

Self-Respect and Pro-Relationship Behavior in Marital Relationships

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ABSTRACT This work advances an interdependence theoretic analysis of the role of self-respect in ongoing close relationships. Self-respect is defined as the tendency to perceive the self as a principled person who is worthy of honor and high regard and is argued to rest on moral integrity. Consistent with predictions, results from a study of marital relationships revealed that individual self-respect is positively associated with both the individual's and the partner's pro-relationship behavior (accommodation, forgiveness, conciliation). Mediation analyses revealed that self-respect not only exhibits direct associations with each person's behavior, but also exhibits indirect associations with each person's behavior, via the impact of each person's actions on reciprocal pro-relationship behavior from the partner. Mediation was more reliably observed for the association of self-respect with partner behavior than for the association with individual behavior. Both individual pro-relationship behavior and partner pro-relationship behavior are positively associated with couple well-being, which in turn is positively associated with personal well-being (life satisfaction, physical health, psychological adjustment). These associations were evident in both within-participant and across-partner analyses and for both self-report and interaction-based measures of

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behavior. Self-respect reliably accounts for unique variance beyond variance attributable to self-esteem.

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Self-respect is the cornerstone of all virtue.

— John Herschel

Even in the most gratifying and congenial relationships, partners periodically encounter situations involving incompatible preferences, conflicted interaction, or extrarerelationship temptation. In dilemmas of this sort, the immediate interests of the individual are incompatible with the interests of the relationship, and something must give. What leads partners to behave well when they encounter interdependence dilemmas? Why are some partners willing to forego direct self-interest in order to promote the interests of their relationships, whereas others are disinclined to do so? In the present work, we suggest that self-respect plays an important role in shaping motivation and behavior in ongoing relationships, leading partners to engage in constructive, pro-relationship acts such as accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliatory behavior.

We begin by advancing an interdependence theoretic analysis of pro-relationship behavior, suggesting that behaving well in interdependence dilemmas comes about via a process termed *transformation of motivation*. What role might positive self-regard play in this process? A review of relevant work reveals inconsistent findings regarding associations of self-esteem with constructive interpersonal behavior, perhaps because (a) when constructive interpersonal behavior is effortful and antithetical to direct self-interest, “doing the right thing” may be more strongly related to principles and moral integrity than to global, positive self-evaluation, and (b) global self-esteem reflects many facets of self-regard other than principles and moral standards.

We suggest that self-respect—a component of self-esteem that arguably rests on honor, principles, and adherence to moral standards—may be relevant to understanding pro-relationship motivation and behavior. Moreover, we hypothesize that self-respect may yield both personal and interpersonal benefits, proposing that to the extent that individuals possess high self-respect, both they and

their partners are likely to exhibit pro-relationship behavior. In turn, pro-relationship behavior should yield positive consequences for relationships (and, indirectly, for individuals). Finally, we report preliminary evidence in support of these claims from a study of ongoing marital relationships.

Pro-Relationship Behavior: An Interdependence-Based Analysis

Interdependence dilemmas are termed “dilemmas” because they involve conflicting motives. On the one hand, there are compelling reasons to pursue one’s direct self-interest. On the other hand, there are compelling reasons to pursue the interests of one’s relationship. Resolving interdependence dilemmas by “behaving well” therefore entails some degree of effort or cost. For example, if Mary is rude to John, John’s immediate impulse may be to say something nasty in return. John may feel demeaned, he may wish to defend himself, or he may seek to gain some measure of revenge. However, John’s retaliative act might produce escalating conflict, ultimately harming his relationship with Mary. Thus, John’s direct, self-interested impulses are at odds with the interests of his relationship. If John is to behave in such a manner as to benefit his relationship, he must control his destructive impulses and find it in himself to behave in a conciliatory manner.

The interdependence theory distinction between the given situation and the effective situation provides a framework for understanding what makes some partners willing to endure cost or exert effort to ensure the well-being of their relationships (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The *given situation* refers to each partner’s immediate well-being in a specific situation, describing each person’s “gut-level,” self-interested preferences (e.g., John’s impulse to retaliate when Mary is rude). Of course, people do not necessarily pursue their given preferences. Frequently, behavior is shaped by broader considerations, including long-term goals, personal values, or concern with a partner’s well-being. Movement away from given preferences results from *transformation of motivation*, a process whereby individuals relinquish their direct self-interest and act on the basis of broader considerations. The *effective situation* describes the preferences resulting from this process: broadened, effective preferences directly guide behavior (e.g., accommodating rather than retaliating).

The present work explores three forms of pro-relationship behavior that partners may exhibit in the course of everyday interdependence dilemmas. First, we examine *accommodation*, or the tendency—when a partner enacts a rude or inconsiderate behavior—to inhibit one’s impulse toward reciprocal negativity, and instead behave in a constructive manner. Second, we examine forgiveness, or the tendency, when a partner betrays the individual by violating a relationship-specific norm, to forego vengeance and other destructive patterns of interaction and, instead, behave in a forgiving manner. Our third pro-relationship behavior addresses the interactive nature of reconciliation, in recognition of the fact that betrayal incidents typically are resolved via the pro-relationship acts of both victim and perpetrator. Specifically, we also examine *conciliation*, or the tendency, during the resolution of betrayal incidents, of (a) victims to forego vengeance and other destructive patterns of interaction and instead exhibit constructive behavior, and (b) perpetrators to forego defensiveness and other destructive patterns of interaction and, instead, offer atonement and make amends.

Each of these pro-relationship acts arises out of dilemmas instigated by a partner’s potentially destructive act. Previous empirical work demonstrates that in dilemmas of this sort, individuals indeed experience rather powerful gut-level impulses toward reciprocal negativity (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Moreover, this work reveals that behaving well—rather than retaliating—rests on transformation of motivation. That is, behaviors such as accommodation and forgiveness indeed involve a pro-relationship shift in motivation, or movement from self-interested motives to motives that reflect broader considerations (e.g., Rusbult, Davis, Finkel, Hannon, & Olsen, 2002; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Finally, prior work reveals that pro-relationship acts, such as accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliation, indeed are beneficial to relationships (e.g., Gottman et al., 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997). Thus, it becomes important to identify social psychological variables that promote such behavior.

Self-Esteem and Pro-Relationship Behavior

The present work is concerned with the role of positive self-regard in promoting pro-relationship behavior. A priori, it might seem

reasonable to anticipate that high self-esteem—or, positive evaluation of the self—would promote pro-relationship behavior. Why so? First, assuming that self-esteem operates as a “social buffer” that shields the self from interpersonal threats (Baumeister, 1998), people with high self-esteem might experience interdependence dilemmas as less aversive and might react in a less defensive manner to such dilemmas. Second, assuming that self-esteem functions as a “sociometer,” or a gauge of one’s social acceptance (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), people might exhibit pro-relationship behavior as a means of ensuring others’ positive regard. Third, assuming that high self-esteem results from child-rearing practices involving parental approval and support (Coopersmith, 1967; Rogers, 1961), people with high self-esteem might model their parents’ behavior, thereby exhibiting more benevolent, other-oriented behavior. And fourth, given that people with high self-esteem place high value on their relationships and sustain greater conviction regarding their partners’ positive regard (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000), they might experience more powerful pro-relationship motivation. Thus, *a priori*, there are many reasons to anticipate that high self-esteem might promote pro-relationship behavior.

Indeed, in both the scientific community and in popular culture, high self-esteem frequently is proclaimed as the cure-all for a variety of personal and interpersonal ills, “a ‘social vaccine’ that [can] prevent assorted problems ranging from drug abuse to teen pregnancy” (Baumeister, 1998, p. 698). But is high self-esteem really a panacea? In particular, does high self-esteem indeed promote positive interpersonal behavior? On the one hand, some empirical evidence suggests that high self-esteem may be interpersonally beneficial: For example, self-esteem has been shown to be negatively associated with loneliness, social anxiety, and marital infidelity, and to be positively associated with conviction regarding partners’ positive regard, inclinations to positively evaluate relationships, and success at sustaining healthy involvements (e.g., Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Marangoni & Ickes, 1989; Murray et al., 2000; Sheppard, Nelson, & Andreoli-Mathi, 1995). On the other hand, some evidence suggests that high self-esteem may be interpersonally problematic: for example, people with high self-esteem have been shown to direct greater anger and hostility at interpersonal sources of ego threat and to behave in a more actively destructive manner during conflicted interaction (e.g., Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Baumeister, Smart, &

Boden, 1996; Rusbult, Morrow, & Johnson, 1987). Also, individuals with unstable high self-esteem exhibit high levels of interpersonal defensiveness and hostility (Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry, & Harlow, 1993; Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989). Indeed, a recent review of relevant research concluded that “loving the self is not a prerequisite for loving others, and may even detract from it” (Campbell & Baumeister, 2001, p. 44).

Why is it that self-esteem exhibits inconsistent associations with pro-relationship behavior? To begin with, it is important to recognize that positive interpersonal behavior is not always easy. As noted earlier, the essence of an interdependence dilemma is the fact that behaving well entails setting aside one’s personal interests, suffering costs, and exerting effort in order to achieve relatively remote goals—goals related to one’s broader concerns, needs, and values. We speculate that when “doing the right thing” and reacting constructively is antithetical to direct self-interest, feeling good about the self—or high self-esteem—may be considerably less important than qualities such as principles and personal moral standards. Although pro-relationship behavior results from a variety of causes, it has been argued that “moral traits. . .constitute an important set [of] adaptations designed to facilitate relationships. . .[enabling] people to live together in harmony. . .The notion of virtue as beneficial to relationships presupposes that the selfish interests of the individual are sometimes in conflict with the best interests of the collective” (Baumeister & Exline, 1999, p. 1166).

Does high self-esteem necessarily rest on moral integrity and principled behavior? Early theoretical definitions of the self-esteem construct tended to encompass such qualities as self-respect and personal conviction (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). However, operational definitions of self-esteem by and large tap global positivity of self-evaluation (e.g., Simpson & Boyal, 1975). For example, the most frequently employed instrument for assessing self-esteem is dominated by such items as “I am able to do things as well as most other people” and “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”; the only principles-relevant item on this instrument is “I wish I could have more respect for myself” (reverse-scored; Rosenberg, 1965).

As a consequence of dissatisfaction with the rather global, undifferentiated nature of the self-esteem construct, many contemporary models propose that self-esteem may usefully be

construed as a multifaceted construct. For example, some contemporary work conceptualizes self-esteem in terms of perceived discrepancies between one's actual self and one's ideal standards, suggesting that there may be considerable variability in the specifics of ideal standards (Higgins, 1996). Other contemporary work suggests that different individuals stake their personal worth on different standards, and that self-esteem rests on success versus failure in adherence to personal contingencies of self worth (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Other authors have advanced hierarchical models of self-esteem, arguing that global self-esteem subsumes multiple, domain-specific dimensions of self-evaluation (Fleming & Courtney, 1984). Consistent with this orientation, we suggest that self-esteem—at least as it is operationally defined—is a global, multifaceted construct that may or may not have much to do with moral standards, honor, or principled behavior. For example, if self-esteem rests on wit or beauty, high self-esteem may have little bearing on inclinations to do the right thing in interdependence dilemmas. To the extent that global self-esteem does not rest on personal attributes such as honor and adherence to personal principles, high self-esteem is unlikely to be a reliable predictor of pro-relationship behavior.

Self-Respect and Pro-Relationship Behavior

If global self-esteem does not necessarily embody attributes such as principles and adherence to moral standards, what subcomponent of self-regard does embody such attributes? Recent work regarding interpersonal respect reveals that respect for another rests on the perception of that person's moral integrity, or adherence to internal moral standards: Respect for another rests on perceiving that person as a "morally good, considerate, and trustworthy person. . .honest, not abusive, loyal, trustworthy. . .following the Golden Rule, and respecting others' views" (Frei & Shaver, 2002). If respect for others rests on their honor and moral integrity, then one's own honor, principled behavior, and adherence to moral standards should be experienced in terms of self-respect. Indeed, dictionary definitions of respect include "to feel or show honor for" and "to consider or treat with deference or dutiful regard," and *self-respect* is defined as "proper regard for oneself and one's own dignity and principles" (*Oxford American Dictionary*, 1980).

We define *self-respect* as the tendency to perceive the self as a principled person who is worthy of honor and high regard and argue that self-respect rests on being a principled and trustworthy person, behaving in such a manner as to earn the “honor” and “dutiful regard” of oneself and others. In the context of ongoing relationships, to behave in an honorable and principled manner is tantamount to “doing the right thing” even when it is not in one’s immediate interest to do so. Indeed, the empirical literature demonstrates that pro-relationship acts such as accommodation and sacrifice—acts that are antithetical to direct self-interest yet beneficial to the partner and relationship—form the basis for the emergence of partner trust (cf. Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Thus, when confronted with interdependence dilemmas, people who respect themselves are likely to (a) control the gut-level impulse toward destructive reciprocity, (b) contemplate the broader considerations that are relevant to action (e.g., moral standards, concern for the partner’s well-being), and accordingly, (c) exhibit positive (yet costly and effortful) pro-relationship acts.

In defining self-respect, we adopt the phrase “principled” because self-respect is unlikely to yield unconditionally positive behavior. In initiating interactions with close partners, people with high self-respect are likely to behave well and adhere to their personal moral standards (e.g., “never be the first to defect”). Over the course of extended interaction, such behavior may be sustained on a rather unilateral basis, due to conviction that such behavior is required by one’s moral standards. However, principled behavior presumably has its limits, resting not only on the caveat that such behavior indeed is “principled” (transpires primarily when one “should” accommodate and forgive; we are not describing “push-over” behavior), but also on the expectation that such behavior generally will be reciprocated. To the extent that one’s positive acts routinely are not reciprocated, sustaining self-respect may well require withholding such behavior, contingent upon honorable behavior on the part of one’s partner. (Indeed, our preliminary self-respect instrument includes items such as “I have a lot of respect for myself” as well as “I give in too easily to others’ wishes or requests” [reverse-scored].)

Are the effects of self-respect limited to the behavior of individual actors? A good deal of research regarding personal dispositions is rather “actor focused,” in that the motivation underlying behavior is

assumed to reside primarily within the individual actor (e.g., demonstrations that pro-relationship behavior is stronger among actors with secure attachment style; Gaines et al., 1997). We suggest that some causes of pro-relationship behavior are inherently interdependent, in that they shape the motivation and behavior of both actor and partner. Why should respecting the self elicit pro-relationship behavior from partners? Our logic rests on the very definition of respect, in that respect entails “feeling or showing honor for [another]” and self-respect entails “proper regard for oneself and one’s own dignity and principles.” Honor and proper regard imply not only adherence to one’s own moral standards, but also the expectation of honorable behavior on the part of others. Thus, we propose that self-respect exerts direct effects on partner pro-relationship behavior, in that people with high self-respect will expect the partner to behave in a considerate and honorable manner, even when it is not in the partner’s immediate interest to do so. In ongoing close relationships, partners presumably “rise to the occasion,” fulfilling the individual’s confident expectation of positive treatment. Thus, self-respect may yield a form of behavioral confirmation, whereby the individual’s expectations about the self (“I am worthy of honorable treatment”) become reality by eliciting the expected behavior from the partner. In indirect support of this claim, research regarding social dilemmas demonstrates that individuals exhibit more cooperative, prosocial behavior toward partners who are perceived to be moral people (e.g., Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994).

In addition to such direct effects, self-respect is also likely to exert two sorts of indirect effects on pro-relationship behavior—effects based what has been termed the “crude law of social relations,” or reciprocity (Deutsch, 1999). First, because individuals with high self-respect enact pro-relationship behaviors such as accommodation and forgiveness, their partners are likely to reciprocate with mutual pro-relationship acts. And second, because the partners of individuals with high self-respect enact pro-relationship behaviors, the individual is likely to reciprocate with mutual pro-relationship acts. Thus, in relationships characterized by relatively strong self-respect, self-respect and pro-relationship behavior may operate in a pattern of mutual cyclical growth, whereby each person’s self-respect and pro-relationship acts feed back on and reinforce the partner’s self-respect and willingness to engage in pro-relationship acts (cf. Wieselquist et al., 1999).

Of what consequence is mutual pro-relationship behavior? We suggest that pro-relationship acts such as accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliation play a role in promoting couple well-being. How so? First, pro-relationship behaviors are “solutions” to interdependence dilemmas (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The transformation process entails reframing dilemmas in such a manner that the broader considerations relevant to action are brought to bear in guiding preferences. As such, John’s pro-relationship acts yield superior direct outcomes for Mary, and yield superior “broadly defined” outcomes for John himself. Second, consciously or unconsciously, interacting individuals not only enact specific behaviors, but also “select” future interaction possibilities, in that a given behavior influences the future behavioral options and outcomes available to the pair (Kelley, 1984). For example, if John offers amends following an act of betrayal, such behavior provides Mary with a more positive set of behavioral options, thereby not only enhancing the positivity of the immediate interaction, but also enhancing the positivity of the future interactions available to the two. Third, interdependence dilemmas have been described as “diagnostic situations,” in that such dilemmas afford the opportunity to behave well versus poorly, thereby revealing each person’s broader goals, values, and motives (e.g., “is John self-interested or is he concerned with our joint well-being?”; cf. Kelley, 1983). Thus, pro-relationship acts provide the added value of communicating an actor’s positive motives, affording positive attributions and serving as the basis for enhanced trust.

Of what consequence is couple well-being for individuals? It is almost a truism to suggest that personal well-being, in the form of life satisfaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment, is greater among individuals in well-functioning relationships than among those in poorly functioning relationships. The logical bases for such a prediction are legion. For example, intimate involvement is an important life goal for most individuals; therefore, “success” in a close relationship promotes personal well-being. Also, many personal goals are more readily achieved with the assistance of a close and loving partner; many personal challenges are more readily borne with the support of a close and loving partner. Indeed, in a recent review of relevant literature, Berscheid and Reis (1998) note that couple well-being is positively related to life satisfaction and subjective well-being (e.g., Myers & Diener, 1995), negatively related to physical ailments and mortality rates (e.g., Cohen, 1988), and negatively related to indices of psychological adjustment such as seeking professional

counseling (e.g., Pinsker, Nepps, Redfield, & Winston, 1985). In short, there is good support for the proposition that couple well-being contributes to personal well-being.

Research Overview

The present research provides a preliminary test of the model outlined above and represented in Figure 1. The data for this work are from the first research occasion of a three-wave longitudinal study of marital relationships (Time 2 activities are ongoing). Thus, our data are entirely cross-sectional, and the present research accordingly is “preliminary” in the sense that we are in no position to make claims regarding causal relations among model variables. At the same time, our data have several notable strengths, in that both partners in ongoing marital relationships provide data relevant to measuring self-respect, self-esteem, individual and partner pro-relationship behavior, couple well-being, and personal well-being. Moreover, pro-relationship behavior is assessed using both global self-report measures and measures obtained in an interaction context.

The present research will test four key hypotheses: First, we suggest that although both self-esteem and self-respect are likely to exhibit positive associations with pro-relationship behavior, if

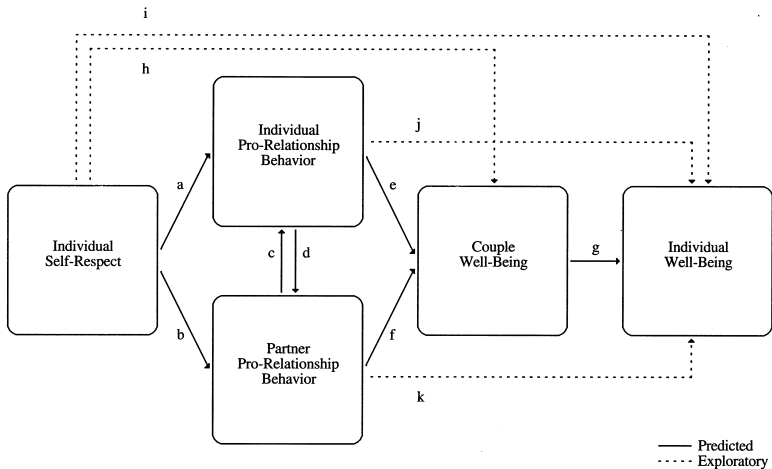


Figure 1
 Predicted Associations Among Self-Respect, Pro-Relationship Behavior, Couple Well-Being, and Personal Well-Being.

self-respect embodies the facet of self-regard that is more directly relevant to pro-relationship motivation, then self-respect will account for significant unique variance in individual behavior and partner behavior beyond variance attributable to self-esteem. Second, we hypothesize that the positive associations of self-respect with both individual pro-relationship behavior and partner pro-relationship behavior are attributable to (a) direct effects of self-respect on both individual and partner behavior, as well as to (b) indirect effects of self-respect, mediated by the impact of each person's pro-relationship acts on reciprocal pro-relationship behavior from the partner. Third, we hypothesize that both individual pro-relationship behavior and partner pro-relationship behavior will be positively associated with couple well-being. And fourth, we hypothesize that couple well-being will be positively associated with personal well-being. We will also perform mediation analyses to evaluate the plausibility of the proposed model, as well as to explore possible direct associations of self-respect with couple well-being and personal well-being (see Figure 1, "Exploratory" associations).

METHOD

Participants and Recruitment

Seventy-nine married couples participated in Time 1 activities of a three-phase longitudinal study of marital relations (Time 2 activities are ongoing). (We deleted the data from analyses for two couples who failed to follow instructions for completing questionnaires, as well as for one lesbian couple [our analysis strategy involves identifying a male and female partner in each marriage].) Participants were recruited through notices posted around campus and in the community, as well as through advertisements in local newspapers. Announcements briefly described the project, indicated that the study involved three research sessions over an eight-month period, noted that couples would be paid \$50 for taking part in each session, and provided contact information. When couples contacted us, we provided further information about project activities, determined whether couples wished to take part, and scheduled appointments for Time 1 sessions.

Participants were 34.11 years old on average (34.87 for husbands, 33.36 for wives); the majority were Caucasian (10% African American, 2% Asian American, 81% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, 4% other); and the majority had at least 4 years of college education (8% completed high school only, 10% completed 2 years of college, 37% completed 4 years of college, 45% obtained advanced degrees or professional degrees). Their personal annual salaries

were about \$25,000 on average. Participants had been married to one another for 6.05 years on average, and the majority did not have children (73% no children, 11% one child, 8% two children, 8% more than two children).

Procedure

Ten days prior to scheduled laboratory sessions, we mailed couples questionnaires to complete in advance and bring with them to the session. These questionnaires included instruments designed to measure self-respect, self-esteem, life satisfaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment (along with other constructs that are irrelevant to the goals of the present research). Upon arrival at Time 1 sessions, we asked participants to complete a brief questionnaire that was later used to identify a suitable topic for a videotaped conversation. Then participants completed a questionnaire including instruments designed to measure individual forgiveness, partner forgiveness, and dyadic adjustment (along with other constructs). Following this, couples engaged in an interaction regarding a recent act of betrayal; immediately following the conversation, they independently reviewed the interaction and made judgments regarding individual conciliation and partner conciliation. At the end of the session, participants completed a final questionnaire designed to measure individual accommodation and partner accommodation (along with other constructs). Finally, couples were partially debriefed, reminded of upcoming project activities, paid, and thanked for their assistance.¹

Measuring Self-Respect, Self-Esteem, and Personal Well-Being

Self-Respect

Self-respect was measured with a five-item instrument developed for the purposes of the present research (e.g., “I have a lot of respect for myself”; “I should treat myself better than I do” [reverse-scored]; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 8 = *agree completely*; $\alpha = .80$). (Given that this instrument is new and not

1. Is it possible that the timing of questionnaires or order in which instruments were completed influenced the obtained data? We suspect not, in that (a) previous research has revealed relatively strong test-retest correlations for instruments such as those employed in the present work, suggesting that scores for these variables may be relatively stable and impervious to temporary mood shifts, and (b) we have obtained similar patterns of results in studies employing alternative timing and ordering of instruments (e.g., Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991). Indeed, it might be argued that to the extent that instruments are completed somewhat independently—at different times and in different questionnaires—they are less likely to be colored by common self-report tendencies.

fully validated, our Self-Respect measure should be regarded as a preliminary attempt to measure this construct.) We measured Self-Esteem using the most frequently employed means of assessing this construct, Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item instrument (e.g., "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others"; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 8 = *agree completely*); one item on the instrument is relevant to self-respect, so we dropped this item from the scale ("I wish I could have more respect for myself"; for the nine-item scale, $\alpha = .93$).²

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured with two instruments—the five-item Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) instrument (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to ideal"; 0 = *does not describe me at all*, 8 = *describes me completely*) and the 10-item Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) instrument ("Describe your present life by circling a number for each of the

2. Are self-respect and self-esteem distinct constructs? We performed exploratory factor analyses to address this question. Principal components analyses (Promax Rotation) performed separately for male and female partners revealed that the first two factors accounted for 54% of the variance among men (eigenvalues = 5.85 and 1.65) and 62% of the variance among women (eigenvalues = 7.16 and 1.51). Examination of the factor scores for men's data revealed: (a) a clear Self-Esteem Factor, for which 9 of 9 coefficients for self-esteem items exceeded .35 (average $\beta = .65$; β s ranged from .52 to .84), and for which coefficients for 0 of 5 self-respect items exceeded .35; and (b) a clear Self-Respect Factor, for which 5 of 5 coefficients for self-respect items exceeded .35 (average $\beta = .69$; β s ranged from .38 to .90), and for which coefficients for 0 of 9 self-esteem items exceeded .35. Examination of women's data revealed: (a) a relatively clear Self-Esteem Factor, for which 7 of 9 coefficients for self-esteem items exceeded .35 (for those 7 coefficients, average $\beta = .62$; β s ranged from .37 to .95), and for which coefficients for only 1 of 5 self-respect items exceeded .35; and (b) a relatively clear Self-Respect Factor, for which 5 of 5 coefficients for self-respect items exceeded .35 (average $\beta = .64$; β s ranged from .50 to .80); unfortunately, coefficients for 6 of 9 self-esteem items also exceeded .35. Thus, although items tapping the two constructs are not perfectly differentiated, the constructs would seem to be acceptably distinct, given that (a) one factor exhibited relatively greater coefficients for self-esteem items and a second factor exhibited relatively greater coefficients for self-respect items (clearly, the results were considerably more consistent for men than for women), (b) these findings are based on relatively small samples, and (c) we regard self-respect as a subcomponent of global self-esteem, and therefore would not necessarily expect items tapping the two instruments to be perfectly distinguishable. At the same time, these findings should not be interpreted as the final word in assessing self-respect and self-esteem, in that we regard the present self-respect instrument as a preliminary attempt to measure this construct.

following scales”; e.g., “boring-interesting”; “disappointing-rewarding”; for all 15 items, $\alpha = .91$). Physical Health was measured with Cohen and Hoberman’s (1983) 36-item instrument; participants checked each health symptom they had experienced during the previous 4 months (e.g., “back pain”; “constant fatigue” [all items reverse-scored]; $\alpha = .84$). Psychological Adjustment was measured with the 13-item Depression Subscale and the 10-item Anxiety Subscale of Derogatis’ (1994) Symptom Checklist 90-R; participants rated the degree to which they experienced each of 23 symptoms during the past 4 months (e.g., “loss of sexual interest or pleasure”; “nervousness or shakiness inside” [all items reverse-scored]; 0 = *not at all*, 8 = *extremely*; for all 23 items, $\alpha = .94$).

Measuring Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Couple Well-Being

Individual Accommodation

Individual accommodation was measured using the 16-item instrument employed in previous work regarding accommodation (Rusbult et al., 1991). This instrument includes four “stems,” or incidents in which the partner created an opportunity for accommodation by engaging in a rude or inconsiderate behavior (e.g., “When my partner does something thoughtless...”). Each stem was combined with four possible modes of reaction—one each for exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect (Rusbult, 1993). Exit reactions are actively destructive (e.g., yelling at the partner), voice reactions are actively constructive (e.g., talking things over with the partner), loyalty reactions are passively constructive (e.g., optimistically waiting for conditions to improve), and neglect reactions are passively destructive (e.g., criticizing the partner about unrelated matters). The resultant 16 items (four stems, four reactions to each stem) were randomly ordered (e.g., “When my partner does something thoughtless, I try to patch things up and solve the problem”; 0 = *I never do this*, 8 = *I constantly do this*; $\alpha = .78$). We also measured Perceived Partner Accommodation, using an identical instrument with appropriate changes in item wording (e.g., “When I say something mean, my partner threatens to leave me” [reverse-scored]; 0 = *partner never does this*, 8 = *partner constantly does this*; $\alpha = .83$).

Individual Forgiveness

Individual forgiveness was measured using a 16-item instrument developed for the purposes of the present research. This instrument includes four “stems” describing incidents in which the partner created an opportunity for forgiveness by engaging in an act of betrayal (e.g., “When my partner tells others about private issues in our marriage...”). Each stem was combined with four possible

modes of reaction—one each for exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect (Rusbult, 1993). The resultant 16 items (four stems, four reactions to each stem) were randomly ordered (e.g., “When my partner flirts with someone else, I speak harshly to my partner” [reverse-scored]; 0 = *I never do this*, 8 = *I constantly do this*; $\alpha = .69$). We also measured Perceived Partner Forgiveness, using an identical instrument with appropriate changes in item wording (e.g., “When I make fun of my partner, he/she talks to me about why this is upsetting”; 0 = *partner never does this*, 8 = *partner constantly does this*; $\alpha = .72$).

Couple Well-Being

Couple well-being was measured using Spanier's (1976) 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which assesses qualities of couple well-being such as affection (e.g., “Do you kiss your partner?”; 0 = *never*, 5 = *every day*), intimacy (e.g., “Do you confide in your mate?”), agreement (e.g., “Do you agree about ‘sex relations’?”), and shared activities (e.g., “Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?”; $\alpha = .94$).

Measuring Conciliation During Interaction

In addition to obtaining self- and partner-reports of everyday accommodation and forgiveness, we also measured behavior in a specific interaction context. Following previous work, to minimize the odds that self- and partner-reports would be colored by response bias or reconstructive memory, we obtained assessments in a manner that was directly linked with verbal interaction (Gottman, 1979; Ickes, Bissonnette, Garcia, & Stinson, 1990). Specifically, we videotaped couples' interactions, later asking partners to review their conversations and rate both their own and the partner's behavior during fixed segments of the interaction.

Upon arrival at Time 1 sessions, partners completed questionnaires designed to identify recent acts of betrayal. We avoided using the word “betrayal,” instead describing such incidents as follows: “All of us have expectations about how our partners should treat us. No matter how well-behaved your partner may be in general, from time to time he or she is likely to . . . ‘break the rules.’ For example, your partner may tell a friend something that you think should have remained private; your partner may do something that is hurtful behind your back. . . ; your partner may flirt with another person; or your partner may otherwise . . . [violate] the ‘rules’ that govern your marriage.” Each partner described three such incidents from the past 4 months, providing simple ratings of each incident (e.g., how upsetting was it? is it resolved?). To identify an incident for discussion, we randomly determined whether to select an incident described by the male or female, and selected an incident that was moderately upsetting, was not totally resolved, and the partners were willing to discuss.

Partners were seated at adjacent sides of a table with a microphone positioned in front of each person. A camera was oriented in such a manner as to videotape both partners. Following a 2-min warm-up conversation (discussing the events of the previous day), the experimenter explained that he/she had randomly determined which partner's incidents would be addressed, and selected one of that person's incidents as a discussion topic. The experimenter read the incident description aloud. Partners were given 1 min to describe the incident, as a means of helping them bring the incident to mind. Then they spent 8 min discussing the incident.

Following the interaction, partners were seated at opposite sides of the laboratory, each facing a monitor on which the videotaped conversation was replayed. The experimenter stopped the videotape at the end of each 2-min segment, asking participants to rate their own and the partner's behavior during that segment. Individual Conciliation during each segment was measured using a six-item instrument developed for the purposes of the present research (e.g., "I behaved in a cold manner with my partner" [reverse-scored]; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 8 = *agree completely*; for the 24-item scale [six items for each of four segments], $\alpha = .93$). We also measured Perceived Partner Conciliation, using an identical instrument with appropriate changes in item wording (e.g., "My partner tried to comfort me"; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 8 = *agree completely*; for the 24-item scale, $\alpha = .94$).³

Calculating Total Measures for Model Variables

We calculated measures of Self-Respect, Self-Esteem, Individual and Perceived Partner Accommodation, Individual and Perceived Partner

3. We measured Individual Conciliation and Partner Conciliation in an interaction context, in that individuals rated both their own and the partner's conciliatory behavior during a conversation regarding a betrayal incident. Thus, for one partner, measures of conciliation reflect the positivity of behavior in the victim role; for the other partner, measures of conciliation reflect the positivity of behavior in the perpetrator role. Do results for Conciliation differ as a function of role? First, mean scores for victims and perpetrators were similar for Self-Report of Individual Conciliation ($M_s = 6.33$ and 6.46) and Self-Report of Partner Conciliation ($M_s = 6.48$ and 6.30). Levels of Conciliation did not differ significantly as a function of role, and no role by sex interactions were significant. Second, for key analyses reported in the results section, we separately examined associations with Conciliation, including role (victim vs. perpetrator) as an additional independent variable. Out of 12 analyses, only two main effects of victim role were even marginally significant; no interactions of role with other predictor variables were marginal or significant. Thus, our findings do not differ as a function of victim versus perpetrator role. Accordingly, in the context of the present work, it is not necessary to take role into consideration in examining associations with the Conciliation variable.

Forgiveness, Life Satisfaction (combining the Diener et al. [1985] and Campbell et al. [1976] instruments), and Psychological Adjustment by averaging items designed to measure each construct. We calculated Individual and Perceived Partner Conciliation by averaging items across the four interaction segments. We calculated Couple Well-Being by summing items from the Spanier (1976) instrument. And we calculated Physical Health by counting the number of items checked on the Cohen and Hoberman (1983) instrument. (Items were reverse-scored where appropriate so that higher values reflect higher self-regard, more positive behavior, and greater well-being.)

We sought to simplify our analyses by developing total scores for Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Perceived Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior, each of which was assessed in terms of Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation. To determine whether doing so was appropriate, we performed hierarchical linear modeling analyses to examine the associations among the measures (this analysis technique is described at the beginning of the results section). Individual Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation were significantly positively associated (β s ranged from .43 to .68, all $ps < .01$), as were Perceived Partner Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation (i.e., each person's perceptions of the partner's behavior; β s ranged from .44 to .72, all $ps < .01$). Given that the three behaviors were at least moderately associated with one another, we calculated an averaged measure of Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and an averaged measure of Perceived Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior for each participant. (Analyses performed separately for Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation revealed identical patterns of significance versus nonsignificance for 96% of the analyses reported in the results section.)

We also sought to simplify our analyses by developing a total score for Personal Well-Being, which was assessed in terms of Life Satisfaction, Physical Health, and Psychological Adjustment. Hierarchical linear modeling analyses revealed significant positive associations among the measures (β s ranged from .31 to .54, all $ps < .01$). Given that the three well-being measures were at least moderately associated with one another, we calculated an averaged measure of Personal Well-Being for each participant. (Analyses performed separately for Life Satisfaction, Physical Health, and Psychological Adjustment revealed identical patterns of significance versus nonsignificance for 100% of the analyses reported in the results section.)

Validity of Self-Report and Partner-Report Measures

We performed across-partner analyses to evaluate the validity of our measures of pro-relationship behavior, regressing the individual's self-

report of his or her own behavior onto the partner's report of perceived partner behavior. The analysis regressing the individual's report of Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior onto his or her partner's report of Perceived Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior revealed a significant association between these variables ($\beta = .59$; in analyses performed separately for Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation, respective β s = .60, .43, and .55, all $ps < .01$). Moreover, partners' reports of Couple Well-Being were significantly associated ($\beta = .76$, $p < .01$). The fact that partners exhibit moderate to high agreement in describing parallel constructs suggests that our measures are valid indices of the constructs they were intended to assess. These associations are particularly noteworthy in that they were observed in across-partner analyses.

RESULTS

We review our analyses and findings in six sections. First, we describe hierarchical linear modeling and outline the specifics of our analysis strategy. Second, we examine whether self-respect accounts for unique variance in pro-relationship behavior beyond variance attributable to self-esteem. In the remaining four sections we examine, the associations of key model variables with individual pro-relationship behavior, partner pro-relationship behavior, couple well-being, and personal well-being, in each instance (a) examining the direct and indirect associations among model variables, and (b) performing mediation analyses to explore the proximal and distal predictors of each criterion.

Analysis Strategy

Data provided by the two partners in a given relationship are not independent. Our design includes two levels of variables, in that data from partners are nested within couple (cf. Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). Therefore, we used hierarchical linear modeling to analyze our data (cf. Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). This analysis technique simultaneously examines within-couple and between-couple variance, modeling each source of variation while accounting for statistical characteristics of the other level. Predictors and criteria are represented in our analyses as lower level variables; couple is the

upper level unit. Hierarchical linear modeling analyses estimate equations of the following form:

$$\text{Lower Level Model : } Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X + r_{ij};$$

$$\text{Upper Level Intercept : } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}; \text{ and}$$

$$\text{Upper Level Slope : } \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + u_{1j}.$$

where X is a given predictor variable and Y_{ij} is the criterion score for Person i in Couple j , r_{ij} is the error term for Person i in Couple j , γ_{00} is the average intercept across couples, γ_{10} is the average slope across couples, u_{0j} is the unique intercept for Couple j , and u_{1j} is the unique slope for Couple j .

We initially performed all analyses representing both intercepts and slopes as random effects. When tests examining the variance and covariance components in these analyses revealed nonsignificant across-couple differences in slopes, we recalculated models representing slopes as fixed effects. Slopes were represented as random effects in about 20% of the analyses (i.e., in analyses in which significant across-couple differences were revealed); slopes were represented as fixed effects in the remaining analyses (i.e., in analyses in which across-couple differences were nonsignificant). (In a few analyses in which slopes were represented as random effects, representing the intercept as a random effect yielded convergence problems; to promote convergence, if there were nonsignificant across-couple differences in intercepts, we represented intercepts as fixed effects.) Importantly, the associations reported below were reliably observed: All analyses for a given model revealed identical patterns of significance (or marginal significance) versus nonsignificance, whether intercepts and slopes were represented as fixed effects or random effects.

In testing a given hypothesis, we first calculated *one-predictor models*, examining the association of a single predictor with a single criterion. When a given hypothesis included multiple predictors of a criterion, we also calculated *multiple-predictor models*, in which we regressed a single criterion simultaneously onto two or more predictor variables. We performed preliminary analyses to explore possible sex effects. All preliminary analyses included the main effect of participant sex, along with the interaction of sex with each predictor variable. A few analyses revealed main effects of sex, but no

interactions with participant sex were significant—that is, no associations reported below differed significantly for male and female partners. Therefore, we dropped participant sex from the analyses.⁴

In all analyses reported in the body of the results section, we employ *self-report* measures of self-respect, self-esteem, individual pro-relationship behavior, couple well-being, and personal well-being, and employ *partner-report* measures of partner pro-relationship behavior. Given that we measured both individual pro-relationship behavior and perceived partner pro-relationship behavior, we were also able to employ measures of perceived partner pro-relationship behavior as “proxy measures”: In supplementary analyses presented in Appendix A we (a) employed the partner’s report of perceived partner pro-relationship behavior as a proxy measure of individual pro-relationship behavior (i.e., both measures tap individual pro-relationship behavior, with the proxy measure representing an assessment from the partner’s point of view), and (b) employed the individual’s report of perceived partner pro-relationship behavior as a proxy measure of partner pro-relationship behavior (i.e., both measures tap partner pro-relationship behavior, with the proxy measure representing an assessment from the individual’s point of view). Thus, some of our analyses examine (a) *within-participant associations*, wherein measures of predictor and criterion were obtained from the same individual, whereas other analyses examine (b) *across-partner associations*, wherein measures of predictor and criterion were obtained from different individuals. It will be noteworthy if we observe support for our hypotheses in both sorts of analysis, in that

4. Preliminary analyses revealed significant or marginal main effects of Participant Sex in all analyses examining Pro-Relationship Behavior, whether a given analysis employed self-report or partner-report measures of this construct (F s ranged from 7.16 to 13.97, all $ps < .05$; this effect was evident in all analyses examining Accommodation and in over half of the analyses examining Forgiveness, but in no analyses examining Conciliation); in all instances, men were described as exhibiting greater pro-relationship behavior than women. Sex main effects were observed in half of the analyses examining Couple Well-Being (F s ranged from 3.62 to 9.52, all $ps < .06$), with women reporting greater couple well-being than men. In addition, there was a main effect of Sex for Personal Well-Being ($F = 5.88, p < .01$), with men exhibiting greater personal well-being than women (this effect was evident for all three components of personal well-being, Life Satisfaction, Physical Health, and Psychological Adjustment). Importantly, no interactions with Sex were significant; that is, the associations of predictors with criteria are not moderated by participant sex.

across-partner analyses tend to be more conservative than within-participant analyses, and across-partner analyses help rule out self-report bias as an explanation of the observed findings.

Self-Respect and Self-Esteem as Predictors of Pro-Relationship Behavior

Prior to performing key hypothesis tests involving self-respect, it was important to determine whether self-respect to some degree is independent of self-esteem. To begin with, we examined the association between participants' scores for these variables. As anticipated, Self-Respect was significantly positively associated with Self-Esteem ($\beta = .60, p < .01$). Next, we calculated one-predictor models, regressing measures of Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (the average of Accommodation, Forgiveness, and Conciliation) onto Self-Respect; we also calculated one-predictor models for parallel measures of Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 1.

As anticipated, Self-Respect was significantly positively associated with both Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Partner

Table 1
Associations of Self-Respect and Self-Esteem With Pro-Relationship Behavior

	One-Predictor Models		Two-Predictor Models	
	β	t	β	t
<i>Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR):</i>				
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.30	4.63**	.24	2.84**
Individual Self-Esteem (SR)	.24	3.58**	.09	1.02
<i>Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR):</i>				
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.20	3.05**	.20	2.28*
Individual Self-Esteem (SR)	.11	1.59	.00	0.03

Note. Higher values reflect greater self-respect, self-esteem, and pro-relationship behavior. SR = self-report measure of construct; PR = partner-report measure of construct. Statistics are from hierarchical linear modeling analyses in which criteria and predictors were lower-level variables; couple was the upper-level unit. *df* for analyses ranged from 1, 72 to 1, 73.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$.

Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 1, statistics under “One-Predictor Models”; β s = .30 and .20). We replicated these analyses, substituting Self-Esteem for Self-Respect, and found that Self-Esteem was significantly positively associated with Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior; however, the association of Self-Esteem with Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior was nonsignificant (see Table 1; β s = .24 and .11).

Finally, we regressed Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior—as well as Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior—simultaneously onto Self-Respect and Self-Esteem. Coefficients for Self-Respect were significant in both analyses (see Table 1, statistics under “Two-Predictor Models”; β s = .24 and .20), whereas coefficients for Self-Esteem were nonsignificant in both analyses (β s = .09 and .00). The fact that self-respect consistently accounts for unique variance in pro-relationship behavior provides good evidence for the validity of this construct.

Predicting Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior

Next, we tested key hypotheses regarding the predicted associations among model variables, as displayed in Figure 1. To test these predictions, we regressed each criterion onto each predictor variable (or simultaneously onto each pair of predictors, for multiple-predictor models). The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 2; parallel analyses using proxy measures of each construct are summarized in Appendix A. To begin with, we hypothesized that to the extent that individuals possess high self-respect, they would exhibit greater pro-relationship behavior (Path a in Figure 1). Consistent with predictions, Self-Respect was significantly positively associated with Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2, statistics under “One-Predictor Models”; $\beta = .30$).⁵

5. We also wished to determine whether the tendency of individuals with high self-respect to exhibit pro-relationship behavior toward partners to some degree is independent of their tendency to be the recipients of pro-relationship behavior from partners. Accordingly, we regressed Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior simultaneously onto Individual Self-Respect and Partner Self-Respect. As anticipated, both Individual Self-Respect and Partner Self-Respect accounted for significant unique variance in Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (respective β s = .30 and .19, t s [72] = 3.89 and 2.74, both p s < .05). Thus, individuals who respect themselves are more likely to (a) treat their partners in a worthy and respectful manner, and (b) be the recipients of worthy and respectful behavior.

Table 2
 Associations With Pro-Relationship Behavior, Couple Well-Being, and Personal Well-Being

	One-Predictor Models		Two-Predictor Models	
	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>
<i>Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR):</i>				
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.29	3.07**	.19	2.02*
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.30	4.63**	.26	4.29**
<i>Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.29	3.07**	.26	2.79**
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.20	3.05**	.14	2.14*
<i>Couple Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.39	4.86**	.48	7.06**
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.48	4.94**	.54	8.00**
<i>Couple Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.39	4.86**	.46	6.25**
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.48	4.94**	.52	7.45**
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.18	2.76**	.06	0.94
<i>Personal Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Couple Well-Being (SR)	.43	7.86**	.27	3.91**
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.48	7.16**	.17	2.42*
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.31	4.28**	-.07	-1.05
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.42	7.75**	.30	5.51**

Note. Higher values reflect greater self-respect, pro-relationship behavior, couple well-being, and personal well-being. SR = self-report measure of construct; PR = partner-report measure of construct. Statistics are from hierarchical linear modeling analyses in which criteria and predictors were lower-level variables; couple was the upper-level unit. *df* for analyses ranged from 1, 67 to 1, 74.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$.

Precisely how does self-respect promote pro-relationship behavior? Earlier, we argued for two possible mechanisms. First, we argued for a possible direct effect, suggesting that self-respect involves being a moral and considerate person, thereby directly promoting individual pro-relationship behavior (Path a). Second, we argued for possible indirect, reciprocity-based effects, suggesting that individuals who respect themselves elicit pro-relationship behavior from their partners (Path b), which in turn may yield reciprocal pro-relationship behavior from the individual (Path c; e.g., because Mary respects herself, John behaves in a positive manner toward her, which causes Mary to exhibit reciprocal positivity).

We performed mediation analyses to explore this line of reasoning. Of course, given that we examined mediation using concurrent data, we cannot form definitive conclusions regarding causal relations. At the same time, to the extent that self-respect exerts a direct effect, self-respect should exhibit a significant association with pro-relationship behavior beyond the possible reciprocity effect (i.e., Path a should be significant even when we take Paths b and c into consideration). And to the extent that self-respect exerts indirect, reciprocity-based effects, partner pro-relationship behavior should significantly mediate the association of self-respect with individual pro-relationship behavior (i.e., including Paths b and c in the model should significantly reduce the magnitude of Path a).

Following the logic of mediation analysis (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986), we examined mediation in four steps, examining: (a) whether a given distal predictor is associated with the criterion; (b) whether the distal predictor is associated with the mediator (or proximal predictor); (c) whether the mediator (or proximal predictor) accounts for significant unique variance in the criterion in an analysis that controls for the distal predictor; and (assuming that the first three criteria are met) (d) whether a test of the significance of mediation (Sobel's test) reveals a significant reduction in the association of the distal predictor with the criterion in an analysis that controls for the mediator (cf. Kenny et al., 1998). Figure 2 presents a summary of findings regarding the observed associations among model variables.

To examine the association of self-respect with individual pro-relationship behavior, we regressed individual pro-relationship behavior simultaneously onto self-respect and partner pro-relationship behavior. All preconditions for assessing mediation were met:

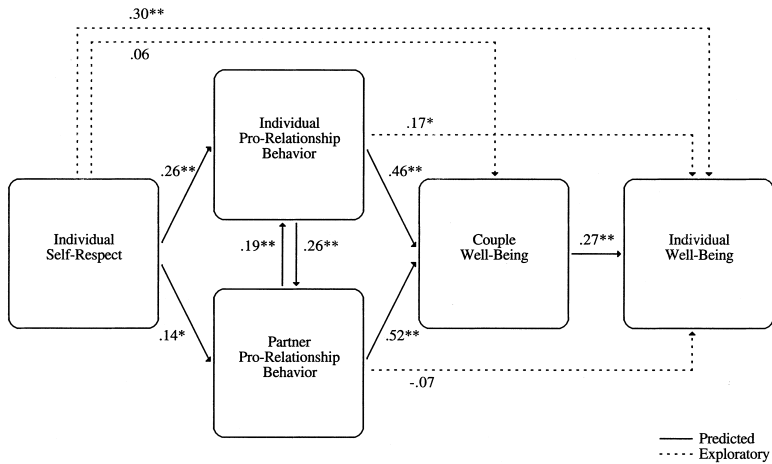


Figure 2

Observed Associations Among Self-Respect, Pro-Relationship Behavior, Couple Well-Being, and Personal Well-Being.

(a) Self-Respect was significantly associated with Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2, $\beta = .30$); (b) Self-Respect was significantly associated with Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior ($\beta = .20$); and (c) Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior accounted for significant unique variance in Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior beyond Self-Respect (see Table 2, statistics under “Multiple-Predictor Models”; $\beta = .19$).

Consistent with the claim that self-respect directly affects individual behavior, when we regressed Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior simultaneously onto Self-Respect and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior, Self-Respect accounted for significant unique variance beyond Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2, $\beta = .26$). A test of the significance of mediation revealed that the association of Self-Respect with Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior was marginally mediated by Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior ($z = 1.81$, $p < .07$; i.e., marginally attributable to reciprocity). (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed a similar pattern in terms of direction and magnitude [see Appendix A], but in contrast to the Table 2 results, mediation was nonsignificant [$z = 1.57$, *ns*].) Thus, mediation by reciprocal pro-relationship behavior appears to be marginal at best, such that: (a) self-respect

may exhibit an association with individual pro-relationship behavior in part because self-respect promotes partner pro-relationship behavior (Path b), which in turn elicits individual pro-relationship behavior (via Path c); but (b) self-respect clearly exhibits a direct association with individual pro-relationship behavior beyond such mediation (Path a).

Predicting Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior

Also consistent with predictions, parallel analyses revealed that Self-Respect was significantly positively associated with Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2, $\beta = .20$). (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed parallel findings [see Appendix A].) Precisely how does self-respect promote partner pro-relationship behavior? Paralleling our earlier reasoning for individual pro-relationship behavior, we argued for two possible mechanisms: (a) a *direct* effect—self-respect involves the expectation of moral and considerate treatment, thereby directly eliciting partner pro-relationship behavior (Path b); and (b) an *indirect*, reciprocity-based effect—individuals who respect themselves exhibit pro-relationship behavior (Path a), which in turn may yield reciprocal pro-relationship behavior from the partner (Path d; e.g., because Mary respects herself, she behaves in a positive manner toward John, which causes John to exhibit reciprocal positivity).

To examine the association of self-respect with partner pro-relationship behavior, we regressed partner pro-relationship behavior simultaneously onto self-respect and individual pro-relationship behavior. Again, all preconditions for assessing mediation were met: (a) Self-Respect was significantly associated with Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2; $\beta = .20$); (b) Self-Respect was significantly associated with Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior ($\beta = .30$); and (c) Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior accounted for significant unique variance in Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior beyond Self-Respect ($\beta = .26$).

Consistent with the claim that self-respect directly affects partner behavior, when we regressed Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior simultaneously onto Self-Respect and Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior, Self-Respect accounted for significant unique variance beyond Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior ($\beta = .14$). A test of the significance of mediation revealed that the association of

Self-Respect with Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior was significantly mediated by Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior ($z = 2.43$, $p < .02$). (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed parallel findings [see Appendix A], with significant and partial mediation [$z = 2.32$, $p < .05$].) Thus, mediation by reciprocal pro-relationship behavior is significant and partial, in that (a) self-respect exhibits an association with partner pro-relationship behavior in part because self-respect promotes individual pro-relationship behavior (Path a), which in turn elicits partner pro-relationship behavior (via Path d), but (b) self-respect also exhibits a direct association with partner pro-relationship behavior above and beyond such mediation (Path b).

Predicting Couple Well-Being

We also hypothesized that couple well-being would be enhanced to the extent that partners treat one another in a respectful manner by engaging in pro-relationship acts (Paths e and f in Figure 1). To begin with, we calculated one-predictor models, regressing Couple Well-Being, in turn, onto Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior. Consistent with predictions, Couple Well-Being was significantly positively associated with both Individual and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (see Table 2, $\beta_s = .39$ and $.48$). Importantly, when we regressed Couple Well-Being simultaneously onto Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior, both variables accounted for significant unique variance in Couple Well-Being ($\beta_s = .48$ and $.54$). (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed parallel findings [see Appendix A].) Thus, couples exhibit good adjustment to the extent that both the individual and the partner treat one another in a positive and respectful manner.

The model displayed in Figure 1 suggests that self-respect promotes individual and partner pro-relationship behavior, which, in turn, promotes couple well-being. As noted earlier, given that we tested this model using concurrent data, we cannot form definitive conclusions regarding causal relations. At the same time, to the extent that this model is plausible, we should find that at each stage in the model, the presumed proximal cause(s) of a given criterion at least partially mediates any association of presumed distal causes with that criterion (e.g., individual and partner pro-relationship behavior at

least partially mediate any association of self-respect with couple well-being).

We performed mediation analyses to explore the association of couple well-being with its presumed proximal and distal predictors. All preconditions were met: (a) Self-Respect was significantly associated with Couple Well-Being (see Table 2, $\beta = .18$), (b) Self-Respect was significantly associated with both Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (reported above), and (c) both Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior accounted for significant variance in Couple Well-Being beyond Self-Respect (β s = .46 and .52). Self-respect does not appear to exert direct effects on couple well-being, in that Self-Respect did not account for significant variance in Couple Well-Being beyond variance attributable to Individual and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior ($\beta = .06$).

Tests of the significance of mediation revealed that (a) Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior significantly mediated the association of Self-Respect with Couple Well-Being (controlling for Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior; $z = 3.49$, $p < .01$), and (b) Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior significantly mediated the association of Self-Respect with Couple Well-Being (controlling for Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior; $z = 3.11$, $p < .01$). (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed parallel findings [see Appendix A], with significant mediation by both Individual and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior [z s = 2.93 and 3.36, both $ps < .01$].) Thus, mediation by pro-relationship behavior is significant and complete, in that self-respect does not account for unique variance in couple well-being beyond variance attributable to one's own and the partner's pro-relationship acts (Path h is nonsignificant)—any association of self-respect with couple well-being is attributable to the fact that self-respect directly and indirectly promotes individual and partner pro-relationship behavior (Paths a, b, c, and d), which in turn promote couple well-being (Paths e and f).

Predicting Personal Well-Being

Finally, we hypothesized that personal well-being would be enhanced to the extent that couples exhibit good adjustment (Path g in Figure 1).

As anticipated, Couple Well-Being was significantly positively associated with Personal Well-Being (see Table 2, $\beta = .43$). Thus, involvement in a well-functioning relationship appears to contribute to personal well-being (i.e., life satisfaction, physical health, psychological adjustment).⁶ To explore mediation, we regressed Personal Well-Being onto Couple Well-Being, Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior, Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior, and Self-Respect. This analysis revealed that Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior accounted for significant variance in Personal Well-Being beyond variance attributable to other model variables ($\beta = .17$), but that Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior did not ($\beta = -.07$). As noted earlier, both Individual and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior were significantly associated with Couple Well-Being. In addition, Couple Well-Being accounted for significant variance in Personal Well-Being beyond other model variables ($\beta = .27$). Interestingly, Self-Respect, too, accounted for significant variance in Personal Well-Being beyond other variables ($\beta = .30$).

Tests of the significance of mediation revealed that Couple Well-Being, significantly, yet partially, mediated the association of Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior with Personal Well-Being (controlling for other model variables; $z = 3.35$, $p < .01$). It was inappropriate to assess mediation by Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior because this variable was not significantly associated with Personal Well-Being. (Analyses performed using proxy measures revealed largely parallel findings [see Appendix A], with significant mediation by Couple Well-Being for both

6. Is it possible that the obtained findings are attributable to socially desirable responding? The mailed questionnaires included a measure of socially desirable response tendencies, including the 10 most reliable items from the Self-Deception and Impression Management subscales of Paulhus's (1984) instrument (e.g., "I have never dropped litter on the street"; 1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *agree completely*; $\alpha_s = .73$ and $.68$ [scores are a count of extreme responses for each subscale]). We replicated the Table 2 (and Appendix A) analyses including measures of Self-Deception and Impression Management, in turn, as covariates. Predictor variables consistently accounted for significant variance beyond both Self-Deception and Impression Management. Thus, the obtained findings do not appear to be attributable to tendencies toward self-deception or impression management.

Individual and Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior [$z_s = 3.37$ and 3.58 , both $p_s < .01$].)

DISCUSSION

Self-Respect and Pro-Relationship Behavior

The main goal of the present work was to examine the role of self-respect in shaping behavior in ongoing interdependent relationships. We proposed that self-respect is the tendency to perceive the self as a person worthy of honor and high regard, arguing that the underlying basis of self-respect is principled behavior and moral integrity. Rather than adopting an “actor focused” analysis of the benefits of self-respect, we argued that this inherently self-relevant construct shapes the motivation and behavior of both actor and partner. As anticipated, we obtained consistent evidence that self-respect is associated with both individual pro-relationship behavior and partner pro-relationship behavior. Significant associations with self-respect were evident for three separate indices of individual and partner pro-relationship behavior (accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliation), in both within-participant analyses and across-partner analyses, using both self-report measures and proxy measures (assessments from both the individual’s and partner’s point of view).

Precisely how does self-respect influence the behavior of individuals and their partners? We proposed that, in part, the effects of self-respect are direct: We reasoned that because self-respect rests on adherence to one’s moral standards, when confronted with interdependence dilemmas, individuals with high self-respect control their gut-level impulses toward destructive reciprocity, contemplate the broader considerations that are relevant to action, and exhibit pro-relationship behavior. Moreover, we reasoned that when individuals respect themselves, partners are likely to fulfill their expectations of worthy and respectful behavior. Consistent with this reasoning, we found that (a) self-respect accounts for unique variance in individual pro-relationship behavior beyond variance attributable to the partner’s behavior, and (b) self-respect accounts for unique variance in partner pro-relationship behavior beyond variance attributable to the individual’s behavior (see Figure 2).

At the same time, we argued that part of the association of self-respect with individual and partner behavior may be attributable to the mechanism of reciprocity, whereby self-respect motivates each person to enact pro-relationship behaviors, which in turn promotes the other's pro-relationship behavior (see Figure 2). A series of mediation analyses revealed support for such indirect effects: We observed some evidence (albeit evidence that was weak and inconsistently observed) that the partner's pro-relationship behavior mediates the association of self-respect with individual behavior and observed strong evidence that the individual's pro-relationship behavior mediates the association of self-respect with partner behavior. Thus, self-respect and pro-relationship behavior may operate in a pattern of mutual cyclical growth, whereby each person's self-respect and pro-relationship acts feed back on and reinforce the partner's self-respect and reciprocal willingness to engage in pro-relationship acts (cf. Wieselquist et al., 1999).⁷

Self-Respect and Self-Esteem

Of course, it must be acknowledged that our results rest on a new, five-item instrument that we regard as a preliminary attempt to assess the self-respect construct. It is striking that despite the preliminary character of this instrument, when pitted against a well-validated instrument for measuring self-esteem, self-respect rather consistently accounts for unique variance in three measures of pro-relationship behavior. (We also found that self-respect accounts for unique

7. The present work revealed relatively consistent evidence that men exhibit greater accommodation and forgiveness than women (see Footnote 4). Although we did not predict sex differences, we can conceive of at least two explanations of these findings. First, women have been shown to be more attentive to conditions and to be more likely to notice problems in their relationships (e.g., Macklin, 1978). The lesser salience of relationships for men might diminish the painful consequences of their wives' potentially destructive acts, thereby making pro-relationship responding easier. Second, popular stereotypes tend to characterize women as more positive and conciliatory than men. Due to "shifting standards," the degree to which an act is salient or judged to be positive may vary depending on whether the actor is male or female (Biernat, Vescio, & Manis, 1998). Thus, identical acts may take on different meaning depending on whether they are enacted by a man or a woman, such that an act is seen as more "pro-relationship" when the actor is a man.

variance beyond self-esteem for measures of personal well-being, including life satisfaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment [unreported analyses].) The predictive power of our measure underscores the desirability of further psychometric work on the measurement of this construct, toward the goal of more fully exploring the relevance of self-respect in explaining diverse interpersonal behaviors.

In addition to developing a more sophisticated instrument for assessing this construct, it will be important to explore the developmental origins of self-respect. Our interdependence theoretic analysis suggests that the direct interests of the individual frequently conflict with the interests of the dyads and groups of which the individual is a member. If individuals are to remain members in good standing of important dyads and groups, it is sometimes necessary to forego direct self-interest and behave in such a manner as to benefit the dyad or group. Given that such behavior is antithetical to the individual's immediate interests, it would seem that such actions may rest at least in part on moral principles. As noted earlier, our interdependence analysis parallels a recent self-regulatory analysis of the origins and functions of moral standards, which argues that "moral traits... constitute an important set [of] adaptations designed to facilitate relationships... [enabling] people to live together in harmony" (Baumeister & Exline, 1999, p. 1166). Interestingly, experimental work regarding adherence to moral principles reveals that individuals are more likely to look at themselves in mirrors when they perform behaviors that are compatible with their value systems than when they engage in behavior that is contrary to their value systems (Greenberg & Musham, 1981). That is, "facing oneself" appears to be easier to the extent that one adheres to one's moral standards. Thus, we speculate that just as self-esteem may function as an internal monitor of the individual's social acceptance versus rejection (Leary et al., 1995), self-respect may function as an internal monitor of the individual's adherence versus nonadherence to moral principles.

Earlier, we proposed that self-esteem may exhibit inconsistent associations with interpersonal behavior because pro-relationship acts are not always easy. We also noted that individuals with high self-esteem—particularly unstable high self-esteem—are prone to react to the interpersonal sources of ego threat with anger and hostility. Given that the resolution of interdependence dilemmas

requires behavior that is antithetical to direct self-interest, it is possible that such dilemmas are experienced as ego threats. If so, is it possible that the weak associations with pro-relationship behavior we observed for self-esteem are attributable to the fact that some of our participants possessed unstable high self-esteem? Because we did not assess the stability of participants' self-esteem, this question remains to be addressed in future work designed to explore the association of self-respect with stability of self-esteem (e.g., does adherence to moral principles contribute to stable self-esteem?).

Couple Well-Being and Personal Well-Being

The present work also sought to demonstrate that pro-relationship acts such as accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliation are beneficial to relationships. Thus, this research extends prior work in the interdependence tradition (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997), demonstrating that so-called "relationship maintenance mechanisms" play a role in promoting couple well-being, and revealing that both partners' acts contribute unique variance to predicting healthy functioning in ongoing marital relationships. Moreover, and consistent with expectations, the present work demonstrates that individual and partner pro-relationship behavior rather thoroughly mediate the association of self-respect with couple well-being (see Figure 2).

Precisely why do pro-relationship acts promote couple well-being? In the introduction, we argued for three primary mechanisms by which such associations may come about, suggesting that pro-relationship behaviors (a) represent solutions to interdependence dilemmas, yielding superior outcomes for both partners, (b) influence future behavioral options and outcomes, providing a route to more congenial future interaction opportunities, and (c) serve as diagnostic situations, revealing the individual's positive goals and values to both the partner and to the self. In our ongoing research regarding relationship maintenance mechanisms, we have obtained evidence in support of each of these mechanisms (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991; Wieselquist et al., 1999).

A final goal of this work was to replicate the well-established finding that personal well-being is enhanced by involvement in a well-functioning relationship. Our analyses revealed good evidence

in support of such effects, revealing positive associations of couple well-being with life satisfaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment. Mediation analyses revealed evidence compatible with the claim that couple well-being rather thoroughly mediates the association of partner pro-relationship behavior with personal well-being. In contrast, there was some evidence that individual pro-relationship behavior may exhibit a direct association with personal well-being (see Figure 2), suggesting that positive interpersonal behavior is not only directly beneficial to relationships and indirectly beneficial to the self, but may also contribute to personal well-being in rather direct ways. For example, via self-perception processes (Bem, 1972), pro-relationship acts may enhance feelings of pride at having revealed one's "best self," thereby promoting personal growth and well-being.

Finally, mediation analyses revealed that self-respect exhibits positive associations with personal well-being beyond variance attributable to couple well-being and both individual and partner pro-relationship behavior (see Figure 2). Thus, although self-respect promotes behavior that is antithetical to direct self-interest, it also contributes directly to personal well-being. To the extent that these findings are upheld in future work, they suggest that in clinical settings, it might be beneficial to help individuals develop conviction regarding their abstract standards of moral conduct. Strengthening adherence to moral principles may well serve multiple functions, increasing personal self-respect, increasing the odds of decent and considerate behavior and of enjoying decent and considerate treatment at the hands of others, and enhancing personal well-being.

Strengths and Limitations

We previously alluded to the main limitation of the present work: Given that we employed cross-sectional survey data to test the proposed model, we cannot form confident inferences regarding cause and effect relations. Granted, mediation analyses revealed evidence that was largely compatible with the proposed model. And granted, we took care to demonstrate that the obtained findings were evident beyond variance attributable to other plausible causes, including self-relevant constructs such as self-esteem, and including tendencies toward socially desirable responding such as self-deception and

impression management. Nevertheless, in future work it will be important to employ longitudinal research and experimental procedures to provide definitive evidence regarding direction of cause and effect, as well as to rule out plausible alternative explanations of the present findings.

Several strengths of the present work are also noteworthy. First, the fact that key hypotheses received support in both within-participant and across-partner analyses does much to enhance one's confidence that our findings may reflect actual circumstances of interdependence in everyday life. Second, the fact that evidence for associations with pro-relationship behavior was obtained for self-report measures, partner-report measures, and interaction-based measures of pro-relationship behavior enhances one's confidence that our findings may reflect actual interaction behavior in everyday life. Third, the fact that two of our three measures of personal well-being (physical health and psychological adjustment) involve self-report of rather concrete symptoms suggests that the benefits identified in the present work may be quite personally impactful. And finally, it is noteworthy that the present work examined partners in ongoing marital relationships, thereby strengthening our confidence in the ecological significance of these findings.

CONCLUSIONS

This work extends previous research regarding behavior in close relationships by demonstrating the importance of self-relevant factors in shaping both partners' inclinations toward constructive, pro-relationship acts such as accommodation, forgiveness, and conciliation. In addition, this work extends previous research regarding the self by identifying self-respect as a potentially important construct. Importantly, in predicting pro-relationship behavior, the effects of self-respect are by no means collinear with the effects of global self-esteem. Moreover, the present results suggest that self-respect not only plays an important direct role in encouraging positive behavior in ongoing relationships but also plays important direct and indirect roles in promoting couple well-being and personal well-being. We hope that the present work, preliminary though it be, may contribute to the growing literature regarding self processes in ongoing close relationships.

APPENDIX A

Associations With Pro-Relationship Behavior, Couple Well-Being, and Personal Well-Being: Supplementary Table 2 Analyses Using Proxy Measures

	One-Predictor Models		Two-Predictor Models	
	β	t	β	t
<i>Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR):</i>				
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.19	1.91+	.17	1.68+
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.21	3.12**	.13	1.94+
<i>Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.19	1.91+	.27	3.30**
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.25	3.58**	.22	3.18**
<i>Couple Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.32	3.26**	.47	7.43**
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.49	5.45**	.62	9.94**
<i>Couple Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.32	3.26**	.44	6.69**
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.49	5.45**	.60	9.24**
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.18	2.76**	.07	1.18
<i>Personal Well-Being (SR):</i>				
Couple Well-Being (SR)	.43	7.86**	.29	3.86**
Individual Pro-Relationship Behavior (PR)	.28	3.89**	-.01	-0.15
Partner Pro-Relationship Behavior (SR)	.39	5.79**	.04	0.54
Individual Self-Respect (SR)	.42	7.75**	.32	5.99**

Note. Higher values reflect greater self-respect, pro-relationship behavior, couple well-being, and personal well-being. SR = self-report measure of construct; PR = partner-report measure of construct. Statistics are from hierarchical linear modeling analyses in which criteria and predictors were lower-level variables; couple was the upper-level unit. *df* for analyses ranged from 1, 67 to 1, 74.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$.

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