



Friendship chemistry: An examination of underlying factors[☆]



Kelly Campbell^{*}, Nicole Holderness¹, Matt Riggs²

California State University, San Bernardino, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 March 2014

Received in revised form 25 January 2015

Accepted 25 January 2015

Available online 18 February 2015

Keywords:

Factor analysis

Friendship formation

Interpersonal chemistry

Relationship initiation

ABSTRACT

Interpersonal chemistry refers to a connection between two individuals that exists upon first meeting. The goal of the current study is to identify beliefs about the underlying components of friendship chemistry. Individuals respond to an online Friendship Chemistry Questionnaire containing items that are derived from interdependence theory and the friendship formation literature. Participants are randomly divided into two subsamples. A principal axis factor analysis with promax rotation is performed on subsample 1 and produces five factors: reciprocal candor, mutual interest, personableness, similarity, and physical attraction. A confirmatory factor analysis is conducted using subsample 2 and provides support for the 5-factor model. Participants with agreeable, open, and conscientious personalities more commonly report experiencing friendship chemistry, as do those who are female, young, and European/white. Responses from participants who have never experienced chemistry are qualitatively analyzed. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

© 2015 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Interpersonal chemistry is a relatively new concept and although no predominant definition exists, it is described

as an instant emotional and psychological connection between two individuals (Ceccoli, 2004; Swann, Sellers, & McClarty, 2006). The few researchers who examine this construct focus on sexual, rather than friendship chemistry (Leiblum & Brezsnayak, 2006; Liebowitz, 1983). Given that a person is likely to partake in a greater number of friendships versus romantic relationships over a lifetime, a thorough exploration of the factors involved in friendship formation, such as chemistry, is essential to this body of work (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). In the present study, we use interdependency theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003) and the friendship formation literature to explore the core components of friendship chemistry.

Researchers propose that friendship formation is a process that occurs relatively quickly. For example, Berg and Clark (1986) speculate that during the initial moments of an interpersonal encounter, individuals are already making decisions about which relationship type—friend or acquaintance—to pursue. Similarly, Abelson (1976) suggests that scripts exist for different kinds of relationships and after meeting someone only once, it is evident which

[☆] The work on this paper was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (5 P20 MD 002722) to California State University, San Bernardino, and a Faculty Professional Development grant from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at California State University, San Bernardino.

^{*} Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, USA. Tel.: +1 909 537 7687.

E-mail addresses: Kelly@csusb.edu (K. Campbell), holdernn@coyote.csusb.edu (N. Holderness), mriggs@csusb.edu (M. Riggs).

¹ Address: Department of Psychology, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, USA. Tel.: +1 909 537 5570.

² Address: Department of Psychology, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, USA. Tel.: +1 909 537 5574.

script the relationship will follow. Berg (1984) demonstrates that students' satisfaction with their roommate after 2 weeks and 6 months of acquaintance is equally predictive of their choice to live with that roommate in the future. These findings suggest that the decision to pursue a friendship is relatively stable and may be predicted from the earliest phases of meeting.

We speculate that friendship chemistry is driven by a combination of relationship formation factors. Leiblum and Breznsnyak (2006) theorize that “sexual, or romantic, chemistry may reflect an overall global assessment of the quality of the sexual relationship based on multiple factors” (p. 56). In other words, sexual chemistry is likely to emerge from an interaction of the various elements that elicit romantic relations. Ambady, Bernieri, and Richeson (2000) indicate that people make decisions about whether to pursue a romantic or companionate relationship within moments of first meeting. Consequently, we propose that friendship chemistry results from an interaction of the most salient friendship formation characteristics within an initial interaction.

In order to determine the most relevant elements of rapid friendship formation, all factors should be assessed in a single study (Fehr, 2008). Unfortunately, a comprehensive list of factors has not been produced. Aron, Dutton, Aron, and Iverson (1989) examine the process of Falling-in-Friendship (FIF). Their study provides a list of factors that facilitate friendship development but does not focus on an initial interaction. Sprecher (1998) compiles and assesses 14 variables associated with friendship formation but omits factors such as sense of humor (Fehr, 2008; Sprecher & Regan, 2002) and communication (Sprecher & Duck, 1994). Knapp and Harwood (1977) similarly examine 39 characteristics associated with friendship formation and do not assess sense of humor. Given that these variables are not collectively examined, it remains difficult to determine the most salient factors involved in friendship formation.

2. Literature overview

Interdependence theory helps explain why the convergence of relevant friendship formation factors would result in chemistry. The theory states that individuals are dependent on relational partners for need fulfillment or rewarding outcomes; thus, relationship formation is based on a rewards/costs analysis in which rewards refer to the benefits acquired through pleasurable experiences and costs pertain to expenditures that result from unsatisfying ones (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). A profitable relationship results when the rewards associated with a relationship outweigh the costs. Whether a relationship's outcome will be positive or negative is contingent on the ratio of rewards to costs and the availability of a more profitable alternative. If an individual perceives a relationship to be rewarding and does not foresee better alternatives, they will depend on their partner for rewarding outcomes and seek to maintain the connection. For example, Jane may rely on Mary for social support, because there is no one else to turn to. Mary, however, may have plenty of options for social support, but rely on Jane for

help with schoolwork. Even though Jane and Mary provide different benefits to one another, the relationship is mutually rewarding, and therefore, a state of interdependence exists.

Many empirically supported friendship formation factors can be understood in terms of interdependence theory. One of the most widely recognized factors is similarity (Rivas, 2009; Sprecher, 2014). Similar behaviors and attitudes among individuals create “coordination” in a relationship and are “symmetrically facilitative,” whereas dissimilar behaviors and attitudes are “symmetrically interfering” (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978, pp. 66–67). Therefore, people are likely to find more enjoyment—and consequently more rewards—from relationships that are in sync versus discordant. Those with comparable demographic traits, intelligence, personality traits, attitudes, beliefs, and hobbies are more likely to form friendships with each other than people who are not similar on at least one or some combination of these dimensions (Fehr, 2008; Perry, 2013b). Interestingly, similarity of physical attractiveness also affects friendship formation. Cash and Derlega (1978) ask judges to rate pictures of male and female same-sexed friends and find that pictures of actual friendship pairs are rated as more similar in attractiveness than artificial pairs. People are drawn to physically attractive individuals because such individuals are assumed to possess desirable qualities such as social and professional happiness and a high occupational status (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972).

Communication and mutual self-disclosures are relevant to friendship formation. Sprecher and Duck (1994) find that the quality of communication between two people significantly influences each person's desire for friendship with the other. People who communicate in a “personal, smooth, efficient, important, and satisfying” way are preferred over those who do not converse in such a manner (Sprecher and Duck, 1994, p. 3). Sprecher and Regan (2002) further reveal that expressive and open communication is highly valued across all relationship types including friendships. A related communication construct, self-disclosure, facilitates friendships (Clark et al., 2004; Sprecher, Treger, Wondra, Hilaire, & Wallpe, 2013). Archer, Berg, and Runge (1980) find that college students who reciprocally disclose highly intimate information to each other, such as their experiences of falling in love, report greater closeness than student participants who disclose more superficial information, such as sharing things they like about their classes. Greater numbers of disclosures as well as more intimate disclosures increase interpersonal closeness, and thereby, facilitate friendship formation.

Reciprocal liking, personableness, and sense of humor influence friendship formation. Beckman and Secord (1959) perform one of the earliest studies investigating the effects of reciprocal liking on groups of same-sex participants. Before the first group meeting, researchers tell participants that they can predict which individuals in the group will like them. The predictions are arbitrary, yet participants indicate a stronger liking for those who are expected to respond favorably toward them. Sprecher (1998) finds that reciprocal liking is a significant determinant of interpersonal attraction across romantic

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/140022>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/140022>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)