

7-27-2017

Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and Their Associations with Adjustment

Kaitlin M. Flannery

University of Connecticut, kaitlin.flannery@uconn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations>

Recommended Citation

Flannery, Kaitlin M., "Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and Their Associations with Adjustment" (2017). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 1545.
<https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/1545>

Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and
Their Associations with Adjustment

Kaitlin M. Flannery, PhD

University of Connecticut, 2017

Friendships are important relationships in the lives of adolescents. However, about half of adolescent best friendships end across the course of a school year, and very little research has focused on the factors surrounding their dissolution. The current study aimed to examine different aspects of friendship dissolution in adolescence, such as the number of friendship dissolutions experienced, the reasons driving dissolution, and the way that friendships ended in a sample of middle school students ($N = 354$). Results suggest that dissolutions are incredibly common, reported by 86% of the sample, that conflict/betrayal is the most common reason for friendship dissolution, and that avoidance is the most common method used to end a friendship. The current study also demonstrated that adolescents feel sadness and happiness/relief most intensely following dissolution experiences, and that various reactions to the dissolution are differentially associated with both the reasons for dissolution and ways the dissolution takes place. Finally, contextual factors, like quality of the friendship, availability of social support, and the disruptive effect that ending one friendship has on other friendships all were associated with adjustment indicators following the dissolution. Implications for intervention efforts and future research are discussed.

Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and
Their Associations with Adjustment

Kaitlin M. Flannery

B.S., University of Delaware, **2012**

M.A., University of Connecticut, **2014**

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the

University of Connecticut

2017

Copyright by
Kaitlin M. Flannery

2017

ii

APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and
Their Associations with Adjustment

Presented by

Kaitlin M. Flannery, B.S., M.A.

Major Advisor

Rhiannon L. Smith, Ph.D.

Associate Advisor

Alaina Brenick, Ph.D.

Associate Advisor

Noel Card, Ph.D.

Associate Advisor

Marie Coppola, Ph.D.

University of Connecticut
2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many people who helped to make this research possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Rhiannon Smith, for her unwavering patience, support, and guidance throughout my graduate career. I am beyond lucky to have such an extraordinary role model for navigating this world of academia. Many thanks also go to my readers and committee members, Dr. Alaina Brenick, Dr. Noel Card, and Dr. Marie Coppola, for their insight and feedback on this project. I thank the many teachers who have helped to shape the way I think, ask questions, and approach both research and life. I am additionally grateful for Dr. Christine Ohannessian and my colleagues at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Thanks to the participants, teachers, parents, and administrators who welcomed me into their school to collect data, and the research assistants in the Social and Emotional Development Lab for their assistance.

My work never just stayed at work, and I therefore owe my deepest thanks to my friends and family who offered invaluable support throughout this process, especially my partner in all things, Michael Kahabka. Thank you to my sisters, Meagan, Amanda, and Kelsea, my brothers-in-law, the Kahabka family, and my friends both near and far for making my world fun. And finally, from the bottom of my heart I thank my parents, Kerin and Lorrie Flannery, for always encouraging me, teaching me, and loving me. I could never have done it without you.

This research was funded by the Fahs-Beck Fund for Research and Experimentation, as well as a University of Connecticut Dissertation Fellowship.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Copyright	ii
Approval Page	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Methods	21
Results	30
Discussion	42
References	70
Tables	81
Figures	90

Friendship Dissolution in Adolescence: Considering the Factors Surrounding Dissolution and Their Associations with Adjustment

Adolescence is a time characterized by tremendous change. As individuals develop from children to adolescents, changes take place across several domains, including physical development (i.e., puberty), cognitive development, and identity development (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). One domain in which developmental change is particularly evident across this transition is in the role of peers and friends.

According to Selman's (1980) stage theory of friendships, as children develop in their ability to take the perspective of other people, their conceptualizations about friendships become increasingly abstract. Instead of evaluating friends based on their proximity and rewards (e.g., toy selection), adolescents begin to expect mutual admiration, equality, acceptance, and trust. Into adolescence, friends become increasingly important sources of companionship and social support, and provide contexts in which to practice and develop additional social skills (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Sullivan, 1953). As these relationships take on greater importance in adolescents' lives, they also begin to exert a stronger influence on their social and emotional well-being and adjustment (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1998; Fehr, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993).

Friendship is a relatively fragile relationship, however, with less explicitly defined roles or supports for maintenance than other relationships (e.g., marriage or familial relationships; Fehr, 1996; Poulin & Chan, 2010). Many friendships end altogether, and even more downgrade to a lower level of closeness over time (Bowker, 2011). Friendships seem to be especially fragile across school transitions, such as the transition from elementary school to middle school (Fehr,

1996; Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002). In a meta-analysis on the stability of friendships among 6 to 17 year olds, only about 50 percent of friendships remained stable over the course of a year (Meter & Card, 2016). This translates to mean that about half of best friendships end across this time, which is meaningful to consider given their importance.

Despite the centrality of friendships in adolescents' lives and the prevalence of friendship instability, few studies exist on the topic of friendship dissolution, considerably limiting our understanding of this developmental phenomenon. Therefore, the first goal of the current study was to provide descriptive information about the experience of friendship dissolution in adolescence. In particular, the current study examined three aspects of friendship dissolution: 1) the number of friendship dissolutions youth experienced, 2) the reasons adolescents cited for ending friendships, and 3) the ways in which youth went about ending their friendships.

Additionally, despite the research demonstrating that dyadic friendships serve as a protective factor against developing internalizing problems and low self-esteem in adolescence (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995; Buhrmester, 1990), little work has been conducted that specifically examines how the dissolution of dyadic friendships influences youth's social and emotional adjustment and well-being. The second goal of the current study, therefore, was to test the relations between the aforementioned aspects of friendship dissolution and social-emotional adjustment.

The third goal for this study was to examine contextual factors that may additionally shape the dissolution experience. Specifically, characteristics of the friendship (length, quality, and setting), and availability of support, were examined in terms of their influence on adjustment following the dissolution. Given the age range of the current sample, and the transitivity and interconnectedness of friendships in adolescence (Veenstra, Dijkstra, Steglich, & Van Zalk,

2013), the current study also considered the influence that ending one friendship could have on adolescents' other friendships.

Aspects of Friendship Dissolution

Because so few studies have focused on friendship dissolution in adolescence, an important first step was to understand the various aspects surrounding this experience. These include the average number of dissolutions that adolescents experience, the most common reasons that friendships end, and the ways in which friendships typically dissolve.

Number of dissolutions. Studies indicate that many adolescent friendships do not remain stable across the course of a year (Meter & Card, 2016). Friendship stability is measured in a variety of ways, but typically includes asking adolescents to either list or circle their friends or best friends across multiple time points (such as each month, or across school years), and calculating whether these lists remain the same across time (Chan & Poulin, 2009; Hardy et al., 2002; Meter & Card, 2016). These studies provide interesting and important information about how the friendships of adolescents change, but little is known about the specific former friends who are nominated as friends at one time point and then fail to be included on the list at later time points.

One study that directly assessed the number of friendship dissolutions that adolescents experienced demonstrated that almost all participants had experienced either a complete dissolution (went from being best friends to not friends at all), or a downgrade dissolution (went from being best friends to just close or good friends), and many experienced both types of dissolutions (Bowker, 2011). This study was an important step in assessing the number of specific friendships that ended, however only the proportion of the sample who had experienced each type of dissolution were reported, and no information was provided about the average

number of dissolutions youths experienced. The current study assessed the number of friendship dissolutions adolescents experienced, and further compared the number of dissolved friends to the number of current friends that an adolescent reported having. The current study also sought to provide new information about the frequency with which friendship dissolutions occurred between same-gender friends as opposed to cross-gender friends, between same-race friends as opposed to cross-race friends, between same-grade friends as opposed to friends in different grades, and between friends from school compared to non-school friends. Perceptions about the likelihood that the dissolved friendships would resume in the future also were examined.

Reasons for friendship dissolution. Beyond understanding the number of friendship dissolutions that adolescents typically experience, it also is important to understand reasons why adolescent friendships end. Limited research has examined the reasons surrounding friendship dissolution in adolescence, and existing studies have done so only in the context of hypothetical scenarios. No studies have assessed reasons for friendship dissolution in actual adolescent friendships. However, additional themes and reasons for dissolution can be ascertained from studies of both adult friendship termination and breakups of romantic relationships in both adolescence and adulthood.

It might be expected that one of the major contributors to the high rate of friendship dissolution among adolescents is the occurrence of conflict or fights between the friends. In fact, when assessing potential reasons that adolescents thought might lead to the end of a friendship, conflict was rated among the top causes for boys and girls across sixth, seventh, and eighth grades (Azmitia, Lippman, & Ittel, 1999). Although conflicts may be common, Bowker (2004) suggests that it is not necessarily the mere presence of conflict that causes friendships to end, but instead is the style of dealing with conflict within the dyad and the coping strategies that each

employs. In this study, Bowker also suggested that adolescent friendship termination is not always caused by the presence of something negative, but instead may occur due to a lack of positive behaviors, such as feelings of intimacy and closeness, which may then lead to a decline in self-disclosure. Relatedly, Sprecher and Fehr (1998) indicated that while some friendships end due to conflict, many others end slowly and without conflict (e.g., drift apart). Similar conclusions can be drawn from work by Johnson and colleagues (2004), in which college students were asked to reflect on the motives behind ending a specific friendship. The most commonly cited reasons included: a decrease in affection, a change in either the self or the friend, less time spent participating in activities or spending time together, and moving away from each other. All of these reasons constitute a lack of positive friendship behaviors and do not indicate that a conflict occurred between the friends. Additional support for this idea is evident in a study by Owens (2003), in which a lack of common experiences was the most commonly reported cause of friendship dissolution in a college sample.

Additionally, approval and support from others seems to facilitate the continuation of friendships and affects relationship satisfaction in couples, whereas lack of approval and interference from important others can act as a risk factor for dissolution, especially among women (La Gaipa, 1979; Rose & Serafica, 1986; Sinclair, Hood, & Wright, 2014; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Third parties also can interfere in friendships indirectly by befriending or initiating a romantic relationship with one member of a dyad, thus leaving that individual with less time to devote to the other member of the dyad (Owens, 2003), or eliciting friendship jealousy (Parker, Low, Walker, & Gamm, 2005). In fact, in the study conducted by Azmitia and colleagues (1999), 40 percent of the adolescents in grades six through eight referenced other friendships as being a potential factor that would cause a friendship to end. The importance of

support from others also is demonstrated in findings suggesting that friendships that exist within multiple contexts, such as in school, the neighborhood, and through parents were more likely to be maintained than those friendships that occurred in just one context (Troutman & Fletcher, 2010). These findings suggest that dyadic friendship stability likely is influenced by the social context in which the relationship occurs.

Another important element for the stability of a friendship is the similarity that exists between the members of the dyad. Homophily often serves as a basis for friendship formation (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011), and friends who are similar to each other are more likely to maintain stable friendships than are those who are dissimilar (Ojanen, Sijtsema, & Rambaran, 2013). Important similarities for the maintenance of a relationship include similar levels of happiness (van Workum, Scholte, Cillessen, Lodder, & Giletta, 2013), similar levels of aggressive behavior (McDonald et al., 2013), similar levels of risky behaviors (for instance cigarette use), and for girls only, similarity in sport participation and adult organized activities (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, & Tolson, 1998). Additionally, similarity in rate of development is especially important for adolescent samples (Azmitia et al., 1999; Fehr 1996; Hardy et al., 2002). As Fehr explains, if one member of the dyad develops interest in pursuing romantic partners and wearing make-up, while the other is still interested in playing make-believe with dolls, the friendship is likely to be disrupted.

In addition to the reasons already mentioned, a host of other reasons for friendship dissolution in both adolescence and adulthood have been uncovered. These include: lack of similarity, such as age differences and differing personality traits, lack of social support from the friend, such as feeling minimized or underappreciated and experiencing excessive criticism, interference from others, such as replacing old friends with new friends, and lack of enjoyable

companionship, such as hyper-competition among friends in school or games and various annoyances (Azmitia et al., 1999; Fehr, 1996; Owens, 2003; Quercia, Bodaghi, & Crowcroft, 2012; Rose, 1984; Schneider, Woodburn, del Toro, & Udvari, 2005). The current study assessed each of these potential reasons for friendship dissolution in early adolescence, and examined which reasons were most commonly reported and whether this differed by gender or grade.

Ways in which friendships end. As discussed by Sprecher, Zimmerman, and Abrahams (2010), ending a relationship is not a single event, but instead a process. This process begins with a phase in which one or both members of the relationship recognize the existence of problems, and ends when one or both partners begin to enact behaviors that lead to disengagement. The ways in which members go about ending relationships include both verbal and nonverbal approaches (Sprecher et al., 2010). However, no studies have examined the ways in which actual adolescent friendships typically dissolve.

Just as there are many reasons for ending a friendship, there also seem to be many different ways that a friendship could end. Work by Johnson et al. (2004) demonstrated this in their analysis of friendship trajectories. These trajectories provided visual representations of the waxing and waning closeness of friends over time, and continued through the period of dissolution. From these representations, it may be inferred that those friendships that decline in closeness very quickly likely end in a different way than those that decline slowly over time. Other methods of ending friendships may be similar to those observed in dating relationships, specifically on-again-off-again relationships, given that many people describe their previous friendships as ending slowly and leaving the door open for resuming the friendship later (Dailey, Pfiester, Jin, Beck, & Clark, 2009).

The most relevant work in the area of how dissolution occurs is that of Baxter and Philpott (1982), in which fifth graders, tenth graders, and college students were asked to name strategies that they might use to both initiate and terminate a friendship in a hypothetical scenario. The study found that all participants were able to list many fewer strategies for ending friendships than for initiating them, but the number of both types of strategies increased with age. The responses were coded into six different termination strategies, with positive tone and withdrawal or avoidance strategies being the most commonly used. The six different categories that emerged included: other negation (indicating to the other person that they are not liked), search for differences (indicating to the other that they do not share things in common), self-presentation (acting in a way that is less personal or highlights one's own shortcomings), cost-rendering (instead of offering favors, demonstrating the increased costs associated with the friendship), disinterest (ceasing to ask the other person information about themselves or indicating any interest in them), and exclusion (purposefully avoiding spending time with the other person). The responses also were coded for whether they would use these methods in a distinctive or straightforward way in a single situation (this was the most commonly employed strategy), in a consistent way in order to send the message across multiple occasions and settings to highlight consensus, or by having other people also send the message that the friendship is over.

Although the study by Baxter and Philpott (1982) contributed to the literature by creating a typology of the strategies that adolescents thought they might use to end a friendship, additional work is needed to examine how adolescents actually go about ending real friendships. Although it might be easy for an adolescent to imagine himself or herself ending a hypothetical friendship in a straightforward, rational, and compassionate manner, the adolescent's actual behavior in a real-life relationship where emotional investment is high may be quite different. The past study

also was limited in that it only asked about intentional strategies, implying deliberate intent by one person or the other to end the friendship, and did not consider other ways that friendships might end, such as through an unplanned conflict, or not seeing each other often enough to maintain the friendship.

This idea of less intentional ways of ending a friendship points to an important distinction between friendship termination and breakups of romantic relationships. Although it might be possible to gain insight into how adolescents may end their friendships based on breakup strategies used in dating relationships, researchers suggest that important differences exist between the two situations. Cody (1982), for instance, posited that it is less likely for romantic couples than for friends to achieve disengagement by simply withdrawing and avoiding each other, and instead suggested that the disengagement would need to be acknowledged more explicitly in dating relationships. Hays (1988) shared this viewpoint and asserted that little negotiation is involved in the termination of friendships, which are more likely to end by indirect means (e.g., simply fade away) than are romantic relationships. Fehr (1996) added to this point by suggesting that friendships can manage to drift apart without the blame falling on only one of the members, and the friendship will sometimes just stabilize at a point that involves lower levels of intimacy (Bowker, 2011; Johnson et al., 2004). This distinction points to the need to examine adolescents' reports of how their friendships actually ended, and whether they believed that the method of dissolution was prompted by one person or the other. The current study aimed to address these gaps.

The current study: Examining aspects of friendship dissolution. Because so little is understood about each of these aspects of friendship dissolution, the first aim of the current study was to provide descriptive statistics about the number of friendship dissolutions adolescents

experienced both overall and in terms of specific characteristics of the previous friends (e.g., same-gender, same-ethnicity, same-grade, etc.), the most common reasons adolescents provided for why their friendships ended, and the most common ways in which friendships dissolved. How each of these aspects of friendship dissolution differed by gender and age of the adolescents also was examined.

Associations with Adjustment

When studying friendship dissolution, it is important to consider adolescents' social-emotional adjustment following the dissolution. The current study considered two types of adjustment: 1) Reactions to the friendship dissolution itself in terms of both a) intensity, and b) duration following the dissolution; and, 2) General current mental health including both a) symptoms of depression, and b) current levels of hope.

Some studies have specifically examined the reactions that adolescents have had in response to the termination of a friendship. In a study of sixth grade students, for instance, Bowker (2011) assessed how adolescents responded to instances of both dissolved and downgraded best friendships by asking about responses such as anger, sadness, and feelings of loneliness, but also happiness. The results revealed that participants were most likely to feel sad after friendship dissolution occurred, followed by feelings of happiness and anger.

Given that friendships are such significant relationships in the lives of adolescents, expected reactions following the loss of a friendship also might be inferred from studies of breakups with romantic partners. Various reactions that have been found to be associated with the breakup of romantic relationships in both adolescence and adulthood range from distress, feeling hurt, frustration, loneliness, hostility, loss of self-esteem, and rumination (Perilloux & Buss, 2008; Sprecher, 1994; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003) to feelings of love and relief (Sprecher,

1994). Evidence also suggests that adults actively look for benefits following breakups, which helps to protect those who perceived the breakup to be especially distressing (Samios, Henson, & Simpson, 2014). These studies clearly represent the diverse outcomes associated with ending a romantic relationship, however, whether similar outcomes are associated with friendship dissolution is not well understood.

Importantly, most of the studies reviewed above only assessed the intensity of the feelings associated with recent breakups and did not account for how long those feelings endured. The time following a breakup, during which a person recovers from the fallout, is referred to as the adjustment period and can vary in length depending on the person and the relationship (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015). The current study aimed to explicitly assess how long this adjustment period endured by assessing the duration of each specific reaction.

Although differences exist between adult and adolescent friendships, information about the perceptions of friendship termination from a sample of adult women may help to shed light on adolescents' immediate and long-term reactions to friendship dissolution. In a dissertation study, Jalma (2008) interviewed a group of women about their experiences with friendship dissolution. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 72 years, and had all experienced a friendship dissolution within the past five years. Each participant reported on how they felt after their friendship ended, and responses ranged from feeling liberated to feelings of grief and loss. Many participants described feeling that they had greater self-awareness, self-respect, and self-competence following the termination, and mentioned that they changed the way that they approached other friendships. These are interesting reactions to consider, and qualitative studies are useful in determining the types of responses that should be studied quantitatively. When considering these specific reflections, however, it is important to remember that adolescents are

still developing in their emotional intelligence and social cognition, and therefore may have different perceptions about their friendships. Thus, the current study was specifically focused in adolescence.

Beyond discrete emotional reactions to the dissolution itself, relationship dissolution also has been demonstrated to affect general mental health. According to the cognitive-interpersonal theory of depression, youth who perceive their relationships, including friendships, to be negative are more likely to suffer from depression (Coyne, 1976; Poulin & Chan, 2010; Sullivan, 1953). This is significant considering that depression is one of the most prevalent mental health issues facing adolescents (Davey, Yücel, & Allen, 2008). Consistent with this theory, studies on friendship termination suggest that losing a friend has negative consequences for an adolescent's social-emotional well-being (Chan & Poulin, 2009; Ford, Collishaw, Meltzer, & Goodman, 2007). Chan and Poulin (2009), for instance, found that friendship instability across five months was significantly related to increased symptoms of depression in early adolescent girls and boys. Breakups of romantic relationships in adolescence also were linked to a heightened risk for the onset of major depressive disorder (Monroe, Rohde, Seeley, & Lewinsohn, 1999), and adults who felt rejected in a romantic relationship breakup experienced increased levels of depression (Perilloux & Buss, 2008).

It is additionally important to consider that, although many studies have exposed strong reactions (both positive and negative) to the termination of a relationship, there also is the possibility that ending certain friendships will not have much of an effect on an adolescents' adjustment or well-being. As discussed in Fehr (1996), though ending some friendships can be beneficial if the friendship was stifling a person's growth, other lost friendships are not particularly significant and people move on from the experience easily. Whether the friendship

dissolution is likely to have a significant impact on adolescents' adjustment may depend on the number of dissolutions experienced, reasons prompting the dissolution, and the way the dissolution occurred. Considering these factors will help to identify the conditions under which adolescents are most at risk for intense or long-lasting emotional repercussions.

Number of dissolutions. One such factor that is likely to affect an adolescent's adjustment is the number of friendship dissolutions that they have experienced. I hypothesized that adolescents who experienced a greater number of friendship dissolutions would experience greater adjustment problems in terms of current levels of depressive symptoms and less hope. I additionally hypothesized that those adolescents who had a large ratio of dissolved friendships to number of current close or best friends would experience greater adjustment problems, as they would have fewer people to turn to for social support.

Reasons for friendship dissolution. Another factor that is expected to affect an adolescent's adjustment following the termination of a friendship is the reason that precipitated the termination. The studies that have examined reasons for friendship dissolution generally have focused on whether or not the friendship dissolved as their outcome. None of these studies explicitly examined which reasons for dissolution led to greater emotional difficulty or adverse outcomes following the dissolution. A goal of the current study, therefore, was to assess whether the reason for friendship dissolution was associated with emotional adjustment following the dissolution. The following hypotheses were tested: 1) Reasons for dissolution that included friendship transgressions involving betrayal of trust or loyalty (such as exclusion; Azmitia et al., 1999), especially if committed by the former friend (rather than by the focal adolescent), would have the greatest negative impact on adjustment difficulties; 2) Situational causes of friendship dissolution, or being in different classes, would be associated with the least severe adjustment

difficulties; and 3) If the focal adolescent committed the friendship transgressions that led to the end of the friendship, as opposed to their former friend committing the transgression, then the adolescent would report greater feelings of guilt following the dissolution.

Ways in which friendships end. Although understanding the reasons for friendship dissolution in adolescence is an important goal, there is research to suggest that the reactions to relationship dissolution also are influenced by whether or not the person feels certain of the reasons for the break (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015). This points to the potential importance of not only *why* a friendship might end in early adolescence, but also *how* the friendship ends, and whether it ends in such a manner that the reasons for the dissolution are clear.

Although disparities might exist in the ways in which romantic relationships and friendships end, the scarcity of research on how adolescents end their friendships requires us to draw from other available literatures, especially when trying to determine which strategies would be associated with the best adjustment following dissolution. In one related study, college students were provided with a list of 47 possible strategies that could be used to break up with someone, and were asked to rate how compassionate they perceived each strategy to be (Sprecher et al., 2010). Honest and straightforward approaches in face-to-face settings were rated as the most compassionate, whereas threatening the partner or asking another friend to break up with the partner were considered the least compassionate (Sprecher et al., 2010). When participants were presented with hypothetical situations detailing these methods of breaking up, they responded that they would be most likely to break up with their partner face-to-face, and were unlikely to break up via text-message or e-mail (Sprecher et al., 2010).

Direct face-to-face discussions that clearly explained the reasoning behind the decision to end the relationship were not only rated as most compassionate in hypothetical situations, but

appear to be associated with better adjustment outcomes following actual breakups. As cited above, research has found that feeling certain about the reasons for the dissolution was predictive of better adjustment following the breakup (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015). It stands to reason, therefore, that being direct and honest about the reasons for the breakup or friendship dissolution would provide the other person with more information and certainty, and therefore result in a better outcome.

According to a longitudinal study, the strategies that participants reported using themselves differed from those they perceived their partners to use (Wilmot, Carbaugh, & Baxter, 1985). When describing their own methods, the most common way participants reported communicating their desire for a breakup was through verbal directness, followed by verbal indirectness (such as asking less about the partner or sharing less personal information during conversations), and using nonverbal withdrawal was reported even less. When participants reported the strategies used by their partners, however, they named nonverbal withdrawal as the most common approach, followed by verbal indirectness, and then verbal directness. This suggests that people reported being more upfront about their desire for breaking up than they perceive their partner to be, although the researchers did caution that the sample consisted primarily of women, and it is possible that women are more direct in their disengagement strategies than are men.

Relatedly, Barutçu Yıldırım and Demir (2015) suggested that breakups are generally driven by a decision made by only one member of the relationship, and mutual decisions to break up are relatively rare. Research suggests that perceptions of control, or being the initiator of a breakup is related to better emotional outcomes following the breakup (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015; Perilloux & Buss, 2008; Sprecher, 1994) which stands to reason given that the initiator would be

much more likely to have a complete understanding of the reasons for the breakup. In a study of adult romantic relationships, both men and women were at greater risk for depression, lowered self-esteem, and a tendency to ruminate about the breakup when they were the one rejected (Perilloux & Buss, 2008). Interestingly, the initiator of the breakup was at greater risk for social retribution in the form of receiving a reputation of being cruel. Those couples who mutually decided to break up tended to report the least amount of stress, as compared to either self- or other-initiated breakups (Wilmot et al., 1985). This perception of control is likely to be important in adolescent friendship dissolution experiences as well, and I hypothesized that those adolescents who believed that they chose to end the friendship or that the friendship ended mutually, would have better adjustment outcomes than those adolescents who believed their friend chose to end the friendship.

Taken together, this research suggests that although there are many approaches that can be used to terminate a relationship, it appears that strategies that convey the most information about the reasoning behind the decision to end the relationship are most beneficial, at least in romantic relationships. As discussed previously, it is more common for friendships to end for ambiguous reasons or without explanation, which may lead to more pain following the breakup of a friendship. It also is possible that different ways of ending friendships affect reactions differently. Direct methods of ending a friendship may be emotionally evocative but also short-lived because they afford more certainty about why the friendship has ended. Therefore, I hypothesized that ending a friendship through conflict or in another direct way, such as telling the other person outright that they no longer wanted to be friends, would be associated with negative reactions to the friendship dissolution such as sadness or anger, but would be less likely to be associated with reactions such as rumination. In contrast, I hypothesized that those

friendships that ended through avoidance would lead to less sadness or anger about the dissolution, but due to the uncertain nature of the dissolution, would be associated with more rumination about the dissolution.

Contextual Factors That May Influence Adjustment Following Dissolution

Beyond the direct associations with adjustment that I have outlined above, the current study also considered various contextual factors that likely influence how an adolescent perceives and reacts to a friendship dissolution. Specifically, the current study assessed contextual factors including the length, quality, and setting of the former friendship. This study examined how these contextual factors were associated with the disruptive impact the dissolution had on the rest of the adolescent's relationships, and how this disruption, in turn, was associated with adjustment. Additionally, the availability of support following adolescents' dissolution experience and whether this moderated the association between number of dissolutions and disruptions to the adolescent's other relationships and adjustment difficulties were examined. Each of these proposed relations are described in turn below.

Length, quality, and context of the friendship. Characteristics of the former friendship were expected to influence adjustment following dissolution. One such characteristic assessed in the current study was the length of the former friendship. Studies on romantic relationships suggest that dissolving longer-lasting relationships is associated with more adjustment difficulty than dissolving shorter-term relationships (Simpson, 1987). However, although some friendships last for a very long time before dissolving, others may be short-lived but intense in their intimacy. This points to the importance of considering the closeness or quality of the former friendship as well. In a sample of early adolescents, Chan and Poulin (2009) found that only friendship instability in the participant's closest or best friend was associated with depressed

mood, and not the stability of secondary friends. This suggests that the closer the friendship, the more likely its dissolution is to have an effect on the emotional adjustment of its members.

Taken together, I hypothesized that both length of the friendship and friendship quality would directly affect adjustment indicators, such that ending longer lasting friendships and friendships high in positive friendship quality would lead to more adjustment difficulties following friendship dissolution.

The setting for the friendship also was important to consider. Findings from a study conducted by Chan and Poulin (2009) indicated that only instability in school friendships, but not friendships from other contexts such as the neighborhood, had a significant association with depressed mood in adolescence. I hypothesized, therefore, that the dissolution of school-based friendships would be more strongly tied to adjustment difficulties than the dissolution of friendships from other settings, such as camp, church, or sports teams.

The current study also considered the disruptive effect that the dissolution of one friendship could have on other relationships within that setting. An important factor that differentiates samples of adolescents from samples of college students and adults is the context in which they know their friends. Research indicates that adolescents typically have friendships from seven different contexts: school, the neighborhood, religious groups, child-care, friends of their parents, cousins or same-age relatives, and extracurricular activities (Fletcher, Troutman, Gruber, Long, & Hunter, 2006). However, due to the large proportion of time spent there, school is the primary context in which friendships occur (Fletcher et al., 2006). In the circumscribed context of school, adolescents' friends are likely to know each other or be friends with one another, and thus are embedded within the same social circle. This embeddedness is potentially less common in college students or adults, who have more of an opportunity to draw friends

from multiple contexts. An implication is that when an adolescent terminates a friendship with one person, it may disrupt their relationships with other peers and also may affect whether the adolescent is included in events with shared friends. The current study aimed to capture how ending one friendship affected the rest of a youth's social network, which is an especially important factor to consider in school-aged participants. I hypothesized that the characteristics of the friendship, specifically the length of the friendship, positive friendship quality with the former friend, and setting would be associated with the extent to which adolescents' other friendships were disrupted as a result of the dissolution. I predicted that longer lasting friendships would result in greater disruption to an adolescent's social network as the adolescents would have had more time to integrate their friend with other friends. Additionally, I expected that losing a friendship that was high on positive friendship quality would lead to a greater disruption to the adolescents' social network given that part of this positive friendship quality included spending time together. I similarly predicted that knowing a former friend from school would be associated with a greater disruption to the adolescent's peer network and relationships with other people. In turn, I hypothesized that greater disruption to other friendships would lead to more adjustment difficulties following dissolution, and would mediate the relationship between the friendship characteristics and adjustment difficulties.

Availability of support. In a study conducted by Barutçu Yıldırım and Demir (2015), it was found that increased perceptions of social support were associated with better adjustment following the breakup of a romantic relationship. The same is likely true for adolescents experiencing friendship dissolution. Yet, despite the frequency of friendship dissolution in adolescence, and the potential impact that losing a friend can have on adjustment outcomes, there are few supports in place for adolescents who experience friendship dissolution (Fehr, 1996).

Based on the comments made by many of the adult women in Jalma's (2008) study concerning how it felt to talk about the topic of friendship dissolution, it appears that discussion of friendship dissolution is not common. Many admitted that their dissolved friendship was something they thought about often, but rarely talked about. The women also expressed interest in the degree to which friendship dissolution is normative, and requested research on the topic as this was something that they perceived many people would be interested in learning more about (Jalma, 2008). Young adolescents similarly may feel as though they do not have an opportunity to discuss friendship dissolution with others who can provide support, and may wonder about whether their experience with friendship dissolution is normative. In light of the Jalma (2008) study, I hypothesized that in the current study, those adolescents who reported having at least one person to talk to about their experiences would fare better in terms of adjustment following dissolution than those who believed they were alone in their experience and had no one to talk to about their feelings. I also hypothesized that the availability of support, or having someone to confide in, would moderate the association between disruption to the friendship network and adjustment difficulties such that for those adolescents who had someone to talk to, disruption would be less strongly associated with negative adjustment than for those who did not feel they had someone in whom they could confide. Additionally, I hypothesized that the availability of support would similarly moderate the effect of number of friendship dissolutions on adjustment difficulties, such that the availability of support would attenuate this relationship, whereas support being unavailable would strengthen it.

The current study

In summary, the current study had three major aims: 1) to explore the factors surrounding friendship dissolution in adolescence by providing descriptive information about the

number of friendship dissolutions that adolescents typically experienced, identifying the most common reasons for dissolution and methods by which dissolution occurred, and examining whether these factors differed by gender or grade of the participant; 2) to understand how these factors were associated with social-emotional adjustment following friendship dissolution; and 3) to test how the context of the dissolution, including characteristics of the former friendship, the disruptive effect of the dissolution on other relationships, and the availability of support following the dissolution impacted adjustment difficulties.

Method

Participants

Participants were 354 students in grades six ($n = 117$), seven ($n = 112$), and eight ($n = 125$) attending a rural middle school near the University of Connecticut. All students enrolled in school at the time of data collection in the fall of 2016 were eligible to participate. The sample was split relatively evenly by gender with 53.3% of the sample identifying as a girl, 45.9% as a boy, and .8% as other. The mean age of the participants was 11.89 years ($SD = .86$). The ethnic/racial breakdown of the sample was: 82% White, 5% multi-racial, 4% American Indian, 3% Hispanic or Latino/a, 1% Asian, 1% Black or African American, and 4% other. Participant reports of their parents' highest level of education completed indicated: 4% of fathers and 2% of mothers completed less than high school; 19% of fathers and 11% of mothers completed high school; 7% of fathers and 8% of mothers completed some college; 40% of fathers and 50% of mothers graduated from college; and 11% of fathers and 13% of mothers completed an advanced degree (i.e., graduate, medical, or law school). The remaining participants reported being unsure of their parents' level of education (18% for father's education, 16% for mother's education). Of

the participants, 86.4% reported having experienced at least one dissolved friendship ($n = 306$). Only those who had experienced a friendship dissolution were included in subsequent analyses.

Procedure

Parents of middle school students were contacted and informed about the study through letters sent out by the school. The letters provided information about the study, including the contact information of the Principal Investigator, to whom parents were encouraged to reach out with questions. Those parents who did not want their child to participate were instructed to inform the school before the date of data collection (across the three grades, four parents withdrew their consent), whereas those who did want their child to participate did not need to take any action.

On the day of data collection, trained research assistants administered surveys using Qualtrics to all assenting students with parental consent during an enhancement period (similar to a study hall). Surveys took approximately forty minutes to complete. The school was paid an honorarium for participation. All procedures were approved by the University of Connecticut's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Information sheet. Participants provided demographic information about themselves, including age, grade, gender, race/ethnicity, and parental education.

Friendship dissolution nomination form. To assess current and previous friendships, youth were asked how many close or best friends they had currently, followed by instructions to “List any close or best friends you have had who you are no longer friends with. List all that you can think of. Please do not include anyone that you have been boyfriend/girlfriend with.” To protect the privacy of friends, only the first names and last initial of the former friends were

requested. Finally, participants were prompted to select from their list of previous close or best friends the friend with whom they were closest, and who they stopped being friends with within the last five years. They then answered the remainder of the survey questions about this identified friend, including the questions that followed assessing the length of that specific friendship, how long ago the friendship dissolved, the gender of their previous friend, their grade, how they knew the friend (e.g., from school, sports, the neighborhood, etc.), who ended the friendship, and whether they perceived it was likely the friendship would resume in the future. Of note, there was a reporting problem with the assessment of time since the dissolution, such that participants unreliably entered the correct date formatting (years, months, days), and therefore this variable was not used in analyses.

Reasons for friendship dissolution. Youth reported on the reasons why their friendship ended with the identified friend using a newly created measure. The adolescents were presented with a list of 89 possible reasons for ending a friendship, derived from previous research on both friendship and romantic relationship termination (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Fehr, 1996; Johnson et al., 2004; Owens, 2003; Rose, 1984), and which seemed most appropriate for a sample of early adolescents. For reasons involving a transgression, most transgressions were represented in two separate items: one item indicating that the former friend committed the transgression, and the other item indicating that the focal adolescent committed a transgression (e.g., “My friend excluded me, or stopped inviting me to things with him/her,” and “My friend said he/she felt like I was excluding him/her”). Mutual or external reasons were presented only once (e.g., “We were no longer in any of the same classes”). The response scale consisted of three options: *True*, *True but not why the friendship ended*, and *Not True*.

The reasons were then coded into seven theoretically-derived categories, identified by the author and a research assistant. The categories were informed by previous work demonstrating the most important characteristics that youth expect from friendships according to widely used measures of friendship quality that potentially could lead to the demise of a friendship. For instance, similarity from the Intimacy Scale (Shulman, Laursen, Kalman, & Karpovsky, 1997), conflict/betrayal, validation/caring, and companionship/recreation from the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Parker & Asher, 1993), proximity (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980), and reciprocity (Clark & Ayers, 1993). The categories included: 1) *lack of similarity*, indicating that the former friends did not share the same interests, maturity level, or understanding of each other's cultural backgrounds (example item, "We did not like doing the same things"); 2) *lack of social support*, indicating that the former friends did not provide each other with essential social support, including listening to each other's problems and standing up for the other person, or that they acted overly critical of the other (example item, "My friend didn't care about my problems"); 3) *conflict or betrayal of trust and loyalty*, indicating that the former friends fought a lot, betrayed each other's trust (e.g., "My friend talked behind my back," "My friend found out that I told other people about our private conversations"), and betrayed each other's loyalty (e.g., "My friend was keeping secrets from me"); 4) *interference from others*, indicating that other people, such as other friends, parents, or boyfriends/girlfriends, either did not approve of the friendship or one of the former friends prioritized spending time with other people over the former friend (example item, "My other friends did not like my friend"); 5) *lack of enjoyable companionship*, indicating that the friendship was no longer fun, or one of the friends was no longer fun to be around (e.g., "My friend stopped wanting to do fun things," "My friend said that he/she often felt down or depressed after hanging out with me"); 6) *lack of reciprocity*, indicating that one former

friend felt they were putting in more effort to maintain the friendship than the other, or that one of the former friends was just using the other friend to get things from them (e.g., “I made more of an effort to try to plan things to do with my friend than he/she did,” “My friend said they felt like I was only friends with them to get more popular”); and 7) *situational*, indicating that the friendship ended due to circumstance (e.g., “We were no longer in any of the same classes”). Responses were then further coded dichotomously to indicate whether or not participants responded “true” that this was a reason why the friendship ended to any of the reasons that fell within each category, and were further distinguished as to whether the focal adolescent enacted the reason that fell within the category or whether their former friend did (e.g., “My friend didn’t care about my problems” versus “I didn’t care about my friend’s problems”). Of note, lack of similarity, interference from others, and situational categories were not split in this way, as the items in these categories were difficult to categorize as being enacted by one of the former friends, as, for example, no longer having interests in common is not the fault of one member or the other.

Ways friendships end. The ways in which adolescents ended the friendship were measured using a 6-item scale that presented six possible methods an adolescent might use to end a friendship. The items were loosely based on a measure by Baxter and Philpott (1982), which coded children’s responses for how they would hypothetically end a friendship into various strategies. The current scale described six actions that could be used to end a friendship which fell into each of five categories: *direct strategies* (i.e., “One of us told the other we longer wanted to be friends”), *third party strategies* (i.e., “One of us had another person, like a mutual friend, tell the other person that they didn’t want to be friends anymore”), *avoidance* (i.e., “One of us just started avoiding the other, or being less responsive, and eventually the other one got

the message that the friendship was over”), *passive aggression* (i.e., “One of us made it clear that the friendship was over by making rude or mean comments to the other but tried to cover up how mean it was by faking a nice tone of voice or a smile”), and *conflict* (i.e., “One of us started a big fight and we stopped talking”). Of each category, only direct strategies contained two different items: one outlining why they were ending the friendship, the other indicating that they did not explain why (e.g., “One of us told the other that we no longer wanted to be friends, and explained why” versus “One of us told the other that we no longer wanted to be friends, but didn’t tell the other why”). The response scale included three options, *I did this to end our friendship*, *My friend did this to end our friendship*, or *Neither my friend or I did this to end our friendship*, with the option to select more than one response if both former members of the friendship utilized this method to end the friendship. Responses were then coded to represent whether the focal adolescent used each strategy (1 = yes, 0 = no), and in a separate variable, to represent whether the former friend used each strategy (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Reactions to friendship dissolution. Four items from the Friendship Endings scale (Owens, 2003) and four new items were used to assess reactions to the friendship dissolution, including whether participants felt positive (i.e., happy/relieved), angry, sad, stressed, lonely, or guilty after their friendship ended, and whether they ruminated about the dissolution. To assess the intensity with which they experienced each reaction, participants rated how well each statement described them on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Does not describe me at all (0)* to *Describes me very well (4)*. To assess the duration of each reaction, participants also were asked to indicate for how long they felt each of the reactions, with responses ranging from *Does not apply (0)*, *Less than a week (1)* to *For over a year (5)*. Each reaction was assessed with a single item except happiness/relief, which was assessed with two items. Intensity and duration of

each reaction were averaged, providing a single reaction variable that encompassed both intensity and duration to be used in analyses.

Current symptoms of depression. Adolescent Depressive Symptoms were assessed using a shortened version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC; Weissman, Orvaschel, & Padian, 1980), which has reliably been used to measure depression in adolescents (Ohannessian, 2012). The 20-item CES-DC assesses the degree to which adolescents experienced symptoms of depression within the last week on a scale ranging from *Not at all* (0) to *A lot* (3). Example items include, “I felt down and unhappy,” and “I was sad.” At the request of school administrators, four questions were removed, leaving 16 items. A composite score was created by reverse-scoring positively phrased items (e.g., “I was happy”), and calculating the mean across all items. The scale demonstrated strong internal reliability in the current sample (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$).

Current feelings of hope. Six items from the Children’s Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) assessed how well adolescents perceive that they are doing (including feelings of agency and pathways to doing well). An example item is “I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.” The six items were rescaled to fit with the CES-DC, with the response scale ranging from *Not at All* (0) to *A lot* (3), and summed to create a total hope scale, with a possible range of scores from 0 to 18 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$).

Previous friendship quality. To assess the participants’ rating of their former friendship when it was at its peak, a revised and shortened version of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ; Parker & Asher, 1993) was used. The scale was comprised of seven items. The highest loading item was drawn from each subscale in the original measure, which assessed six qualities: validation/ caring, conflict resolution, help/guidance, companionship/recreation, intimate

exchange, and conflict/betrayal. An item from the satisfaction scale also was included. Participants indicated how true each item was of their friendship using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all true* (0) to *really true* (4). The questions were phrased in past tense, asking the participant to reflect on their friendship when they were closest (e.g., “My friend and I always told each other about our problems” and “My friend and I did fun things together a lot”). The mean was calculated across all items with higher scores indicating higher quality friendships, and demonstrated acceptable internal reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$).

Disruption to other relationships. The extent to which ending the specified friendship disrupted adolescents’ other relationships was measured using a newly developed 6-item scale. Items assessed whether the adolescent stopped being friends with previously shared friends, and how dissolving the friendship affected the frequency with which the focal adolescent was included in activities with other friends. Example items include, “I often feel left out of group activities now that I am no longer friends with [Friend’s name]” and, “I had to switch who I sit with at lunch now that I am no longer friends with [Friend’s name].” Responses ranged from *Not at all true* (0) to *Very True* (4). A mean score was calculated with higher scores reflecting greater disruption in the friendship network following the friendship dissolution, (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$).

Availability of support. To measure the availability of support following the dissolution, participants were asked whether they felt they had at least one person with whom they could discuss their feelings about the friendship ending who would understand what they were going through, with a response scale of *yes* (1) and *no* (0). Participants were then presented with a list of people, including parents, siblings, other relatives, mutual friends of the former friend, other non-mutual friends, online friends, boyfriend/girlfriends, and other non-parent adults (including a therapist, teacher or school counselor, or church leader), and asked who they talked to most

about their feelings following the dissolution. Participants were asked to select all that applied, with 0 indicating they did not speak to that person about their dissolution, and 1 indicating they did.

Plan for Analysis

First, descriptive information is presented concerning the three primary aspects of friendship dissolution. This includes the average number of friendship dissolutions experienced in total, as well as characteristics of the specific friendship that dissolved (including whether the former friends were same-gender, same-race, same-grade, or same-school friends, as well as the perceived likelihood of the friendship resuming in the future). Descriptive information also is presented concerning the most frequently cited reasons for friendship dissolution, and the most common ways in which friendships ended, including confirmatory factor analyses for each newly created scale.

Next, one-way ANOVAs and Chi-Square tests were run to test whether there were gender or grade differences in the frequency with which the above factors were reported. Interactions between gender and grade also were tested.

Then, partial correlations were utilized to test the hypotheses concerning the relations of number of friendship dissolutions, reasons for friendship dissolutions, and ways in which friendships dissolved with the adjustment indicators following dissolution. Separate correlations were run for each reaction (using the length x duration variable) and indicators of current adjustment (depressive symptomatology and hope), controlling for gender and grade of the participant.

Path analyses run in Mplus were used to test the hypothesized path model, such that characteristics of the friendship, including length of the friendship, friendship quality, and setting

of the friendship (i.e., whether the friendship originated in school or not) would be associated with reactions and adjustment outcomes directly, and also that this relationship would be mediated by the disruption to other relationships. Grade and gender were controlled for in the model.

Finally, whether availability of support moderated the relationship between disruption to other relationships and current adjustment or between number of friendship dissolutions experienced and current adjustment was analyzed using a series of regression analyses in SPSS version 24. In the first set of regression analyses, relationship disruption, availability of support, and the interaction between the two were entered as predictor variables, with depressive symptoms and hope as the outcome variables. The second set of regression analyses included the total number of friendship dissolutions, availability of support, and the interaction between total number of dissolutions and availability of support as independent variables, and depressive symptomatology and hope as the dependent variables.

Results

Aim 1a: Descriptive Information About Friendship Dissolutions Overall

Number of friendship dissolutions. To understand the prevalence of friendship dissolution among the sample, descriptive statistics were calculated. Participants reported experiencing a mean of 4.29 friendship dissolutions across the last five years ($SD = 4.68$), with responses ranging from zero to 20 reported friendship dissolutions. Results from a 2-way (gender x grade) independent ANOVA indicated that there was not a significant difference in the number of friendship dissolutions reported by boys ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 4.57$) compared to girls ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 4.76$), $F(1, 297) = 2.02$, $p = .16$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. There was, however, a significant difference in the number of dissolutions reported across grade, $F(2, 297) = 3.28$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 =$

.02. Bonferroni corrected post-hoc comparisons indicated that sixth graders ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 5.89$) reported experiencing significantly more friendship dissolutions than eighth graders ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.82$; $p < .05$), with seventh graders falling between the two but not differing significantly from either ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 4.99$).

Aim 1b: Descriptive Information About a Specific Friendship Dissolution Experience

Beyond the number of friendship dissolutions that adolescents experienced overall, participants also reported in-depth information about their experience dissolving the friendship with the person with whom they were closest. Most of the sample reported the former friend was the same gender ($n=274$; 93.5%), 70% of the sample reported their former friend was the same race/ethnicity as themselves ($n=203$), and 86.6% reported the former friend was in the same grade as the focal adolescent ($n=256$). Concerning where the friends knew each other from, 84.3% ($n=253$) reported knowing their former friend from school, 21.9% ($n=67$) from a sports team, 15.0% ($n=46$) from their neighborhood, 7.8% ($n=24$) through a mutual friend, 5.9% ($n=18$) from camp, 5.6% ($n=17$) from a club or activity, 2.3% ($n=7$) through the internet, 1.6% ($n=5$) from church or another religious activity, and 11.1% ($n=34$) in another way. Regarding these friendships, 19.9% ($n=57$) of participants indicated it was very unlikely they would become friends again in the future, while 14.6% ($n=42$) indicated it was very likely they would become friends, with the rest of the participants falling somewhere in between ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.68$).

Reasons why the friendship ended. To confirm that the reasons participants endorsed about why the friendship ended loaded onto the theoretically derived categories, I ran confirmatory factor analyses using Mplus7, with three separate models: one for the reasons enacted by the former friend, one for the reasons enacted by the focal adolescent, and one for mutual reasons. The indicators of each scale were binary (either yes, this was a reason why the

friendship ended or not), and therefore, a WLSMV estimation procedure was used (this estimator tests a tetrachoric correlation matrix between the indicators, instead of the traditional Pearson correlations; Woods, 2002). Each item loaded highly onto the specified category in each model (three items with factor loadings lower than .5 were removed from the models). Of the remaining items in the model of reasons enacted by the former friend, the loading values ranged from .84-.94 for lack of social support, from .74-.96 for betrayal or conflict from former friend, from .59-.91 for lack of companionship, and from .83-1.0 for lack of reciprocity (altogether 97% of the factor loadings were above .65, 88% were above .80), with the following model fit indices: $\chi^2(493) = 967.06, p < .001$; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .95; TLI = .95. For the model with reasons enacted by the focal adolescent, the factor loadings also were high, ranging from .52-.98 for lack of social support by the focal adolescent, from .56-.91 for conflict or betrayal by the focal adolescent, from .75-1.0 for lack of companionship, and from .76-1.1 for lack of reciprocity (altogether 84% of the factor loadings were above .65, 65% were above .80), with the following fit indices: $\chi^2(432) = 564.19, p < .001$; RMSEA = .03; CFI = .88; TLI = .87. For the final model that included only items with mutual reasons, the factor loadings ranged from .56-.89 for reasons having to do with similarity, and from .59-.85 for reasons having to do with interference from other people (altogether, 95% of the factor loadings were above .65), with the model demonstrating the following fit indices: $\chi^2(153) = 527.09, p < .001$; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .83; TLI = .81.

Given the high factor loadings, all further analyses were conducted using the specified categories. Descriptive information for each of these categories is presented in **Table 1**. Reasons relating to conflict/betrayal were the most commonly cited, with 58.3% of the sample indicating

that a reason why their friendship ended fell within this category, whereas situational reasons were cited least commonly.

Within this measure, participants reported on behaviors enacted by either themselves or the former friend that led to the dissolution of the friendship. Of the 32 items across the categories that indicated a specific action taken by the former friend that would cause the friendship to end, participants endorsed a mean of 5.56 items ($SD=7.36$), and a maximum of 29 out of 32 possible actions. Of the 32 corresponding items across the categories that indicated a specific action taken by the focal adolescent that was a cause of the dissolution, participants only endorsed a mean of 1.51 items ($SD=2.85$), with a maximum of 14 items endorsed. Results from a repeated measures ANOVA indicated that participants were significantly more likely to report that their former friend did something that caused the friendship to end than they were to report that they had done something that had caused the friendship to end, $F(1, 280) = 112.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$.

To test for gender and grade differences in participants' reported reasons why their friendship ended, chi-square analyses were run. As shown in **Table 1**, no gender differences emerged, but several significant grade effects emerged. The results show that sixth graders were especially unlikely to report that their friendship ended due to conflict/betrayal on the part of the former friend, due to lack of support by the former friend, due to lack of similarity, due to interference from others, or due to lack of companionship and fun on the part of the former friend, compared to participants in seventh and eighth grade. In contrast, sixth graders were just as likely as seventh and eighth graders to attribute the end of the friendship to a lack of reciprocity and to situational factors such as no longer being in the same classes together.

Ways the friendship ended. To confirm that the items from the questionnaire assessing how adolescents ended their friendships loaded onto a single latent factor, I ran a CFA in Mplus7. Two items that assessed use of a direct strategy to end the friendship were combined into one variable. The indicators were again binary in their structure (coded as 0 = neither the focal adolescent nor the former friend used this method to end the friendship, and 1 = this method was used by one of the former friends to end the friendship), which necessitated the use of the WLSMV estimator. The factor loadings were high across the items, ranging from .67 to .88, with the model fitting the data relatively well [$\chi^2(6) = 22.26, p = .001$; RMSEA = .09; CFI = .97; TLI = .94].

Descriptive information about how the participants ended their friendships is presented in **Table 2**. Of the various methods presented, the most common method utilized to end the friendship was to avoid the other person until they got the message that the friendship was over. The least commonly cited method of ending the friendship was by using a third party. Repeated measures ANOVAs indicated that participants reported that their former friend was significantly more likely to use conflict ($M_{\text{focal adolescent}} = .08, SD = .28$; $M_{\text{former friend}} = .14, SD = .35$), passive-aggression ($M_{\text{focal adolescent}} = .07, SD = .25$; $M_{\text{former friend}} = .13, SD = .33$), and another person ($M_{\text{focal adolescent}} = .04, SD = .19$; $M_{\text{former friend}} = .08, SD = .28$) to end the friendship than they were [$F(1,305) = 7.89, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$; $F(1, 305) = 6.10, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$; $F(1, 305) = 6.95, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$ respectively]. Interestingly, however, when asked *who* ended the friendship, 23.4% of the sample ($n=64$) said they ended the friendship, 17.9% of the sample ($n=49$) said the former friend ended the friendship, and 58.8% of the sample ($n=161$) said it was mutual.

Chi-square analyses were used to test for gender and grade differences in the prevalence with which each method was used to end the friendship. As demonstrated in **Table 2**, girls were

significantly more likely to endorse avoidance as a strategy that either they or their former friend used to end the friendship. No other gender differences reached statistical significance. Chi-square analyses testing for grade differences suggested that only using avoidance to end a friendship differed by grade, such that sixth graders were least likely to report using this strategy, and eighth graders most likely.

Reactions Following the Friendship Dissolution.

Beyond reporting on why and how their specific friendship ended, participants also reported on how they felt following the dissolution, both in terms of how intensely they felt that emotion and for how long it persisted after the dissolution. Descriptive statistics about these reactions are presented in **Table 3**. As shown, the emotion felt with the greatest intensity following dissolution was sadness, whereas participants reported that positive feelings (i.e., happy/relieved) persisted for the longest time. Results from two-way ANOVAs indicated that while there were no significant interactions between grade and gender, several gender and grade differences reached statistical significance. These results suggested girls reported feeling significantly more sadness ($M_{\text{girls}} = 5.04, SD = 6.76; M_{\text{boys}} = 2.53, SD = 5.16; F(1,265) = 30.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$), rumination ($M_{\text{girls}} = 4.76, SD = 7.24; M_{\text{boys}} = 2.55, SD = 5.42; F(1,264) = 8.09, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .01$), loneliness ($M_{\text{girls}} = 3.28, SD = 6.17; M_{\text{boys}} = 0.98, SD = 3.03; F(1,266) = 16.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$), and stress ($M_{\text{girls}} = 1.93, SD = 4.27; M_{\text{boys}} = 0.85, SD = 2.52; F(1,267) = 7.64, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .03$) following the dissolution than boys. Boys, on the other hand, reported significantly more positive reactions ($M = 4.52, SD = 6.95$) than did girls ($M = 2.83, SD = 5.27; F(1, 264) = 4.64, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .02$). These comparisons also suggested that sixth graders were significantly more likely to report feeling sad after the dissolution ($M = 5.18, SD = 6.87$) than seventh or eighth graders ($M = 3.46, SD = 6.12; M = 3.53, SD = 5.78; F(2, 265) = 5.17,$

$p=.0$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$), and significantly less likely to feel positively following the dissolution ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 6.87$) than eighth graders ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 6.57$; $F(2,264) = 3.71$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$).

Relations between reactions and current adjustment. Reactions to the specific dissolution were related to current indicators of adjustment. Pearson correlations between the reactions (intensity x length) and current levels of depressive symptoms and hope demonstrated that current depressive symptomatology was significantly and positively correlated with reactions of sadness ($r = .193$, $p = .005$), anger ($r = .243$, $p < .001$), stress ($r = .31$, $p < .001$), loneliness ($r = .24$, $p < .001$), guilt ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), and rumination ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), but were not significantly associated with positive reactions ($r = .11$, $p = .10$). Current feelings of hope, on the other hand, was significantly associated with less loneliness ($r = -.14$, $p = .045$), and less guilt ($r = -.17$, $p = .02$). Current hope and depressive symptomatology were significantly and negatively correlated with each other ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$).

Aim 2: Associations Between Dissolution Experiences and Reactions/Current Adjustment

Associations between dissolution experiences and emotional reactions and adjustment were examined next. First, the relations between number of friendship dissolutions and current adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms and hope) were tested. Then, the dissolution of a specific friendship was considered. In particular, analyses tested the relations between reasons for ending the specific friendship and reactions to ending that friendship, depressive symptoms, and hope. Similarly, analyses tested the relations between the ways of ending the friendship with reactions to ending that friendship, depressive symptoms, and hope. For all associations, partial correlations were computed controlling for gender and age.

Number of friendship dissolutions. The results indicated that the number of friendship dissolutions participants reported experiencing was significantly associated with current level of

depression ($r = .18, p = .01$), such that experiencing a greater number of dissolutions was associated with greater depressive symptomatology. However, number of friendship dissolutions was not significantly associated with current levels of hope ($r = -.06, p = .37$). Additionally, those adolescents who had a higher ratio of number of dissolved friendships to number of current friendships also tended to report more symptoms of depression ($r = .15, p = .04$), but this ratio was not significantly associated with current levels of hope ($r = -.09, p = .22$).

Reasons for dissolution. As seen in **Table 4**, many of the reasons for ending a friendship were associated with both reactions to the dissolution and current levels of adjustment. Associations with reactions to the dissolution differed depending on whether it was the focal adolescent or the former friend who enacted a reason within each category. As hypothesized, when the focal adolescent was at fault in a given category, they tended to report feeling more guilt surrounding the dissolution. In the case of conflict/betrayal, lack of social support, and lack of companionship, participants also reported lower levels of hope. Also consistent with hypotheses, the results demonstrated that friendships that ended due to situational reasons and lack of similarity were associated with less negative reactions (less anger and guilt for situational reasons and less sadness, loneliness, and rumination for lack of similarity). However, ending the friendship for situational reasons also was associated with a less positive reaction to the dissolution. The hypothesis that conflict/betrayal would be associated with the most adjustment difficulties was partially supported, except that reactions were more negative when the focal adolescent ended the friendship (i.e., they felt more symptoms of depression, less hope, and more anger, stress, and guilt) compared to when the former friend ended the friendship (this was associated with more symptoms of depression and anger). Interestingly, all reasons except situational, were associated with the participant feeling positively (i.e., happy/relieved) following

the dissolution, generally mixed with other negative reactions. Overall, the pattern indicates that the nuanced emotional reactions are important to consider separately.

Ways the friendship ended. The ways that adolescents ended their friendship also were associated with adjustment, as seen in **Table 5**. For instance, when the focal adolescent reported using avoidance as a strategy, they tended to report feeling less sadness, less loneliness, and greater positivity. If the former friend used avoidance as a strategy to end the friendship, however, this was associated with feeling angry following the dissolution. Conversely, while the focal adolescent using conflict as a strategy to end a friendship was associated with less loneliness and more positivity, if the former friend used conflict to end the friendship the focal adolescent reported feeling more current symptoms of depression, less hope, and greater stress, but also less sadness, less loneliness and greater positivity. A passive aggressive strategy used by the focal adolescent was only associated with greater positivity, whereas a passive aggressive strategy used by the former friend was associated with more current symptoms of depression, more anger, and more stress following the dissolution, but also more positivity. The former friend using direct strategies to end the friendship was also associated with more current symptoms of depression, and greater sadness, anger, stress, and positivity following the dissolution, whereas if the focal adolescent ended their friendship using a direct strategy they were less likely to feel sad and more likely to feel positively. Finally, if the target adolescent ended their friendship by having someone else tell the former friend, they tended to report more positive feelings, whereas if the former friend utilized this third party strategy, the focal adolescent reported greater levels of current depressive symptomatology and more stress. Inconsistent with hypotheses, only direct strategies used by the former friend were significantly associated with rumination.

In addition to the specific methods adolescents used to end their friendships, a series of one-way ANOVAs, controlling for gender and grade, tested for significant differences in adjustment and reactions depending on *who* the adolescents reported ending the friendship. In line with hypotheses, the results from these ANOVAs indicated that participants reported feeling significantly more positive when they ended the friendship ($M = 7.53, SD = 7.30$) compared to when the former friend ended the friendship ($M = 2.10, SD = 4.78$) or when it was mutual ($M = 2.53, SD = 5.46; F(2, 244) = 16.71, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$). Participants also reported feeling significantly less sad when they ended the friendship ($M = 2.40, SD = 5.90$) compared to when the former friend ended the friendship ($M = 4.85, SD = 6.16$) or when it was mutual ($M = 4.43, SD = 6.45; F(2, 244) = 10.05, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$). There were no significant differences observed for any of the remaining reactions or indicators of adjustment.

Aim 3: Examining the Context of the Dissolution

The third aim of this study was to examine various contextual factors that may influence the dissolution experience. Such factors include the length of the former friendship before it ended, the quality of the former friendship, where the friends knew each other from, the disruptive effect ending the friendship had on other relationships, and availability of social support. Descriptive statistics for these contextual factors indicated that the mean length of the former friendship was 3.67 years ($SD = 2.75$), ranging from zero to 12 years, the mean reported positive friendship quality was 2.46 ($SD = 0.88$), 82.7% of participants met at school ($n=253$), and on a scale from 0-4, the mean relationship impact was .70 ($SD = .85$). Of the participants, 57.4% reported that they did feel as though they had someone to talk to about the dissolution ($n = 169$). In terms of who adolescents turned to for support, 36.3% of the participants reported talking to a parent ($n=107$), 36.3% talked to a mutual friend between them and the former friend

($n=107$), 15.3% talked to a sibling ($n=45$), 14.9% talked to a friend that was not shared with the former friend ($n=44$), 8.1% spoke to another relative ($n=24$), 6.4% talked to a boyfriend or girlfriend ($n=19$), 5.0% spoke to a non-parent adult ($n=15$), including teachers, therapists, clergy and others, and 3.7% spoke to someone online ($n=11$). To examine the impact of these factors on the dissolution experience, three hypothesized models were tested.

The first of these models tested whether the length of the friendship, the quality of the friendship, and whether the friends knew each other from school were associated with the dissolution having a larger disruptive effect on other relationships, and whether this, in turn, was associated with greater adjustment difficulties. To test this, I ran a path model in Mplus7, controlling for both gender and age. Indices of model fit suggest that the model fit the data well [$\chi^2(6) = 6.85, p = .36$; RMSEA = .02; CFI = 1.0; TLI = .98], and all significant paths are presented in **Figure 1**. As shown, the model did not support the hypothesized mediating relationship of the disruptive effect on other relationships as years of friendship, friendship quality, and whether the friends knew each other from school or not were not significantly associated with disruption. However, several significant direct effects were observed. For instance, higher friendship quality in the former friendship was associated with greater feelings of sadness, anger, loneliness, and rumination, and with lower positivity following the dissolution. If the former friends knew each other from school, this was directly associated with fewer symptoms of depression. Greater disruption to relationships was associated with more current symptoms of depression, and greater feelings of sadness, anger, stress, loneliness and rumination following the dissolution.

The second model to test for the influence of context focused on the availability of support. I hypothesized that participants who had someone to talk to about the dissolution would

experience better adjustment following the dissolution than those who did not, and that who the adolescent spoke to would be important to consider. To examine these relations, I once again ran partial correlations controlling for gender and grade, between who the adolescent spoke to and their current adjustment and reactions to the dissolution (see **Table 6**). The results suggested that speaking to a sibling, a mutual friend of the participant and former friend, and a girlfriend or boyfriend was associated with significantly greater positive reactions following the dissolution. Speaking to a mutual friend was also significantly associated with greater feelings of stress following the dissolution, as was talking to a non-mutual friend, talking to someone online, talking to a girlfriend or boyfriend, and talking to a non-parent adult. Adolescents who talked to a non-parent adult also were more likely to report feeling lonely after the dissolution, and those who talked to mutual friends and people on the internet were more likely to ruminate about the dissolution. Finally, talking to a relative about the dissolution was associated with greater angry feelings, whereas talking to a parent was not significantly associated with any of the reactions or adjustment indicators. Only the dichotomous variable representing whether or not the adolescent had someone to talk to overall was significantly associated with current symptoms of depression, and hope, such that those participants who had someone to talk to reported fewer symptoms of depression and more hope than those participants who did not.

To test whether availability of support (i.e., having someone to talk to about the dissolution or not), moderated the association between the disruptive effect of dissolution on other relationships and current levels of depressive symptoms and hope, I ran two hierarchical linear regressions with depressive symptomatology and hope as the dependent variables. In the first step of these regression models, gender and grade were entered as control variables, in the second step the main effects of availability of support and the disruptive effect on other

relationships (centered) were entered, and in the final step the interaction between the two were entered. As seen in **Table 7**, the results did not support my hypotheses, as having someone to talk to did not moderate this association. The same models were run to test whether availability of support moderated the association between number of friendship dissolutions an adolescent experienced and their adjustment outcomes. Once again the data did not support my hypotheses, and availability of support did not significantly moderate this association (see **Table 8**).

Discussion

The current study is the first to examine why and how friendship dissolutions occur in early adolescence. This study provides new information about multiple aspects of friendship dissolution, including how many friendship dissolutions adolescents experience, the most common reasons for dissolution, the most common ways adolescents go about ending friendships, and how these factors are associated with reactions to the dissolution experience and current indicators of adjustment. The results have important implications for both the study of friendship and for promoting better adjustment in adolescence.

Number of dissolutions. The first factor of friendship dissolution that was of interest in the current study was number of friendship dissolutions adolescents experienced. Participants reported on the total number of their friendships that had ended during the last five years, and results indicated that adolescents experienced a little more than four dissolutions on average. Additionally, 86% of the sample reported experiencing at least one dissolution. The prevalence rate in this study may be contrasted with that found in previous research. Bowker (2004) found that 30% of early adolescents reported a dissolution with their best friend across a six-month timeframe. In a separate study, Bowker (2011) found that 36% of early adolescents reported a complete dissolution (i.e., they had a same-sex best friendship that ended, such that the

adolescents were no longer friends), whereas the prevalence increased to 66% when all types of dissolution were included (e.g., 55% experienced a downgrade dissolution, in which one of their former best friends downgraded to being only a close friend). The timeframe during which the dissolutions had occurred was not specified in the latter study. The greater prevalence of dissolutions found in the current study compared to past studies may be due in part to the timeframe under investigation. In the current study, adolescents were asked to report any dissolutions that occurred within the last five years, which may have increased the average number of friendship dissolutions reported. Documenting a developmental timeline of when friendship dissolutions occur (and whether several co-occur) would be an interesting future direction for this work, and would inform us whether adolescents tend to experience friendship dissolutions in clusters and whether this has a more negative impact on adjustment. Additionally, the previous studies were limited to dissolutions with best friends of the same gender whereas adolescents in the current study reported dissolutions with any good or close friends, and were not instructed to limit their nominations to same-gender friends.

No significant gender differences emerged in the number of friendship dissolutions experienced. Mean number of dissolutions indicate that girls reported experiencing more dissolutions than boys, but unlike prior studies (Benenson & Christakos, 2003; Bowker, 2011), this gender difference did not reach significance. It may be the case that girls experience more friendship dissolutions into later adolescence, but because the participants in this study were reporting on friendship dissolutions within the last five years, which for sixth graders could date back to friendships from early elementary school, this gender difference was non-significant. Unfortunately, without valid reports of the timeframe in which each dissolution took place, I cannot disentangle this information within the current study.

A significant effect of grade was found such that sixth graders experienced more friendship dissolutions than eighth graders. To interpret this grade difference, the developmental phase of early adolescence must be considered. According to Selman's theory of friendship development, it is precisely during this transition into early adolescence that friendships begin to take on a greater and new meaning in adolescents' lives (Selman, 1980). Selman's theory suggests that adolescents begin to conceptualize their friendships in a more abstract manner, shifting their expectations from a focus on proximity to expectations of loyalty, mutuality, and genuineness (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Selman, 1980). Adolescents also begin to rely on their friends as important sources of social support, companionship, and intimate disclosure (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2013; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Sullivan, 1953). It may be the case that in the current study, given the wide timeframe examined, sixth graders were reporting mostly on dissolution experiences from elementary school, whereas eighth graders were reporting on friendship dissolutions that would primarily have occurred in middle school. This would suggest that youth are more likely to maintain their middle-school friendships than their elementary-school friendships, possibly due to the increased importance of, and reliance on friends during this time. Again, valid reports of time since the dissolution are required in order to understand these developmental trends more clearly.

Reasons for dissolution. The second factor of interest was the reason why friendships ended. As expected, the most commonly cited reasons for dissolution were those that fell under the category of conflict/betrayal of trust or loyalty. This finding is consistent with the study by Azmitia and colleagues (1999), which found that when adolescents speculated about reasons why friendships may end, they were most likely to name conflict as the cause. It is likely that because youth are still-developing in their social perspective-taking ability and conflict

negotiation strategies across middle childhood and adolescence (Flannery & Smith, 2016a; Selman, 1980; Van der Graaff et al., 2014), when conflict arises it may surpass what they are developmentally capable of managing and thus result in a dissolution of that friendship. The prevalence of conflict as a reason for dissolution may differ in older adolescence and adulthood, when people become more skilled with navigating conflict and reaching a resolution that is fair and equal for both members. Interestingly, however, sixth graders reported conflict/betrayal as a reason for dissolution less often than did eighth graders. It is possible that as the expectations for loyalty and trust within friendships continue to increase (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2013; Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980), eighth graders are more likely to react more strongly to friendship transgressions, compared to sixth graders who are still developing their friendship expectations. Of note, some of the reasons included in the conflict category reflect acts of relational aggression, a behavior that tends to increase across adolescence (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004), perhaps partially explaining this developmental trend.

Although conflict/betrayal was the most commonly cited reason for dissolution in the current study, it was not necessary for a negative occurrence to take place for the friendship to end. Consistent with previous studies and theorizing (e.g., Bowker, 2004; Sprecher & Fehr, 1998), positive aspects lacking from a friendship also were important contributors to why the friendship ended. In fact, after conflict/betrayal, lack of social support was the second most commonly reported reason for ending a friendship. There was no gender difference in the frequency with which this reason was endorsed. However, there was a significant grade difference such that sixth graders were least likely to report that this was why their friendship ended, and eighth graders most likely. This follows the theoretical stage view of friendship by Selman (1980), such that the more that adolescents come to rely on their close friendships for

social support, including greater intimacy and self-disclosure (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Rubin, Bukowski, & Bowker, 2015), the more the lack of social support would become an important reason to end a friendship.

Despite the growing importance of provisions like social support across development, more basic factors such as similarity and proximity continue to play a role in adolescent friendships (Furman & Bierman, 1984; Hartup, 1996). As evidenced by the current study, the third most commonly cited reason for dissolution was lack of similarity. This category included basic indicators of dissimilarity (e.g., the friends no longer liked doing the same things or had different interests) as well as more developed aspects of similarity (e.g., similarity in values and beliefs), which might contribute to the grade difference observed, such that sixth graders cited this reason least. Based on prior research, one area that I had hypothesized would be an important aspect of similarity, especially in a middle school sample, was similarity in maturity level (Azmitia et al., 1999; Fehr, 1996; Hardy et al., 2002). The two items that assessed this, however, did not load well onto the category, and were removed. Prior explanations about the importance of similarity in maturity level have centered around similarity in other areas (e.g., adolescents of different maturity levels would have different interests and want to engage in different activities; Fehr, 1996), but it also would be interesting to investigate whether maturity level on its own impacts friendship success, as adolescents may desire to terminate a friendship with someone who they deem immature, or “babyish.” Additionally, given that behavioral maturity is impacted by physical maturity (e.g., brain development, hormonal changes), it would be of interest to test the impact of similarity in physical development on the stability of friendships. Early adolescence is a particularly important developmental period to examine maturational similarity as this is a time of rapid developmental change, resulting in a wide range

of physical and cognitive maturity levels among early adolescent youth (Carter & Williams, 2016) and therefore a large potential for maturational dissimilarity between friends.

The next most commonly cited reason for dissolution was interference from other people. Included in this category were reasons indicating that the former friends did not like the same people or hang out with the same type of crowds, as well as the negative impact that other people's perceptions had on the friendship. For instance, other people thinking that it was strange the two were friends, other friends not liking that specific friend, prioritizing a girlfriend or boyfriend over the former friend, and disapproval from parents were all cited as reasons for why friendships ended. Prior research indicates that support from other people is an important component of long-lasting romantic relationships (Rose & Serafica, 1986; Sinclair et al., 2014; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992), and the current study provides evidence for the important contribution a lack of external support may have on the dissolution of friendships. Studies of adults also have found that third parties can interfere in friendships, often by forming romantic relationships with one member of the dyad, taking away from the time they could spend with the former friend (Owens, 2003). Similar processes may be evident among early adolescents as well. Interference from romantic partners may increase across early adolescence as youths increasingly form romantic relationships and shift their attention toward those romantic partners at the expense of their friends (Kuttler & La Greca, 2004), which may partly explain why sixth graders reported this reason less frequently than did eighth graders in the current sample. The strong impact that other people's perceptions had on the stability of friendships indicates that friendship researchers would be wise to extend their focus beyond specific friendship dyads to the broader social context in which youths' friendships are situated.

Friendships are incredibly important for their provisions of social support and intimacy, but they also are meant to be a source of fun and companionship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Parker & Asher, 1993). The results of the current study caution against overlooking the importance of friends having fun together and enjoying spending time with each other, as this was a commonly cited reason for dissolution. Of note, the reasons that fell within this category referenced the friends not having fun together or doing fun things together, but also included indicators of depression on the part of either the former friend or focal adolescent. Such items indicated that one of the former friends always wanted to talk about their problems, seemed down or depressed, or left their friend feeling down or depressed after spending time together, all things that would make the friendship less fun. The finding that youths cite this as a reason for ending their friendship maps on to the interpersonal theory of depression, which posits that depressive symptoms contribute to relationship difficulties (Coyne, 1976; also see Rose et al., 2011), in part because relationship partners may find the behavior of depressed individuals to be aversive (e.g., excessive reassurance-seeking Joiner & Metalsky, 2001; Stewart & Harkness, 2017). It also is interesting to note that this was cited as a reason more commonly in eighth grade than in sixth grade, which is in line with findings suggesting that depression increases in prevalence across this time (Cole et al., 2011; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). However, it is acknowledged that the current measure included only a few indicators of depressive symptoms along with other indicators of lack of fun and enjoyable companionship. Future research including a more thorough assessment of depressive symptoms will offer a fuller understanding of the role of depression in friendship dissolution.

Another key aspect of dyadic friendships is that they are reciprocal (Bukowski et al., 1998). However, there can exist variation in the effort that each party puts into maintaining the

friendship. In the current study, several participants reported that their friendship ended due to feeling as though their friendship was not a two-way street, or that one of the former friends put in considerably more effort than the other. According to social exchange theory, the continuation and success of a relationship is dependent on the extent to which there is a mutually rewarding exchange of ‘goods’ or transactions (Emerson, 1976). If examined through the lens of this theory, it might be the case that if one adolescent feels they are putting in more effort, and feels undervalued by the former friend, they may evaluate that the costs of the relationship outweigh the rewards and dissolve the relationship. Interestingly, there were no grade or gender differences in the frequency with which this category was cited as a reason for dissolution, suggesting that this is a component of friendship that is important to girls and boys alike in middle school, and perhaps not as developmentally situated as other reasons.

Finally, some friendships ended for situational reasons. In this study, situational reasons included no longer being in the same class as the former friend, with participants writing in that they did not go to the same school anymore, or that their former friend moved towns. Although higher order factors such as trust and intimacy may gain importance across adolescence (Selman, 1980), it is important to note that being in close proximity and having frequent contact remains important across this developmental period, and continues to be important even into emerging adulthood (Owens, 2003).

Ways to End the Friendship. The third factor of interest in the current study was the ways adolescents went about ending their friendship. The frequency with which participants reported that they used each strategy was considered separately from the frequency with which participants reported that their former friend used each strategy. However, simply avoiding the other person until they got the message that the friendship was over was the strategy most

commonly utilized by both the former friend and the focal adolescent. When considered together (i.e., the frequency with which either the former friend or focal adolescent used this strategy), avoidance was more common among girls compared to boys, and eighth graders utilized this strategy more frequently than sixth and seventh graders. The direction of the grade effect was unexpected. It may be expected that as adolescents developed cognitively they would also develop more sophisticated ways of dealing with conflict and approaching these types of difficult situations, per Selman's (1980) theory. However, as many researchers have pointed out, one way that friendship dissolution differs markedly from breakups of romantic relationships is that there is not as strong an expectation for friendship dissolutions to be acknowledged and confirmed the way there is in romantic relationships (Cody, 1982; Fehr, 1996; Hays, 1985). Past research has demonstrated that girls tend to exhibit more advanced social cognition in adolescence than boys (Bosacki, 2007; Devine & Hughes, 2013; Smith & Rose, 2011; Van der Graaff et al., 2014), and social cognitive skills continue to develop across adolescence (Flannery & Smith, 2016a; Vetter, Leipold, Kliegel, Phillips, & Altgassen, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that girls and older adolescents have a better understanding of the ways in which friendship dissolution expectations differ from romantic breakups, and are better able to recognize that avoidance is the least harmful method of ending the friendship, as evidenced by the associations with adjustment (discussed further below).

Following avoidance, the next most common strategies utilized by the former friend were to engage in conflict as a means of ending a friendship, followed by acting in a passive aggressive manner to convey the friendship was over. Of all the strategies presented, these two are most difficult to conceptually differentiate between a *cause of* the friendship dissolution and *how* the friendship ended. For example, a friendship could end because the former friends fought

too much or because one of the former friends acted passive aggressively toward the other as a general interpersonal style (e.g., by frequently giving backhanded compliments). These reasons may be distinct from using conflict or passive aggression as a deliberate strategy to end the friendship, such as by starting a big fight as a way of ending a friendship, or committing discrete acts of passive aggression with the specific purpose to send the message that the friendship was over. These strategies were outlined by Baxter and Philpott (1982) as methods used to end friendships. However, there is not enough existing literature to help differentiate these methods from reasons, and in the current study, reasons and ways were highly correlated. Thus, more work is needed in this area. Qualitative studies that ask adolescents explicitly to differentiate *why* a specific friendship ended, compared to *how* one of the parties went about ending it, may be beneficial for clarifying this distinction.

A separate strategy is to tell the other person directly that the friendship is over. In the current study, direct strategies were the fourth most commonly used strategy by the former friend, but the second most common for the focal adolescent (second only to avoidance). This finding is in line with results from the study by Baxter and Philpott (1982) in which adolescents reported on how they would go about dissolving a friendship in a hypothetical scenario. Results from this previous study suggested that the most common method for terminating a friendship was to exclude the other and avoid being around them (similar to avoidance in the current study), and the second most common strategy was to make it clear that they did not like the other person and no longer wanted to be friends (e.g., “I’d tell him that I really didn’t like him anymore,” Baxter & Philpott, 1982, pp. 220). Given that the few existing studies assessing methods of ending friendships rely exclusively on hypothetical scenarios (e.g., Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Benenson & Christakos, 2003), the present research offers an important contribution by

providing evidence that adolescents' responses to hypothetical vignettes in previous research map on to the current findings regarding adolescents' real-life dissolution experiences.

Finally, the strategy utilized by the fewest participants was having another friend tell the other that the friendship was over. In a previous study concerning the dissolution of romantic relationships, participants rated the strategy of asking a third party to break the news about the breakup to the other person as the least compassionate method (Sprecher et al., 2010). Given that the former friends likely cared about each other at some point, perhaps they shared this perception and therefore chose not to end their friendships in this way. It also may be the case that the participants perceived this as an immature strategy. Future studies that encompass participants of a wider age range might examine whether this is more commonplace among younger children.

Participants' ratings in Sprecher and colleagues' (2010) study additionally may shed light on another pattern observed in the ways adolescents reported that their friendship ended in the current study. According to Sprecher et al. (2010), ending a relationship is a process, and whereas it is sometimes a mutual decision, most often one person initiates the dissolution. In the current study, however, when asked who ended the friendship, participants were much more likely to report that it was a mutual decision than to point to either friend as being solely responsible. This might be one area in particular that friendship dissolution differs from that of romantic relationship dissolution (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015; Sprecher et al., 2010).

In contrast, regarding specific methods that could be used to end a friendship, participants were more likely to report that their former friend used conflict, passive-aggression, and third party strategies than to report using those strategies themselves. The two methods for which no difference in frequency of use by the focal adolescent versus former friend emerged

were avoidance and direct strategies. Direct strategies were rated as the most compassionate way of ending a relationship according to participants in the Sprecher et al. (2010) study, and avoidance was associated with the best adjustment in the current study. Baxter and Philpott (1982) also put forth the idea that using one of the more negative strategies would leave the participant vulnerable to judgment by the social network as being responsible for the relationship failure. Taken together, the pattern observed in the current study may reflect that participants did not want to report ending their relationship with a former friend in a less compassionate way, and were more likely to attribute that style of ending the friendship to the former friend.

Although adolescents reported that they often mutually decided to end their friendship, in terms of the *reasons* why the dissolution occurred, participants were more likely to suggest that their friend did something that caused the friendship to end than they did, effectively shifting the blame away from themselves. A study on the breakup of romantic relationships in adolescence uncovered a similar pattern, in which adolescents typically reported that it was the partner who was not meeting their needs, and thus they caused the relationship to end (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). Despite blaming the reason on the former partner, adolescents in the previous study were more likely to describe the dissolution as being self-initiated, such that they were the one to end things (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). It may be the case that it is easier to place blame on the other person in both types of relationships, instead of owning up to being the one that did something to cause the relationship to end. Because friendships may not require the same explicit breaking up process as romantic relationships, perhaps this is why adolescents were more likely to report that the dissolution was mutual, reflecting that they were unsure as to who ended the relationship and how the relationship ended. An in-depth examination of the similarities and

differences between romantic relationship dissolution and friendship dissolution in adolescence is merited.

Associations with Adjustment

The second major contribution of the current study was that it tested relations between dissolution experiences and adolescents' adjustment following the dissolution. I hypothesized that the total number of dissolutions an adolescent experienced would be related to their current levels of adjustment. Results suggesting that those adolescents who experienced a greater number of dissolutions also reported experiencing more current symptoms of depression provided support for this hypothesis. It may be that the impact of friendship dissolution is cumulative, and that the more dissolutions an adolescent experiences, the more likely they are to experience poor adjustment. One potential explanation for this cumulative effect is that each additional friendship that dissolves leaves the adolescent with one fewer person to turn to for social support. Additional support for this reasoning was shown in the significant relation between higher ratios of dissolved friendships to current friendships and more symptoms of depression. The significant association between number of dissolutions and greater depressive symptoms also supports previous studies which have found that high instability in friendships over time is associated with greater internalizing problems (Chan & Poulin, 2009). However, in the current study, directionality cannot be assumed, and it is possible that those adolescents who are depressed also tend to experience more dissolutions. According to the interpersonal theory of depression (Coyne, 1976; Joiner & Metalsky, 1995), not only do relationship disruptions lead to depression, but depression leads to aversive behaviors that can negatively impact relationships such as excessive reassurance-seeking (Stewart & Harkness, 2015, 2017). For example, in a study of fifth, seventh, and ninth graders, those who suffered from symptoms of depression

experienced more conflict, less positive friendship quality, and less stability in their friendships (Rose et al., 2011). Interpreting the results of the current study through the lens of the interpersonal theory of depression would indicate that the relationship between the number of dissolutions and depressive symptoms is bi-directional, pointing to a problematic cycle such that those adolescents who experience friendship dissolution are more likely experience depressive symptoms, which in turn may predict less stability in other friendships, leading to more experiences of depression. Longitudinal studies will be needed to examine these relations over time.

Reactions to dissolution. In addition to understanding current indicators of adjustment, immediate reactions to a specific dissolution experience also merit consideration. Therefore, in the present study, adolescents chose one friendship (i.e., the friend with whom they had been closest) to report on their reactions to the dissolution of that friendship. There is evidence to suggest that experiencing a friendship dissolution would have a negative impact on an adolescents' well-being (e.g., Bowker, 2011; Chan & Poulin, 2009), but it also has been theorized that friendship dissolutions are not always a negative experience (Fehr, 1996). In fact, Flannery and Smith (2016b) suggested that a dissolution can even be a somewhat positive experience when it protects youth from the negative effects of depression contagion or risky-behavior contagion, or helps youth achieve a desired boost in their peer status. Additionally, according to Jalma (2008), ending a friendship also can help people grow in unexpected ways, providing them with a better sense of themselves and their needs. Accordingly, the current study assessed both negative reactions to the dissolution (e.g., sadness, anger) and positive reactions (i.e., happiness/relief). Reactions were assessed both in terms of how intensely adolescents experienced each reaction, as well as the duration of each reaction. Findings support the

necessity of specifying this distinction, as the reaction felt most strongly (i.e., sadness), was not the reaction with the longest duration (i.e., positivity).

Of the various reactions experienced by the participants in this study, consistent gender differences emerged. Given previous findings that girls react to friendship transgressions more negatively than boys (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012), are more distressed at the idea of a potential friendship termination (Benenson & Christakos, 2003), and tend to place more importance on their dyadic friendships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006), it is perhaps unsurprising that girls reported more intense feelings of sadness, rumination, loneliness, and stress than boys, and also reported significantly less happiness/relief following the dissolution. Because girls are at higher risk for developing internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression (Hankin, 2009; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002), and taking into account the well-established link between some of these reactions and internalizing problems (e.g., rumination; Calmes & Roberts, 2007; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1993), these findings suggest that girls may be at more risk following a dissolution experience than boys.

A significant effect of grade also emerged, such that sixth graders reported more intense and long-lasting feelings of sadness than seventh and eighth graders, and less positivity than eighth graders following the dissolution experience. That sixth graders reacted most negatively to the dissolution experience is concerning given that sixth graders experienced the greatest number of dissolutions, suggesting that this transition period into middle-school is a particularly difficult time. One potential explanation for this difficulty in coping with the dissolution experience is a potential lack of clarity about why the friendship ended. As demonstrated in this study, sixth graders were least likely to endorse several categories of reasons as being the explanation for why their friendship ended. It may be that sixth graders had the least clear sense

of why the friendship ended and that this uncertainty was particularly distressing, as has been found in romantic relationships (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015). Several of the provided reasons for dissolution also included some sort of friendship transgression, or indicator that the friendship was not wholly positive. Not being able to identify specific reasons that could help the adolescent justify the benefits of the dissolution may have led to greater feelings of loss and sadness. Additional research on this developmental period is needed to adequately explain these observed patterns.

Although experiencing some negative feelings in reaction to a friendship dissolution may be seen as normative and expected, it is important to note that several of these negative reactions were significantly associated with current levels of depressive symptomatology, and some with lower levels of hope. These significant associations provide further evidence that these reactions merit attention, especially for identifying those dissolution experiences that lead to the greatest issues with adjustment. Interestingly, positive reactions to the dissolution were not associated with either current indicator of adjustment. Like in Bowker's (2011) study, these positive reactions, including happiness and relief, were often reported simultaneously with negative reactions. It is likely that although the adolescents may have experienced some negative reactions to the loss of a friendship, they also were able to recognize that the friendship was flawed or toxic, and therefore felt happy and relieved when the friendship was over and the negativity ceased. The potential protective effect of these positive reactions, however, might be limited to the extent that they co-occur with negative reactions. Overall, the experience of friendship dissolution appears to result in a "mixed-bag" of emotional reactions for adolescents. However, the extent to which an adolescent reacted positively was closely tied to the reason cited for ending the friendship.

Reason for dissolution. The associations that emerged between the reasons for the dissolution and both current indicators of adjustment as well as specific reactions to the dissolution also are useful in identifying those dissolution experiences that place adolescents most at risk. For instance, if a friendship ended because one of the former friends created a conflict or committed an act of betrayal of loyalty and trust, the participant was more likely to report more current symptoms of depression and react with anger, but also with more happiness and relief. Although my hypothesis that betrayal committed by the focal adolescent would be associated with more reactions of guilt following the dissolution was supported, if it was the focal adolescent who committed the betrayal, compared to the former friend, the participant tended to feel additional negative emotions, such as less current hope, and more stress. Although this result did not support my hypothesis, the finding that betrayal committed by the former friend was associated with more positive reactions may help to make sense of the unexpected result. When it was the former friend who betrayed the focal adolescent, the adolescent may have been better able to justify that ending the friendship was for the best. On the other hand, when the focal adolescent was the one to commit the transgression, they may not have had this comfort, and additionally may have been blamed more harshly by others in the peer group (Baxter & Philpott, 1982), leading to elevated feelings of guilt and stress.

Results also partially supported the hypothesis that situational reasons for ending the friendship would be associated with less negative reactions. In this study, those adolescents who reported that their friendship ended due to a situational reason reported significantly less anger and guilt, but also felt significantly less positively after the friendship ended. It is likely that the situational reasons were attributed as being out of either adolescents' control or lacking negative intent and therefore did not evoke anger, guilt, or stress, but there also were no negative aspects

of the friendship that left the adolescent feeling relieved or happy that the friendship was over. These nuanced associations provide additional evidence for the importance of examining both negative and positive reactions to the dissolution.

Additional findings regarding reactions of guilt are of interest. As hypothesized, when the focal adolescent enacted a transgression that led to the dissolution of the friendship, they experienced significantly more guilt. The only exception to this pattern was observed in the association between lack of enjoyable companionship and guilt, such that focal adolescents were still likely to react with more guilt following the dissolution even if it was the former friend who enacted one of the reasons within this category. Of note, the items within this category largely suggested that the former friend was no longer fun to be around (i.e., they were always talking about their problems or they did not want to do fun things anymore), and were often indicators that the former friend may have been depressed or unhappy. Adolescents may have reacted with more stress and guilt for ending a friendship with someone who was experiencing emotional difficulties, perhaps because they felt as though they were “abandoning” a friend who was vulnerable, or because they anticipated that ending the friendship would compound the friend’s emotional problems. However, the significant association with positivity suggests in this situation adolescents also react positively, perhaps because they feel happy or relieved that they no longer had to spend time with this person.

Ways the friendship ended. The current study also examined associations between the methods adolescents reported using to end their friendships and indicators of adjustment and reactions to the dissolution. The observed associations suggested that when the focal adolescent ended the friendship they tended to feel significantly less negatively following the dissolution than when the former friend ended the friendship. This was especially true for the strategy of

avoidance, which when used by the focal adolescent, was associated with significantly less sadness, stress, and loneliness. When the former friend ended the friendship with avoidance, on the other hand, the participants tended to report feeling significantly angrier. This pattern of associations fits with research suggesting that in romantic relationships, feeling in control of the situation, or being the person who chose to end the relationship, was associated with better adjustment following the dissolution (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2015; Perilloux & Buss, 2008; Sprecher, 1994).

I hypothesized that the former friend ending the friendship by using avoidance would be associated with greater rumination because such methods may leave the reason for the dissolution more ambiguous. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Instead, only when the former friend told the focal adolescent directly that the friendship was over did the adolescent report greater rumination following the dissolution. It may be incorrect to assume that non-direct strategies such as avoidance necessarily result in more ambiguity. Additionally, there could be other, non-ambiguous, aspects of the dissolution that adolescents ruminated about when the friendship ended in a direct manner. For instance, instead of wondering why the friendship dissolved, they may spend time ruminating about the direct confrontation, especially if it happened in front of other people or was particularly embarrassing or hurtful. This finding is partially consistent with the pattern observed in adult romantic relationships, such that rumination was a common reaction when the other person ended the relationship (Perilloux & Buss, 2008).

Even if avoidance is a more ambiguous method for ending a friendship, the observed associations between dissolution strategies and reactions may have a developmental explanation. Early adolescents may experience friendship conflicts that they are not yet well equipped to

handle, given that their social perspective-taking ability, which has been theorized to be essential for managing conflict (Selman, 1980), is still developing at this age (Flannery & Smith, 2016a). It is possible, therefore, that the negative ramifications for direct and conflictual strategies outweigh the importance of understanding why the friendship ended, leaving avoidance as the most adaptive strategy. It also may be that the way in which friendships typically end differs qualitatively from the way that romantic relationships end. In romantic relationships, there are much stronger expectations that an ending will be explicitly conveyed to the other person (especially in instances of exclusivity between the two parties; Cody, 1982). In friendships, however, it is not always the case that explicit breakups take place (as evidenced by the high proportion of adolescents who say their friend ended by just avoiding the other person). These different norms and expectations of the relationships may then influence how an adolescent reacts to a specific experience.

Influence of context. The third aim of this study was to examine how the social context surrounding a dissolution experience influenced how that dissolution was perceived by the adolescent. One contextual factor of interest was the availability of someone to talk with about the dissolution and with whom the participants chose to discuss the dissolution. The data demonstrated that adolescents most often spoke to parents and close friends about the dissolution experience, followed by siblings, other relatives, romantic partners, non-parental adults, and online friends. Notably, about 35% of the sample reported not speaking to anyone about the dissolution at all. It may seem surprising that such a large portion of the sample chose not to speak about something that many of the participants reported as being upsetting, especially considering that discussing the experience with friends is one of the most common ways of coping with the breakup of a romantic relationship (Perilloux & Buss, 2008). However, the

observed result is similar to findings by Jalma (2008), in which adult women reported that they rarely spoke about the experience of dissolving a friendship. Given that studies rarely observe a reluctance to speak about the dissolution of romantic relationships, perhaps there is something specific to friendship dissolutions that people are embarrassed to discuss. It might be the case that because adolescents perceive the dissolution of romantic relationships as more normative than friendship dissolution, they feel more comfortable discussing it with others. Although the current study did not compare romantic versus friendship perceptions directly, adolescents did report on their perceptions of the normativeness of friendship dissolution. Specifically, they rated how true they thought the following statement was, “It is very common for people my age to lose close friends or have good friendships end.” The responses revealed that more than half of the sample (55.3%) responded that this was *not at all true* (0) to *somewhat true* (2), and only 13.6% of the sample responded that this statement was *very true* (4). An important aim of this study is to open a dialogue about friendship dissolution among adolescents, especially given that those adolescents who did have someone to talk to following the dissolution reported better adjustment.

Another contextual factor that was of interest in the current study extended beyond whether or not an adolescent had someone to talk to following the dissolution, and focused on how the dissolution experience directly disrupted other relationships. In middle school, friendship networks tend to be relatively interconnected (Veenstra et al., 2013), suggesting that adolescents’ friends are usually friends with each other. Given this context, the current study revealed that when an adolescent experienced a dissolution with one friend, this often had a disruptive impact on their other relationships, such that they reported being invited to social gatherings less frequently, or had to switch who they sat with at lunch. Those dissolutions that

had a greater disruptive impact on the rest of the adolescents' social world were associated with worse adjustment outcomes following the dissolution, including experiencing more symptoms of depression, and reacting more negatively to the dissolution. When adolescents lose one friendship, this might lead to the loss of other friendships and force adolescents to make new friends. This compounding effect, like what was observed in the relationship between number of dissolutions and adjustment, provides more support for the idea that future studies should examine whether friendships tend to dissolve in clusters (i.e., experiencing multiple dissolutions over a short span of time instead of few at a time on separate occasions), and how this impacts an adolescent's well-being.

Of note, the disruptive relationship impact that a dissolution had was not influenced by either the length, quality, or setting of the friendship, as I had hypothesized. Although it seems likely that long-term friends who know each other from school probably do have more friends in common than shorter-term friends who know each other from a more remote setting (e.g., a recreational sports team), the current study may have overlooked a key component in these relationships. That is, the current study did not examine the social status of both members of the former friendship. This is an important factor that should be taken into account in future studies, as it is possible that one of the former friends is more central to the shared friend group than the other, and therefore would be at less risk of losing other friendships as a result of the dissolution. If this is the case, only one member of the former dyad would be likely to experience a greater negative relationship impact when the former friends had many friends in common. An important next step for research in this area is to assess reciprocal nominations of former friendships, and to gather sociometric data for all participants.

Although disruptive relationship impact did not mediate associations between former friendship quality and reactions to the dissolution, several direct associations were observed. The results suggested that dissolving a friendship that was of higher quality was particularly distressing, resulting in more sadness, anger, loneliness, and rumination following the dissolution, as well as less positivity. A recent meta-analysis examining the associations between adolescents' romantic relationship quality and subsequent mental health following a breakup uncovered a similar pattern such that dissolving higher quality relationships was associated with more mental health issues (Mirsu-Paun & Oliver, 2017). Not only does this information help to identify dissolution experiences that are likely to be most distressing to adolescents, but it also demonstrates that despite the friendship ending and the negative feelings that might be associated with that experience, adolescents were still able to look back on a friendship that ended and recognize that it was of high quality. This may help to quell some worries about the use of retrospective accounts in studying these experiences.

Limitations

In addition to relying on retrospective accounts of friendship dissolution, the current study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. For instance, all data relied on self-report and were cross-sectional, limiting the assumptions that can be made about the direction of effects. Due to issues with measurement, analyses did not account for the time since the dissolution occurred. It is likely that adolescents' perceptions of a dissolution change over time, and associations may be stronger for those dissolutions that occurred more recently. To amend this error, future studies should aim to assess the time since the dissolution in a way that is more accessible to such young participants, perhaps by utilizing a Likert scale with specified timeframes. Future studies also may aim to be more targeted in their approach, as the

survey utilized in the current study was relatively long (taking the adolescents between 40 minutes to an hour to complete), which may have resulted in fatigue and low quality responses. An aim for my future work will be to utilize the information gleaned from the current study to modify the newly created measures to make them more streamlined and accessible for future research. To do this, I will use information from confirmatory factor analyses to pinpoint the most important items to include, and assess measurement invariance across gender and grade to assure that measures going forward are of the highest quality. Finally, because data were collected in a school from which the majority of the participants reported knowing their former friend, interdependence of data is a concern. Due to the completely anonymous nature of the study, I was unable to account for this interdependence between former friends. Future studies that utilize reciprocal nominations from former friendship dyads, and that account for sociometric status, would be better situated to model these dependencies.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Despite the limitations inherent in this study, the novelty and relevance of the topic argue for the importance and potential impact of this line of research. Key findings from the current study include that dissolutions are incredibly common, with over 80% of the sample reporting having experienced a friendship dissolution in the last five years, that conflict/betrayal is the most common reason for dissolution, and that avoidance is the most common method used to end a friendship. The current study also demonstrated that adolescents feel sadness with greatest intensity following dissolution, followed by feelings of happiness and relief, and that these reactions are differentially associated with both the reasons for dissolution and ways the dissolution takes place.

Although friendship dissolution is pervasive in the lives of adolescents, it is a topic that is paid little attention in the literature. Results from the current study, implicating the importance of why friendships end, how friendships end, and the contextual factors surrounding the dissolution, suggest that this is an area ripe for future investigation. The most obvious direction for future research is to prospectively examine this experience, mitigating any retrospective biases and assessing the experience in real time. This type of study also should aim to examine the dissolution from the perspective of both former friends, an approach that would not only shed light on how adolescents' perceptions of the dissolution are discrepant, but also helping to identify those at most risk.

As noted previously, future studies that aim to understand the number of dissolutions that adolescents experience might consider creating a timeline of dissolution experiences. This would allow researchers to understand whether dissolutions tend to happen simultaneously, or are more spread out. This more developmental approach also might be of interest across various life transitions. In the current study, we observed that sixth graders reported more dissolution experiences than seventh or eighth graders. Importantly, sixth graders had recently undergone a transition period, and were more likely to be reporting on dissolutions from elementary school, whereas seventh and eighth graders had more time to establish their middle-school friendships and peer group hierarchies. Previous research supports the idea that friendships are least stable across school transitions (Chan & Poulin, 2007; Fehr, 1996; Hardy et al., 2002), which may suggest that examining dissolution experiences across other developmental transitions, such as across the transition into high school, into college, into new careers, and into starting families, would be incredibly interesting directions for future research in this area. These developmentally situated studies could compare not only the prevalence of friendship dissolutions across these

various phases of life, but also the reasons why friendships end, the ways friendships end, and how people react to these experiences. Qualitative studies in this area also might be useful in understanding how participants distinguish between factors like reasons *why* friendships end compared to *how* friendships end, and more fully explaining how cognitions about dissolution experiences may shift over time. Whether there are differences between reasons for and ways of enacting dissolution for best friends compared to good or close friends, and the associated adjustment, also requires empirical examination.

Although future work is certainly needed to refine our understanding of this experience, the current study has important implications for intervention efforts. Given the negative impact dissolution experiences can have, the primary goal of these intervention efforts would likely be to prevent dissolutions where possible. This might include educating adolescents about the most common reasons for dissolution, such as betrayal and lack of social support, and providing youth with social skills training to help them avoid these pitfalls in their own friendships. Previous studies have demonstrated social skills training to be effective in improving peer acceptance (Oden & Asher, 1977), but given the differing skills required for friendship maintenance compared to acceptance from the broader peer group (Flannery & Smith, 2016b), training more targeted toward friendships may be an important avenue for intervention efforts. Boosting adolescents' social perspective-taking skills may be of primary interest for helping youth salvage a struggling friendship, as this is a skill theorized to help with conflict management and negotiation (Selman, 1980), and is associated with better friendship quality (Smith & Rose, 2011).

Intervention efforts aimed at reducing the occurrence of dissolution have the potential to be very useful, but it also is important to recognize that avoiding dissolution is not always

possible, and perhaps not always advisable. Therefore, intervention efforts also should encompass training aimed toward helping adolescents successfully navigate this experience. This type of training might include helping adolescents to recognize when they are in unhealthy or toxic relationships and empowering them around self-care with reminders that it is okay to end a friendship to protect their own well-being. Past research has highlighted the risk for depression contagion in adolescent friendships (Prinstein, 2007), especially when the friends co-ruminate, or talk excessively about their problems (Schwartz-Mette & Rose, 2012; Schwartz-Mette & Smith, 2016). As such, ending a friendship with someone who is depressed or constantly bringing the friend down may be merited if it protects youth from depression contagion. There may be heightened negative consequences for the depressed friend, however, in that ending the friendship may serve to exacerbate depressive symptoms (i.e., interpersonal theory of depression Coyne, 1976). Therefore, discussion about the most compassionate ways to end friendships, and increasing availability of formal resources for those who have experienced dissolution, are warranted.

Additionally, providing assurances that dissolution is a normative experience and that adolescents who experience this are not alone may prove beneficial. In the current study, 27.7% of the sample indicated that if they had known that it was very common for people their age to lose close or good friends, this would have helped them to feel less upset about their own dissolution. Increasing discussions around this topic, therefore, may help adolescents to feel less alone and more comfortable talking to other people about their dissolution experiences, which was demonstrated to be useful in helping to protect youth from developing internalizing problems in the current study. Finally, as mentioned above, conversations around this topic might help to inform youth about the most compassionate ways to go about ending their

friendship, preferably by avoiding engaging in conflict or acting passive aggressively toward the former friend, in order to protect the well-being of both parties.

Friendships are incredibly important relationships in adolescence, and the more we as researchers understand about them, the more we are able to inform intervention efforts and help to foster positive relationships among youth. The current study provided the first comprehensive look at friendship dissolutions during early adolescence, and filled many gaps in the current literature. The ubiquity of friendship dissolution in adolescence argues for the importance of understanding not only the circumstances surrounding it, but also the associated adjustment outcomes associated in both the short- and long-term. This study served as an important first step toward providing teens, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals with information about the experience of friendship dissolution in adolescence.

References

- Azmitia, M., Lippman, D. N., & Ittel, A. (1999). On the relation of personal experience to early adolescents' reasoning about best friendship deterioration. *Social Development, 8*(2), 275–291.
- Bagwell, C. L., & Schmidt, M. E. (2013). *Friendships in childhood and adolescence*. Guilford Press.
- Barutçu Yıldırım, F., & Demir, A. (2015). Breakup adjustment in young adulthood. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 93*(1), 38–44.
- Baxter, L. A., & Philpott, J. (1982). Attribution-based strategies for initiating and terminating friendships. *Communication Quarterly, 30*(3), 217–224.
- Benenson, J. F., & Christakos, A. (2003). The greater fragility of females' versus males' closest same-sex friendships. *Child Development, 74*(4), 1123–1129.
- Bigelow, B. J., & La Gaipa, J. J. (1980). The development of friendship values and choice. In H. C. Foot, A. J. Chapman, & J. R. Smith (Eds.), *Friendship and social relations in children* (pp. 15–44). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Bishop, J. A., & Inderbitzen, H. M. (1995). Peer acceptance and friendship: An investigation of their relation to self-esteem. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 15*(4), 476–489.
- Bleske-Rechek, A. L., & Buss, D. M. (2001). Opposite-sex friendship: Sex differences and similarities in initiation, selection, and dissolution. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(10), 1310–1323.
- Bosacki, S. L. (2007). Children's understandings of emotions and self: Are there gender differences? *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 22*(2), 155–172.

- Bowker, A. (2004). Predicting friendship stability during early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 24*(2), 85–112.
- Bowker, J. C. (2011). Examining two types of best friendship dissolution during early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 31*(5), 656–670.
- Brechwald, W. a, & Prinstein, M. J. (2011). Beyond homophily: A decade of advances in understanding peer influence processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 21*(1), 166–179.
- Buhrmester, D. (1990). Intimacy of friendship, interpersonal competence, and adjustment during preadolescence and adolescence. *Child Development, 61*(4), 1101–1111.
- Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1987). The development of companionship and intimacy. *Child Development, 58*(4), 1101–1113.
- Bukowski, W. M., Newcomb, A. F., & Hartup, W. W. (1998). *The company they keep: Friendships in childhood and adolescence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Calmes, C. A., & Roberts, J. E. (2007). Repetitive thought and emotional distress: Rumination and worry as prospective predictors of depressive and anxious symptomatology. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 31*(3), 343–356.
- Carter, R., & Williams, S. (2016). Self-perceptions of pubertal timing and patterns of peer group activities and dating behavior among heterosexual adolescent girls. *Journal of Adolescence, 47*, 71–80.
- Chan, A., & Poulin, F. (2007). Monthly changes in the composition of friendship networks in early adolescence. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 53*(4), 578–602.
- Chan, A., & Poulin, F. (2009). Monthly instability in early adolescent friendship networks and depressive symptoms. *Social Development, 18*(1), 1–23.

- Cillessen, A. H. N., & Mayeux, L. (2004). From censure to reinforcement: Developmental changes in the association between aggression and social status. *Child Development, 75*(1), 147–163.
- Clark, M. L., & Ayers, M. (1993). Friendship expectations and friendship evaluations: Reciprocity and gender effects. *Youth & Society, 24*(3), 299–313.
- Cody, M. J. (1982). A typology of disengagement strategies and an examination of the role intimacy, reactions to inequity and relational problems play in strategy selection. *Communication Monographs, 49*(3), 148–170.
- Cole, D. A., Jacquez, F. M., LaGrange, B., Pineda, A. Q., Truss, A. E., Weitlauf, A. S., ... Dallaire, D. H. (2011). A longitudinal study of cognitive risks for depressive symptoms in children and young adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 31*(6), 782–816.
- Connolly, J., & McIsaac, C. (2009). Adolescents' explanations for romantic dissolutions: A developmental perspective. *Journal of Adolescence, 32*(5), 1209–1223.
- Coyne, J. C. (1976). Toward an interactional description of depression. *Psychiatry, 39*(1), 28-.
- Dailey, R. M., Pfister, A., Jin, B., Beck, G., & Clark, G. (2009). On-again/off-again dating relationships: How are they different from other dating relationships? *Personal Relationships, 16*(1), 23–47.
- Davey, C. G., Yücel, M., & Allen, N. B. (2008). The emergence of depression in adolescence: Development of the prefrontal cortex and the representation of reward. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 32*(1), 1–19.
- Devine, R. T., & Hughes, C. (2013). Silent films and strange stories: Theory of mind, gender, and social experiences in middle childhood. *Child Development, 84*(3), 989–1003.
- Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335–362.

- Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship processes*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2016a). The effects of age, gender, and gender role ideology on adolescents' social perspective-taking ability and tendency in friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Published online before print. DOI: 10.1177/0265407516650942
- Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2016b). Are peer status, friendship quality, and friendship stability equivalent markers of social competence? *Adolescent Research Review*, Published Online First. DOI: 10.1007/s40894-016-0042-z
- Fletcher, A. C., Troutman, D. R., Gruber, K. J., Long, E., & Hunter, A. G. (2006). Context and closure in children's friendships: Prevalence and demographic variation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23(4), 609–627.
- Ford, T., Collishaw, S., Meltzer, H., & Goodman, R. (2007). A prospective study of childhood psychopathology: Independent predictors of change over three years. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 42, 953–961.
- Furman, W., & Bierman, K. L. (1984). Children's conceptions of friendship: A multimethod study of developmental changes. *Developmental Psychology*, 20(5), 925–931.
- Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development*, 63(1), 103–115.
- Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development*, 63, 103–115.

- Hankin, B. L. (2009). Development of sex differences in depressive and co-occurring anxious symptoms during adolescence: Descriptive trajectories and potential explanations in a multiwave prospective study. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 38*(4), 460–472.
- Hardy, C. L., Bukowski, W. M., & Sippola, L. K. (2002). Stability and change in peer relationships during the transition to middle-level school. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 22*(2), 117–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431602022002001>
- Hartup, W. W. (1996). The company they keep: Friendships and their developmental significance. *Child Development, 67*(1), 1–13.
- Hays, R. B. (1985). A longitudinal study of friendship development. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*(4), 909–924.
- Hays, R. B. (1988). Friendship. In S.W. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of Personal Relationships* (pp. 391-408). New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Jalma, K. S. (2008). *Women's friendship dissolution: A Qualitative Study*. University of Minnesota. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations.
- Johnson, A. J., Wittenberg, E., Haigh, M., Becker, J., Brown, K., & Craig, E. (2004). The process of relationship development and deterioration: Turning points in friendships that have terminated. *Communication Quarterly, 52*(1), 54–67.
- Joiner, T. E., & Metalsky, G. I. (1995). A prospective test of an integrative interpersonal theory of depression: A naturalistic study of college roommates. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(4), 778–788.

- Joiner, T. E., & Metalsky, G. I. (2001). Excessive reassurance seeking: Delineating a risk factor involved in the development of depressive symptoms. *Psychological Science, 12*(5), 371–378.
- Kuttler, A. F., & La Greca, A. M. (2004). Linkages among adolescent girls' romantic relationships, best friendships, and peer networks. *Journal of Adolescence, 27*(4), 395–414.
- La Gaipa, J. J. (1979). A developmental study of the meaning of friendship in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence, 2*(3), 201–213.
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V, von Eye, A., Bowers, E. P., & Lewin-Bizan, S. (2011). Individual and contextual bases of thriving in adolescence: A view of the issues. *Journal of Adolescence, 34*(6), 1107–1114.
- MacEvoy, J. P., & Asher, S. R. (2012). When friends disappoint: Boys' and girls' responses to transgressions of friendship expectations. *Child Development, 83*(1), 104–119.
- McDonald, K. L., Dashiell-Aje, E., Menzer, M. M., Rubin, K. H., Oh, W., & Bowker, J. C. (2013). Contributions of racial and sociobehavioral homophily to friendship stability and quality among same-race and cross-race friends. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 33*(7), 897–919.
- Meter, D. J., & Card, N. A. (2016). Stability of children's and adolescents' friendships: A meta-analytic review. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 62*(3), 252–284.
- Mirsu-Paun, A., & Oliver, J. A. (2017). How much does love really hurt? A meta-analysis of the association between romantic relationship quality, breakups and mental health outcomes in adolescents and young adults. *Journal of Relationships Research, 8*(e5), 1–12.

- Monroe, S. M., Rohde, P., Seeley, J. R., & Lewinsohn, P. M. (1999). Life events and depression in adolescence: Relationship loss as a prospective risk factor for first onset of major depressive disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 108*(4), 606–614.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Morrow, J. (1993). Effects of rumination and distraction on naturally occurring depressed mood. *Cognition and Emotion, 7*(6), 561–570.
- Oden, S., & Asher, S. R. (1977). Coaching children in social skills for friendship making. *Child Development, 48*, 495–506.
- Ohannessian, C. M. (2012). Parental problem drinking and adolescent psychosocial adjustment: The mediating role of adolescent–parent communication. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 22*(3), 498–511.
- Ojanen, T., Sijtsema, J. J., & Rambaran, A. J. (2013). Social goals and adolescent friendships: Social selection, deselection, and influence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23*(3), 550–562.
- Owens, R. A. (2003). *Friendship features associated with college students' friendship maintenance and dissolution following problems*. West Virginia University. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations.
- Parker, J. G., & Asher, S. R. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood: Links with peer group acceptance and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology, 29*(4), 611–621.
- Parker, J. G., Low, C. M., Walker, A. R., & Gamm, B. K. (2005). Friendship jealousy in young adolescents: Individual differences and links to sex, self-esteem, aggression, and social adjustment. *Developmental Psychology, 41*(1), 235–50.

- Perilloux, C., & Buss, D. M. (2008). Breaking up romantic relationships: Costs experienced and coping strategies deployed. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(1), 164–181.
- Poulin, F., & Chan, A. (2010). Friendship stability and change in childhood and adolescence. *Developmental Review*, 30(3), 257–272.
- Prinstein, M. J. (2007). Moderators of peer contagion: A longitudinal examination of depression socialization between adolescents and their best friends. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 36(2), 159–170.
- Quercia, D., Bodaghi, M., & Crowcroft, J. (2012). Loosing “friends” on Facebook. *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual ACM Web Science Conference on - WebSci '12*, 251–254.
- Rose, A. J., Carlson, W., Luebke, A. M., Schwartz-Mette, R. A., Smith, R. L., & Swenson, L. P. (2011). Predicting difficulties in youth’s friendships: Are anxiety symptoms as damaging as depressive symptoms? *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 57(3), 244–262.
- Rose, A. J., & Rudolph, K. D. (2006). A review of sex differences in peer relationship processes: Potential trade-offs for the emotional and behavioral development of girls and boys. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(1), 98–131.
- Rose, S. M. (1984). How friendships end: Patterns among young adults. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 1, 267–277.
- Rose, S. M., & Serafica, F. C. (1986). Keeping and ending casual, close and best friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 3, 275–288.
- Rubin, K. H., Bukowski, W. M., & Bowker, J. C. (2015). Children in peer groups. In M. H. Bornstein, T. Leventhal, R. M. Lerner, M. H. Bornstein (Ed), T. Leventhal (Ed), & R. M. Lerner (Ed) (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science: Ecological settings and processes*. (pp. 175–222). Hoboken, NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

- Samios, C., Henson, D. F., & Simpson, H. J. (2014). Benefit finding and psychological adjustment following a non-marital relationship breakup. *Journal of Relationships Research, 5*, 1–8.
- Schneider, B. H., Woodburn, S. S., del Toro, M. D. P. S., & Udvari, S. J. (2005). Cultural and gender differences in the implications of competition for early adolescent friendship. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 51*(2), 163–191.
- Schwartz-Mette, R. A., & Rose, A. J. (2012). Co-rumination mediates contagion of internalizing symptoms within youths' friendships. *Developmental Psychology, 48*(5), 1355–1365.
- Schwartz-Mette, R. A., & Smith, R. L. (2016). When does co-rumination facilitate depression contagion in adolescent friendships? Investigating intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 1–13*.
- Selman, R. L. (1980). *The growth of interpersonal understanding*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Shulman, S., Laursen, B., Kalman, Z., & Karpovsky, S. (1997). Adolescent intimacy revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26*(5), 597–617.
- Simpson, J. A. (1987). The dissolution of romantic relationships: Factors involved in relationship stability and emotional distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*(4), 683.
- Sinclair, H. C., Hood, K. B., & Wright, B. L. (2014). Revisiting the Romeo and Juliet effect (Driscoll, Davis, & Lipetz, 1972): Reexamining the links between social network opinions and romantic relationship outcomes. *Social Psychology, 45*(3), 170–178.
- Smetana, J. G., Campione-Barr, N., & Metzger, A. (2006). Adolescent development in interpersonal and societal contexts. *Annual Review of Psychology, 57*, 255–284.

- Smith, R. L., & Rose, A. J. (2011). The “cost of caring” in youths’ friendships: Considering associations among social perspective taking, co-rumination, and empathetic distress. *Developmental Psychology, 47*(6), 1792–1803.
- Snyder, C. R., Hoza, B., Pelham, W. E., Rapoff, M., Ware, L., Danovsky, M., ... Stahl, K. J. (1997). The development and validation of the Children’s Hope Scale. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 22*(3), 399–421.
- Sprecher, S. (1994). Two sides to the breakup of dating relationships. *Personal Relationships, 1*, 199–222.
- Sprecher, S., & Fehr, B. (1998). The dissolution of close relationships. In J. H. Harvey (Ed.), *Perspectives on Loss* (pp. 99–112). Philadelphia, PA: Edward Brothers.
- Sprecher, S., & Feinlee, D. (1992). The influence of parents and friends on the quality and stability of romantic relationships : A three-wave longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 54*(4), 888–900.
- Sprecher, S., Zimmerman, C., & Abrahams, E. M. (2010). Choosing compassionate strategies to end a relationship: Effects of compassionate love for partner and the reason for the breakup. *Social Psychology, 41*(2), 66–75.
- Stewart, J. G., & Harkness, K. L. (2015). The interpersonal toxicity of excessive reassurance-seeking: Evidence from a longitudinal study of romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 34*(5), 392–410.
- Stewart, J. G., & Harkness, K. L. (2017). Testing a revised interpersonal theory of depression using a laboratory measure of excessive reassurance seeking. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 73*(3), 331–348.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. Routledge.

- Tashiro, T., & Frazier, P. (2003). "I'll never be in a relationship like that again": Personal growth following romantic relationship breakups. *Personal Relationships, 10*(1), 113–128.
- Troutman, D. R., & Fletcher, a. C. (2010). Context and companionship in children's short-term versus long-term friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 27*(8), 1060–1074.
- Twenge, J. M., & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2002). Age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and birth cohort difference on the children's depression inventory: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 111*(4), 578–588.
- Urberg, K. A., Degirmencioglu, S. M., & Tolson, J. M. (1998). Adolescent friendship selection and termination: The role of similarity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*(5), 703–710.
- Van der Graaff, J., Branje, S., De Wied, M., Hawk, S., Van Lier, P., & Meeus, W. (2014). Perspective taking and empathic concern in adolescence: Gender differences in developmental changes. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(3), 881–888.
- van Workum, N., Scholte, R. H. J., Cillessen, A. H. N., Lodder, G. M. A., & Giletta, M. (2013). Selection, deselection, and socialization processes of happiness in adolescent friendship networks. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23*(3), 563–573.
- Veenstra, R., Dijkstra, J. K., Steglich, C., & Van Zalk, M. H. W. (2013). Network-behavior dynamics. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23*(3), 399–412.
- Vetter, N. C., Leipold, K., Kliegel, M., Phillips, L. H., & Altgassen, M. (2013). Ongoing development of social cognition in adolescence. *Child Neuropsychology, 19*(6), 615–629.

- Weissman, M. M., Orvaschel, H., & Padian, N. (1980). Children's symptom and social functioning self-report scales: Comparison of mothers' and children's reports. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, *168*(12), 736–740.
- Wilmot, W. W., Carbaugh, D. A., & Baxter, L. A. (1985). Communicative strategies used to terminate romantic relationships. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *49*(3), 204–216.
- Woods, C. M. (2002). Factor analysis of scales composed of binary items: Illustration with the Maudsley Obsessional Compulsive Inventory. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, *24*(4), 215–223.

Tables and Figures

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics About Reasons Why the Friendships Ended

Reason	Possible Range	N (%) of participants who endorsed at least one item	Mean Number of Items Endorsed (SD)	Observed min-max	Gender χ^2	Grade χ^2
Conflict/Betrayal						
Focal Adolescent	0-14	25.4% (n=71)	.61 (1.37)	0-9	.01	2.04
Former Friend	0-15	55.7% (n=157)	3.14 (4.19)	0-15	2.41	9.95**
Lack of Social Support						
Focal Adolescent	0-7	25.4% (n=71)	.39 (.84)	0-5	3.29	1.76
Former Friend	0-7	42.3% (n=119)	1.33 (2.04)	0-7	.12	7.90*
Lack of Similarity						
Overall	0-6	41.1% (n=117)	.79 (1.17)	0-5	.50	6.47*
Interference from Others						
Overall	0-13	116 (41.3%)	1.17 (1.93)	0-11	.34	13.52**
Lack of Companionship						
Focal Adolescent	0-6	23.8% (n=65)	.39 (.82)	0-5	.08	4.41
Former Friend	0-7	38.3% (n=105)	.85 (1.41)	0-7	.09	7.15*
Lack of Reciprocity						
Focal Adolescent	0-4	12.4% (n=33)	.18 (.53)	0-3	.11	.19
Former Friend	0-4	26.1% (n=70)	.45 (.89)	0-4	2.15	3.86
Situational						
Overall	0-1	24.0% (n=69)	0.24 (0.43)	0-1	.88	1.15

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics About How the Friendship Ended

How the Friendship Ended	Used by one of the former friends N(%)	Used by focal adolescent N (%)	Used by former friend N (%)	Gender χ^2	Grade χ^2
Avoidance	129 (46.9%)	86 (28.1%)	77 (25.2%)	5.67*	12.12**
Conflict	56 (20.4%)	26 (8.5%)	44 (14.4%)**	3.21	0.61
Passive-aggression	57 (18.6%)	21 (6.9%)	39 (12.7%)*	0.04	0.91
Direct	56 (18.3%)	34 (11.1%)	33 (10.8%)	0.02	3.16
Third party	35 (11.4%)	11 (3.6%)	26 (8.5%)**	3.20	1.30

Note. Participants were able to select both “I did this” and “my friend did this.” * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics About Reactions to the Friendship Dissolution

Reaction	Mean Intensity (SD)	Mean Duration (SD)	Gender Differences	Grade Differences
Sad	1.58 (1.59)	1.43 (1.69)	G>B***	6 > 7 & 8**
Positive	1.30 (1.44)	1.53 (1.78)	B>G*	6<8*
Ruminate	1.29 (1.52)	1.48 (1.80)	G>B**	ns
Angry	0.82 (1.23)	0.67 (1.10)	ns	ns
Lonely	0.78 (1.32)	0.96 (1.52)	G>B***	ns
Stressed	0.71 (1.26)	0.73 (1.26)	G>B**	ns
Guilty	0.50 (0.96)	0.69 (1.28)	ns	ns

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4.

Partial Correlations Between Reasons Why the Friendship Ended and Adjustment/Reactions

Variable	Depression	Hope	Sad	Angry	Stressed	Lonely	Guilt	Ruminate	Positive
Conflict/Betrayal									
Focal Adolescent	.16*	-.21**	-.05	.22**	.24**	-.11	.25***	-.05	.31***
Former friend	.14*	-.12	-.13	.17*	.12	-.10	.06	-.06	.41***
Lack of Social Support									
Focal Adolescent	.13	-.25***	-.13	.15*	.14	-.11	.15*	-.15*	.25***
Former friend	.11	-.03	-.18*	.07	.14	-.06	.04	-.10	.49***
Lack of Similarity									
Overall	-.07	-.03	-.28***	-.02	-.05	-.20**	.04	-.15*	.38***
Interference from Others									
Overall	.13	-.12	-.09	.12	.20**	.03	.21**	-.04	.41***
Lack of Companionship									
Focal Adolescent	.26*	-.14*	-.07	.14*	.24**	.02	.15*	.06	.31***
Former friend	.15*	-.12	-.13	.11	.20**	-.08	.16*	-.02	.45***
Lack of Reciprocity									
Focal Adolescent	.06	-.11	-.04	.13	.08	-.04	.22**	.02	.21**
Former friend	.15*	-.01	.06	.17*	.20**	.05	.04	.00	.19**
Situational									
Overall	-.13	.14	-.06	-.14*	-.10	-.13	-.20**	-.13	-.16*

Note. Reasons were binary with 1 indicating that at least one of the reasons the friendship ended fell within this category and 0 indicating it did not. Reaction variables were log transformed. Partial correlations controlling for gender and age are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.

Partial Correlations Between Ways the Friendship Ended and Adjustment/Reactions

Variable	Depression	Hope	Sad	Angry	Stressed	Lonely	Guilty	Ruminate	Positive
Avoidance									
Focal Adolescent	.04	-.10	-.17*	-.11	-.06	-.21**	.13	-.08	.40***
Former friend	.04	.03	.04	.21**	.05	-.04	.04	.05	.07
Conflict									
Focal Adolescent	.08	-.08	-.11	.13	.02	-.16*	.07	-.04	.15*
Former friend	.18**	-.15*	-.15*	.07	.18*	-.16*	.02	-.06	.31***
Passive-aggression									
Focal Adolescent	-.02	.07	.07	.06	.07	.01	.12	.04	.14*
Former friend	.22**	-.06	.05	.20**	.27***	-.07	-.00	.02	.16*
Direct									
Focal Adolescent	.03	-.09	-.14*	.12	.12	-.06	.04	-.04	.17*
Former friend	.17*	.03	.16*	.24***	.15*	.03	.10	.14*	.17*
Third party									
Focal Adolescent	-.08	.10	-.03	-.03	.00	-.12	-.12	-.05	.23**
Former friend	.16*	-.02	.06	.05	.14*	-.11	-.07	.03	.10

Note. Ways were binary. Reaction variables were log transformed. Partial correlations controlling for gender and age are presented.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 6.

Partial Correlations Between Sources of Support and Adjustment/Reactions

Variable	Depression	Hope	Sad	Angry	Stressed	Lonely	Guilty	Ruminate	Positive
Parent	-.05	.12	.12	.07	.06	.13	.06	.08	.09
Sibling	-.03	-.04	.12	.03	-.07	.03	-.02	-.05	.15*
Relative	-.05	.08	.08	.16*	.06	.01	.03	-.02	.05
Mutual Friend	-.05	.06	.04	.00	.16*	-.06	.03	.18*	.23**
Non-mutual friend	.03	.03	.07	.16*	.15*	.10	.10	.11	-.04
Online	.09	-.13	-.04	.13	.19**	-.02	.03	.16*	.00
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	.15*	-.11	.08	.11	.16*	-.06	.02	.06	.15*
Non-parent adult	.12	-.04	.11	.18*	.27***	.23**	.02	.08	.08
Talk yes/no	-.19**	.27***	-.01	-.04	-.03	-.11	-.09	-.03	.03

Note. Sources of support. Reaction variables were log transformed. Partial correlations controlling for gender and age are presented.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 7.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Examining the Moderating Role of Availability of Support on the Relationship Between Effect on Other Relationships and Adjustment

Predictors	Depressive Symptoms			Model for Hope		
	β	B (SE)	ΔR^2	β	B (SE)	ΔR^2
Step 1			.02			.01
Gender	.10	.12 (.08)		-.05	-.39 (.56)	
Grade	-.09	-.06 (.05)		-.06	-.26 (.33)	
Step 2			.15***			.07**
Gender	.09	.11 (.08)		-.08	-.65 (.55)	
Grade	-.08	-.05 (.05)		-.07	-.35 (.32)	
Relationship impact	.34***	.25 (.05)		-.09	-.41 (.33)	
Support	-.14*	-.18 (.09)		.24**	2.01 (.58)	
Step 3			.00			.00
Gender	.09	.11 (.08)		-.08	-.66 (.55)	
Grade	-.08	-.05 (.05)		-.07	-.34 (.32)	
Relationship impact	.39***	.29 (.07)		-.07	-.31 (.49)	
Support	-.14*	-.17 (.09)		.25**	2.02 (.58)	
Relationship impact x Support	-.07	-.07 (.10)		-.03	-.18 (.67)	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Variables were centered.

Table 8.

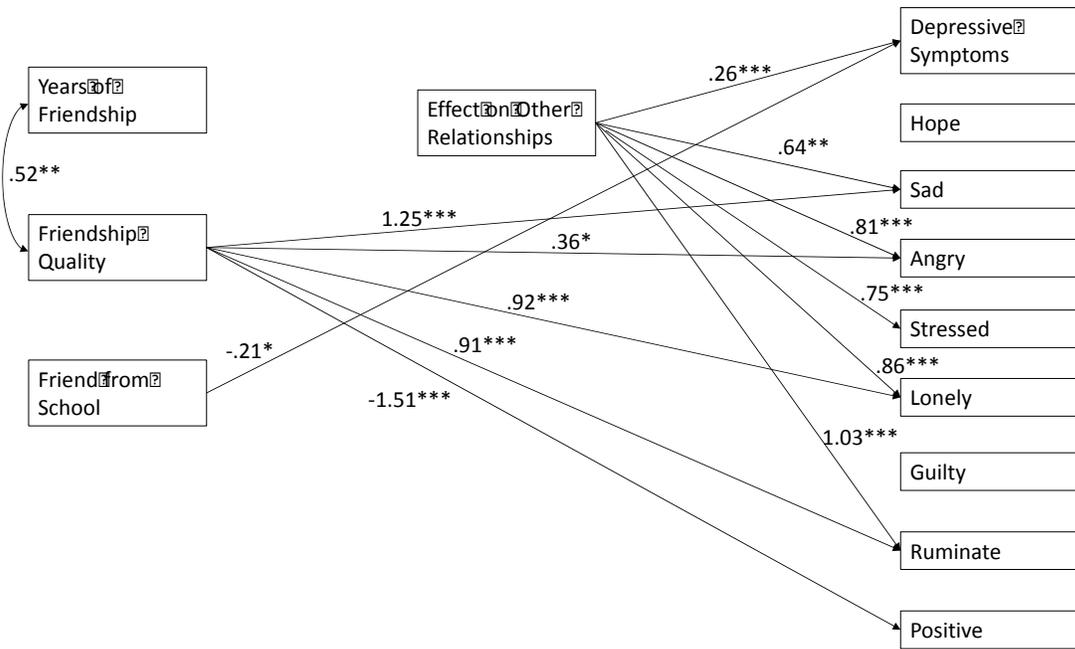
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Examining the Moderating Role of Availability of Support on the Relationship Between Number of Dissolutions and Adjustment

Predictors	Depressive Symptoms			Model for Hope		
	β	B (SE)	ΔR^2	β	B (SE)	ΔR^2
Step 1			.02			.00
Gender	.12	.14 (.08)		-.03	-.24 (.53)	
Grade	-.11	-.08 (.05)		.01	.06 (.31)	
Step 2			.05**			.07***
Gender	.13	.15 (.08)		-.06	-.50 (.52)	
Grade	-.08	-.06 (.05)		-.02	-.08 (.31)	
Total dissolutions	.16*	.02 (.01)		-.09	-.09 (.06)	
Support	-.17*	-.21 (.08)		.26***	2.13 (.54)	
Step 3			.01			.00
Gender	.13	.16 (.08)		-.06	-.50 (.52)	
Grade	-.08	-.05 (.05)		-.02	-.08 (.31)	
Total dissolutions	.04	.01 (.02)		-.10	-.09 (.10)	
Support	-.16*	-.20 (.08)		.26***	2.13 (.54)	
Total dissolutions x Support	.14	.03 (.02)		.01	.01 (.13)	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Variables were centered.

Figure 1.

Path Model Testing Associations Between Years of Friendship, Friendship Quality, Friendship Context, Negative Effect of Dissolution on Other Relationships and Adjustment Outcomes



Note. For ease of interpretation, only significant paths are presented in the model. Control variables of gender and grade also are not presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.