

Women's Relational Orientation and Relationship Formation

by

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S RELATIONAL ORIENTATION AND RELATIONSHIP FORMATION

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Recent research suggests that women's relational orientation is a multidimensional construct with both adaptive and maladaptive facets (Hennig, 2012). Historically, researchers have emphasised the negative outcomes of women's relational orientation, limiting knowledge on positive outcomes. The purpose of the current study is to examine positive outcomes of women's relational orientation, in particular social competence and relational satisfaction. In a university setting, previously unacquainted female participants completed a dyadic interaction task and were then asked to evaluate the quality of the interaction. The results reveal distinct patterns of interactions related to the various facets of women's relational orientation. This study will increase the current understanding of the adaptive and maladaptive facets of women's relational orientation and its effects on relationship formation.

Keywords: Relational Orientation, Mitigation Theory, Social Competence, Self-Disclosure, Responsiveness, Relationship Formation, Relationship Satisfaction.

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Women's Relational Orientation and Relationship Formation

Close relationships are considered a fundamental human need which plays an integral role in overall well-being (Maslow, 1966). Gender differences have been consistently found. Women are more oriented to dyadic relationships, place a greater emphasis on maintaining harmonious relationships, demonstrate more social competence, and view those relationships as important aspects of their identity than men (e.g. Cross & Madson, 1997; Diehl, Owen & Youngblade, 2004; Gabriel & Gardner, 199; Hall, 2011). Historically, women's relational orientation has been viewed as a liability contributing to lower self-esteem, empathetic distress, and depression (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Rose, 2002; Smith & Rose, 2011). Investigators have attempted to reconcile this apparent paradox by proposing a trade-off model, wherein women's relational orientation is viewed simultaneously as an asset and a liability (Rudolph & Conley, 2005). More recently researchers have found evidence to support a multifaceted conceptualization of relational orientation (the mitigation model), which better explains the presence/absence of negative outcomes (Hennig, 2012; Hennig & Walker, 2008). Left unexplained is how a multifaceted mitigation model of relational orientation can explain the absence/presence of positive outcomes. The general purpose of the current study is to examine the three facets of relational orientation distinguished by the mitigation model as these differentially predict positive outcomes (social competence, relationship satisfaction) within the relationship formation process.

Women's Relational Orientation: Trade-Off and Mitigation Models

Crossing multiple theoretical perspectives, biological (e.g., Taylor et al., 2000) and social (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997), there has been a shared interest in the notion that relational orientation is central to understanding the well-being of women. Historically, women's relational orientation was viewed as inherently pathological, in terms of relational dependency (McBride,

Bacchiochi & Bagby, 2005), relationship perfectionism (Wiebe & McCabe, 2002) and as a vulnerability for greater emotional distress and depression (McBride, Bacchiochi & Bagby, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Other investigators have also acknowledged the benefits of relational orientation associated with having supportive social connections. In an attempt to reconcile the costs as well as the benefits of possessing a relational orientation, Rudolph and Conley (2005) found support for a *trade-off model* in which relational orientation was simultaneously predictive of costs (depressive symptoms) and benefits (social competence).

More recently, Hennig and Walker (2008) “projected” items from existing scales purporting to measure some notion of “relational orientation” onto the interpersonal circle. Results indicated a high degree of interpersonal variability among items within measures as well as variability between the measures themselves. Three distinct facets (or clusters of items) were identified, and a new set of scales were reconstituted from the existing items: the interdependent, sacrificial, and silencing self subscales. The authors proposed a mitigation model that both encompasses and extends the trade-off model.

Each facet has a differential relationship with positive/adaptive and negative/ maladaptive outcomes. The most adaptive facet (termed the *interdependent self*) was strongly associated with social benefits but not with costs. The most maladaptive facet (here re-labelled, *silencing self*) was strongly associated with costs but not with benefits. The *third* facet (here re-labelled, *sacrificial self*) represents a middle-point, reflective of the trade-off model in predicting both (some) social benefits and (some) emotional costs (Hennig, 2012; Hennig & Walker, 2008). From the perspective of interpersonal theory and research, the three relational orientation facets are reflective of, and were developed based upon, the distinct octants into which their respective items fell within the interpersonal circle (Figure 1). The interdependent self is reflective of an

underlying high level of communion. In contrast, the silencing self reflects underlying low levels of agency (or self-definition, sense of surgency; -A). In short, octants and their respective scales, reflect differences in level of communion and agency as individuals increasingly subordinated themselves and their individual needs for the maintenance of harmonious relationships (self- vs other-focused; Harter et al., 1997).

The mitigation model has demonstrated the above mentioned differential relations between facets of relational orientation and negative outcomes (e.g., neuroticism, depression; Hennig & Walker, 2008). The corresponding positive outcomes associated with facets of relational orientation, however, require further examination. The current study examines the three facets of relational orientation as they differentially predict social competence skills needed for the establishment of satisfying relationships, that is, *self-disclosure* and *responsiveness*.

Relationship Formation: Individual and Dyadic Levels

Enduring relationships are formed through a series of relationally satisfying interactions. (Laurenceau, Barrett & Pietromonaco, 1998). *Relational satisfaction* develops from an interpersonal process of various social competence skills; including mutual self-disclosure and sensitive/responsive reactions (Reis & Shaver, 1988). *Self-disclosure* consists of the sharing of important information about oneself with a partner, that is, intimate disclosures will initiate relationally satisfying relationships. Sensitive and responsive reactions involve being able to detect a partner's revelation of vulnerability and responding in a caring, understanding, and supportive manner, leading their partners to perceive them as *responsive*. A person's perception of the listener's responses is the most important element in the interaction (Reis & Shaver, 1988). The results of self-disclosure are driven by the perception of the partner's responsiveness, with a responsive reaction leading to an increase in positive affect and fostering further self-

disclosure (Anderson, Carson, Darchuk & Keefe, 2004; Falk & Wagner, 1985; Laurenceau et al., 1998). This process then continues with one partner revealing important information or feelings about themselves and receiving a supportive and empathic response from the listener, which leads to an increasingly satisfying relationship. Both self-disclosure and responsiveness is associated with feelings of closeness, liking, and relationship satisfaction (Collins & Miller, 1994; Cross et al., 2000; Reisman, 1990).

Due to the interpersonal nature of relationship formation, these social competence skills influence relationship satisfaction both at an individual and dyadic level (see Figure 2; right hand side). At an *individual* level, a person's relationship satisfaction is predicted by her own perception of her partner as responsive (later to be described as the actor effect). At the *dyadic* level, a person's actual self-disclosure, leads their partner to perceive them as responsive and also experience relationship satisfaction (later described as the partner effect).

A Model of Relational Orientation and Relationship Formation

As described above, relationship satisfaction is affected by both individual and dyadic attributes. One such individual attribute is women's relational orientation, examined in the current study. Previous research has examined the role of relational orientation in the process of relationship formation. A previous model, developed by Cross et al (2000) which proposes links between women's relational orientation and social competence skills leading to relationship satisfaction. Their model of relational orientation and relationship formation is presented in Figure 2. This model proposes that a woman's relational orientation will affect her own self-disclosure (path a) and her perception of her partner's responsiveness (path b) which will also affect her satisfaction with the interaction (path c and d, respectively; Cross et al., 2000; Gore et al., 2006). Women's relational orientation is also proposed to affect her partner's overall

satisfaction through both direct (path f) and indirect pathways. The indirect pathways exist through the actor's self-disclosure to her partner's perception of her responsiveness (path e). The model also proposes an interrelationship among perceiving one's partner as being responsive and the amount of self-disclosure (path g).

Cross et al's (2000) model of relational orientation and relationship formation was developed using just one facet of relational orientation, interdependent self. Despite this, the model is quite extensive in its encompassing of both *individual* (actor) and *dyadic* (partner) level paths. At an individual level, relational orientation can be expected to drive perceptions of the interaction in a biased fashion, partially independent of the partner's actual behaviours in the interaction. Investigators have long demonstrated the impact of positive and negative cognitive biases (or benign and hostile attribution biases; see De Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch & Moonshouwer, 2002; Saveliev, 2010) on the perception of and subsequent response to others. Women with an interdependent self demonstrate positive evaluations of their relationships (Cross, Morris & Gore, 2002), which is consistent with the finding that interdependent self is positively related to self-disclosure and perceiving one's partner as responsive, partially independent of the partner's behavior (Cross et al., 2000). Alternatively, it can be expected that a more negative bias may make a person see others as critical and are hypervigilant to rejection cues. As a result, they would disclose less about themselves and experience less satisfaction from the exchange, partially independent of the partner's actual behaviours. At the *dyadic* (partner) level, a person's relational orientation can be expected to drive their own level of self-disclosure which in turn is perceived as responsive/nonresponsive and affects the level of relationship satisfaction experienced by their partner. Interdependent self has been shown to lead to more

self-disclosure which is in turn perceived as responsive by the partner and leads them to feel satisfied (Cross et al., 2000).

A model of relational orientation and relationship formation proposes an explanation for individual variations in social competence skills through women's relational orientation. The model suggests that women's relational orientation indirectly influences the quality of interpersonal relationships (Cross et al., 2000; Gore, Cross & Morris, 2003). Research on this model to date has been limited to one facet of relational orientation, interdependent self. In an attempt to further validate the mitigation model, it is important to understand how the multiple facets of relational orientation lead to positive outcomes such as social competence skills and relationship satisfaction.

This question could be addressed by examining relationship formation within naturally developing relationships. However, there are many potential confounding effects involved in naturalistic relationships. On the basis that individuals tend to choose relationship partners who are similar to themselves (Verbrugge, 1977), this biases their experiences and behaviours in the relationship. In order to examine relationships without the inherent biases involved in naturalistic relationships, the current study will examine the relationship formation process to be examined within a controlled experimental setting. Previously unacquainted partners will engage in an interaction task known to generate feelings of closeness (Aron et al., 1997). The task closely models Reis and Shaver's (1988) intimacy model, providing opportunities for both self-disclosure and responsiveness leading to relationship satisfaction. Undoubtedly the temporary closeness generated from this task may be different from the intimacy generated from natural ongoing relationships, however this method allows for the modeling of important relationship processes and avoids the many confounds involved in naturalistic relationships.

Hypotheses of Current Study

As previously noted, research examining the three facets of relational orientation (interdependent self, silencing self, and sacrificial self) is limited, particularly in relation to predicting benefits (that is social competence skills and relationship satisfaction). The current study examined the role of interpersonal self, silencing self, and sacrificial self in Cross et al's (2000) model of relational orientation and relationship formation. This study examined three hypotheses.

H1: Replicating Cross et al (2000), it is expected that the interdependent self will be predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills (self-disclosure & responsiveness).

H2: In contrast, silencing self will not be predictive of relationship satisfaction, nor be associated with social competence (self-disclosure & responsiveness).

H3: Sacrificial self (similar to the interdependent self), will be predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills, that is self-disclosure and responsiveness. [Taken together with previous research, sacrificial self is predicted to describe the "trade-off" model (Rudolph & Conley, 2005), simultaneously predicting both positive and negative outcomes].

Methods

Participants

Participants were 160 undergraduate females (80 dyads) from the University of Guelph, recruited through an undergraduate participant pool in exchange for course credit ($M = 18.4$, $SD = 1.9$). The data were collected in 2005. Participants did not report ethnicity however, based on the ethnicity distribution of the wider university population at that time, it is expected that the

majority of participants self-identified as White/Caucasian, with a mix of Black/African Canadian/Caribbean, Asian, Middle Eastern, Aboriginal/Native Canadian, and South Asian/Indian/Pakistan participants. The study was approved by the University's Research Ethics Board.

Procedure

Participants came into the lab, four at a time. They were told the purpose of the study was to investigate differences in efficiency of problem solving in pairs depending on whether the pairs are familiar with each other or not. Upon arrival to the lab, the experimenter inquired about whether any of the participants were previous acquaintances. Participants were then randomly assigned to a partner, or in cases where participants knew each other they were randomly assigned to one of the remaining participants.

Participants first completed self-report measures of relational orientation individually. They were then seated in a room together with their assigned partner, and told they had been placed in the condition in which they get to know their partner before the problem solving task. They then completed an interaction task replicated from Cross et al. (2000). Each pair was given 15 cards containing increasingly sensitive questions. A sample question would read, "What would constitute a perfect day for you?". The participants were told to go through the cards alternating asking and answering the questions, with each person responding to every question. They were allowed to skip any questions they did not wish to answer, and were given 15 minutes to work through the questions. This experimental interaction task has been validated in previous studies and shown to successfully generate interpersonal closeness between pairs (Aron et al., 1997; Cross et al., 2000).

After completing the interaction task the participants were once again separated and asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their interaction partner and the interaction as a whole. Following the completion of these questionnaires, participants were thoroughly debriefed on the deception and the real purpose of the study.

Measures

Relational Orientation. Following research demonstrating the presence of three distinct facets of a broader notion of relational orientation (Hennig & Walker, 2008), three measures were examined. *Interdependent self* was measured using the Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal scale (RISC; Cross et al., 2000). The 11-item scale assesses the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their interpersonal relationships (sample item: “My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am”). The *sacrificial self* and *silencing self* relational orientations were assessed with the 2-Vector Unmitigated Communion Inventory (2-VCI; Hennig & Walker, 2008). Sacrificial self is reflected by the 11-item Submission-with-Connection factor in which caring for others is an important focus of one’s relationships (sample item: “For me to be happy, I need others to be happy”). Silencing self is reflected by the 11-item Submission-without-Connection factor containing excessive social-evaluative concerns and self-criticism (sample item: “If I can’t get along with somebody, I worry that something is wrong with me”). Measures were completed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree/not at all like me*) to 7 (*strongly agree/definitely yes*). Alpha reliabilities in the current study for *interdependent self*, *sacrificial self*, and *silencing self* were .84, .87, and .84, respectively.

Self-Disclosure. The degree of disclosure during the interaction task was measured using a modified version of the Self-Disclosure Index (Miller, Berg & Archer, 1983). Following Cross

et al (2000), two of the original items were removed from the scale because of vague wording. Participants were asked to rate the amount of information they disclosed in regard to eight domains (e.g., my personal habits), on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Alpha reliability in the current sample was .75.

Responsiveness. Partner's responsiveness was assessed using 12 items from Cross et al's (2000) study. Participants rated how much they felt their partner understood, cared for, and validated them. A sample item reads, "My partner seemed sincere during our interaction". Participants rated their partner's responsiveness on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Alpha reliability in the current sample was .90.

Relationship Satisfaction. In order to assess participant's overall evaluation of the interaction, a composite measure was created combining measures of satisfaction, liking and closeness. Participant's satisfaction with the interaction was measured with six items previously used in Cross et al.' (2000) study. A sample item reads "How pleased were you with the way the interaction went?". How much participant's liked their interaction partner was assessed using three items from Miller et al., (1983) and one from Cross et al. (2000). A sample item reads "How much do you like your partner as a close friend?". Finally, how close participants felt to their partners after the interaction was measured using three items from the Subjective Closeness Index (Berscheid, Snyder & Omoto, 1989). A sample item reads "Right now, how close do you feel to your partner?". Participants rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Alpha reliability of the 12-item composite measure in the current study was .87.

Selection Variables. In order to assess participant's attitudes toward the interaction task, they were asked how seriously they and their partners took the interaction task and how well they knew their partners before the experiment.

Results

Analytic Strategy: The APIMeM Model

The dyadic nature of the study is predicated on the notion that individuals are interdependent with one another and thus, their behaviour is not independent. To assess for interdependence, pairwise intraclass correlations were calculated (Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2006). Variable scores were calculated using the average response of each participant. The analysis revealed significant relations between parallel measures for each member of the dyad for self-disclosure ($r = .22, p < .05$), perceptions of partner responsiveness ($r = .51, p < .01$), and overall satisfaction with the interaction ($r = .40, p < .01$). This suggests that an individual's self-disclosure invites reciprocal disclosures from one's partner, perceiving one's partner's responsiveness was also associated with oneself being perceived as responsive, and one's own overall satisfaction with the interaction was related to one's partner satisfaction.

To account for the interdependence of the data, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM) was utilised (Ledermann & Macho, 2009). The APIMeM allows the dyad to be the unit of analysis. The model proposes that each woman's facet of relational orientation will influence both her overall satisfaction with the interaction (actor effect) and her partner's overall satisfaction with the interaction (partner effect) through indirect pathways of self-disclosure and perception of partner's responsiveness. Each hypothesis was first examined within the larger APIMeM model and then specific actor and partner effects were examined using phantom modelling.

Relational Orientation and Relationship Formation: A Structural Equation Model

The correlations, means and standard deviations of all of the variables across both partners are presented in Table 1. Differences between partners should be disregarded as both partners are theoretically indistinguishable. These associations were then examined within the larger model of relational orientation and relationship formation. Structural equation modeling was conducted in IBM SPSS AMOS 21.0. Before conducting structural equation analysis, all of the variables were mean centered. The path coefficients, means, variances and intercepts were constrained to be equal between the two partners to account for the indistinguishable nature of the dyads (Olsen & Kenny, 2006).

H1: Interdependent self was predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills. A preliminary examination of the correlations revealed positive associations between interdependent self, social competence skills (self-disclosure, & responsiveness) and relationship satisfaction for both partners (see Table 1). Examined within a structural equation model, Cross et al's (2000) original fully specified model (see Figure 2), had adequate fit, $\chi^2(27) = 31.585, p > .05, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05$. Following the removal of non-significant paths identified in the output (path f; the direct path from relational orientation to partner's satisfaction), still preserved good model fit, $\chi^2(28) = 31.868, p > .05, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04$. While the chi-square difference test ($\chi^2(1) = .283, p > .05$) indicated that both models fit the data equally well, the second model is accepted on the basis of parsimony (path weights are presented in Figure 3). Individuals with an interdependent self have greater social competency skills (self-disclosure and responsiveness), which in turn lead to greater relationship satisfaction for both the individual and their partner.

H2: Silencing self was not predictive of relationship satisfaction, nor associated with social competence skills. Silencing self had weak and nonsignificant correlations with the study variables (see Table 1). Unlike, interdependent self, silencing self was not related to self-disclosure or perceiving one's partner as responsive. Since structural equation modeling is more powerful than simple zero-order correlations, the model was estimated and revealed bad fit, $\chi^2(28) = 17.921, p < .05, CFI = .00, RMSEA = .46$. The standardized path coefficients for the silencing self and relationship formation model are presented in Figure 4. Consistent with the correlations, silencing self was not related to social competence skills and consequently does not lead to relationship satisfaction.

H3: Sacrificial self (similar to the interdependent self), was predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills. Sacrificial self was not significantly correlated with social competence skills (self-disclosure & responsiveness) or relationship satisfaction. The magnitude of the relationships however, did suggest positive trends (see Table 1). A model of sacrificial self and relationship formation was then estimated and revealed good fit, $\chi^2(28) = 30.274, p > .05, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03$, which is consistent with expectations. The standardized path coefficients for the sacrificial self and relationship formation model are presented in Figure 5.

Examining Specific Actor/Partner Effects: Phantom Modelling

Following the estimation of the relational orientation and relationship formation models, the specific indirect pathways were estimated. Due to poor model fit and lack of association between silencing self and social competence (self-disclosure & responsiveness), actor and partner effects were not examined for Hypothesis 2. Specific actor and partner effects were examined using phantom modeling due to software limitations of IBM SPSS AMOS 12.0.

Phantom modelling allows for the estimation and comparison of specific effects by modeling them as total effects in the phantom model. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals, using 5,000 samples, were also used to assess the significance of the specific effects (Ledermann & Macho, 2009; Macho & Ledermann, 2011). Significant effects are denoted by confidence intervals which do not include zero.

H1: Interdependent self was predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills (self-disclosure & responsiveness). Two actor effects are present between interdependent self and overall satisfaction of oneself. Interdependent self led women to disclose more information and to perceive their partners as more responsive, both of which led to increased levels of overall satisfaction ($\beta = .04, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01 - .08]$ and $\beta = .15, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.07 - .24]$, respectively). A comparison of these two pathways reveal that perceiving one's partner as responsive accounts for significantly more variance in the interdependent self actor effect ($\beta = .11, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.03 - .20]$), which is consistent with previous research. A significant partner effect is also present between interdependent self and partner's overall satisfaction. Interdependent self led women to disclose information to their partners, which led their partner's to perceive them as responsive, resulting in their partners being more satisfied with the interaction ($\beta = .03, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01 - .06]$). In comparing actor and partner effects, interdependent self had a greater impact on one's own satisfaction ($\beta = .12, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.05 - .22]$).

H3: Sacrificial self (similar to the interdependent self), was predictive of relationship satisfaction through its positive association with social competence skills, that is self-disclosure and responsiveness. Two actor effects are present between sacrificial self and overall satisfaction of oneself. Sacrificial self led women to disclose more information and to perceive their partners

as more responsive, both of which led to increased levels of overall satisfaction ($\beta = .02, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01 - .06]$ and $\beta = .09, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.02 - .18]$, respectively). A comparison of these two pathways revealed that perceiving one's partner as responsive accounts for significantly more variance in the sacrificial self actor effect ($\beta = .07, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.03 - .15]$). A significant partner effect is also present between sacrificial self and partner's overall satisfaction. Sacrificial self led women to disclose information to their partners, which led their partner's to perceive them as responsive, resulting in their partners being more satisfied with the interaction ($\beta = .02, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01 - .05]$). In comparing actor and partner effects, sacrificial self had a greater impact on one's own satisfaction ($\beta = .08, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01 - .16]$).

Discussion

While previous research has examined the role of women's relational orientation on the process of relationship formation, no research to date has examined the three facets of women's relational orientation and their differential roles in relationship formation. Overall, the results of the study provide support for the distinction between the three facets. As expected, an interdependent self was related to social competence skills and relationship satisfaction for both members of the dyad. On the other hand, silencing self was not related to social competence skills or relationship satisfaction for either member of the dyad. Sacrificial self, the midpoint between the maladaptive and adaptive facets, was associated with social competence skills and relationship satisfaction for both members of the dyad.

Interdependent Self and Relationship Formation

The current study successfully replicated Cross et al's (2000) model of interdependent self and relationship formation. Interdependent self was related to self-disclosure and responsiveness, which led to greater relationship satisfaction for both partners of the dyad. These results are consistent with previous research demonstrating the link between interdependent self,

social competence and relationship satisfaction (Gore et al, 2006; Morry & Kito, 2009). Interdependent self is viewed as the adaptive facet of relational orientation in the mitigation model and theorized to be associated exclusively with positive outcomes, which was supported by the results of the study (Hennig, 2012; Hennig & Walker, 2008). Interdependent self has been shown to be associated with self-acceptance (Akin & Eroglu, 2013) and an optimistic evaluation of relationships (Cross et al., 2002). As a result, examinations of naturalistic relationships reveal that women with this facet of relational orientation are able to be more authentic in their relationships, allowing them to self-disclose and receive social support (Morry & Kito, 2009; Neff & Beretvas, 2013).

Silencing Self and Relationship Formation

On the contrary, silencing self was not related to self-disclosure, perceiving one's partner as responsiveness, or relationship satisfaction. These findings are contradictory to earlier theories positing that women self-silence to maintain relationship harmony (Jack & Dill, 1992). However, the mitigation model categorizes silencing self as maladaptive and exclusively related to negative outcomes (Hennig, 2012; Hennig & Walker, 2008), which is supported by the lack of relation to positive outcomes in the current study (such as social competence skills and relationship satisfaction). Newer lines of research have supported the maladaptive nature of silencing self by linking it with rejection sensitivity (Harper et al., 2006). It is theorized that women suppress their thoughts and feelings in relationships due to fear of rejection (Harper et al., 2006; Harper & Welsh, 2007). Examinations of naturalistic relationships have found that women who are not present in their relationship are also not able to experience the benefits of close relationships – emotional support – and report lowered relationship satisfaction (Harper et al., 2006; Harper & Welsh, 2007; Thomas & Bowker, 2013)

Sacrificial Self and Relationship Formation

Sacrificial self led women to self-disclose and perceive their partners as responsive, which led to relationship satisfaction for both self and partner. These results are consistent with previous research documenting links between sacrificial self, social competence and relationship satisfaction (Amanatullah, Morris & Curhan, 2008; Hennig, 2012). Underlying sacrificial self is the preoccupation with maintaining interpersonal harmony by placing the needs of others above the self (Jack & Dill, 1992), which is conducive to being perceived as responsive by one's partner. According to the mitigation model of relational orientation, sacrificial self represents the trade-off model (Rudolph & Conley, 2005), predicting both positive and negative outcomes (Hennig, 2012; Hennig & Walker, 2008). In fact, there is other research suggesting that sacrificing one's own needs in relationships is motivated by insecurity with the relationship and is linked to feeling inauthentic and less satisfied in relationships (Bassett & Aube, 2013; Jin, Van Yperen, Sanderman, & Hagedoorn, 2010; Neff & Harter, 2002). The negative outcomes of sacrificial self were not apparent in the current study, likely due to the limited interaction between partners. However it is likely that this continued interaction pattern, placing the partner's needs above one's own needs, will lead to negative outcomes (e.g. caregiver burnout; Rigenbach, 2009).

Individual and Dyadic Level Effects

Another important finding of this study reveals that women's relational orientation is significantly more important for their own experience of the relationship (actor effect) than for their partner's (partner effect). These results suggest that interdependent self will likely always predict greater relationship satisfaction than silencing self, partially independent of their partner's facet of relational orientation. However, other research suggests that relationship styles (mutuality and other-focused connection) are often different and related to different outcomes

across different relationship contexts (Neff & Harter, 2003). However, relational orientation reflects more subtle and pervasive experiences within relationships, whereas Neff and Harter (2003) examined relationship styles in the context of consciously making important decisions.

Implications

The present findings provide further support for the mitigation model which distinguishes women's relational orientation into three distinct facets. Interdependent self is continually associated with exclusively interpersonal benefits, such as social competence and relationship satisfaction. While silencing self has been associated exclusively with emotional costs and no interpersonal benefits, such as social competence and relationship satisfaction. Sacrificial self, on the other hand, has been purported to represent the trade-off model and has been associated with emotional costs and interpersonal benefits (such as social competence and relationship satisfaction). The current study provides important insight into the different relationship formation patterns of the various relational orientation facets. Both interdependent self and sacrificial self led women to disclose information to their partners and perceive their partners as responsive. Whereas, silencing self did not lead women to disclose information and perceive their partners as responsive. As a result only interdependent self and sacrificial self led women and their partners to experience satisfaction from their interaction.

Close relationships provide an important avenue for social support (Reis & Franks, 1994) and social support has been shown to foster positive psychological functioning (Khatib, Bhui & Stansfeld, 2013). Since close relationships are very important, relational orientation which has an important effect on relationship formation will likely be beneficial beyond the relationship itself. For example, a facet of relational orientation which does not promote the formation and maintenance of relationships will likely also be related to other emotional costs (i.e. depression).

Therefore, understanding the positive outcomes of the three facets of relational orientation, also provide important information about the absence/presence of negative outcomes.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study limited its examination of relationships to the experimentally generated initial stage of relationship formation, the first encounter. Future studies should expand upon this study by examining naturally forming relationships longitudinally in order to clarify questions of consistency in relational patterns and outcomes. Potential future studies could use a diary method to examine the development and maintenance of relationships longitudinally.

Future research should also aim to expand on this research by evaluating the other types of relationships. Despite the current study's finding that women's relational orientation has a greater impact on their experience of the relationship than their partner's, and thus suggest that their behaviour in relationships will be consistent across various relationships. Other research has found that behaviour in relationships vary depending on the type of relationship and the perception of power (Neff & Harter, 2003). Cross-sex friendships, heterosexual romantic relationships and parental relationships are also an important part of women's lives and likely to have disparity in perceptions of power, and thus important to examine these relationships more closely (Neff & Harter, 2003).

The general purpose of the study was to examine the positive outcomes of women's facets of relational orientation, and as such the current study limited its examination of positive valence outcome measures. Researchers have consistently found that valence is two-dimensional, and positive and negative affect are not exclusive of each other (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). The results of the current study revealed important information about interdependent and sacrificial self (the more adaptive facets) however silencing self (maladaptive facet) was simply not related

to any of the outcome measures. Consequently, future studies should aim to include a wide variety of measures of both positive and negative valence, in order to get a better understanding of adaptive and maladaptive facets of relational orientation.

The current study limited its examination of relationship formation to individual attributes, however cultural influences may also play a role. Culture affects one's beliefs, values, and self-concept. It is generally thought that individualistic cultures emphasize being able to express internal values, goals and emotions whereas collectivistic cultures emphasize not over imposing on others (Markus & Katayama, 1991). Therefore, it can also be expected that differences in the process of relationship formation exist, with individualistic cultures placing more emphasis on self-disclosure for relationship satisfaction (Adams, Anderson & Adonu, 2004). Researchers have found cross-cultural differences in self-disclosure – with individuals in collectivistic cultures disclosing less (Kito, 2005; Maeir, Zhang & Clark, 2013). The current study did not examine possible cultural influences on relationship formation. Therefore, its results cannot be generalized beyond an individualistic culture. Future research should examine cultural influences on the various facets of relational orientation and the relationship formation process.

Conclusions

This research further validates a multidimensional view of women's relational orientation with the distinct results for each facet of relational orientation (independent, silencing and sacrificial self). It also adds to the limited number of studies examining women's relational orientation and positive relationship outcomes. By understanding women's relational orientation within the context of relationship formation is crucial to further understanding women, their relationships, and their well-being.

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Table 1.

Inter-Correlations Among Partner 1 and Partner 2 Variables Used in Relational Orientation and Relationship Development Model

	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	M	SD
<i>Partner 1</i>													
1. Interpersonal RO	.29**	.33**	.38**	.42**	.20	.07	.08	-.05	.22	.28*	.26*	59.36	7.55
2. Silencing RO		.36**	.06	.01	-.01	-.14	.14	-.14	-.04	-.10	-.16	33.58	8.70
3. Sacrificial RO			.21	.21	.05	.17	.07	.07	.21	.21	.10	46.16	7.89
4. Self-Disclosure				.43**	.29**	.12	.08	.10	.22	.22*	.24*	23.31	4.99
5. Perceived partner responsiveness					.66**	-.07	-.20	.02	.23*	.51**	.45**	43.66	5.40
6. Overall satisfaction						-.05	-.10	.07	.22	.37**	.41**	.00	2.41
<i>Partner 2</i>													
7. Interpersonal RO							.20	.38**	.26*	.19	.22	59.04	7.35
8. Silencing RO								.36**	.10	.02	.05	32.50	9.30
9. Sacrificial RO									.18	.22*	.18	46.27	6.91
10. Self-Disclosure										.55**	.62**	24.64	5.63
11. Perceived partner responsiveness											.79**	49.02	5.97
12. Overall Satisfaction												.00	2.65

Note. RO = Relational Orientation. ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

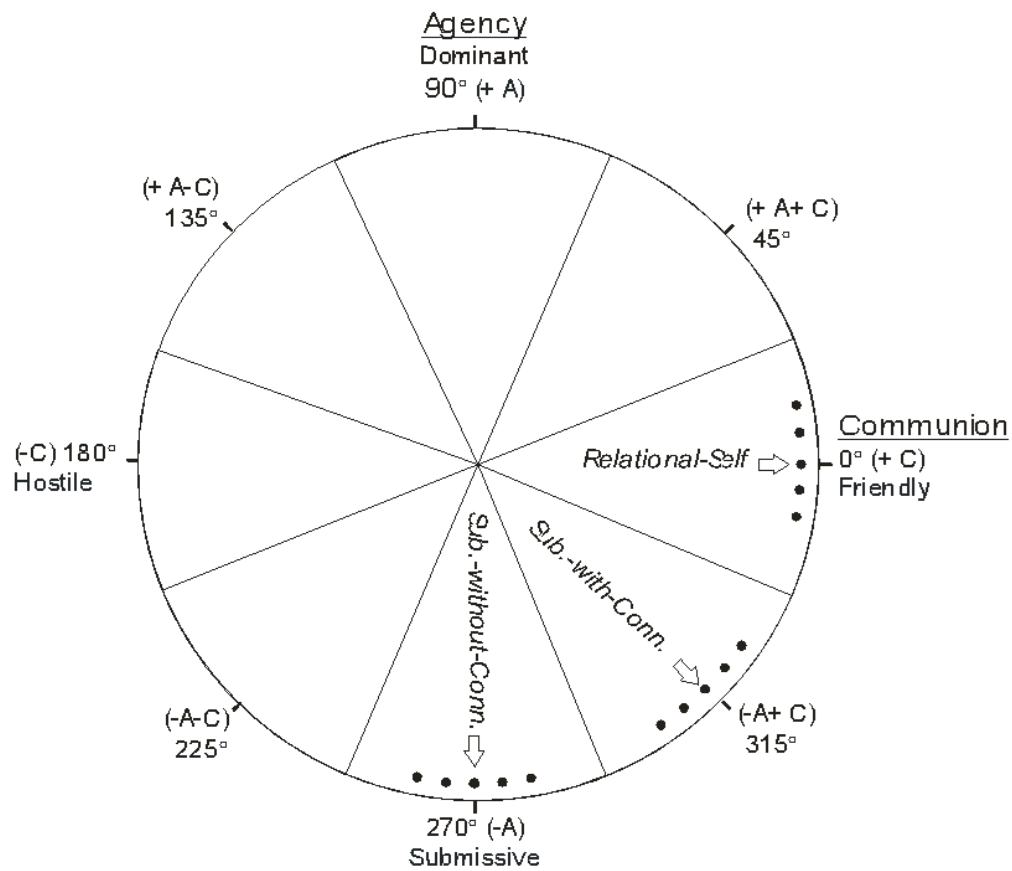


Figure 1. Projection of the mitigation model facets of relational orientation onto interpersonal space (from Hennig & Walker, 2008). Relational-Self = Interdependent self, Sub.-with-Conn. = Sacrificial self, and Sub.-without-Conn. = Silencing self.

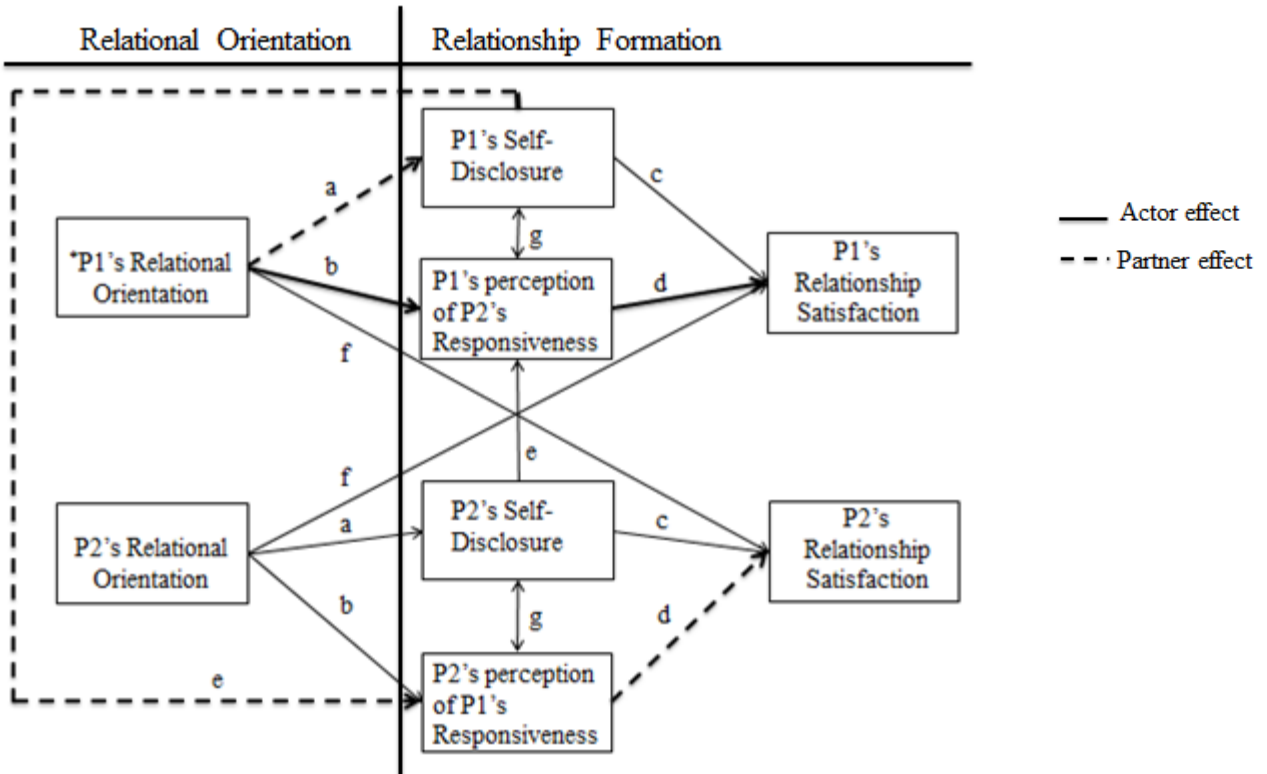


Figure 2. Path model of a relational orientation and relationship formation model (Cross et al., 2000). P1 = Partner 1; P2 = Partner 2. * Actor and partner effects from P1.

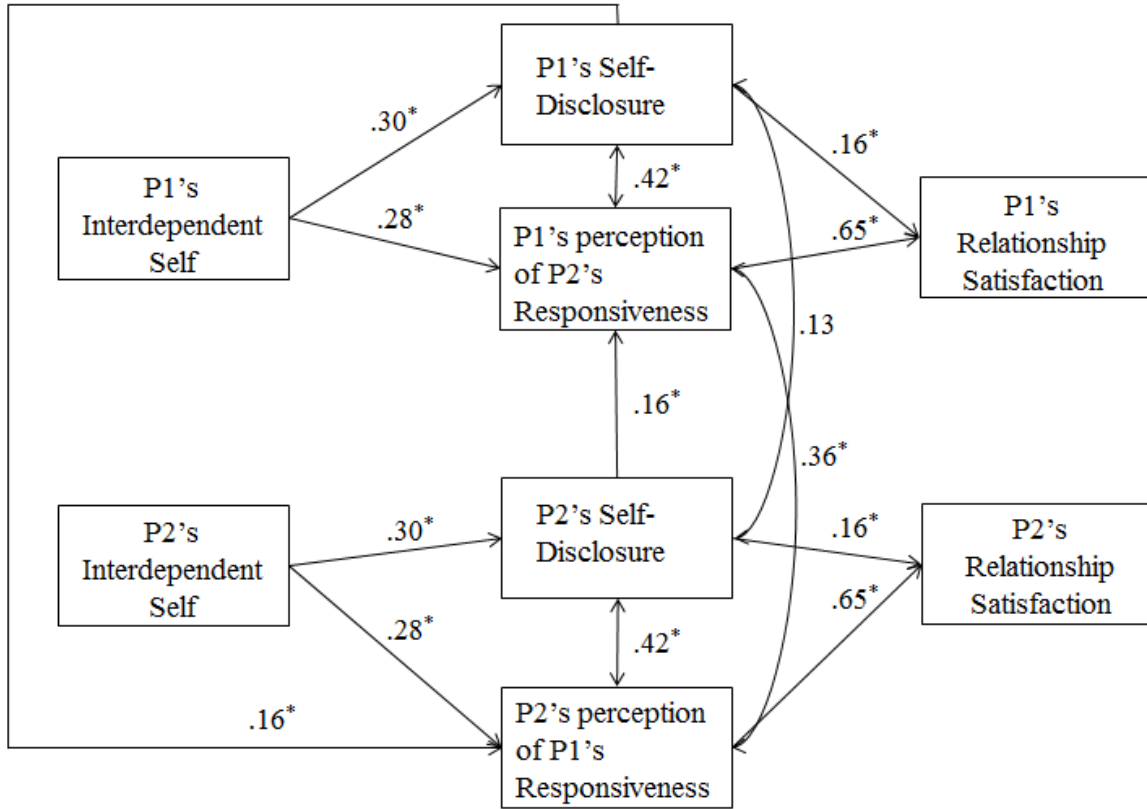


Figure 3. Path model of interdependent self relational orientation and relationship formation.
 * = significant standardized path weights at $p < .05$. P1 = Partner 1; P2 = Partner 2.

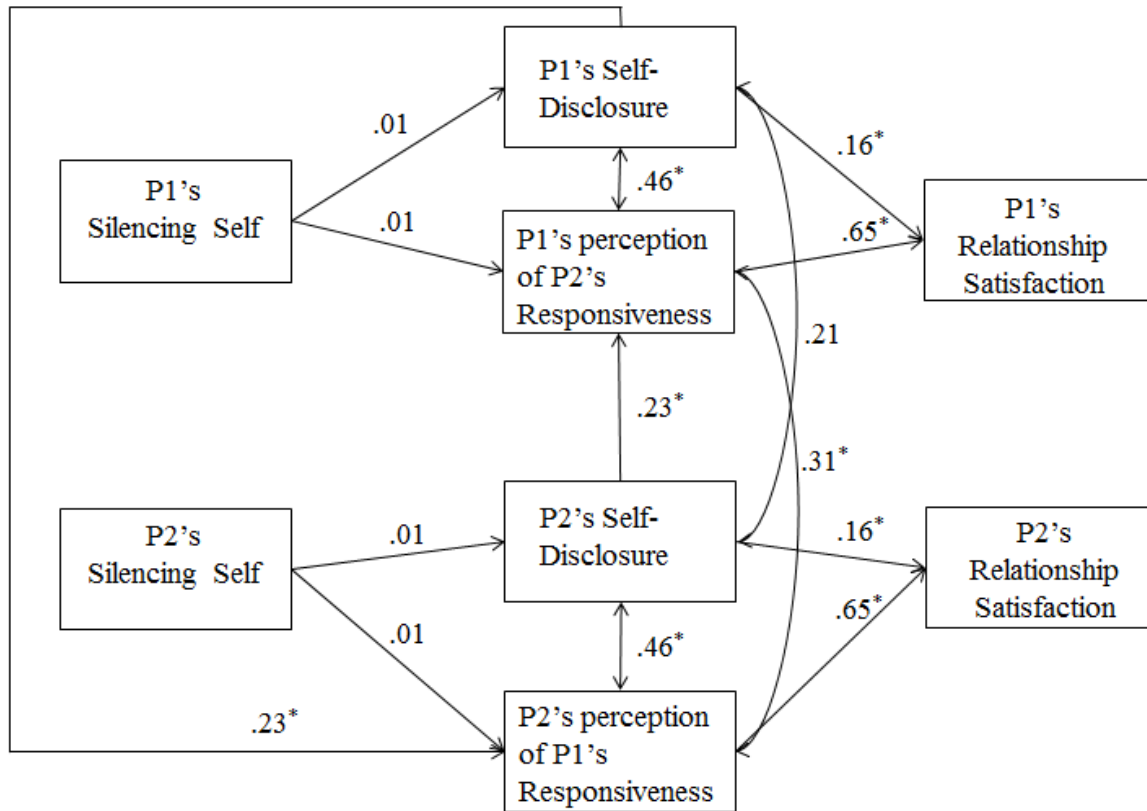


Figure 4. Path model of silencing self relational orientation and relationship formation.

* = significant standardized path weights at $p < .05$. P1 = Partner 1; P2 = Partner 2.

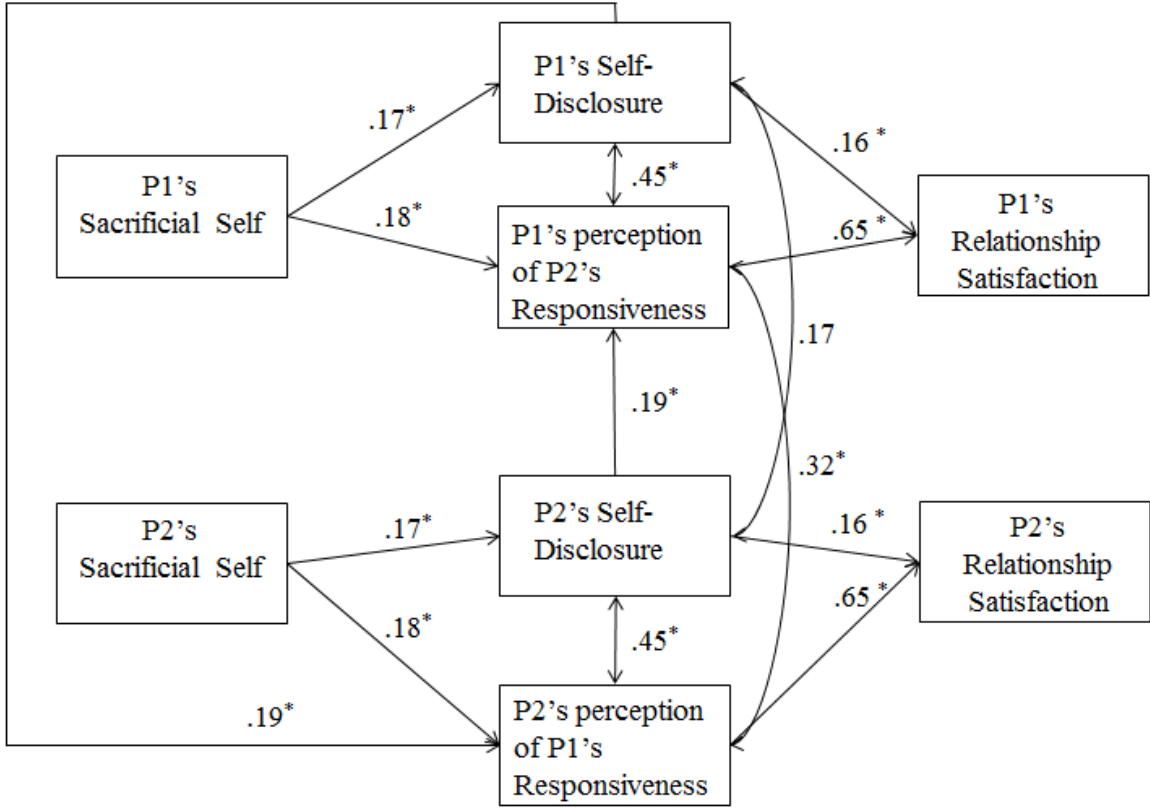


Figure 5. Path model of sacrificial self relational orientation and relationship formation.
 * = significant standardized path weights at $p < .05$. P1 = Partner 1; P2 = Partner 2.

Appendix A: Relational Orientation

Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you Agree or Disagree with each of these statements using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral/Mixed	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am.
2. When I feel very close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.
3. I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.
4. I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are.
5. When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.
6. If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.
7. In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.
8. Overall, my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.
9. My close relationships are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
10. My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.
11. When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.

2-Vector Unmitigated Communion Inventory

Instructions. Please indicate the extent to which each statement is descriptive of you. Think of friends and people close to you when completing this questionnaire.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all like me	Not like me		Neutral/Mixed		Like me	Definitely Yes

<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	I keep silent if I think my opinion might create conflict.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	I feel terrible if I upset someone
<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	Instead of risking confrontations with my friends I would rather not rock the boat.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	It saddens me deeply when I say or do something inconsiderate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.	I am afraid of making mistakes in conversations
<input type="checkbox"/>	6.	One of the most important things to me is to avoid being unkind.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7.	When with friends I get anxious at the possibility of saying something wrong.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8.	Before I can be happy, others have to be cared for first.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9.	When my friends' opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	10.	The most important thing for me is to take care of the needs of others.
<input type="checkbox"/>	11.	I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble with my friends.
<input type="checkbox"/>	12.	I get very distressed when friends are upset.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13.	I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they conflict with my friend's feelings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	14.	If I am not highly caring, I feel like a bad person.
<input type="checkbox"/>	15.	If I can't get along with somebody, I worry that something is wrong with me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	16.	One of the most important things is to avoid being selfish.
<input type="checkbox"/>	17.	I tend to judge myself by how I think my friends see me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	18.	I always place the needs of others above my own.
<input type="checkbox"/>	19.	Making mistakes in conversations does not bother me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	20.	For me to be happy, I need others to be happy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	21.	When I make decisions, my friend's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	22.	I often worry about others' problems.

Appendix B: Self-Disclosure

Instructions: Use the scale above to rate the extent to which You discussed the following topics. Use the same scale as you did above.

- _____ 1. My personal habits.
- _____ 2. Things I wouldn't do in public.
- _____ 3. My deepest feelings.
- _____ 4. What I like and dislike about myself.
- _____ 5. What is important to me in life.
- _____ 6. What makes me the person I am.
- _____ 7. Things I have done which I am proud of.
- _____ 8. My close relationships with other people.

Appendix C: Responsiveness

Instructions: The following items ask about your perceptions of the partner's responsiveness.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/Mixed	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Appendix D: Relationship Satisfaction

Satisfaction

Instructions: Please complete the following questions using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral/Mixed		Very much

- ___ 1. How much did you enjoy the interaction with your partner?
- ___ 2. How satisfied were you with your interaction with this partner?
- ___ 3. How comfortable were you in the interaction with this partner?
- ___ 4. How pleased were you with the way your interaction went?
- ___ 5. Did you find your conversation to be a pleasant exchange?
- ___ 6. Were you thinking that you could hardly wait until the discussion was over?

Liking

Instructions: Please complete the following questions using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral/Mixed		Very much

- ___ 1. How much do you like your partner?
- ___ 2. How much would you like your partner as a close friend?
- ___ 3. How much would you like to see your partner again?
- ___ 4. How much would you like to work with your partner on the upcoming problem-solving task?

Closeness

Instructions: Please complete the following questions using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral/Mixed		Very much

- ___ 1. Relative to all your relationships, how would you characterize your relationship with this person?
- ___ 2. Relative to what you know about other people's close relationships, how would you characterize your relationship with this person?
- ___ 3. Right now, how close do you feel to your partner?

Appendix E: Selection Variables

Instructions: Please complete the following questions using the scales below.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all			Neutral/Mixed			Very Seriously

____ 1. To what extent did you and your partner take the discussion time seriously?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						We knew each other pretty well

____ 2. How well did you know your partner before the task?

Appendix F: Interaction Task

You have been given 15 slips of paper with questions written on them. One of you should read aloud the first strip and the BOTH of you answer it. Please go through the slips one at a time and in order. Take plenty of time with each slip, answering what it asks thoroughly and thoughtfully. You will be given 15 minutes to do so.

1. What was your impression of the University of Guelph the first time you ever came here?
2. Where are you from? Name all of the places you've lived
3. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
4. What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
5. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
6. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
7. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
8. What do you value most in a friendship?
9. What is your most treasured memory?
10. What is your most terrible memory?
11. Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."
12. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.
13. Tell your partner something you like about them already.
14. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
15. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to save any one item. What would it be? Why?