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# MBTI Personality Types and Preferred Relationship Disengagement Strategies in Intimate Situations

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*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Speech Communication](#) at Eastern Illinois University.

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MBTI Personality Types And Preferred Relationship  
Disengagement Strategies In Intimate Situations  
(TITLE)

BY

Jeffery Joe Davis

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
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1990  
YEAR

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MBTI Personality Types And Preferred  
Relationship Disengagement Strategies

In Intimate Situations

Master Thesis

By

Jeffery J. Davis

Speech Communication

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

This thesis poses two research questions that focus on MBTI personality types and specific strategies used to disengage romantic intimate heterosexual relationships.

- 1) Would one specific MBTI personality type prefer to use one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship?
- 2) Would any relationship situation yield one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship?

A total of 116 college students were surveyed at a small Midwestern university. Age ranged from 18 years to 55 years with a mean age of 23.6 years. The experimental method consisted of administering Form G of the MBTI and an additional questionnaire measuring relationship strategies. The t-test for simple effects found significance between MBTI types and strategy selected to dissolve relationships at the (.05) level. Significant results were also found for type of situation and strategy selection at the (.05) level. The conclusions of this study found that certain MBTI personality types prefer to disengage relationships by using specific types of strategies. Situations were also found to be significant.

## Relationship Disengagement

3

### Dedication

To my Mom and Dad.

Without their support this would not be possible.

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FOREWORD

I begin with a slogan that has inspired me to complete this thesis when I became apprehensive about the completion of this phenomenal piece of literature. The slogan, T. C. B. and a lightning bolt has also inspired and directed Elvis Aaron Presley as he came upon Goliath barriers he had to cross. T. C. B. and a lightning bolt stands for Taking Care of Business in a Flash. This is good advice for all. Don't dwell upon it, just take care of it.

MBTI Personality Types And Preferred  
Relationship Disengagement Strategies  
In Intimate Situations

Although there has been a plethora of research on the psychological aspects on why intimate relationships dissolve (Harvey, Wells, & Alvarez, 1987; Duck & Gilmour, 1981; Duck, 1982), research is limited when it comes to describing the specific strategies, tactics and situations of relationship disengagement.

Furthermore, research has yet to draw any comparisons between the types of relationship disengagement strategies used in dissolving a relationship, with the personality type of an individual(s) who might use these relationship disengagement practices. Thus, this study will apply the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, MBTI, to draw relationships between personality types and the use of specific relationship disengagement strategies, as well as how they are applied in different relationship situations.

To date, no studies in print have applied the MBTI to relationship disengagement strategies and situations (Mitchell, 1983; Buros, 1974, 1970, 1965). If there are any significant relationships between personality type and relationship disengagement strategies this could help predict future relationship disengagement research, in that one would be able to forecast, which personality type would utilize a specific relationship disengagement strategy. This thesis will only focus on heterosexual pre-material intimate relationship disengagement strategies and situations. The following research questions were generated for this study. 1) Would one specific MBTI personality type prefer to use one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship? 2) Would any relationship situation yield one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship?

### **Review of Literature**

Research has generated a variety of definitions of relationship disengagement, no one clear cut definition of relationship disengagement has emerged.

Relationship disengagement can simply be defined as the termination of a romantic dyadic relationship. The literature review focuses on the strategies, events and the behavioral characteristics that accompany relationship disengagement.

There are certain characteristics that accompany relationship disengagement and we must first take these characteristics into consideration before we can begin to fully understand the true process of why and how certain relationship disengagement strategies are utilized by certain personality types in particular situations.

In a study conducted by Hill, Rubin, and Peplau (1976), the following characteristics were found to accompany most intimate relationships that disengaged.

- 1) The desire to breakup was seldom mutual:  
women were more likely to perceive

problems in premarital relationships and are more likely to be the ones to initiate the breakups.

- 2) Couples who were less intimate or less attached to one another were more likely to breakup.
- 3) Couples who had more similarities between them had longer relationships than dissimilar couples.
- 4) There are two distinct roles played in a terminating relationship: the breaker-upper, who is the rejecting lover, and the broken-up-with, who is the rejected lover. Both partners in a dissolved relationship want to be considered as the breaker-upper and tend to perceive themselves that way because individuals who are the breaker-upper feel less depressed, less lonely, freer, happier, but more guilty.
- 5) Individuals in severed relationships tend to agree on the month when their

relationship ended, but tend to disagree on how the ending came about. Was it gradual or abrupt?

- 6) There are two sex differences associated with relationship disengagement. First, men tend to fall in love more readily than women. Second, women tend to fall out of love more readily than men.
- 7) Women tend to be more sensitive than men to problem areas in their relationships.

Relationship termination can be viewed as a communicative persuasive effort where one is attempting to influence the other on a specific relationship definition, i.e., friends, lovers, enemies. A discrepancy in one of these definitions can lead to relationship conflict, which could lead to relationship disengagement. Relationship disengagement has also been referred to as a process that reduces communication between partners (Wood, 1982). The specific strategies used in relational disengagement have failed to generate in depth research efforts.

Relationship disengagement follows a pattern that can be compared to relationship engagement, only that a reverse pattern is created (Ayres, 1983; Altman & Taylor, 1973). This literature review will focus on three specific strategies of relationship disengagement: attribution, self-disclosure, and relationship states. All of these strategies are communication centered. It is the extent of the type of communication and the degree of communication that initiates and determines which relationship disengagement strategy used to disengage the relationship.

#### Attributional Strategy

The attributional approach to relationship disengagement centers on interpretations of significant relational events in a variety of circumstances. Attributions in relationships are causal inferences that are made both explicitly and implicitly in both public and private ways. According to Duck (1982), these inferences are the causes of events, which are relevant to the relationship, for example "Why are we

getting married?" "How did I ever fall in love with you?"

These interpretations have a major influence upon the quality, life span, and successfulness of the relationship. Attribution may take on many forms at different stages in a relationship (Satir, 1972). Attributions can cause conflict in a relationship which can eventually lead to the disengagement of that relationship. A scenario of the attributional approach to relationship disengagement may find that a conflict will emerge in a relationship and may cause the progression of that relationship toward distortion from each party failing to work out attributional disagreements. This progression then could lead to a dissolution of the relationship. During this stage, attribution may take the form of justifications of one's own course of actions or possibly blaming the other partner (Weiss, 1975).

Orvis et al. (1976) theorized that when partners disagree about the causes of each other's actions, the threat of conflict precipitates an intense and searching causal analysis. Thus, attribution



represents a process of ongoing evaluation and restructuring, which must change as the relationship changes. Failure to modify and adapt to the changing relationship can cause conflicts, which can result in dissolution of the relationship.

Hill (1976) found that after a breakup of a relationship former partners tended to agree on external factors of the breakup (e.g. partners parents, another lover), but not on the internal factors (e.g. different backgrounds and interests). Ross (1977) pointed out "the fundamental attributional approach error" in the attributional approach, which is the strong tendency for attributors to make attributions to the dispositions of others. For example, in a troubled intimate relationship each member may view the other's problematic behavior as only a manifestation of the other's character.

Harvey (1987) explained that once a relationship has been terminated, partners continue to engage in causal analysis. At this stage, the attributional concerns are part of an individual's self-assessment and rationalizations for the dissolution. These post

separation attributions seem to focus on fixing blame and adjusting (generally lowering) evaluations of the other partner.

Baxter and Philpott (1982) developed the attributional cube for a clearer explanation of the attributional approach to relationship disengagement. The attributional cube's foundation is supported by three levels of communication which individuals use in understanding events and people: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus.

Distinctiveness captures the extent to which a given effect or feature is uniquely associated with the object of perception. Consistency refers to the stability of that association across time and circumstance. Consensus is the extent to which one's perception is validated by others.

When a person assesses whether he or she is disliked by another, the person looks for signs of distinctiveness, i.e., evidence that the other displays disliking behavior. An example of this type of behavior is where one partner in a relationship refuses to hold hands.

Consistency follows by the partner offering hints to the other that they are not liked, i.e., refusing to hold hands over a period of time. Consensus is the last stage and is where the verification of the disengagement or intent to disengage takes place (i.e. have friends ask why couple doesn't hold hands any more).

There are six primary attributional strategies, according to Baxter and Philpott (1982), which stem from the three levels of communication, of reducing the liking between two parties and terminating the relationship.

- 1) Other negation: the demonstration that the other is not liked (i.e. not returning phone calls).
- 2) Difference: the demonstration that one does not have things in common with the other.
- 3) Self-presentation: presentation of the self in a less personal manner or presentation of one's negative attributes.

- 4) Cost-rendering: the cessation of favor rendering.
- 5) Disinterest: cessation of efforts to acquire additional information about the other. Studies also refer to this strategy as the reduction of self-disclosure (Baxter, 1979; Wheelless, 1978; Cozby, 1973; Pedersen & Higbee, 1969; Mayer, 1967). Self-disclosure will be addressed further in the next section.
- 6) Exclusion: avoiding the other's presence.

These disengagement strategies are more common in relationships that are in the early stages where there is a low intimate level.

Each of these strategies are composed of at least one or all of the three levels of communication: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. Each type of information is present in the six attributional stages. But, only one level of information may be needed to terminate a relationship. The same applies for the six attributional strategies because only one

of the strategies is needed in order to terminate a relationship, i.e., the other partner is likely to perceive that they are no longer desired and consequently avoids or terminates contact with the person.

This condition is more common in other negation, exclusion, and disinterest because these three are more easy to detect and perceive. Difference, negative self-presentation, and cost-rendering are more likely to motivate the other partner to desire termination of the relationship because one is perceived as being less desirable. Logically, one doesn't want to stick around if the other partner doesn't desire or like them anymore.

Relationship termination is composed of two distinct characteristics of attributional perception: 1) that one is no longer interested in having the other as a partner, and 2) that one is no longer worthy of being a partner (Baxter & Philpott, 1982). Only one of the two attributional perceptions is necessary to successfully terminate the relationship.

Newman (1981) argued that attribution is

multileveled. The two most common levels are the dispositional (interpersonal) level of attribution and situational attributions. Dispositional attribution is an event or behavior, which is interpreted as a sign of a partners nature. Situational attributions account for the influence of events and objects external to either partner.

If deception is detected in a relationship, attributional confidence comes into question. In simpler terms, one mate begins to question the amount of confidence they can attribute to the other mate, or to what extent the partner can be trusted. If one partner in a relationship violates the trust in that relationship, the level of trust will never be the same as it was before the trust was violated. If the partner forgives the other, the level of trust will rise, but it will never be at the same level at which it was prior to the incident. When one mate becomes skeptical or leery of the other, this is more commonly referred to as retroactive attribution (Clatterbuck, 1979).

Retroactive attribution is where one interprets

the meaning of past actions in the relationship and uses the past information as a base for interpretations of future interactions, judgments, and events. If one mate is caught telling a lie or has an affair, the other mate will use the past experience as a judgment for future questionable events. In other words, once a partner's credibility is subject to question it will always be questioned, according to retroactive attribution.

A typical scenario of retroactive attribution is as follows, "Howard, remember the time you told me you went bowling every night and you really where fooling around with Amy? Now all of a sudden you're working late hours at work, so I know your fooling around with someone." Howard may not actually be fooling around at all. But, since he did cheat in the past, his future behavior is subject to question because of his past actions.

Self-Disclosure

Another method that is similar to the attributional-based strategy is the self-disclosure strategy of relationship disengagement. This theory states that if one wants to terminate a relationship the one ending the relationship, more commonly referred to as the terminator, will self-disclose less and less with the other partner. The terminator will also avoid direct confrontation and discussion regarding the state of the relationship (Baxter, 1979). A typical warning sign of this disengagement strategy may find one saying, "We never talk as much as we used to."

Brant, Miller & Hocking, (1980a, 1980b), Larzelere & Huston (1980), Wheelless & Grotz (1977), Cozby (1973) indicate that respectable self-disclosure is determined by the amount of honesty and sincerity in a relationship. The more honesty and sincerity in a relationship, the higher the amount of self-disclosure will be. Further studies indicate that the more similar individuals are to one another, the amount of self-disclosure increases (Coombs, 1966; Banta & Hetherington, 1963; Katz et al., 1963; Rosenfeld &



Jackson, 1959).

In contrast, Bowerman and Day (1956) found that self-disclosure increases as partners' needs complement each other, compared to partners who only have similar needs. Mehlman (1962) discovered that individuals who were similar to one another agreed more with each other, while enemies tended to disagree with each other. The length of the relationship also has an effect on the amount of self-disclosure. Individuals in long-term relationships disclose more than individuals in short-term relationships (Cline & Musolf, 1985).

The degree of trust also determines the amount of self-disclosure in a relationship (Wheeless, 1978). Larzelere and Huston (1980) indicated that marital partners had higher levels of trust than did pre-marital partners, divorced partners, and ex-partners. Two of the main factors in determining the success of a relationship are the amount of trust and the level of self-disclosure in a relationship (Wheeless & Grotz, 1977; Cozby, 1973; Pedersen & Higbee, 1969; Shapiro & Swensen, 1969; Mayer, 1967).

Self-disclosure varies with the type of relationship. The more comfortable one feels, the more one will self-disclose. The less comfortable one feels in a relationship, the less self-disclosure will take place. The more self-disclosure that takes place in a relationship, the more familiar the participants become with each other. It then becomes easier to detect deception in the relationship (Brant et al., 1980a, 1980b).

Less personalized communication is another characteristic when using self-disclosure as a disengagement strategy. Personalized communication is centered more towards the development of private meanings, feelings and information known only to the partners (Knapp et al., 1980). When one partner decides to terminate a relationship, personalized communication will start to diminish and eventually will stop. The relationship changes from privately centered topics to topics that don't have as deep of an intimate meaning between the partners. They become more general. One illustration of this type of personalized communication disengagement strategy would

be, "We never talk about us anymore or this relationship. It seems that all we ever talk about now is school work."

Similar results were found by Fitzpatrick and Best (1979) as they classified personalized communication as two different types of communication, expressive and instrumental. Both types of communication are missing in a relationship that is deteriorating. Expressive communication is the amount of self-disclosure and verbal expression of feelings between partners. The major function of instrumental communication is to move toward or achieve a goal.

An example of these two types of personalized communication is when a couple is taking a walk and one whispers into the other's ear, "I'd stop the world and melt with you under the moon that's so ever blue." At the same time the individual is also feeling butterflies inside that makes their heart go pitter patter. These feelings stay inside the individuals mind and are not expressed to the mate. In a relationship that is deteriorating or starting to disengage, expressive and instrumental communication

will start to decrease and will not be expressed.  
There will be fewer walks under the moon and the  
butterflies will die.

### Relationship States

A study by Wood (1982) concludes that the nature and function of human relationships are composed and defined by communication. It is through communication that individuals define themselves and their relationships. For example, "we're just friends," "let's be friends," "I don't want to see you anymore." Through communication the definition of the relationship and one's self are constantly being revised. The locus of every relationship is the relational culture. According to Wood, relational culture is an extensive set of definitions, values, and rules which comprise a unique-to-the world order. In other words, the relationship culture acts like a set of guidelines in which the relationship operates, Duck (1980) also refers to this as the relational context. The culture acts like a filtering schema through which partners interpret events and behavior. They then use

this schema to guide themselves. The relationship culture is not static. There are constantly ongoing modifications of the partners concepts of themselves, the bond between them, and the standards of public and private behavior.

Wood defines twelve states of a relationship life span from initiation to disengagement: individuals, invitational communication, exploration communication, intensifying communication, revising communication, bonding communication, navigating communication, differentiating communication, disintegrating communication, stagnating communication, terminating communication, and individuals. This study is similar to Delia's findings (1980) that as a relationship progresses or digresses, the individuals in the relationship take on different trajectories, or states, as Wood refers to them.

The first seven states are directed towards relationship development, while the last five are centered on relationship disengagement. Each state is defined and determined by the relational culture and each relationship will have their own definition of

these states. This thesis will only focus on the last five states because they are the axis of relationship disengagement.

Differentiating communication is mainly a process of disengaging or uncoupling. A characteristic of this state is when one partner asserts their individuality over and above their pair-identity. A primary motive for this type of behavior is where the partner perceives a lack of equality in the relationship due to changes in the partner's view. One scenario of this state is as follows, "You don't own me, I can do what ever I want to because you always get to do what you want to."

Disintegrating communication is where the differentiation focuses on the individuals. The function of this communication includes the disintegration of the common bond, decrease in depth of communication, violation of established rules, and the avoidance of bond affirming style in the content of communication. Bond affirming style is a voluntary commitment to an extended future as an intimate pair. This future is a pair identity that binds a couple

together, in addition, each individual is constrained and connected to that of the other. This state is similar to the principles of the self-disclosure strategy. As a relationship deteriorates the amount of self disclosure will also decline. An example of disintegrating communication would be, "Things between us aren't that serious. I'm not your girlfriend, so I'm going to go out with my friends."

Stagnating communication is a standstill state in which partners are biding time. This state is a transition between unsatisfactory disposition of the relationship and finding some other alternative trajectory that the relationship can take. The relational culture has been punctured, the relationship is dying.

Terminating communication is the final closure of the relationship. The function of communication takes on a negotiation state where settlements are discussed, to establish distance between partners, and to define the nature of any future relationship i.e., remaining friends or enemies. These stages are also very similar to the stages of decay in Knapp's (1978) developmental

model: differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating.

The last state is where the participants become individuals again. As a result of the previous intimate involvement, individuals will have alterations on how they conceive future relationships, values, goals, and themselves. This stage can also be considered as a learning stage where the individual learns from their mistakes. Duck (1982) refers to this as the grave-dressing phase. This state will influence an individual's behavior and how the individual will define his/her relational culture in their next relationship. This is also considered a growing stage where individuals learn from their mistakes. Similar to the relationship states are disengagement strategies, which are used specifically to dissolve a relationship. These tactics are initially constructed within the seven relationship states, according to Wood.



Disengagement Strategies

Cody (1982) predicted four strategies utilized in different types of relational problems that were used to justify relationship disengagement. First, disengagers felt obligated to give some de-escalation tactics (expressing advantages). This tactic was primarily used among non-intimates. Second, the more faults attributed to a partner, the more likely the disengager would move toward a full termination of the relationship. Third, disengagers used negative identity management strategies in order to sever a relationship tie when the partner was possessive. Fourth, disengagers used strategies which might result in a continuation of friendship. This tactic has also been referred to as an Internal Legitimizing (Knapp et al., 1973), which softens the directness of termination. The most common internal legitimizer is the famous, "We can still be friends, can't we?", after a relationship has disengaged.

A study conducted by Banks, Altendorf, Greene, and Cody (1987) expanded on Cody's initial findings. Individuals tend to use five general types of

strategies when disengaging a relationship:

- 1) Behavioral De-escalation: avoiding contact without a discussion for doing so.
- 2) Negative Identity Management: stating a desire to disengage without offering a reason that addresses the feelings of the partner and possibly blaming the partner, and other tactics that are generally considered to be rude.
- 3) Justification: full explanation of the person's reasons for seeking termination.
- 4) De-escalation: expressing advantages to be gained by changing the relationship and holding out for the possibility of some future relationship.
- 5) Positive Tone: attending to the feelings of the partner when confronting disengagement in order to avoid ending the relationship on a sour note.

Behavioral de-escalation strategies are used when one is reluctant to face one's partner, when the levels of intimacy and self-disclosure in the relationship are

low, and when there is little commitment to the other's well being. This strategy is present in relationships with low trust and those in which the other is considered to be at blame for the breakup because of personal faults, i.e., sleeps too much during the day, materialistic, too much preparation before going out, etc.

Negative identity management strategies are used when the partner is perceived as constraining and undesirable. Low trust is also associated with this condition. This strategy is utilized when a partner wants to maintain a proper public image. The partner doesn't want to look bad in front of friends and family and therefore, associates negative characteristics with the other partner. "Marianne and I broke up because she chewed her food with her mouth open," is an example of negative identity management.

Justification strategies are used more when intimacy is high, constraint is high, fault is high, and network overlap (the possibility of running into each other in the future) is high. "I broke up with Kimberly because we didn't have a lot in common," is an

example of justification.

De-escalation strategies are more likely to be used when disengagers intend to remain friends with their partner after breaking up. This strategy leaves the door open for possible future relationships. This situation is prompted by higher levels of trust, dyadic adjustment, and partner desirability. "Let's still be friends," is a typical example of the de-escalation strategy.

Positive tone strategies are used to establish confirmation of the partner's worthiness. The partners show overt concern for the feelings of the other. This strategy is commonly used when the partner did not have faults and when intimacy, constraint, and network overlap is high.

A study conducted by Ragan and Hopper (1984) identified three other disengagement strategies that were present in deteriorating relationships: meta-talk, zero sum conflict, and consensus on dissensus. Meta-talk is the violation of "let it pass." In normal conversation communicators do not ordinarily question each other closely about intentions or meanings of

underlying utterances.

However, in relationships that are disintegrating partners frequently find it necessary for the other to explain what is really meant by an utterance or innuendo. In laymen's terms, the conversation doesn't focus on the issue at hand, but on the conversation used in explaining that issue. For relationships that are deteriorating meta-talk is common in the conversation. An example of meta-talk would be:

Wendy: "How are you?"

Chuck: "How an I in regard to what? My health, my finances, my peace of mind..."

Zero-sum conflict is used to destroy the other's position. This can be best represented by the attitude "I win, you lose." The characteristics of the zero-sum conflict are described as; dominating, winning, and oneupsmanship (out for one's own welfare). Topic shifts are also employed in this situation because one partner is trying to control the conversation. The derivative of this strategy is to destroy the other's

position and focus blame for the failing relationship.

Consensus on dissensus is a tactical agreement not to agree on how the relationship is to be conducted, or much of anything else. A consensus is reached on the fact that termination of the relationship is the most appropriate action. This same strategy has also been labeled as directness (in a study conducted by Ayres, 1983), where the couple agreed on termination.

### Events

Relationships that do disengage don't always follow a gradually decreasing pattern. Sometimes relationship disengagement is a very sudden process, caused by a certain event which leads to the relationship termination (Duck, 1982). Discovery of a partner's adultery, betrayal of trust, or deception, competing sexual behavior, change in personality or values, and instances of personal renunciation of the relationship are examples that are likely to bring a sudden end to a relationship (Planalp et al., 1988).

Negative events increase uncertainty, affect cognition, emotion and the relationship. Events do not

undermine beliefs about only one aspect of a relationship, but rather they are carried over to all other beliefs about the relationship, to beliefs about the other person and to beliefs about one's self. Events that increase uncertainty in a relationship are critical enough to strongly influence and redirect relational trajectories (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985).

Relational trajectories then can take either a positive or a negative course. A negative course is likely if emotions are strongly negative both toward the situation and toward the partner. Thus, the relationship will start to disintegrate because the participants are unable to reduce the uncertainty about each other (Parks & Adelman, 1983). This coincides with the findings when trust is violated in self-disclosure. Once that trust is violated it will never be at the same level as it was before the violation. The probability that the relationship will disengage is highly likely.

Behavioral Characteristics

Perlman and Duck (1987) concluded that when individuals are involved in relationship disengagement their behavior can be represented by four characteristics: exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect.

Exit is the formal separation of the relationship, i.e., dissolution, moving out of a joint residence, thinking or talking about leaving one's partner, threatening to end the relationship, actively destroying the relationship, or getting a divorce.

Voice is when partners openly discuss problems, they compromise, suggest solutions to problems, ask the partner what is bothering them, and try to change themselves or the partner. This behavior occurs where there is still effort put forth to save the relationship if it is in trouble. Vice-versa, voice is one of the main characteristics in building a healthy relationship.

Loyalty is when the relationship starts to deteriorate. The partners are waiting and hoping that things will improve. A typical scenario of loyalty is, "Let's give each other some time to work out our



problems." In this behavior the partners continue to have faith in the relationship and each other, but no effort is put forth to solve the problems in the relationship. In other words, the partners hope that the problem will mend itself.

Neglect takes the shape of ignoring the partner or spending less time together. Some of the more common characteristics of neglect are: refusing to discuss problems, treating the partner badly emotionally or physically, criticizing the partner for things unrelated to the real problem, and chronically complaining without offering solutions to problems. An overall attitude behind this type of behavior is to just let things fall apart.

One other type of element that may lead to relationship disengagement is Available Alternative Opportunities (Cahn, 1987). Available Alternative Opportunities refers to a threshold point at which one or both partners perceive that another person outside the relationship understands them more than does one's partner. This is the point where dissolution of the relationship becomes a real possibility.

Available Alternative relationships become more desirable when one realizes that another relationship offers more emotional commitment and stability than the present one. In simpler terms, this situation can be referred to as, "I'll just date him/her until something better comes along." Vice versa, as commitment to the present relationship increases, the Available Alternative Opportunities will decrease.

This thesis will draw upon the forementioned strategies and situations used to disengage an intimate heterosexual pre-material relationship. This literature review serves as the foundation that is needed in order to answer the research questions posed by this study. 1) Would one specific MBTI personality type prefer to use one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship? 2) Would any relationship situation yield one dominate strategy to disengage a relationship?

### **Method**

In order to tabulate the effects of personality types and the preferences used in relationship disengagement strategies, two instruments were used, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and a separate questionnaire focusing on different types of relationship disengagement strategies and situations.

The MBTI is a self-report inventory which was developed to measure the variables in Jung's theory of psychological types (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). The compendium of Jung's theory is that seemingly random variation in behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent because of basic distinctions in the way individuals prefer to use their perception and judgement. These distinctions are divided into four different preferences referred to as indexes:

Extraversion-Introversion (E-I), Sensing-Intuition (S-N), Thinking-Feeling (T-F), and Judgment-Perception (J-P).

The initial assumption is that every individual has a natural preference for one or the other distinctions on each of the four indexes. The MBTI is

designed to distinguish and determine which of these four types are more dominate in an individual, much like a natural preference for right or left-handedness. To further illustrate this preference, the dominate type is analogous to the game of Jai-Alai. Both players may play the front or the back court, but it is a players preference which court he may play, even though he is quite capable of playing the front or back court. The aim of the MBTI is to identify the basic preferences of an individual in regard to perception and judgment.

The E-I index is designed to measure an individual's preferred orientation toward life. Extraverted types are regarded as being centered primarily toward the outer world of objects, people, and action, and have a tendency to get caught up with whatever is happening around them; thus they tend to focus their perception and judgment on people and objects. Introverted individuals have a more inward orientation and tend to detach themselves from the world around them. They tend to focus their perception and judgment around concepts and ideas (Myers &

McCaulley, 1985).

The S-N index is designed to reflect an individual's preference between two opposite ways of perceiving. Sensing types rely on perceptions received directly through their sense-organs, which report observable facts or happenings through one or more of the five senses. Sensors notice the concrete details and practical aspects of a situation. Intuitive types have a more vague outlook acting on a certain spontaneous hunch from the unconscious. Intuitor's like to deal with abstractions, inferred meanings, and relationships and/or possibilities that have been formulated beyond the reach of the conscious mind (Myers & McCaulley, 1985)

The T-F index is designed to represent an individual's preference between two contrasting ways of judgment. Thinking types rely on logical structures to clarify order and to decide impersonally on the basis of logical consequences in a particular situation. Thinking types are skilled at objectively organizing material and weighing the facts. Feeling types base their judgment primarily on the basis of personal or

social values. Individuals of this type are skilled at understanding other people's feelings and analyzing subjective impressions (Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

The J-P index is designed to represent an individual's preference in dealing with the outer world, which is dealing with the extraverted part of life. Judging types are organized and systematic who prefer to use a judgment process (either T or F). Individuals of this type live in a planned, orderly way, aimed to regulate and control life. Perceptive types use a more perceptive process (either S or N) to deal with the outer world. These types of individuals come across as being more curious and open-minded. Perceptive individuals are more flexible, spontaneous, and their aim is to understand life and adapt to it (Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

In each of the four preferences one is preferred over the other indexes for each of the 16 MBTI types. The preference for one index is independent of preferences for the other three indexes. The four indexes generate the characteristics of sixteen possible different combinations called "types" (Myers &

McCaulley, 1985), which are indicated by the four letters of the preferences (e.g., ESTJ, INFP).

For each type, one index is the leading or dominate one and the second index serves as the auxiliary or recessive index. For example, an ESTJ is dominant in thinking (T), while the recessive or auxiliary is feeling (F). This individual has a thinking preference when making judgments. However, there still exists the possibility of this individual to rely on the feeling preference, even though it (F) is the recessive trait in order to make a judgment.

Form G of the MBTI was used to indicate the personality type preferences. Form G is now the standard form used in administering the MBTI (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Form G of the MBTI is a reliable and valid measuring device of personality types. Thompson & Borrello (1986) found results that strongly supported the MBTI's construct validity. Twenty-two of the 24 Judging-Perceptive (JP) items had a correlation greater than .30 in absolute value. Twenty of the 22 Extraversion-Introversion (EI) had a correlation greater than .30 in absolute value. Twenty-two of the

26 Sensing-Intuition (SI) items had a correlation greater than .30 in absolute value. Sixteen of the 23 Thinking-Feeling (TF) items had a correlation greater than .30 in absolute value.

Carlson (1985) found that both internal and test-retest reliability of both forms F and G of the MBTI have proven satisfactory in recent assessments, with  $r$  values of individual scales often exceeding .80.

Myers & McCaulley (1985) reported that the MBTI did prove to be both reliable and valid when compared with other similar studies. Significant correlations were found for extraversion (E) scale, which ranged from  $-.77$  to  $-.40$ . Significant correlations were also found for the introversion (I) scale, which ranged from  $.75$  to  $.40$ . Significant correlations were also found for the Sensing-Perception scale, which had a range of  $-.67$  to  $-.40$ ; the Intuitive-Perception scale, which ranged from  $r .62$  to  $r .40$ ; the Thinking-Judgment scale, which had a range of  $r -.57$  to  $r -.40$ ; and the feeling-judgment scale, which ranged from  $r .55$  to  $r .40$ .

Ware et al. (1985) reported validity coefficients



of the MBTI ranged between .52 and .70. Cohen et al. (1981) reported that the construct validity of the MBTI scales of Extroversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, and Thinking-Feeling were supported, whereas the Judging-Perceptive scale was not.

Tzeng et al. (1984) reported results that substantiated that the MBTI is a reliable instrument and that the 95 marker items in the inventory would generate four distinct psychometric dimensions that are consistent with the theoretical constructs (based on Jung's theory) of the MBTI.

Carlyn (1977) reported that the individual scales of the MBTI measure important dimensions of personality which seem to be quite similar to those explained by Jung. The MBTI appears to be a reasonably valid instrument which is potentially useful for a variety of purposes. Form G consists of 126 questions, of which 95 are actual scoring items. The 95 scoring items generate four distinct psychometric dimensions that are consistent with the theoretical constructs of the MBTI (Tzeng et al., 1984).

In addition to the MBTI indicator, the

participants were also administered an additional 5 item questionnaire that focused on relationship disengagement strategies and situations.

These questions were based upon Cody's (1982) initial predictions of four strategies from which different types of relational problems were used to describe relationship disengagement situations. Cody's study was then expanded upon by Banks, Altendorf, Greene, and Cody (1987). This supplemental study specified five general types of strategies used by individuals when disengaging a relationship; behavioral de-escalation (more commonly referred to as avoidance), negative identity management, justification, de-escalation, and positive tone. Sudden death was also used in this questionnaire as an additional strategy, which was adapted from Duck (1982).

In order to validate the measurement derived from these studies, a pilot study was conducted to verify that the five disengagement strategies were valid and easily definable. Participants of the pilot study were first presented with five notecards which each had a definition of one of the five relationship

disengagement strategies. These definitions were based upon Banks et al. (1987) and Duck (1982) definitions. The five disengagement strategies used in this questionnaire were: behavioral de-escalation (avoidance), negative identity management, justification, sudden death, and positive tone. They each were defined as follows:

- 1) Behavioral de-escalation (avoidance):  
avoiding contact without a reason for doing so.
- 2) Negative Identity Management: stating a desire to break up without offering a reason for doing so.
- 3) Justification: providing a full explanation of the person's reasons for breaking up.
- 4) Sudden death: causing a sudden end of a relationship.
- 5) Positive tone: attending to the feelings of the partner when breaking up in order to avoid ending the relationship on a

"sour note."

The participants were presented with 26 individual notecards which each had one statement that represented one of the four various types of relationship disengagement strategies. They were then asked to place each notecard in a separate pile according to the appropriate definition.

For example, one notecard might read "Just say it wasn't working out and leave it at that." The participant then would classify this statement according to one of the five definition cards of relationship disengagement strategies.

The results of this pilot study found that these 26 statements did properly represent the five disengagement strategies as defined by Cody and Duck, with a 87.25% rate of accuracy. Twenty five out of the 26 statements were then used in the questionnaire to represent possible alternatives or solutions in relationship situations.

The relationship situations used in this study were based upon similar situations and examples applied in the following studies: Planalp and Honeycutt (1985),

Ragan and Hopper (1984), Ayres (1983), Baxter and Philpott (1982), Larzelere and Huston (1980), Hill et al. (1976), and Mayer (1967). A total of five different relationship situations were used.

Situation one was based on a short term relationship. Situation two was based on a long term relationship. Situation three focused on the violation of sacred trust (walking in on your mate in bed with someone else). Situation four was based on post-contact of a previous intimate partner. And situation five was centered upon seeking understanding, more specifically, wanting to know reasons why a relationship had broken up.

In addition to the relationship strategies used, the respondents were also given an option of writing out their own response to a particular relationship situation. If a respondent did chose this option, the response given was then classified according to the five original definitions and recorded as that particular strategy. There were no responses that did not fit the original definitions. Altogether, some responses did combine more than one strategy and

tactic. In this case, the response was not counted towards that particular relationship situation.

The independent variables in this study were the MBTI personality type and the relationship situation. The dependent variable was the relationship disengagement strategy. Each individual MBTI personality type was assigned a number value, e.g., ISTJ = 1, ISFJ = 2, INFJ = 3, etc. Each relationship disengagement strategy was also assigned a numerical value, e.g., negative identity management = 1, sudden death = 2, avoidance = 3, justification = 4, and positive identity management = 5. Each relationship situation was assigned a numerical value also, e.g., Situation one = 1, Situation two = 2, etc. A two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then used as the method of measurement to determine any significant effects between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Most participants in this study were enrolled in speech communication classes, ranging from introductory classes to graduate level classes, at Eastern Illinois University, which is a small Midwestern university. In

addition, one class, an introductory speech class, at a small Midwestern junior college, was also administered the survey. The total number surveyed was 116. The minimum age was 18 years and the maximum age 55 years. The mean age was 23.6 years with a standard deviation of 2.3 years. All participants were administered form G of the MBTI and the additional questionnaire on relationship disengagement strategies. All participants were allowed as much time as they needed to complete the MBTI and the questionnaire.

### **Results**

The results of the two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) found that there were no significant interaction effects between MBTI personality types and the five relationship disengagement strategies. That is, no one specific MBTI personality type preferred to use any one specific strategy to disengage a relationship. A t-test was administered to test for simple effects (Winer, 1971). The results of the t-test did yield some significant differences between MBTI personality types and the type of strategy used to

disengage relationships. Significant differences also were found between the relationship situation and the type of strategy used to disengage a specific relationship.

With the results that the t-test generated, a new system of measurement was then developed. The relationship disengagement strategies were assigned number values: negative identity management = 1, sudden death = 2, avoidance = 3, justification = 4, and positive identity management = 5. A continuum was then established representing the various disengagement strategies. The continuum went from negative based strategies to positive based strategies.

The continuum was divided into three areas, negative centered strategies, which ranged from 1.00 to 2.50; neutral centered strategies, 2.51 to 3.50; and positive centered strategies, 3.51 to 5.00. The continuum was designed to illustrate the type of strategy selected by MBTI personality types and the type of strategies selected in the five relationship situations. The average mean of the t-test would then be classified as it corresponded to the continuum. The



mean averages of both MBTI personality types and situations fell into the respective three strategy areas, negative, neutral and positive.

Among the MBTI types, the t-test yielded significant differences between ISTJ, INTJ (which only had a total of 5 cells tested), ISTP, ESTP, and ENFP personality types and the dependent variable, the relationship strategy, at the (.05) level of significance. No other significant effects were found between the remaining 11 other MBTI personality types. The corresponding mean averages for the MBTI personality types to their relationship with the type of relationship disengagement strategy selected are as follows: ISTJ, 3.24; INTJ, 2.0; ISTP, 3.47; ESTP, 3.36; and ENFP, 4.38. Table 1 shows in further detail the comparison of mean averages for MBTI personality types and their association with the type of relationship disengagement strategies selected.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Significant effects were also found between the independent relationship disengagement situation and the type of relationship disengagement strategy selected. Significant effects were found in situations one, three, four, and five at the (.05) level of significance. The equivalent mean averages for the relationship disengagement situations are as follows: situation one (short term), 3.93; situation three (event), 3.19; situation four (post-meeting), 4.29; and situation five (explanation), 3.5. No significant effects were found for relationship disengagement situation number two (long term based relationship).

Each relationship situation did not have equal responses from the subjects due to some subjects failing to complete or omitting that particular relationship situation. The total number of subjects completing each relationship situation is as follows: situation one, 116; situation two, 111; situation

three, 111; situation four, 115; and situation five, 112. Table 2 illustrates the comparison of mean averages with their direct proportion to the type of relationship disengagement strategies selected.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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All of the 16 MBTI personality types were represented in this study. The highest number of one personality type that was represented were the ESTJ's with 22. The lowest number of a personality type that was represented in this study was the INTJ type with one. The average response was 7.25 subjects per MBTI personality type. The breakdown for each individual MBTI personality type is as follows: ESTJ-22; ISTJ-10; ESFP-10; ENFP-10; ENTP-10; ESFJ-10; INTP-8; ISFJ-6; ENTJ-6; ESTP-5; ISFP-4; INFP-4; ENFJ-4; INFJ-3; ISTP-3; and INTJ-1.

### **Discussion**

Although the two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded no significant interaction effects between MBTI personality types and relationship disengagement strategies, this can be attributed to an assortment of circumstances. First, not all MBTI types were equally represented. The majority of personality types were extroverts. Introverts had a considerably lower number of responses and had fewer personality types. The explanation for this occurrence could be the types of classes surveyed. All the classes surveyed were speech classes. Out of all of them only three were introductory speech classes. Therefore, the majority of subjects were students that were majoring or minoring in speech or else had a strong speech interest. The reason for the abundance of extroverts could be that extroversion may be a common characteristic of an individual majoring in speech.

Second, the mean age (23.6) was rather high for this type of survey. Since the survey was administered in the summer session, there were a larger number of older students that were trying to complete their last

semester before graduation, or were behind and were trying to catch up so that they could graduate on time. Younger students may not have been equally represented because they did not have the pressure of trying to graduate on time and were more likely not to attend summer classes. Also, the younger students in the survey were found in the beginning speech classes and only three introductory classes were offered. This could account for the higher percentage of older students.

Third, with the older students surveyed, compared to beginning classes, the probability of the participants having more experience with intimate relationships was higher than younger participants. The reason is that as an individual has more intimate relationships the more experienced that individual becomes and the more likely that that individual would not want to hurt the other partner's feelings (Duck, 1982; Wood, 1982). One could then theorize that younger participants would employ relationship strategies that were more negative centered, due to their lack of experience, in order to disengage a

relationship.

It is imperative to point out before discussion of the individual MBTI personality types that the updated MBTI manual (1985) and the supplemental book, Gifts Differing (1980), only outline brief behavioral traits and characteristics, which are mostly applicable toward vocational skills and specific career objectives. The characteristics of how a specific individual personality type will behave in, and or initiate an intimate relationship is only briefly touched upon by the manual and the supplemental book.

Decisive characteristics of how different personality types approach a relationship are limited and centered towards a particular personality type's behavior in a platonic relationship, i.e., one's best friend. There are seldom exclusive characteristics of how a certain personality type will approach or perform in an intimate relationship. The manual and the supplementary book seldom make any detailed references to intimate relationships. When a reference is made to intimate relationships, the reference is never discussed in any great detail. Therefore, one can only

make speculations about precise characteristics and behaviors which could influence each individual personality type and how they will utilize specific relationship disengagement strategies. The speculations made in this discussion section are based on the initial personality characteristics and behaviors described by the MBTI manual (1985) and the supplementary book, Gifts Differing (1980).

The results of this study revealed five MBTI personality types: ISTJ, INTJ, ISTP, ESTP, and ENFP, to have significant preferences for the type of strategy used to disengage a relationship. The characteristics of each MBTI personality type and situation will be addressed separately along with an explanation of the results.

To illustrate the different characteristics surrounding each individual personality type a number will be used to further clarify the explanations of the different MBTI personality types. (#1) will be used to symbolize the most dominate trait in that particular personality type. (#2) symbolizes the auxiliary or second most important trait in that personality type.

(#3) symbolizes the tertiary trait, or third most utilized trait in that particular type. And (#4) symbolizes the inferior trait, the fourth or last trait of that particular personality type.

ISTJ

ISTJ is an introvert (I) with sensing (S) being the dominate (#1) introverted function and thinking (T) being the auxiliary (#2) extroverted function. Feeling (F) is the tertiary (#3), or third most utilized function, and is also extroverted. Intuition (N) is the inferior (#4) extroverted function.

Therefore, ISTJs trust sensing (#1) the most, use it the most, develop it the most, and shape their lives by using the five senses. They are very observant and dependent upon their physical surroundings and rely mostly on their past experiences. They compare and contrast past and present situations by way of thinking (#2) in order to make a decision. They use their thinking (#2) as a backup for sensing. Sensing is their biggest desire, but they will not let their thinking overcome anything derived from sensing.



Sensing is dominant in the inner life and they base future judgements on previous stored experiences. ISTJs let thinking (#2) govern any judgments which they may make. Thinking also makes them more responsible. They think about a situation before entering impulsively. Feeling (#3), and intuition (#4) run their outer life and are not called upon as much as thinking.

The MBTI manual describes ISTJs with the following characteristics. ISTJs are introverted sensing types that are particularly dependable by their combination of preferences, which makes them very stable. They use sensing (#1) in their inner life and base their ideas on an innate, solid accumulation of stored impressions. These impressions are considered sound and they trust and rely upon them the most. Sensing provides the facts and their judgment is derived from their extroverted trait thinking (#2), which stresses analysis, logic and decisiveness.

ISTJs like everything clearly stated, kept factual and not too complex. They are sound and sensible because what they do as part of their outer life is

governed by their best judgement. No other type is more thorough, systematic, hard-working, or patient with detail and routine. They do not enter into things impulsively because they rely on judgement and thinking to guide them in the outer world. Their practical judgment and memory for detail make them conservative, consistent, and able to cite cases to support their evaluations of people and methods.

They will go to any amount of trouble if they can find a need to do so. Otherwise, they hate to be required to do something that doesn't make any sense to them. It is very hard for them to see any sense in needs which differ widely from their own.

Gifts Differing describes ISTJs as the most practical of the introvert types. Inwardly they have extremely individual reactions to their sense impressions. The interaction of introversion, sensing, and the judging attitude give them extreme stability. They also habitually compare present and past situations. When they deal with the rest of the world the personality that they show reflects the judging processes they habitually use outward, i.e., thinking

(#2) or feeling (#3). They rely entirely on their senses and are very annoyed when things are left up to their imagination.

The results in this study found that ISTJs preferred a strategy which was more neutral centered (3.24) to disengage a relationship (see Table 1). One reason for such a neutral response is that ISTJs like everything clearly stated, kept factual and not too complex. Relationship disengagement is often a complex process because the parties involved are either trying to get what they want (freedom), or are trying to keep what they have.

Hence, ISTJs like things clearly stated and may tend to choose a neutral, non-personal tactic when disengaging a relationship because of the grayness involved when dissolving a relationship. This could explain why ISTJs chose neutral centered strategies in order to help them avoid or end a relationship as quickly as possible. Using neutral centered strategies makes it less complicated and easier for ISTJs to disengage a relationship. By choosing neutral centered tactics they do not have to explain or

justify, in any great detail, their reasons for dissolving the relationship, compared to positive centered tactics, which require a fuller explanation and a more detailed justification of a person's actions.

Another characteristic of ISTJs are that they prefer practical judgment and cite examples to support their evaluations of people and methods. This characteristic could account for the tendency to use neutral centered tactics in order to disengage a relationship because ISTJs have a tendency to cite specific examples of why they want to end a relationship. By doing this, a personal situation becomes more impersonal because ISTJs treat most of their personal confrontations much like a business confrontation, in which they use formal logic and impersonal characteristics. This reasoning would support the tendency for ISTJs to choose a more neutral centered tactic in order to disengage a relationship.

ISTJs also find it very hard to see any sense in the needs of others if they differ widely from their own. If ISTJs detect this variation in needs they

become more impersonal when needs are not familiar with their own. This could account for the neutral tendency for disengaging relationships because one characteristic of a dissolving relationship is that if there is a differentiation of needs between the parties, which often results in conflict, that deficiency could drive both parties away ending the relationship (Wood, 1982). This could further explain the tendency for ISTJs to disengage a relationship within their neutral impersonal situation.

What can be considered the most significant factor for ISTJs preference of selecting neutral centered strategies could be that their feeling trait is tertiary. They would rely more on their auxiliary trait, thinking. They then would depend on thinking and logic, which are more impersonal, to make decisions rather than feeling, which is more personal.

One final possibility for an explanation of the results is that ISTJs rely on stored past experiences when they make a decision. Logically, if they had a bad or negative past experience in a relationship this could further explain why ISTJs prefer to use neutral

centered strategies when disengaging a relationship.

INTJ

INTJ is an introvert (I) with intuition (N) being the dominant (#1) introverted function. Thinking (T) is the auxiliary (#2) extroverted function. Feeling (F) is the tertiary (#3) extroverted function and sensing (S) is the inferior (#4) extroverted function.

The MBTI theory describes this type as trusting intuition (#1) the most, developing it the most, and letting intuition shape and guide their inner lives to give them the maximum freedom for pursuing their intuitive goals. Their extroverted thinking (#2) supplies a critical organizing faculty. They also use feeling (#3), and sensing (#4) to guide them in the outer world. Intuition is focused towards the inner world, while thinking governs the outer world. They will not let thinking overcome anything that their intuition seriously desires.

The MBTI manual describes ISTJs as having the following characteristics. The INTJ personality type is the most individualistic and most independent of all

of the 16 personality types. They resemble extraverted thinkers in organizing ability and have a tendency to ignore the views and feelings of those who don't agree with them. People of this type are logical, critical, decisive, determined, and often stubborn. They can also be described people who like to get their way in life.

They trust their intuitive insights about the relationship and meanings of things, regardless of previous established authority or popular beliefs. They trust their vision of the possibilities, regardless of universal skepticism. They deal firmly with the outer world, which they do by means of their preferred kind of judgment, thinking (T). They look back on their original insight, by way of intuition, with the determination, perseverance and enduring purpose of the judging types.

There are certain dangers that do arise from their single-minded concentration. They see a certain goal so clearly that they may not even look for the other things they need to see, the things that conflict with or limit their goal. They often do not take the

trouble to learn the specific details of the situation at hand that they propose to change. Sensing is their least developed process, they easily overlook relevant facts and the limitations that these fact impose. They may not consider that something may be wrong with their idea.

Their auxiliary (#2) process, thinking (T), supplies the needed criticism for their ideas. Judgment can be used to foresee difficulties and decide what needs to be done to solve the difficulties. If their judgment is not properly developed they will not be able to criticize their own inner vision, intuition, and may tend to reject all judgments from the outside. As a result of this lack of judgment, they will not be able to shape their effective inspirations into effective action(s).

The supplemental book, Gifts Differing, describes this type as facing life expectantly, craving inspiration. This type is imaginative at the expense of lacking complete observation. They are inventive and original, and are quite indifferent to what other people have and do. They have a tendency to ignore the



views and feelings of other people. They have a highly critical destructive attitude in personal relations, which can have a disintegrating effect upon their private lives. This type is very independent of their physical surroundings, as sensing (#4) is their inferior trait.

The results in this study found that INTJs also preferred (2.0) to disengage a relationship by using tactics that were more negative centered (see Table 1). The results of this one personality trait cannot be considered to be reliable because there was only one subject tested of this personality type. But, if we examine the characteristics of this type, they do support this study's findings.

First, INTJs are more individualistic and the most independent of all the personality types. Therefore, they would be more apt to think strictly of themselves and not of the other person when involved in a relationship. Theory would follow that they would use negative centered tactics to dissolve a relationship because negative tactics do not take into consideration the other partner's feelings, whereas, positive

centered tactics do account for the other partner's feelings. According to their personality characteristics, INTJs would not be apt to use positive centered tactics.

Second, INTJs have a tendency to ignore the views and feelings of those who don't agree with them. This coincides with the characteristics of behavioral de-escalation, which is considered to have a negative connotation. As theory would have it the results of this study does support this characteristic of INTJs.

INTJs also have a highly critical destructive attitude in personal relations. This attitude does imply a negative inclination towards personal relationships. Thus, this characteristic could be juxtaposed with the negative type of strategies that were preferred by INTJs when disengaging a relationship.

#### ISTP

ISTP personality types are introverted (I) with thinking (T) being the most dominant (#1) function. Sensing (S) is the auxiliary (#2) extroverted function.

Intuition (N) is the tertiary (#3) extroverted function. The inferior (#4) extroverted function is feeling (F).

MBTI theory states that ISTPs trust thinking (#1) the most, utilize it the most, and that it is the most developed out of the four functions. Thinking guides their inner lives and is the dominate factor when a decision or judgment is made. The (#2) trait is extroverted sensing which allows them understanding of the outside world as it relates to the five senses. They are more at ease with concrete materials than they are with abstract ones. Intuition (#3) and feeling (#4) also help them relate to the outside world but are not relied upon as heavily as sensing (#2).

The MBTI manual describes ISTPs as having the following characteristics. ISTP personality types are introverted thinkers who use their thinking to analyze the world, not to run it. They see the realities in the world and have a great capacity for facts and details. They organize ideas and facts, which are more concrete, and tend not to organize situations or people, which are more abstract. Relying on thinking

makes them logical, impersonal, objectively critical, and they are not likely to be convinced by anything other than reasoning. Since they are introverts, they focus their thinking on the principles underlying a situation rather than on the situation itself. They lead their outer lives with their preferred perceptive process (S). They are quiet, reserved, detachably curious and quite adaptable, until one of their ruling principles is violated, at which point they stop adapting.

If their perception is not developed, they will have little knowledge or experience of the world. Their thinking will have no relationship to the problems of their time and nothing much will come of it. Socially, they may be rather shy except with their best friends. They tend to state their ideas in a manner too complicated for most people to follow.

Feeling is their least developed process (#4). They are not apt to know, unless told outright, what matters emotionally to another person. Their working life and personal life would run more smoothly if they would take the time to say an appreciative word when

praise is due, and mention the points where they agree with another person before they bring up the points that they disagree on.

Gifts Differing distinguishes the dominate process of thinking of the ISTP as essentially analytical and impersonal. The goal of thinkers is the objective truth, which lies independent of the personality and wishes of the thinker or anyone else. The ISTP is usually impersonal and is more interested in things than in human relationships. This impersonal approach is less successful for the ISTP. ISTPs view people more as objects than as people, therefore ISTPs lack the sympathetic handling of people and personal values. ISTPs feel that their inferior trait, feeling (#4) is unreliable and uncontrollable and thinkers cannot judge feeling. ISTJs naturally judge all feelings according to their own, which are relatively undeveloped and unreliable. They are naturally brief and businesslike, they often lack friendliness and sociability without knowing it or intending to. Feeling serves as the bridge between one human being to another, ISTPs lack this bridge. Furthermore, they tend to suppress,

undervalue, and ignore feelings that are incompatible with the thinking judgments.

Thinkers do their best with the impersonal, and they are the most able to handle things that need to be done impersonally. However, one important fact that has to be pointed out is that their thinking is not always first-class thinking. As a result of this, what appears to be the truth for ISTPs may not always be the case. What they hold true could, in fact, not be the truth.

They are outwardly quiet, reserved, detached, and inwardly absorbed in the current analysis or problem. They are inclined toward shyness because the chief interests of introverted thinking are little help in small talk or social contacts. They are also great believers in economy and effort. Their greatest contribution to their personality type is their efficiency to judge accurately how much effort is required in a situation. They then proceed promptly to exert only the effort required to fulfill the situation.

The results in this study also found that ISTPs

also preferred (3.46) to disengage a relationship by using tactics which were more neutral centered (see Table 1). This result can be supported by the behavioral characteristics of this type. ISTPs trust thinking the most, which is their most dominate trait. Thinking makes them logical, impersonal, objectively critical, and valuing reasoning very highly. These characteristics are not geared for optimal interpersonal communication. Hence, ISTPs would tend to select tactics that were more neutral centered in order to disengage a relationship.

One other type of behavioral characteristic that supports the preference for neutral centered strategy selection is that ISTPs are socially shy except with their best friends. If we then compare all of the results with one another, ISTPs have the highest average of neutral strategy preferences out of all the personality types that have a neutral strategy preference. The higher average could be accounted for by this behavioral characteristic of being shy toward others except toward their best friend.

The term "best friend" is just a formality because

in an intimate relationship the partners involved in a relationship often refer to their intimate partner as being their best friend. Therefore, one rationalization of this behavioral characteristic could be that ISTPs may tend to disengage a relationship on a slightly more positive note than the other personality types that have selected a neutral preference. Because they have a higher chance of becoming more open to their best friend, i.e., intimate partner, they may consequently want to disengage the relationship on a slightly more positive note.

The most noteworthy behavioral characteristic is the inferior trait of ISTPs. Feeling is the least developed trait in the ISTP personality type. This is explained by ISTPs having more interest in situations or things than in human relationships. ISTPs also lack the sympathetic handling of people and personal values. This characteristic strongly supports the tendency for ISTPs to select a neutral strategy when disengaging a relationship because they have a tendency not to be very sympathetic towards their partner.

ISTPs tended to select a neutral centered



strategy, i.e., negative identity management, behavior de-escalation, and sudden death, because they would not want to explain their actions (if any) to their partner. A positive strategy requires a more detailed form of explanation for an individual's actions.

One other point that backs the neutral strategy selection of the ISTJ is that ISTJs naturally judge all feelings according to their own, which is relatively undeveloped and unreliable. An ISTJ therefore, may not know or understand how to properly end a relationship because they lack the development of feeling. This could result in the ISTJ not knowing how to disengage a relationship on a positive note. So, an ISTJs only alternative is to disengage relationships by using neutral centered strategies, not because they dislike or don't care about their partner, but because it may be the only way they know how to disengage a relationship.

ESTP

ESTPs are extrovert (E) with sensing (S) being the most dominate (#1) extroverted function. The auxiliary (#2) introverted function is thinking (T). Feeling (F) is the third tertiary (#3) introverted function. Intuition (N) is the inferior (#4) introverted function.

The ESTPs trust sensing (#1) the most, employ it the most, and it is the most developed out of all of the traits. Their extroverted lives rely on the five senses to guide them in the outer world. They have a realistic outlook toward the outer world and are considered to be quite practical because of their auxiliary (#2) trait of introverted thinking. Thinking is used to guide their inner thoughts, which are based largely on past experiences. Feeling (#3) and intuition (#4) are also used to guide their inner lives but are not relied upon as much as thinking.

The MBTI manual describes ESTP personality type as possessing the following characteristics. ESTPs are extroverted sensing types and are considered to be realists who naturally accept and use the facts around

them, whatever they may be. They like to make decisions based upon their thinking rather than their feeling, which makes them more aware of the logical consequences of an act or decision. Thinking (#2) gives them a more rounded grasp of underlying principles and makes it easier for them to get tough when the situation calls for toughness. They are aware of what the facts are because they notice and remember them more than any other personality type. They are more personable and know what goes on, who wants what and who doesn't. They are unprejudiced, open-minded, and usually patient, easygoing and tolerant of everyone. Their expertise in sensing situations enables them to have a continuous awareness, and an ability to see the need of the moment and turn easily to meet it.

Since they are realists they get more out of first-hand experiences than from study. They have trouble seeing new ideas, theories and possibilities because intuition (#4) is their least developed process.

Gifts Differing further describes this type as

making decisions with thinking rather than feeling and therefore being more aware of the logical consequences of a decision. They tend to prefer action to conversation. They also tend to value the object that is sensed rather than the subjective impression, of which they may hardly be aware of. Their strong point is their flawless handling of things and situations, which is developed from sensing (#1) and thinking (#2).

The results found that ESTPs preferred to disengage a relationship by using tactics that were more neutrally centered (see Table 1) in order to disengage a relationship. An explanation of this result finds that ESTPs base their decisions upon their thinking rather than their feeling, which makes them more aware of the logical consequences of an act or decision rather than the feeling or personal consequences.

They also find it easier to get tough when the situation calls for toughness. This characteristic can be attributed to ESTPs dominant trait of sensing and auxiliary trait of thinking. Reasoning leads them to base the disengagement of a relationship upon thinking

which is more impersonal. This impersonal characteristic is more common with neutral centered strategies than with positive centered ones.

Another prominent characteristic which needs to be addressed is that ESTPs have an inclination to prefer action to conversation. This could account for the ISTPs' desire to end a relationship suddenly, which is a direct action, rather than engaging in conversation. This direct action could be considered a negative strategy in dissolving a relationship (i.e., sudden death).

ESTPs do not regard conversation highly and would put forth less effort trying to discuss the relationship, patching up the relationship, or trying to explain why the relationship was dissolving. They would choose a more direct action such as, stop seeing their partner, avoiding them, or offering them no explanation for the break up, which in this case, would all have characteristics of negative disengagement strategies.

ESTPs would rather not try to end the relationship on a positive note where more conversation would be

needed (e.g., offering an explanation of one's actions). The results support this theory that ESTPs do prefer neutral centered strategies when disengaging a relationship rather than using positive (conversation centered) strategies.

#### ENFP

ENFP is an extrovert (E) with intuition (N) being the dominate (#1) extroverted function. Feeling (F) is the auxiliary (#2) introverted function. The tertiary (#3) introverted function is thinking (T). Sensing (S) is the inferior (#4) introverted function.

ENFPs trust intuition (#1) the most, utilize it the most, and it is their most developed trait. Feeling (#2) is used as an auxiliary introverted trait. This helps them to understand the viewpoints of others around them. This quality also helps them to get along rather easily with people. Thinking (#3) is the tertiary trait and is used to understand the inner interests of the outside objective situation, this is were their line of reasoning initiates. Sensing (#4) is the inferior trait and they tend to rely less upon

the routine five senses, and rely upon their creative intuitive impulses.

The MBTI manual describes the ENFP personality type according to the following characteristics. ENFPs are more enthusiastic and are more concerned with people and are quite skillful in handling them. They look upon each new person as a fresh problem to be solved and possible fresh ideas to be communicated. They are always seeing new possibilities, or new ways of doing things. They are confident in their inspirations, which are derived from their intuitive trait.

They are also perceptive types and try to understand people rather than to judge them. They achieve an uncanny knowledge of what makes a person tick, and often use this knowledge to win their way. They adapt to other people in the way they present their objectives. Their faith in their intuition makes them too independent and individualistic to be conformists, but they are easily interested in almost anything. Their auxiliary (#2) trait, feeling, adds depth to the insights supplied by their intuition.

The drawback of this type is that they hate uninspired routine and find it remarkably hard to apply themselves to humdrum detail unconnected with any major interest. They also have a hard time finishing their projects after they've tackled the main problems when the rest seems like smooth sailing. If their judgement is not fully developed, they could become unstable, undependable, fickle, and quite easily discouraged.

Gifts Differing explains ENFPs as extraverted intuitives that are hard to describe because of their infinite variety. Their main interest is enthusiasm, and their energy is capable of pouring suddenly into any channel that they want to direct it in. This is a perceptive energy, which is an intuitive vision of some possibility in the external world. They also enjoy the remarkable ability to get what they want from people. This gift is a combination of ingenuity, charm, and a overwhelming understanding of the other person. This gift lets them proceed with the utmost of confidence. Overall, the main concern of ENFPs are centered towards people and the skills needed in order to handle them.

ENFPs were the only MBTI personality type that



preferred (4.38) to disengage a relationship by using a positive centered strategy (see Table 1). This result can be attributed to the fact that ENFPs are more concerned about people. Feeling is their second most dominate trait. ENFPs also have a higher tendency to try to understand people rather than to judge them and are overall more people centered. This would explain why ENFPs preferred to use tactics that were more positive centered when disengaging a relationship.

They would not want to hurt the individual, or would try to hurt them as little as possible, by using positive strategies. They would more than likely use the tactic of justification so they could fully explain their actions. Positive identity management would also be used in order to try to keep the dissolved relationship on a more positive note. ENFPs would break up a relationship much like they would want to be broken up with. They are caring types and will employ tactics that are more positive. They are also ones that take the individual's feelings into consideration when they disengage a relationship.

### Situations

The results of the t-test found that four out of the five relationship situations did yield some significant effects between relationship strategies used to disengage a relationship and the type of situation. The mean effects that were significant were: situation one (short-term), 3.9; situation three (event), 3.19; situation four (post-meeting), 4.29; and situation five (explanation), 3.5.

### Situation One

Situation one focused on a short term relationship. The results indicated that a positive centered strategy was preferred to disengage a short term relationship. This can be explained by the relationship only lasting a short time. Since the relationship only lasted a short time, the probability of a high rate of self-disclosure taking place would be slim because the partners would not have that much time to self-disclose. If the self-disclosure theory is applied to this situation, the partners of this relationship would not be familiar with one another

(Brant et al., 1980a, 1980b). With this low rate of self-disclosure, the partners would not experience a high rate of intimacy and would be more likely to break up (Hill et al., 1976).

The self-disclosure theory explains why a positive centered strategy was selected. The partners would not have know each other for a long period of time. Intimacy would not be high so there would not be as many deep feelings involved as compared to a longer relationship (Hill et al., 1976). Therefore, the partners would be apt to end the relationship on a more positive note since self-disclosure was low. Little personal feelings would have been disclosed and would limit the chance for partners' feelings to be hurt, causing a more positive outlook when the relationship did disengage.

A further explanation for this positive result would be the definition of roles. Since this relationship was short term, the partners would not have had exclusive roles defined, i.e., lovers, boyfriend, girlfriend. If roles were assigned (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend) the probability would be slim

that these roles would be deeply developed and defined. They would be shallow because of the shorter amount of time. The roles would not have had a chance to prosper and develop as fully as they would in a longer relationship (Wood, 1982). The partners would not be as heavily involved and would not have as much to lose compared to a long term relationship. Therefore, this could explain the preference of a positive centered strategy.

### Situation Three

Situation three focused on the violation of sacred trust, in this case it was the confrontation of one partner walking in on the other partner while s/he was in bed with someone else. The results indicated that a neutral centered strategy was preferred in this situation. One explanation of this neutral result can be illustrated by the impact that a certain event can have on a relationship. Since this situation could be relatively unexpected, it could automatically lead to the termination of the relationship on the spot (Duck, 1982).

Further support can be drawn from the literature review in this study. Certain events do have a significant impact on a relationship. Theory indicates that a sudden event could be classified as having a negative or positive impact on the relationship. If the impact is positive, the greater the chance for the relationship to survive the sudden event. If the event has a negative impact on the relationship, the event could increase uncertainty in the relationship and if critical enough, the event could strongly influence and redirect the relationship trajectory, i.e., possible dissolution (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985).

The event theory does support the neutrality of this situation. It is left up to the individual involved in the relationship to decide if the event should be given a negative or positive classification. If negative, the chances would greatly increase for this situation to be redirected toward a negative strategy to disengage the relationship. If positive, the chances would shift toward a more positive centered strategy to be used in handling this type of situation.

Therefore, this situation is a truly neutral one.

Depending entirely upon the individual and the specific strategy (i.e., negative identity management, sudden death, avoidance, justification, positive identity management) used in disengaging the relationship. Based on the strategy used in disengaging the relationship it would then be either a negative, neutral (i.e., avoidance), or positive centered strategy. The event theory does support the neutrality of situation three.

#### Situation Four

Situation four focused on post-contact of a previous intimate partner (old lovers running each other again). The results found that a positive strategy was preferred in this situation. This situation was only directed towards a brief run-in (passing each other on the street) between previous partners. The positive results could be attributed to the fact that this was only a brief run-in. The partners were not expected to arrange a time to sit down and engage in a conversation. Nor were they expected to initiate a conversation right on the spot.

These could be reasons for the high positive response.

Another rationalization of the high positive response could be accredited to the fact that individuals have a tendency to desire to come across generally favorably toward one another (Kleinke, 1975; Mehrabian, 1970), even if they do not particularly care for each other. So, if the past intimate partners ended on a negative note this explains for the preference for past intimate partners to still present a favorable (positive) impression towards their past intimate partner.

Yet another explanation of this result could be self-esteem reasons. An individual would not want to come across negatively towards a person and therefore develops a high (positive) self-esteem towards themselves, the other partner, and the situation. Individuals tend to avoid jerk-like negative behavior because they do not want to come across in a negative manner toward others and also because such behavior affects their own self image. So, a more positive behavior is more favorable giving the individual a higher self-esteem.

Situation Five

Situation five focused upon seeking understanding. To further elaborate, the individual was assigned the role of the person broken-up-with (Hill et al., 1976) and they wanted to know reasons why the relationship had broken up. The results uncovered that a neutral strategy was preferred in this situation, although, this strategy was very close to being a positive centered strategy. The mean average of this type was 3.50. A strategy was considered positive centered if it had a mean average of 3.51 to 5.00. The difference between these two strategies was only .01.

The neutral strategy preference could be attributed to how the relationship ended. To further illustrate, if the relationship disengaged on a negative note, the chances would be greatly increased for that individual not to want justification of why the relationship did break up. Theory has it that if an individual perceives that they are not liked or wanted by the other partner, that individual will be less likely to continue to hang around or be with them (Baxter & Philpott, 1982).



This theory corresponds with the results. If a negative image was projected at the end of the relationship, that individual would not, according to theory, want to continue to still engage in contact with that person. Therefore, this situation could be negatively centered because of the negative way which the relationship ended.

The opposite of this theory could also occur for this same situation. If the relationship disengaged on a positive note, the parties would be more open toward each other and probably offer some sort of an explanation or justification of the circumstances surrounding the break up.

This also supports the results for this situation. The neutral centered strategy could be applied both ways depending upon how the disengagement took place, positively or negatively. The events that took place in the relationship would have a notable effect on which disengagement strategy (i.e., negative identity management, avoidance, justification, positive identity management) was used in order to disengage the relationship. The strategy used would then be either a

negative, neutral (as in the case of avoidance), or positive centered strategy.

#### Future Research

Future directions for this type of study include surveying a larger sample. For this study 116 individuals were surveyed. The problem was that not all of the 16 MBTI personality types were equally represented. This posed a problem because in some cases there was only one personality type represented, while in others there were over 20. The ideal situation for this study would be to have 100 samples of each individual personality type. This would be quite a task considering 1,600 subjects would be needed. If this could be accomplished correlations could then be successfully drawn between MBTI personality types and relationship disengagement situations.

Secondly, if this study were to be repeated, a larger number of a diverse type of majors would have to be surveyed. For this study, there were a larger amount of extroverts (77) than introverts (39)

surveyed. This could be accounted for because only students in speech classes were surveyed. If we look at the average student that has a speech interest, they would more than likely fit the characteristics of extroverts than introverts. The biggest reason is that speech students do not tend to be socially apprehensive.

Further exploration of this type of study is also needed. Since this was the first study of this kind, similar studies need be performed in order to verify, not only this study's results, but also that personality types do have a significant influence in the determination of how a relationship will be disengaged.

Comparisons could also be drawn between relationship initiation and termination to verify if there is a significant relationship between an individuals personality type and how they will begin and end a romantic dyadic relationship. Research need not stop at this point. Platonic relationships could also be studied to see if certain personality types disengage a friendship in the same manner that they end

a romantic relationship.

Future studies could also center on the affiliation of personality types to relationship disengagement strategies in the family and in the working environment.

The MBTI should be tested further as not only as a personality type indicator, but also as an indicator, or even predictor, of relational behavior.

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Tables

Table 1

Mean Averages Of Relationship Disengagement Strategies  
Selected by MBTI Types

		Relationship Disengagement Strategy				
		N.I.	S.D.	A.	J.	P.I.
		1	2	3	4	5
M B T I	ISTJ	.	.	<b>X</b> (3.24)	.	
	INTJ	.	<b>X</b> (2.0)	.	.	
	ISTP	.	.	<b>X</b> (3.46)	.	
T Y P E	ESTP	.	.	<b>X</b> (3.36)	.	
	ENFP	.	.	.	<b>X</b> (4.38)	

Note. 1.00 - 2.50 negative centered strategy.

2.51 - 3.50 neutral centered strategy.

3.51 - 5.00 positive centered strategy.



Table 2

Mean Averages for Type of Strategy Selected in Various Relationship Situations

		Relationship Disengagement Strategy							
		N.I.	S.D.	A.	J.	P.I.			
		1	2	3	4	5			
S I T U A T I O N	No. 1		.		.		.	<b>X</b> (3.9)	
	No. 3		.		.		<b>X</b> (3.19)	.	
	No. 4		.		.		.		<b>X</b> (4.29)
	No. 5		.		.		<b>X</b> (3.5)	.	

Note. 1.00 - 2.50 negative centered strategy.

2.51 - 3.50 neutral centered strategy.

3.51 - 5.00 positive centered strategy.