



Friendship Maintenance Mediates the Relationship Between Compassion for Others and Happiness

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Abstract

Displaying compassion for others (CFO) and utilizing friendship maintenance (FM) behaviors are positively associated with happiness. Two studies investigated FM as a mediator of the relationship between CFO and happiness (Study 1: $N = 273$; Study 2: $N = 368$). FM mediated the CFO-Happiness relationship in both studies regardless of the way happiness was measured. Although women had higher scores on both CFO and FM, the model was supported for both genders. The implications of the findings are discussed and suggestions for future research are provided.

Keywords Compassion for others · Happiness · Friendship maintenance · Mediation · Gender differences · Bootstrapping

In recent years, compassion in general and compassion for others, particularly, has received a vast attention in the field of psychology. Although a lack of consensus remains on the definition (Strauss et al. 2016), studies have found that compassion, regardless of the conceptualization, has many positive outcomes. For instance, research has identified an association between self-compassion and a sense of community (Akin and Akin 2015), and relational well-being (Yarnell and Neff 2013). Compassion for others (hereafter CFO) on the other hand is related to forgiveness (Arslan 2017) and better problem-solving skills (Feher 2016). Furthermore, CFO is a reliable correlate of well-being, including happiness (e.g., Beaumont et al. 2016a, b; Bibeau et al. 2016; İşgör 2017). Yet, an explanation for why the CFO-happiness association exists remains absent in the literature. The current investigation aimed to address this gap by testing friendship maintenance as the mediator of the relationship between CFO and happiness. We focus on friendship because not every emerging adult is involved in a romantic relationship (Demir, 2010) and some prefer to be single (Shulman and Connolly 2013). Additionally, friends become the primary source of emotional support and intimacy during emerging adulthood (Barry

et al. 2016). Consistent with this trend, friendship experiences make unique contributions to emerging adults' happiness even when taking other close relationships (e.g., relationship with parents, romantic partners) into account (Brannan et al. 2013; Demir et al. 2018; Ratelle et al. 2013).

Compassion for Others

Neff (2003) defines compassion as: "...being open to and moved by the suffering of others, so that one desires to ease their suffering. It also involves offering others patience, kindness and nonjudgmental understanding, recognizing that all humans are imperfect and make mistakes" (p. 224). While this definition focuses on alleviating others' suffering, the initial work championed by Neff focused on self-compassion. This line of research has shown that self-compassion is a robust marker of psychological well-being and has implications for health (see Neff and Knox 2017 for a review). Researchers have also strived to understand compassion in relation to one's interpersonal relationships. After all, when a person is suffering it often stimulates help, concern, and communication from others determined to alleviate that pain. Pommier (2010) defines this determination to alleviate the suffering of others as compassion for others (CFO).

CFO stemmed conceptually from Neff's (2003) self-compassion (SC) model, and is composed of the same three components: mindfulness, kindness, and common humanity. Accordingly, the main dimensions along with the opposing

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dimensions are: mindfulness (a willingness to understand others' suffering) versus disengagement (an unwillingness to understand others' suffering), kindness (displaying warmth towards those suffering) versus indifference (ignoring those that are suffering), and common humanity (viewing suffering as a common human experience) versus separation (viewing suffering as an individual, isolated experience). These three components collectively make up CFO. Namely, Pommier (2010) explains that when others are suffering, having CFO entails being mindful of their emotions rather than dismissive, being understanding rather than apathetic, and viewing suffering as a common human experience instead of the experience being that individual's fault.

While CFO makes a unique contribution to the understanding of compassion in general, it is critical to highlight how it differs from other conceptualizations of compassion. First, one popular approach to compassion is compassionate goals (CG; Crocker and Canevello 2008), which are defined as being concerned about other's well-being and providing support. Although CG and CFO share kindness as a key component, they differ from each other in two ways. Specifically, neither the conceptualization nor the assessment of CG is concerned with the mindfulness and common humanity component of CFO. Also, while both CFO and CG conceptualize compassion as a trait, CG can also be studied as a state. For instance, Crocker and Canevello (2008) state that "...people fluctuate from week to week, day to day, and possibly even moment to moment in how compassionate their goals are" (p. 557). Similarly, Martins et al.' (2013) approach to compassion, as measured by the compassion scale, differs from CFO. Specifically, although both conceptualizations focus on alleviating the pain of others, the compassion scale measures compassion at the state level and does not incorporate the mindfulness and common humanity aspects of CFO.

Secondly, another construct that is theoretically related to CFO is empathy. It is defined as "sharing another's feelings by placing oneself psychologically in that person's circumstances" (Lazarus 1991, p. 287). Empathy is considered to be an attribute of compassion (Gilbert 2010) and certainly plays a key role in eliciting compassion (Goetz et al. 2010). However, Pommier (2010) highlights that CFO is a feeling elicited in response to another person's suffering, whereas empathy emphasizes the mirroring of another person's emotions which is not limited to negative emotions. Also, the desire and motivation to alleviate the suffering of another person is a key aspect of CFO, while empathy does not entail this act or concern. Thus, although empathy is necessary for CFO, the experience of compassion has "...additional components over and above empathy" (Strauss et al. 2016, p. 8). For instance, the mindfulness component of CFO prevents the individual from overidentifying with another person's distress, and this suggests that CFO is not equivalent to "...an empathetic state or mirrored distress, fear, or sadness" (Goetz et al. 2010, p. 363).

Consistent with this notion, Pommier (2010) reported a positive relationship between empathy and CFO ($r = .67$), suggesting that there is considerable overlap between the constructs, but they are also distinct from each other.

Lastly, compassionate love (CL) is another popular approach in studying compassion. CL is defined as "feelings, cognitions, or behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the other, particularly when suffering" (Sprecher and Fehr 2005, p. 630). Although both CFO and CL entail a desire to alleviate the suffering of others, their assessment of and approach to compassion is different. For instance, while kindness and common humanity are key features in both constructs, CL does not address mindfulness (i.e., emotional regulation). Also, the assessment of CL does not include items tapping into the recognition of others' suffering (Strauss et al. 2016). Furthermore, CL is differentiated for close others and humanity whereas CFO assumes consistent feelings of compassion to the sufferer regardless of closeness. Consequently, Pommier (2010) found that CFO and CL were moderately related ($r = .30$ for common humanity; $r = .54$ for close others), supporting the notion that these two constructs are distinct. In sum, while there are similarities between CFO and other approaches to compassion, CFO is unique and different from them with its multidimensional conceptualization of compassion.

CFO and Psychosocial Well-Being

Since its development, numerous studies have utilized Pommier's conceptualization of compassion and investigated its nomological network. For instance, Roxas et al. (2014) found that CFO is a reliable predictor of forgiveness of others. In studies focusing on careers that entail rehabilitation, care, and support (e.g., nursing, music therapist), CFO was positively related to compassion satisfaction (i.e., gratification from caregiving) and negatively related to burnout (Durkin et al. 2016; Rushing 2017). Regarding interpersonal relationships, CFO has been associated with closeness, trust, and social support in friendships (Salazar 2015). Furthermore, Salazar (2016) found an inverse relationship between CFO and verbal aggressiveness, narcissism, and interpersonal communication apprehension. Additionally, Feher (2016) found that CFO mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies.

The relationship between CFO and happiness has been obscured as a result of what Pommier (2010) termed the "paradox of compassion." This entails that being compassionate first constitutes a negative experience, recognizing the suffering of others, yet it also promotes positive emotions such as happiness. Pommier (2010) explains that this relationship is only present when individuals are mindful. If the negative

experience promoted by recognizing suffering consumes the individual, compassion does not manifest. Consequently, Pommier (2010) proposed that alleviating the pain of others may explain the paradox of compassion. For instance, after recognizing other's suffering, through feelings of concern, compassionate individuals are determined to provide aid. Thus, what promotes happiness is not the initial negative feelings, but the feelings involved when helping others, which is consistent with studies showing a positive relationship between happiness and prosocial behavior (Oishi et al. 2007; Priller and Schupp 2011). Another explanation that may account for the paradox of compassion relate to the feelings of interdependence that emerge as a consequence of wanting to alleviate the suffering of others. In this case, both the person receiving compassion and the person providing the compassion feel positive emotions.

Studies on different approaches of compassion demonstrate a positive relationship between compassion and happiness (Davidson 2006; Goleman 2003; Hollis-Walker and Colosimo 2011; Mongrain et al. 2011; Neely et al. 2009; Neto 2012; Pace et al. 2009). Research investigating the association of CFO with well-being is growing. Beaumont et al. (2016a, b) reported a positive relationship between CFO and well-being in various samples. İsgör (2017) reported that CFO was a predictor of subjective well-being among Turkish college students. Recently, research conducted with college students showed that CFO was positively associated with happiness; a finding obtained regardless of the happiness measure used (Demir, M., Grant, C., & Adams, D. Compassion for others and happiness. Unpublished manuscript). In sum, there is an array of studies showing multiple benefits associated with compassion, including happiness. Yet, less is known about why CFO is related to happiness. The current investigation examined friendship maintenance behaviors as the mediator between CFO and happiness.

Friendship Maintenance

Friendships matter. However, friendships do not magically last for years. A plethora of studies have investigated maintenance behaviors that take place between the initiation and termination of relationships (Canary and Stafford 1994; Dindia and Baxter 1987). Early studies specifically focusing on friendship maintenance explored how individuals dealt with conflict and anger in their friendships (Fehr 1996). However, the resolution of conflict does not fully entail why two individuals stay as friends. As a result, behaviors such as self-disclosure, supportiveness, and spending time together were identified as additional strategies and routines most commonly affiliated with friendship maintenance (Berndt 1986; Burlinson and Samter 1994; Rosenfeld and Kendrick 1984).

Oswald et al. (2004) addressed the limitation of focusing on individual maintenance behaviors by presenting a

comprehensive approach to the study of maintenance behaviors in friendships. Oswald et al. (2004) defined friendship maintenance (hereafter FM) as behaviors involving strategies and routine behaviors used to sustain committed and satisfactory relationships. They identified four components that individuals engage in to maintain their friendships: interaction, positivity, supportiveness, and openness. For instance, supportiveness refers to behaviors promoting social support and providing comfort (e.g. "Listen without making any judgment") and openness captures behaviors that involve honesty and being able to share private thoughts (e.g. "Share your private thoughts with your friend"). Collectively, these components represent the broad construct of friendship maintenance.

FM is positively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment (Oswald and Clark 2006), communal strength (Mattingly et al. 2011), friendship quality (Canute 2016), and autonomy support in the friendship (Demir et al. 2011). Past research also showed that FM has implications for individual well-being. For instance, FM has a positive relationship with ego-resiliency and adaptive coping (Canute 2016; Lozano et al. 2016). Interestingly, Baker et al. (2012) found a negative association between friendship maintenance behaviors and depressive mood only when individuals reported being satisfied in their friendships. In addition, O'Brien (2014) reported that friendship maintenance behaviors were negatively related to loneliness. Relevant to the purposes of the current study, it was found that friendship maintenance was related to happiness (Demir et al. 2011). In sum, there are numerous relational and individual benefits of engaging in FM behaviors.

Friendship Maintenance as a Mediator of the Relationship Between CFO and Happiness

Although the available literature suggests that both CFO and FM are related to happiness, it is critical to examine how CFO might be related to FM. Previous research suggests that being compassionate enhances one's friendships by establishing social bonds (Crocker and Canevello 2008). Of particular importance, Salazar (2015) found that CFO is linked to closeness, trust, and social support in friendships, which are constructs closely related to FM. We believe that there are several reasons why CFO might engender FM. To start with, Pommier (2010) noted that "good" people usually perform compassionate behaviors because they illustrate selflessness and a focus on others. This other-centered mindset allows individuals to place less emphasis on the self and instead focus on and help others (Gilbert 2005), which might explain how CFO is linked to friendship maintenance. In friendships, this other-focused mindset might promote a selfless approach to

friendship and increases an awareness of a friend's suffering, distress, or/and pain. For instance, if a friend's suffering is recognized, individuals with high levels of CFO might be less self-focused, aware of a friend's distress, and be more inclined to help, which in turn leads to actual friendship maintenance behaviors such as listening, giving advice, and trying to cheer them up.

Second, the overlap between these two constructs may explain their relationship. For instance, we believe that mindfulness, a key component of CFO, promote friendship maintenance behaviors. Through mindfulness one achieves emotional balance (not over-identifying with other's feelings and not being disengaged; Pommier 2010) that makes it easier to help a friend in need and provide support. For instance, if a friend is experiencing difficulties or distress, a compassionate friend can provide the best support since their emotions are under control and in a state that is other-focused.

Another possible explanation for the association between CFO and FM has to do with the fact that relationships are inherently interdependent bonds (Ayres 1983; Kelley and Thibaut 1978; Stafford and Canary 1991). In relationships, this interdependence creates a shared reality between two people that promotes feelings of "we-ness", which refers to a bond between two people that is established by identities being intertwined (Reid et al. 2006). In fact, studies have found that a sense of we-ness is positively correlated to relationship satisfaction (Reid et al. 2006). Recall that with common humanity, individuals are able to understand and see someone that is suffering as equal because it is a state we all experience; thus, a sense of we-ness or interconnectedness emerges. Ledbetter (2013) found that inclusion of others in the self predicted frequency of maintenance behaviors, indicating that a sense of we-ness in relationships encourages maintenance behaviors. Thus, we believe that people with high CFO strengthen a sense of we-ness already existing in close friendships, which motivates supportive and other friendship maintenance strategies because friends are able to relate and understand one another with less effort.

Gender Differences

Although men and women do not differ from each other on happiness (Diener et al. 1999), they do differ on compassion and friendship maintenance. Social role theory suggests that gender-stereotypical qualities are relevant to prosocial behaviors (Dindia and Canary 2006); with compassion, a gender-stereotypical quality, often attributed to women (Dindia and Canary 2006). A growing body of research has also consistently reported that women, compared to men, report higher levels of CFO (Beresford 2016; Pommier 2010; Salazar 2015; Strauss et al. 2016).

Gender differences in friendships favoring women have been well-documented. For instance, past research showed that friendships of women are higher in quality and self-disclosure (Fehr 1996; Leung 2002). Similarly, research on FM has also reported that women engage in higher levels of relationship maintenance behaviors in their friendships than men (Demir et al. 2011; Hays 1984; Oswald et al. 2004).

The well-established gender differences in relationship experiences have promoted theoretical arguments suggesting that women, compared to men, reap more benefits from their relationships (Saphire-Bernstein and Taylor 2013). That is, the associations of various relationships experiences should make a stronger contribution to their well-being. While this idea was generally supported in research on marital relationships (e.g., Pinquart and Sörensen 2000; Proulx et al. 2007; Saphire-Bernstein et al. 2010; see Williams 2003 for exception), empirical research on friendship has shown that the associations of various friendship experiences with happiness are similar for both men and women (Demir & Davidson, 2013; Demir et al. 2011). Relatedly, research investigating various meditational models linking friendships experiences to happiness was found to be gender invariant (Demir et al. 2017; Demir & Özdemir, 2010). The current investigation conferred a unique opportunity to contribute to this debate by examining whether FM mediated the association of CFO with happiness similarly for both men and women.

Aims of the Present Study

In light of the aforementioned literature, we developed four hypotheses (H). We predicted that women would have higher scores on CFO and FM compared to men while there would be no differences between the groups on happiness (H1). We also expected CFO to be positively related to FM (H2), and both variables to have a positive association with happiness (H3) for both men and women. Finally, we predicted that FM would mediate the relationship of CFO with happiness similarly for men and women (H4). These hypotheses were tested in two independent samples both of which employed two different conceptualizations of happiness to establish confidence in our findings. Specifically, the first study relied on the affective component of the tripartite model of happiness (Cummins 2013; Diener 1984), while the second study assessed the global happiness of the participants (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The samples for the studies consisted of 273 (83 men, $M_{age} = 19.13$, $SD_{age} = 1.62$, range = 18–25) and 368 (118 men,

$M_{age} = 18.90$, $SD_{age} = 1.58$, range = 18–25) college students, respectively, attending a medium-sized university in the southwestern United States. Both samples were ethnically diverse: 70 and 65% European American, 14 and 19% Latino American, 2 and 4% African American, 3 and 2% Native American, and 11 and 10% East Asian, Middle Eastern, multiracial, or “other”.

The data for both studies were gathered online during two consecutive semesters. The studies were announced on an online research participation system, with the title of the studies (“Close Friendships and Well-Being”) available to participants. Participants were recruited from the psychology department’s online research participation system. Eligibility requirements included being between 18 to 25 years old, and having a nonfamilial, nonromantic same-sex best friend. Eligible participants signed up online, and received access to the online survey administered via [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Students that participated in the first study were not allowed to sign up for the second study through the online participation system. Participants provided informed consent prior to completing the survey, and received a debriefing form once the survey was completed. In both studies, the survey consisted of various other constructs (e.g., emotion regulation), however, only the constructs relevant for the purposes of the present investigation are reported. Participants received extra credit for participation in the study. In both studies, the order of the questionnaires was counterbalanced after every 100 participants. In both studies, completion of the surveys was about 25 min.

Measures

Assessment of Same-Sex Best Friendship Participants in both studies were required to have a same-sex best friend in order to take part in the study. Participants were asked to confirm that they have a nonfamilial, nonromantic same-sex best friend and report the duration of the best friendship. The duration of same-sex friendships did not differ between men ($M = 85.49$, $SD = 57.15$) and women ($M = 78.08$, $SD = 52.09$) in the first study ($t(267) = 1.04$, $p = .30$). In the second study, men’s friendships ($M = 82.55$, $SD = 52.35$), when compared to women’s friendships ($M = 66.06$, $SD = 54.27$), were longer in duration (Study 2: $t(340) = 2.61$, $p < .01$, $d = .31$). Friendship duration was not related to the study variables in either study.

Compassion for Others The Compassion Scale (CS; Pommier 2010) was used to measure compassion for others in both studies. The CS consists of 24-items with six 4-item subscales. These subscales include: Kindness (e.g., “If I see someone going through a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person”), Common Humanity (e.g., “Everyone feels down sometimes, it is part of being human”), Mindfulness (e.g., “I

pay careful attention when other people talk to me”), Indifference (e.g., “Sometimes when people talk about their problems, I feel like I don’t care”), Separation (e.g., “I don’t feel emotionally connected to people in pain”), and Disengagement (e.g., “When people cry in front of me, I often don’t feel anything at all”). Respondents indicated their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Almost Never*, 5 = *Almost Always*). Items for the Indifference, Separation, and Disengagement subscales were reverse coded. Means of the subscales were used to create a composite score where higher scores indicate higher levels of compassion for others (Study 1: $\alpha_{men} = .92$, $\alpha_{women} = .93$; Study 2 = $\alpha_{men} = .92$, $\alpha_{women} = .94$). Importantly, a recent study focusing on measures of compassion with various criteria ranked CS as the second best measure of compassion (Strauss et al. 2016).

Friendship Maintenance The Friendship Maintenance Scale (FMS; Oswald et al. 2004) was used to measure the frequency of behaviors individuals engage in to maintain their same-sex best friendships in both studies. FMS consists of 20-items assessing four relationship maintenance dimensions: Positivity (e.g., “How often do you reminisce about things you did together in the past?”), Supportiveness (e.g., “How often do you support your friends when s/he is going through a difficult time?”), Openness (e.g., “How often do you repair misunderstandings?”), and Interaction (e.g., “How often do you make an effort to spend time even when you are busy?”). Participants were asked to indicate how often they engage in a specific behavior in their friendship using an 11-point scale (1 = *Never*, 11 = *Frequently*). The means of the subscales were relied on for the creation of respective composite scores. The mean correlation between the four dimensions in Study 1 and 2 were .80 and .75, respectively. Thus, the mean of all items was taken to create an overall FM composite score where higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship maintenance (Study 1: $\alpha_{men} = .93$, $\alpha_{women} = .95$; Study 2 = $\alpha_{men} = .95$, $\alpha_{women} = .96$). FMS is positively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment to the friend and is sensitive to the degree of closeness such that individuals report higher levels of maintenance behaviors for their best friends when compared to close or casual friends (Oswald et al. 2004; Oswald and Clark 2006).

Happiness The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al. 1988) was used to measure happiness in the first study. PANAS is the most widely used instrument that measures the affective component of happiness (e.g., Bussari and Sadava 2011). It consists of 10 mood states for positive affect (PA; e.g. excited) and 10 for negative affect (NA; e.g., nervous). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they feel each mood in general on a 5-point scale (*very slightly or not at all* (1), *extremely* (5)). Composite PA ($\alpha_{men} = .83$, $\alpha_{women} = .85$) and NA ($\alpha_{men} = .87$,

$\alpha_{\text{women}} = .89$) scores were computed by taking the mean of the respective items. An affect balance score was computed by subtracting negative affect score from positive affect score (e.g., Diener 1994).

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999) was used to assess happiness in the second study. The SHS measures the subjective assessment of the individual's global happiness with four items (e.g., "In general, I consider myself: 1 = *not a very happy person*, 7 = *a very happy person*). After recoding the reverse-keyed item, a composite happiness score was created by taking the mean of the four items, where higher scores indicate higher levels of happiness ($\alpha_{\text{men}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{women}} = .85$). The SHS has been shown to be positively correlated with other measures of happiness (e.g., life satisfaction) and psychosocial well-being (e.g., environmental mastery; Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999; Otake et al. 2006; Segrin and Taylor 2007).

Results

The correlations amongst the study variables, and means for both men and women in both studies are reported in Tables 1 and 2. Consistent with our prediction, men and women did not differ from each other on happiness (Study 1: $t(271) = 1.33$, $p = .19$; Study 2: $t(366) = .94$, $p = .35$). However, as predicted, women reported higher levels of CFO (Study 1: $t(271) = 3.50$, $p < .001$, $d = .40$; Study 2: $t(366) = 4.48$, $p < .001$, $d = .50$) and maintenance behaviors (Study 1: $t(271) = 3.17$, $p < .001$, $d = .42$; Study 2: $t(366) = 4.85$, $p < .001$, $d = .54$) compared to men. The effect sizes associated with the differences were moderate. Overall, H1 concerning gender differences was supported in both studies.

The correlations amongst the study variables in both studies yielded support for H2 and H3. CFO was positively associated with friendship maintenance, and both variables were positively related to happiness for men and women in both samples. Fisher's z -test, comparing the strength of the correlations between the two groups, did not reveal any significant differences.

Our prediction that FM would mediate the association between CFO and happiness (H4) was tested with bootstrap estimation by relying on regression analyses (Hayes 2013; Preacher and Hayes 2008). This procedure estimates confidence intervals for the indirect effects while repeatedly sampling, with replacement, from the dataset (Preacher and Hayes 2004). The results would support mediation only when the 95% confidence intervals (CI) do not include zero, and no indirect effect would be inferred if the CIs did contain zero (MacKinnon et al. 2002). Consistent with the recommendations of Mallinckrodt et al. (2006) 10,000 bootstrap samples were estimated, and the CIs obtained from the bias-corrected and accelerated intervals were reported (Efron 1987).

The results supported the proposed model in both studies (Study 1: Men: $R^2 = .25$, $B = .37$, 95% BCa CI = [0.17, 0.64], Women: $R^2 = .13$; $B = .30$, 95% BCa CI = [0.12, 0.52]; Study 2: Men: $R^2 = .12$, $B = .25$, 95% BCa CI = [0.07, 0.45], Women: $R^2 = .16$, $B = .33$, 95% BCa CI = [0.21, 0.52]). The CIs did not include zero, and as reported in Fig. 1, the relationship between CFO and happiness was no longer significant when friendship maintenance was taken into account in both studies. Although the proposed model was supported, it could be that CFO mediates the association between FM with happiness. Thus, we tested CFO as a mediator to exclude this as an alternative explanation. Results did not support this alternative model (Study 1: Men: $B = .03$, 95% BCa CI = [-0.04, 0.14], Women: $B = .05$, 95% BCa CI = [-0.03, 0.14]; Study 2: Men: $B = .05$, 95% BCa CI = [-0.02, 0.15], Women: $B = .02$, 95% BCa CI = [-0.03, 0.09]). Collectively, these analyses suggest that FM mediated the CFO-Happiness association similarly for both men and women.

Discussion

The findings of the current investigation contribute to the growing literature on CFO in two important ways. First, we demonstrated that CFO is positively associated with FM in same-sex friendships. This represents a unique addition to the nomological network of CFO and suggests that the

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Amongst the Variables (Study 1)

	1	2	3	Men <i>M (SD)</i>	Women <i>M (SD)</i>
1. Compassion for others	–	.53*	.33*	3.77 (.59)	4.02 (.65)
2. Friendship maintenance	.61*	–	.49*	9.23 (1.35)	9.79 (1.34)
3. Happiness	.28*	.35*	–	1.93 (.91)	1.74 (1.12)

Correlations for men ($n = 83$) are above the diagonal, women ($n = 190$) below the diagonal. Values in parentheses are standard deviations

* $p < .01$

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Amongst the Variables (Study 2)

	1	2	3	Men <i>M (SD)</i>	Women <i>M (SD)</i>
1. Compassion for others	–	.52*	.27*	3.74 (.63)	4.05 (.61)
2. Friendship Maintenance	.45*	–	.33*	8.77 (1.62)	9.64 (1.60)
3. Happiness	.23*	.40*	–	5.22 (1.14)	5.09 (1.24)

Correlations for men ($n = 118$) are above the diagonal, women ($n = 250$) below the diagonal. Values in parentheses are standard deviations

* $p < .01$

presumed benefits of CFO extend into relationship maintenance. Second, we showed that FM mediated the relationship between CFO and happiness. These findings were obtained in two different studies each employing a different measure of happiness. Importantly, we were able to show that the model was supported for both men and women.

Decades of empirical research on close relationships in general and friendships in particular suggest that any discussion or presentation of findings concerning relationship experiences would be incomplete without taking gender into account (Hazan and Shaver 1994; Oswald et al. 2004). Relatedly, the gender benefits debate in the literature suggests that women might reap more benefits from their relationships compared to men (Saphire-Bernstein and Taylor 2013). The hypotheses and the analyses addressed these two important issues. The first hypothesis predicted gender differences in CFO and FM, favoring women. This was supported in both studies yielding moderate effect sizes, which is consistent with past research (Demir et al. 2011; Oswald et al. 2004; Salazar 2015).

The well-established gender differences in the literature promoted arguments that because women, compared to men, display a stronger relationship orientation the contributions of relationship experiences to their well-being might be stronger. The predictions addressing this issue (H2 & H3) were confirmed such that CFO was positively associated with FM and both variables were correlated with happiness similarly for

both men and women. That is, the strength of the associations did not differ by gender. Importantly, the proposed mediational model was supported similarly for both men and women. Thus, while women display a stronger concern to alleviate the suffering of others and engage in FM behaviors to a greater extent than men, the benefits associated with these differences and the process through which CFO contributes to happiness are similar for both genders. We believe that this is a significant finding that highlights the usefulness of CFO for the psychosocial well-being of emerging adult men and women. It also suggests that the gender benefits argument might not be generalizable to relationship experiences and compassionate acts in the context of friendship and experience of happiness.

One strength of the current study was the utilization of two different conceptualizations of happiness to establish confidence in the proposed model. While Study 1 focused on the affective component of the tripartite model of happiness (Cummins 2013), Study 2 assessed the global happiness of the participants. The findings across the two studies were similar suggesting that the associations of CFO and FM with happiness as well as the support for the proposed model are not specific to the way happiness is assessed. While this practice enhanced confidence in our findings, it remains to be seen whether the findings would be replicated when life-satisfaction, the cognitive component of the tripartite model, and different measures of affect (Kjell et al. 2016; Miao et al. 2013) are used as measures of happiness.

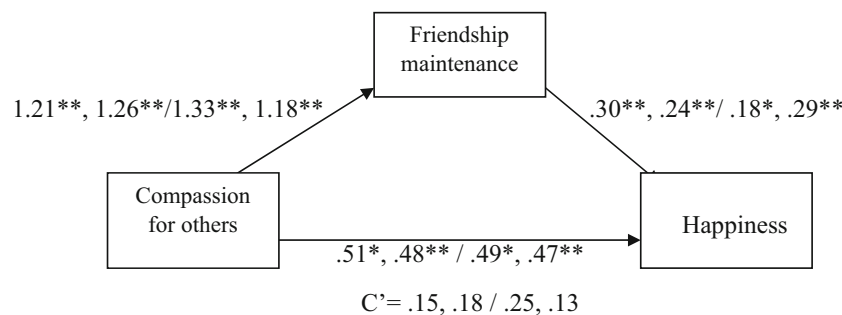


Fig. 1 Friendship Maintenance as a Mediator of the Compassion for Others-Happiness Association. The numbers in the figures represent the unstandardized regression coefficients. The C' represents the effect of the Compassion for Others on happiness when taking the mediator into

account. Values before and after the dash sign are for the first and second studies, respectively. The first numerical value in each block is for men, and the second one for women. Please refer to the text for sample sizes. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

The contribution of the current study is limited with its focus on friendships. It is important to highlight that emerging adults maintain relationships with their parents and some are involved in romantic relationships (Demir & Özdemir, 2010; Shulman and Connolly 2013). These relationships are also reliable correlates of individual happiness (see Demir & Sümer, 2018; and Feeney and Collins 2015, for reviews). Thus, it remains to be seen whether the findings of the current study would apply to other close relationships. Since CFO entails having a concern and determination to alleviate the suffering of others in general it is likely that it would promote maintenance behaviors in other intimate relationships. Thus, we predict that the model supported for friendship would be generalizable to the other relationships of emerging adults.

The current investigation adds to the growing nomological network of CFO by documenting an association with FM. Past research linked CFO to conflict resolution strategies in general (Feher 2016) and we showed that it is also related to routine and strategic behaviors that keep a friendship intact. Considering the positive associations of CFO with FM and happiness, it would be appropriate to consider CFO as a personal strength and resource that has the potential to promote relational and psychological well-being. This argument is bolstered by work on character strengths and virtues (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Specifically, humanity is one of the virtues that cover the character strengths of kindness, love, and social intelligence (Park and Peterson 2009). Individuals with the virtue of humanity are aware of other's feelings and value close relationships for which they perform good deeds. While there is some overlap between CFO and the virtue of humanity, it is important to note that this virtue does not necessarily address all of the components of CFO and is not concerned with alleviating the suffering of others. Notably, past research has shown that character strengths are associated with happiness (Park and Peterson 2006; Park et al. 2004; Peterson et al. 2007; Peterson and Seligman 2004). Finding that CFO makes a unique contribution to the prediction of psychosocial well-being above and beyond humanity would support our argument that CFO is a personal strength and resource.

In the current investigation, we moved above and beyond the simple associations by showing that FM explain why CFO is related to happiness. While we introduced a unique way of understanding how these variables relate to each other, and predict happiness, future research has the potential to investigate other potential mediators of the CFO-happiness association and examine complex models. For instance, it could be that individuals with higher levels of CFO enjoy friendships that are higher in overall quality and satisfaction. Since both markers of these friendships are robust correlates of happiness (Demir et al. 2015), they could be tested as potential mediators of the CFO-Happiness association.

Technological advancement brings with itself the opportunity to maintain relationships in online platforms. The current

investigation focused on FM behaviors in general in same-sex best friendships and did not differentiate between online versus face-to-face relational maintenance behaviors. Empirical research on online interactions suggests that individuals establish and maintain solely online friendships (Ye 2006). For instance, Aisha (2014) found that intense Facebook users, compared to inactive users, engaged in Facebook maintenance behaviors more and were more invested in maintaining online friendships. Earlier, we suggested that CFO represents a personal strength and resource for building and enhancing relationships. Thus, we would predict that individuals with higher levels of CFO would engage in routine and strategic maintenance behaviors for online only friendships as well and reap similar benefits reported for face-to-face friendships.

CFO is a relatively recent conceptualization of compassion. Yet, a burgeoning body of empirical research and the finding of the current study suggest that it has implications for psychosocial well-being. However, the utility of CFO in well-being and assessing compassion needs empirical scrutiny. Specifically, future research should investigate the role of CFO in psychosocial well-being in relation to other conceptualizations of compassion such as CG (Crocker and Canevello 2008) and CL (Sprecher and Fehr 2005). The assessment of different approaches to compassion simultaneously would allow, for instance, examining whether the associations of CFO with FM and happiness hold when controlling for CG and/or CL. This would be a strong test of the ability and utility of CFO in well-being. Also, since CG is associated with friendship experiences (e.g., support) and well-being (Crocker and Canevello 2012), it is possible that individuals with higher levels of CFO might have stronger CG in their friendships that would promote various relationship maintenance behaviors which in turn might contribute to their happiness. Finding support for such a model in an ideally longitudinal or diary study would suggest that different conceptualizations of compassion work in tandem and collectively promote well-being in unique ways.

Limitations

Although the findings across the two studies yielded support for the proposed model, the findings should be interpreted with caution given the limitations of the research design and samples. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents making inferences suggesting a cause-effect relationship. Thus, a longitudinal study would be best suited to address the limitations of the cross-sectional data. Second, the data represents the perspective of one individual. Friendships do not take place in vacuum; they are dyadic in nature and are inherently interdependent. Thus, it would be ideal to gather data on the study variables from both members of the friendship. This practice would not only allow to test the proposed

model for both members of the dyad but also enable the investigation of potential partner effects. That is, whether one's CFO promotes the partner's FM behaviors and vice-versa. Third, the sampling method and the composition of the samples limit the generalizability of the findings. Since we relied on convenience samples of college students, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations (i.e. nonstudent population). Thus, future studies with other age groups are needed to investigate whether the proposed model would be supported beyond an emerging adult sample. Additionally, studies on compassion often consist of homogenous samples, lacking racial diversity (e.g., Pommier 2010). The present study was no exception, with a large Caucasian sample, limiting the ability to generalize findings to racial or ethnic minority groups. Fourth, it is likely that the present studies were influenced by volunteer bias (Rosnow and Rosenthal 1997). Because the title of the study was available to participants through the online participant management pool, those with more positive friendship experiences could have been more inclined to participate in the study (Demir, Haynes, Orthel-Clark, & Özen, 2017). Thus, it would be appropriate to recruit potential participants with neutral study titles which could alleviate volunteer self-selection bias. Finally, when conducting research involving self-report measures of compassion, participants are less likely to report a lack of compassion (Pommier 2010). For this reason, in addition to gathering dyadic data, it would be ideal to gather data from a participant's close other (e.g., romantic partner, sibling, friend, parents) to ensure accurate assessment of CFO.

Conclusion

We investigated whether FM behaviors mediated the relationship between CFO and happiness. The findings supported the proposed mediation model, across two separate college student samples, displaying that CFO is associated with happiness partly because of FM behaviors, regardless of the happiness measure utilized. Despite women scoring higher on CFO and FM in both studies, the model was supported for both genders. Future research is ripe with numerous opportunities that have the potential to enhance our understanding of the implications of CFO for relational and individual well-being.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest Marlyn Sanchez and Andrew Haynes were the recipients of summer internships as part of the National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates. On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that the authors have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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