validity occurs when two or more measures of unrelated constructs have a weak or no correlation (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Furr, 2011). Sprecher et al., (2014) found a positive correlation between scores on openness and positive tone subscales and scores on the Compassionate Love Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). Sprecher et al., (2014) also found a negative correlation between scores on the manipulation and distant communication subscales and scores on the Compassionate Love Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005).

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring was measured using the 25item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). The scale was created to measure five dimensions: (1) motivation (e.g., "I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) to please someone else or win their favor."), (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 have considered being an entertainer."), (4) use of ability (e.g., "I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them."), and (5) behavioral consistency (e.g., "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons."). Responses were given using a *true-false* format.

The 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale was comprised of 13 positively worded items (e.g., "I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end.")) and 12 negatively worded items (e.g., "I am not particularly good at making people like me."). High self-monitoring responses received a score of 2 and low self-monitoring responses received a score of 1. A total score was computed by summing scores to responses for all 25 items on the

Self-Monitoring Scale. The sum of scores was between 25-50. Higher scores were indicative of higher self-monitoring.

Temporal reliability is a consistency across time (Furr, 2011). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were found to have temporal reliability. A correlation of .83 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale was found that spanned a one-month period (Snyder, 1974). A correlation of .73 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale which spanned a two-month period was reported by Girvan et al., (2010).

Internal consistency is consistency across items (Furr, 2011). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were found to have internal consistency. Briggs et al., (1980) reported a KR20 reliability coefficient of .72 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. A KR20 reliability coefficient of .70 was found by Snyder (1974), and a KR20 reliability coefficient of .66 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale was reported by Gangestad and Snyder (1985). Zaccaro et al., (1991) found an alpha of .67 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. Blickle et al., (2008) found an alpha of .68 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. A meta-analysis from over 100 samples performed by Day et al., (2002) reported alphas of .66 and .70 for scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. When a factor analysis was performed on the items of the Self-Monitoring Scale, 24 of the 25 questions had positive factor loadings (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985). In our study, an alpha of .69 was found for the Self-Monitoring Scale, .58 was found for the acquisitive subscale and .62 was found for the protective subscale.

Convergent validity occurs when scores on two or more measures of the same construct have a correlation (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Furr, 2011). Snyder (1974) found scores on measures of self-monitoring such as peer rating to be correlated with individuals' scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. Another method used to measure self-monitoring in individuals is

predicting different group scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. Professional actors, mediators

and managers were thought to be high in self-monitoring (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982).

Psychiatric patients were thought to be low in self-monitoring (Furnham & Capon, 1983). Actors

scored higher on the Self-Monitoring Scale than did non-actors. Psychiatric patients scored lower

on the Self-Monitoring Scale than college students or middle-aged adults (Furnham & Capon,

1983). Gangestad and Snyder (1986) found a correlation of .52 (correcting for attenuation, the

correlation rose to .72) between Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) 13-item Revised Self-Monitoring

Scale and Snyder's (1974) 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale.

Discriminant validity occurs when two or more measures of unrelated constructs have a

weak or no correlation (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Furr, 2011). Snyder (1974) found that scores

on the Self-Monitoring Scale were not correlated with scores a measure of Machiavellianism

(Christie & Geis, 1970) or scores on a measure of need for approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964).

There was no correlation between scores on the Self-Monitoring scale and a measure of

extraversion scores (Snyder & Monson, 1975). Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were

unrelated to scores on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Graf & Harland, 2005).

Demographics

Participants indicated whether they were *male* or *female*. Participants reported

their age in years. Participants indicated their racial/ethnic background by choosing one of the

following options: *White/Caucasian*, *Black/African American*, *Hispanic/Latino*, *American

Indian/Alaska Native*, *Asian/Pacific Islander*, *Other/Mixed*. Participants' former friend's sex was

indicated as *male* or *female.* Former friend's age was reported in years. Participants' former

friend's race/ethnicity was identified as follows: *White/Caucasian*, *Black/African American*,

Hispanic/Latino, *American Indian/Alaska Native*, *Asian/Pacific Islander*, *Other/Mixed*. Length

of friendship was reported in years. Years since relationship ended was reported as *Less than one year* or *more than a year*.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive Statistics for Friendship

First, participants reported former friends were likely to be similar in age as themselves, $r(142) = 0.96$, $p < .001$, when participants reported themselves as terminator of the friendship. Participants also reported former friends were likely to be similar in age as themselves, $r(142) = .94$, $p < .001$, when participants reported their former friend as terminator of the friendship. Second, participants reported former friends were likely to be the same sex as themselves, $r(142) = .53$, $p < .001$, when participants reported themselves as terminator of the friendship. Participants also reported former friends were likely to be the same sex as themselves, $r(142) = .38$, $p = .006$, when participants reported their former friend as the terminator of the friendship. Third, after coding race as White ($n = 84$) or non-White ($n = 62$), participants reported former friends were likely to be a similar race as themselves, $\chi^2(1, N = 142) = 12.95$, $p < .001$, when participants reported themselves as the terminator of the friendship. Similarly, participants reported former friends were likely to be a similar race as themselves, $\chi^2(1, N = 52) = 5.19$, $p = .023$, when they reported the former friend as the terminator of the friendship.

Multicollinearity Analyses

Coding participants as White ($n = 84$) or non-White ($n = 62$), scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were significantly and negatively related to participant race, $t(144) = +2.20$, $p = .029$. Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were also significantly and negatively related to participant sex, $r(145) = -.17$, $p = .042$. Scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale were significantly and negatively related to participant age, $r(145) = -.24$, $p = .003$. Given the relatively small

magnitude of these correlations (Cohen et al., 2003), these variables do not pose a threat to multicollinearity. High self-monitors were nor more or less likely than low self-monitors to report that they were the ones who ended the friendship, $r(146) = .07$, $p = .470$.

Main Analyses

Self-Monitoring Alone as Predictor

We predicted that self-monitoring would be related to the extent to which participants used different disengagement strategies. This expectation was evaluated by performing several bivariate correlational analyses with self-monitoring scores as one variable and usage of different disengagement strategies as the other variable. When participants said they had terminated their friendship, there was no relationship between self-monitoring and (a) positive tone, $r(93) = .01$, $p = .927$, (b) openness, $r(93) = -.13$, $p = .224$, (c) avoidance, $r(93) = .01$, $p = .966$, (d) manipulation, $r(93) = -.04$, $p = .699$, and (e) distant communication, $r(93) = -.12$, $p = .243$.

Although not part of our hypotheses, we examined the relationship between self-monitoring and the extent to which participants said their former friend used different disengagement strategies. We again performed several bivariate correlational analyses with self-monitoring scores as one variable and usage of different disengagement strategies as the other variable. When participants said their friend had terminated their friendship, there again was no relationship between self-monitoring and (a) positive tone, $r(52) = -.07$, $p = .623$, (b) openness, $r(52) = +.11$, $p = .456$, (c) avoidance, $r(52) = -.12$, $p = .389$, (d) manipulation, $r(52) = -.10$, $p = .478$, and (e) distant communication, $r(52) = -.12$, $p = .404$.

Self-Monitoring and Terminator Status as Predictors

For exploratory purposes, we also examined whether the terminator (participant or former friend) in conjunction with self-monitoring was related to the use of different disengagement strategies. To evaluate these potential effects, several regression analyses (one for each

disengagement strategy) were performed in which self-monitoring was a continuous predictor

and terminator was a categorical predictor. In these analyses, 95% confidence intervals for

effects were used to determine the reliability of these effects. The results of these analyses can be

summarized succinctly. There were no effects of self-monitoring either alone or in conjunction

with the nature of the relationship terminator on any of the disengagement strategies (See Tables

2 through 6).

Exploratory Analyses

In addition to our analysis on self-monitoring and use of disengagement strategies, we

conducted analyses on variables not involved in our hypothesis. This analysis involved exploring

the relationship between disengagement strategies as well as the connection to any demographic

variables. These analyses were performed separately for participants as the relationship

terminator and former friends as the relationship terminator.

Participants as Relationship Terminator

When participants identified themselves as the terminator of the friendship, avoidance

and manipulation were significantly related, $r(93) = .39, p < .001$. This means that participants

who use avoidance may be likely to use manipulation. Participants' use of manipulation was

significantly related to distant communication, $r(92) = .48, p <.001$. That is, participants who use

distant communication may be likely to use manipulation Participants' use of openness was

significantly related to positive tone, $r(93) = .42, p< .001$. Participants who use openness may be

likely to use positive tone. Participants' use of openness was significantly related to manipulation

$r(93) = .23, p =.027$. In other words, participants who use openness may be likely to use

manipulation Last, participants' use of distant communication was significantly related to

openness $r(93) = .35, p<.001$. That is, participants who use distant communication may be likely

to use openness.

Participant sex was significantly related to manipulation, $r(92) = .25, p = .015$. That is, manipulation was more likely to be used by former friends who were females rather than males. Performing a series of t-tests with race (white vs. non-white) as a predictor revealed there were no relationships between race and termination strategy.

Former Friends as Relationship Terminator

When participants identified their former friend as the terminator of the friendship, avoidance and manipulation were significantly related, $r(52) = .45, p < .001$. Participants indicated that they were likely to end a friendship using avoidance and manipulation when their former friend ended the friendship. Former friend's use of distant communication was significantly related to openness $r(52) = .37, p = .008$. Using distant communication was predictive of using openness when the participant's

former friend ended the friendship

Participant sex and participant age were $r(52) = .32, p = .024, r(51) = -.34, p = .013$ significantly related to a former friends use of manipulation respectively. Manipulation was more likely to be used by former friends who were females but less likely to be used by former friends who were older.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if high and low self-monitors differ in their use of friendship termination strategies. Much is known about self-monitoring regarding friendship formation and maintenance. However, little is known about self-monitoring and friendship dissolution.

In previous research, high self-monitors tended to use denial-avoidance strategies when dealing with conflict resolution and have superficial friendships (Snyder & Smith, 1986). In previous research, low self-monitors tended to use cooperative strategies when dealing with

conflict resolution and have intimate friendships (Snyder et al., 1983). We hypothesized that for

our study, high self-monitors would use denial avoidance strategies when ending friendships. We

hypothesized that low self-monitors would use cooperative and positive tone strategies when

ending friendships. The results do not support our hypotheses. Our results did not demonstrate a

significant effect of self-monitoring on use of disengagement strategy.

A possible reason for our null result findings may be due to unreliable and invalid

measures (Taber, 2018). Alphas reported for the Self-Monitoring Scale were .66 - .70 (Day et al.,

2002). In our study, alphas reported for the Self-Monitoring Scale were .69. Alphas for the

Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire were .88 for the avoidance/withdrawal

subscale, .79 for the manipulation subscale, .8 for the positive tone subscale, .67 for the openness

subscale, and .83 for the distant communication subscale (Sprecher et al., 2014). In our study,

alphas for the Friendship Disengagement Strategies Questionnaire are, .75-.77 for the

avoidance/withdrawal subscale, .68-.71 for the manipulation subscale, .84-.87 for the positive

tone subscale, .59-.78 for the openness subscale, and .72 for the distant communication subscale.

Given that the alphas we obtained are consistent with those reported by other researchers, it does

not appear that a lack of reliability is a plausible explanation for our null results.

Inadequate statistical power is possible reason for our null result findings in our study.

Statistical power is the likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false. When it is

false, results from a study will have statistically significant findings under the null hypothesis

(Hallahan & Rosenthal, 1995). In our study, power level was set at .80 which would result in a

20% chance of making a Type II error (Shafer, 2001). Using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009), our

sample was 143 participants which was adequate for a medium and large effect size but not for

small effect sizes. There may not have been adequate statistical power for the multiple regression analyses in this study.

The nature of our sample could have contributed to null results. Our sample was largely white females which is not representative of the population overall. Women tend to end friendships due to physical separation, dating, or marriage compared to men (Rose, 1984). Compared to men, women are more likely than men to have a new friend replace the old friend (Rose, 1984). Women tend to cite conflict as a reason for termination, whereas men cite common interests as a reason for termination (Johnson et al., 2004) In our sample, sex was predictive of use of manipulation strategy. Sex differences may have obscured self-monitoring differences in the use of different strategies to end relationships with former friends.

Limitations

This study had some limitations even if our findings were consistent with our hypotheses. Some problems with this study involve causality. One problem is temporal precedence (i.e., order of events). Temporal precedence is necessary to determine which variable is a cause and which variable is an effect (Nestler, 2018). The design of this study was cross-sectional rather than longitudinal (Feeney, 2013). The problem of temporal precedence in research can make it difficult to determine which variable influenced the other (Shadish et al., 2002). It would be beneficial to use a longitudinal design to assess whether self-monitoring orientation predicts the choice of disengagement strategy used or vice versa.

In research, there often is a problem with the influence of confounding variables (Jager et al., 2008). This study did not use an experimental design. The problem with not using experimental design is that there are no manipulated variables. In previous research, scholars have found that self-monitoring is sometimes confounding with other personality variables.

Variables that correlate with self-monitoring are extraversion, neuroticism, and openness (Wilmot et al., 2016). Introverts and extraverts have different patterns of relationship disengagement (Shafer, 2001). Even if self-monitoring differences were found in our study, extraversion might have been a plausible explanation for different patterns of relationship disengagement.

In any study, there is a risk of measurement error. In our study, responses were provided with self-report. Self-report methodology is subject to response bias such as socially desirable responding (Tracey, 2016). Socially desirable responding is a response given to make a favorable impression (Paulhus, 1991). Participants were asked whether they or their friend ended their former relationship. Research suggests that participants' perception of who ended the former friendship is susceptible to bias (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001).

In our study, participants were asked to identify a relationship with a former close friend. Participants' perception of what is a close friend could affect their responses in our survey. Self-monitors have different perceptions of what friendship means to them (Snyder & Smith, 1986). High self-monitors tend to have a larger pool of friends that are less intimate than low self-monitors; Low self-monitors tend to a have a smaller pool of friends that are more intimate than high self-monitors (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). In our study, it is possible that participants incorrectly identified who ended the former friendship.

There is a problem with sample selection bias in our study. This study was conducted using psychology students as participants from the University of North Florida. Because our participants are college students, this may cause a problem with external validity. External validity is the extent to which findings from a current study can be applied to other settings (Andrade, 2018). College students may differ from non-college students in that they suffer from

having more stress and less sleep than non-college students (Lund et al., 2010). Including a

diverse group of participants could help fix this problem by generalizing results.

Future Directions

Establishing causality in research about self-monitoring and friendship dissolution would

help to clarify any confusion about the relationship between these variables. The issue of

temporal precedence would be addressed by implementing a longitudinal design. Using a

longitudinal design would allow researchers to determine if self-monitoring affects

disengagement strategy used or vice versa.

The influence of confounding variables can be reduced or eliminated by implementing

restriction, randomization, and matching (Pourhoseingholi et al., 2012). Restriction involves

limiting the participant population based on criteria such as participant's sex. Randomization

involves participants having an equal chance of being in the control or experimental group. For

example, participants could be given false feedback suggesting they are high self-monitors or

low self-monitors. An example of randomization in future research could be assigning

participants as either a low self-monitor or a high self-monitor. Matching involves participants

being placed in a group based on a similarity such as extraversion.

It would be beneficial to reduce socially desirable responding by using methods to help

eliminate it from occurring in research. Socially desirable responding can be statistically

controlled with the use of a social desirability scale such as the Brief Social Desirability Scale

(Haghighat, 2007). The scale measures the extent to which participants are interested in social

approval.

Due to potential problems with external validity, there could be an issue with

generalizing the results of a sample to a population. Including non-college students in research

samples can help to generalize the results to a general population (Andrade, 2018). Friendship functions differ from young adulthood to middle adulthood. In young and middle adulthood, friendship replaces parents as confidants (Wrzus et al., 2017). Friendship is commonly formed in school and work settings and prepare individuals for intimate sexual-romantic relationships later in life (Wrzus et al., 2017). In older adults, friendship is more pleasant and less stressful than in younger and middle adulthood (Wrzus et al., 2017). Friendship is important in older adulthood although there is a greater emphasis on family as opposed to younger and middle adulthood (Fiori et al., 2012).

There are other things to consider in future research. Do high and low self-monitors experience friendship dissolution in different stages? In the relationship disengagement model proposed by Duck (1982), he outlined different relationship phases individuals go through when they end their relationships. Duck's phases of dissolution are the intrapsychic phase, dyadic phase, social phase, and grave dressing phase. It could be possible that those who are higher or lower in self-monitoring could go through these phases in a different order or for different lengths of time. High self-monitors tend to end friendships more often than low self-monitors and may possibly skip phases in the dissolution process.

Besides phase of dissolution, other matters such as mediation and moderation should be addressed in future research (Mackinnon et al., 2007; Fritz, 2017). Mediator variables between self-monitoring and friendship disengagement strategy could be psychological closeness (Snyder, 1987). Mediator variables may explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. High self-monitors tend to have more friends and more superficial friendships than low self-monitors. Low self-monitors tend to have less friends than high self-

monitors and value intimacy in their relationships. The degree of closeness could mediate the connection between self-monitoring and choice of disengagement strategy.

Some possible moderator variables include longevity of friendship as well as type of friendship (Snyder & Smith, 1986). High self-monitors tend to have friendships that are shorter in duration compared to low self-monitors. High self-monitors tend to have friendships that are less intimate compared to low self-monitors. Longevity of friendships may predict use of cooperative strategies for disengagement. The longer individuals have been friends, the more likely they may tend to use methods that spare others' feelings as opposed to friendships that are shorter in duration (Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Baxter, 2009). Those with intimate friendships may be more likely to use cooperative strategies as opposed to superficial friendships (Snyder & Smith, 1986). In general, those who are experiencing fewer intimate friendships lasting shorter duration may use different friendship ending strategies than those with more intimate friendships lasting longer duration.

Conclusions

Much is known about self-monitoring and close relations. There is nonetheless still much that needs to be done. Future research should explore the relationship between self-monitoring and use of disengagement strategies. Understanding relationships is important given their connection to physical and mental health (Pietromonaco & Collins, 2017).

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics for Termination Strategies as a Function of Friendship Terminator*

Participant as Terminator of Friendship

Disengagement Strategy	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range
Avoid/Withdrawal	24.27	6.36	.13	-.96	26
Openness	7.61	3.63	.37	-1.08	12
Positive Tone	22.27	7.92	.04	-.73	31
Manipulation	17.65	5.67	.58	-.51	22
Distant Communication	7.23	3.66	1.14	0.33	13

Former Friend as Terminator of Friendship

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range
Avoid/Withdrawal	23.07	6.53	.08	-.35	28
Openness	5.56	2.75	1.32	1.4	11
Positive Tone	16.06	7.61	1.08	.31	28
Manipulation	18.87	6.59	.86	.2	25
Distant Communication	7.96	4.28	.84	-.25	16

Table 2 *Regression Analysis and Parameter Estimates for Positive Tone*

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	1305.17	435.05	7.03	0.0002
Error	142	8788.38	61.89		
Corrected Total	145	10094			

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	Type I SS	Standardized Estimate	95% Confidence Limits	
Intercept	1	22.07	18.28	1.21	0.229	58720	0	-14.07	58.23
self-Monitoring	1	0.16	0.48	0.35	0.727	14.40	0.08	-0.78	1.11
terminator	1	-0.50	12.90	-0.04	0.969	1278.60	-0.02	-26.00	25.00
interaction	1	-0.14	0.33	-0.44	0.658	12.17	-0.34	-0.81	0.51

Table 3 *Regression Analysis and Parameter Estimates for Openness*

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	164.46	54.82	4.9	0.002
Error	142	1587.32	11.17		
Corrected Total	145	1751.78			

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	Type I SS	Standardized Estimate	95% Confidence Limits	
Intercept	1	20.79	7.77	2.68	0.008	6904.21	0	5.42	36.15
self-Monitoring	1	-0.29	0.20	-1.44	0.151	9.58	-0.34	-0.69	0.10
terminator	1	-8.99	5.48	-1.64	0.103	136.60	-1.24	-19.83	1.84
interaction	1	0.18	0.14	1.28	0.203	18.27	1.02	-0.10	0.46

Table 4 *Regression Analysis and Parameter Estimate for Avoidance*

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	79.86	26.62	0.64	0.590
Error	142	5901.50	41.55		
Corrected Total	145	5981.37			

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	Type I SS	Standardized Estimate	95% Confidence Limits	
Intercept	1	17.36	14.98	1.16	0.248	82996	0	-12.26	46.98
self-Monitoring	1	0.21	0.39	0.54	0.591	12.39	0.13	-0.56	0.99
terminator	1	6.64	10.57	0.63	0.530	44.60	0.49	-14.25	27.54
interaction	1	-0.20	0.27	-0.74	0.459	22.86	-0.62	-0.75	0.34

Table 5 *Regression Analysis and Parameter Estimate for Manipulation*

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	76.82	25.60	0.7	0.552
Error	142	5180.18	36.48		
Corrected Total	145	5257.01			

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	Type I SS	Standardized Estimate	95% Confidence Limits	
Intercept	1	14.32	14.04	1.02	0.309	47737	0	-13.43	42.08
self-Monitoring	1	0.05	0.36	0.15	0.884	17.02	0.03	-0.67	0.78
terminator	1	5.41	9.90	0.55	0.585	53.32	0.43	-14.16	24.99
interaction	1	-0.10	0.25	-0.42	0.674	6.47	-0.35	-0.621	0.40

Table 6 *Regression Analysis and Parameter Estimates for Distant Communication*

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	49.22	16.40	1.08	0.358
Error	142	2151.26	15.14		
Corrected Total	145	2200.49			

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	Type I SS	Standardized Estimate	95% Confidence Limits	
Intercept	1	9.83	9.04	1.09	0.278	8197.50	0	-8.04	27.72
self-Monitoring	1	-0.09	0.23	-0.38	0.705	28.43	-0.09	-0.56	0.38
terminator	1	1.45	6.38	0.23	0.819	20.62	0.18	-11.15	14.07
interaction	1	-0.01	0.16	-0.11	0.915	0.17	-0.08	-0.34	0.31

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