

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ACTOR'S AND PARTNER'S SELF-DISCREPANCY AS MODERATORS OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGATIVE EVENTS AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS:
A DAILY DIARY STUDY EXAMINING THE ACTOR-PARTNER
INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL IN AFRICAN AMERICAN COUPLES

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For my mother, Pamela J. Hall

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ABSTRACT

Self-worth influences how individuals perceive the health of their romantic relationships in response to adverse experiences, especially interpersonal threats. Though explicit self-esteem is often used as an indicator of self-worth in investigations of relationship functioning after interpersonal threats, particularly those focusing on perceptions of felt love and acceptance, actual:ideal self-discrepancy is an evaluative aspect of the self that may have more direct impacts on romantic relationship functioning after negative events that are unrelated to the relationship. Using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model to analyze dyadic data from 150 African American couples using multilevel regression models, the current study's results were contrary to predictions; actor's self-discrepancy did not moderate the association between daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning (H1) and actor's and partner's self-discrepancy did not interact to moderate this association either (H3). However, partner's self-discrepancy significantly moderated the association between daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning (H2) while a post-hoc analysis found that partner's self-discrepancy significantly moderated the association between actor's self-discrepancy and daily relationship functioning. Actual:ideal self-discrepancy

exerted a distinctive impact on romantic relationship functioning, even after controlling for explicit self-esteem, and may be a critical factor in relationship health to investigate in the future.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships influence and are influenced by a variety of factors and these intimate pairings also contribute to the functioning of the individual (Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Gabriel, Carvallo, Jaremka, & Tippin, 2008). One of the most significant impacts of these relationships is their contribution to fulfilling the critical human need to socially belong and feel accepted by other people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Given the importance of social acceptance, it is helpful to consider the conditions under which it is offered or perceived. Teasing apart the intricate connections between experiences, expectations, perceptions, behaviors, and character traits opens a window of understanding that allows us to better comprehend interpersonal interactions and related outcomes.

The current study will investigate the impact of character traits and negative experiences external to the relationship on perceived evaluations by the romantic relationship partner. An individual's perception of how much they are accepted by their romantic partner (i.e., reflected appraisal) is an important piece of the relationship puzzle because it is positively related to the individual's perceptions of that partner and of the functioning of the

relationship (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose, 2001). Which factors influence reflected appraisals? Work on risk regulation theory has shown that evaluations of the self (i.e., self-worth) can predict the valence of reflected appraisals after threats to the relationship (DeHart, Murray, Pelham, & Rose, 2003; Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008). Additionally, some experiences external to the relationship can be perceived as relationship threats when the individual exposed to an adverse event responds with negative affect or behavior in the presence of the romantic partner, known as stress spillover (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Repetti & Wood, 1997). Research by Hallinger, DeHart, and Burrows (2017; unpublished data) suggests that actual:ideal self-discrepancy (the difference between your actual self and the person you most want to be; Higgins, 1987) is a type of self-evaluation that impacts perceptions of romantic partners and may moderate the influence of discriminatory experiences on reflected appraisals. Furthermore, romantic partners influence and are influenced by each other's words and behavior (Bolger et al, 1989; Repetti & Wood, 1997), which indicates that the self-evaluations of one partner can interact with the effects of the other partner's self-evaluations on the association between negative events and reflected appraisals.

The current study builds on past research by testing how an individual's actual:ideal self-discrepancy and their romantic partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy moderate the impact of experiencing a negative event on the first individual's perceptions of romantic relationship functioning. Additionally, this study bolsters the established research literatures on both self-discrepancy and relationship functioning processes by contributing data on African American couples, which is seldom presented. Using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Kashy & Kenny, 2000; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) will allow for the simultaneous estimation of the effects of the individual's self-discrepancy (actor effect) and the romantic partner's self-discrepancy (partner effect) on the relation between negative events external to the relationship and romantic relationship functioning while controlling for the covariation present (see Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 2

NEGATIVE EVENTS AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Reflected appraisals, also called perceived regard or perceived love and acceptance, are what an individual believes another person thinks of them or how the other person views them (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). These perceived evaluations by others are typically focused on felt love and acceptance, especially within the context of romantic relationships, but can also reflect global evaluations or attributions of specific traits and abilities. Reflected appraisals are important to examine because they are an indicator of individuals' perceived relationship functioning.

Reflected Appraisals and Relationship Functioning

Reflected appraisals within a romantic relationship are an important indicator of the level of a couple's relationship functioning. Reflected appraisals have been shown to predict perceptions of the romantic partner as well as relationship satisfaction (Murray et al., 2000). Reflected appraisals are also moderately to highly correlated with feelings of closeness within the relationship, caring, and enjoyment of sex with the partner (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001). Additionally, relationship stability and satisfaction are significantly

influenced by perceptions of a partner's love and acceptance toward the self (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Murray et al, 2001).

Expectations of acceptance and rejection from relationship partners in response to solicitations of social support are a strong determinant of behavior within significant-other relationships (Andersen & Chen, 2002). Even when evaluating new people, individuals' expectations of acceptance will conform to how much the new person resembles the individual's romantic partner (Andersen et al., 1996; Reznik & Andersen, 2001). If the romantic partner is considered caring and supportive, the individual will expect to be accepted by people who resemble that positive partner. On the other hand, if the romantic partner is considered cold and aloof, the individual will expect to be rejected by people who resemble that negative partner. Given the associations between reflected appraisals and relationship functioning, understanding changes in reflected appraisals may contribute to our knowledge of factors leading to long-term relationship maintenance or dissolution.

Indicators of Relationship Functioning

In romantic relationships, reflected appraisals are an indicator of perceived relationship functioning in that they demonstrate the level of love and acceptance one partner feels from the other partner (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Murray et al, 2000). Relationship closeness may be a related gauge of

romantic relationship functioning. The closer we perceive others to be to the self, the more likely we are to confuse or project our traits, views, and attitudes onto them (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Mashek, Aron, & Boncimino, 2003). Egocentric assimilation theory, self-other integration, and social synchronization all point to a general tendency for people to perceive high levels of similarity and closeness with significant others and that this closeness is usually related to favorable relationship outcomes (Gabriel, Kawakami, Bartak, Kang, & Mann, 2010; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Slotter & Gardner, 2009). Conversely, low levels of closeness tend to accompany negative relationship functioning and poor long-term outcomes (Collins, Cooper, Albino, & Allard, 2002).

Further, positive evaluations of relationship partners' traits and assumptions of similarity with the partner have been linked to greater relationship satisfaction (Cobb, Davila, & Bradbury, 2001; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Murray et al, 1996). Seeing the partner in a favorable light may promote closeness as well as satisfaction within the relationship. In fact, feeling loved and accepted by one's relationship partner leads to perceptions of relationship closeness and satisfaction (Murray et al., 2002). The associations between reflected appraisals, relationship closeness, and relationship satisfaction are irrevocably intertwined. The interrelated nature of these indicators of

relationship functioning warrant investigation of all three though the primary focus of this study began with research and predictions associated with reflected appraisals. The current study utilizes relationship closeness, relationship satisfaction, and reflected appraisals combined into one indicator that optimally captures individuals' perceived relationship functioning.

CHAPTER 3

NEGATIVE EVENTS AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS

All life events impact human beings in a variety of ways and the influence of the affective valence (positive or negative) of those events on psychological functioning informs our understanding of human behavior. Intuitively, negative events are an important factor predicting negative psychological outcomes and research shows that these experiences are associated with reduced well-being, increased negative affect, and depression, to name a few (Reich & Zautra, 1981; Stallings, Dunham, Gatz, Baker, & Bengtson, 1997). Poor psychological functioning can lead to harmful self-evaluations and is known to negatively impact interpersonal relationships (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998), so it follows that experiencing negative events can produce negative reflected appraisals, especially those involving close others such as romantic partners.

Significant life events can produce physiological and psychological arousal that impacts the individual's social and emotional functioning in either helpful or detrimental ways (Billings & Moos, 1981). Negative social and emotional consequences are generally expected to follow negative events (e.g., experiencing anger and increased blood pressure after being

cut off in traffic), however, individuals seldom predict the positive consequences of negative events (e.g., feeling relieved and energetic after a contentious romantic break-up) in part due to idiosyncratic responses to various experiences. Though objective event valence generally corresponds to the positivity or negativity of the affective response to the event, an individual's subjective experience of an event is the more critical predictor of emotional consequences.

Impact of Negative Events

After stimuli of any type, physical and cognitive resources are automatically mobilized to reduce all arousal, not just negatively valenced arousal, suggesting that the body generally prefers a calm state even over positive arousal (Taylor, 1991). Consequently, involuntary arousal mitigation processes are triggered in response to almost all daily life events, but are most pronounced after experiences of negative events (Levinthal, 1990).

Negative events are generally associated with significant levels of distress for individuals. Such events produce negative emotions, which are associated with greater arousal or activation because they serve as a signal that action needs to be taken (Schwarz, 1990; Taylor, 1991). Negative events also predict severely harmful emotional states, such as depression, (Myers, Lindenthal, Pepper, & Ostrander, 1972; Paykel, 1974; Vinokur & Selzer, 1975). Additionally, negative aspects of any stimulus are weighted

more heavily than positive aspects, spark more causal attributional activity, produce more cognitive work, and create more complex cognitive representations (Czapinski & Peeters, 1990; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Peters & Czapinski, 1990) so individuals allocate greater attention and resources to negative events. The bias toward negative events can also be attributed to an individual's tendency to interpret unexplained arousal negatively, so even neutral events may trigger negative affective evaluations (Marshall & Zimbardo, 1979; Maslach, 1979).

Negative life events are always stressful, but tend to be particularly potent and enduring when they are unexpected (Reich & Zautra, 1981). Depression is commonly linked to negative events in part because such experiences predict the development of depressive symptomatology and adverse physical conditions (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). Negative events also contribute substantially to the development of physical illnesses (Suls & Mullen, 1981). Supporting the bi-dimensional affect theory's proposition that positive and negative affect are qualitatively distinct, independent phenomena (Taylor, 1991), only negative events were found to be predictive of change in negative affect, despite the presence of some positive consequences for adverse experiences (Stallings, Dunham, Gatz, Baker, & Bengtson, 1997).

Negative Events and Reflected Appraisals

Individuals may respond to negative events in ways similar to interpersonal risk responses because negative events external to relationships can still be construed as interpersonal threats, depending on their context. Interpersonal risk is the situation where an individual is in a position to be accepted or rejected by a valued other. Negative events are associated with adverse mood states, such as depression or anxiety (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Vinokur & Selzer, 1975) along with feelings of dejectedness (Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986), which may trigger worries of interpersonal rejection. Additionally, adverse experiences have been shown to negatively impact relationship functioning (Repetti & Wood, 1997) and evaluations of close others (Crouter & Bumpus, 2001). Therefore, an individual's response to negative events external to the relationship is likely to resemble that individual's response to interpersonal threats, including their formation of reflected appraisals and perceptions of relationship functioning.

Stress spillover is the process by which negative stressors stemming from domains external to the relationship are associated with changes in an individual's relationship-salient cognitions and behavior (Bolger et al., 1989; Repetti & Wood, 1997). Non-relationship negative events, and their associated stress, can be transferred onto a relationship. For example, romantic couples argue more frequently at home on days when distressing

encounters occur at work (Bolger et al., 1989; Repetti & Wood, 1997) and increased work stress is associated with less favorable views of family members (Crouter & Bumpus, 2001) while increases in general stress contributes to lower relationship satisfaction (Bodenmann, 1997; Tesser & Beach, 1998). External stress may also affect marital satisfaction by increasing negative perceptions within the relationship and by limiting or preventing relationship-enhancing perception processes (Neff & Karney, 2004). Specifically, higher external stress predicted increased perceptions of specific problems within marriages and the tendency to attribute blame to the partner for their misbehavior. These findings demonstrate possible processes by which external stressors can be viewed as interpersonal threats by individuals within relationships.

People tend to feel threatened and rejected by their romantic partner's ambivalent or negative behavior (i.e. negative mood), even when it is unrelated to the individual or the relationship (Bellavia & Murray, 1999; Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003). Essentially, increased general stress is associated with corresponding increases in negative behaviors (i.e. arguing and blaming) and unfavorable perceptions of romantic partners in conjunction with decreases in both relationship satisfaction and coping behavior usage. Negative events can trigger perceptions of interpersonal threat for the individual or the individual's maladaptive response to

experiencing such events can trigger perceptions of interpersonal threat and rejection for the individual's romantic partner. Therefore, adverse events, external to the relationship, generate negative thoughts and behaviors in individuals and so are often sources of interpersonal threat to both members of a romantic relationship. Experiencing negative events should then elicit the same patterns of reflected appraisals that occur after interpersonal threats because these events can trigger intense responses and adverse experiences external to the relationship often spillover into interpersonal interactions (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998; Taylor, 1991). That is, after general negative events external to the relationship, people will distance themselves from their romantic partner, producing negative reflected appraisals, therefore, adverse experiences appear to have a negative relation to romantic relationship functioning processes.

Negative Events, Self-Worth, and Reflected Appraisals

Research suggests that after experiencing interpersonal threats, people construct reflected appraisals that conform to their own positive or negative sense of self-worth (Murray et al., 2000). For example, people with low self-esteem report dramatically unfavorable perceived regard as compared to their romantic partner's self-reported, favorable view of them. Underestimating the partner's regard was followed by the individual's less favorable perception of the partner and reports of decreased relationship

well-being (Murray et al., 2000). However, this pattern of misattribution is not relegated only to people with low self-worth. After interpersonal threats, individuals with high self-esteem believed that their romantic partner viewed them positively and then reported more favorable partner perceptions and greater relationship well-being. This response is attributed less to the possibility of self-verifying accuracy than to the propensity of high self-worth individuals to prioritize approach goals after threats, which includes believing that others view them as they view themselves. Even in other types of close relationships, such as that between a mother and her child, people have been shown to use their own self-regard to predict the perceived regard of the other person after adverse interpersonal events (DeHart et al., 2003).

People with low self-worth experience the worst consequences of this pattern after negative events because their poor self-evaluations exacerbate the harm done to them and their relationships. In the absence of high self-regard, these individuals are likely to misattribute their own low self-evaluations as reflections of low regard by others. Additionally, people with low self-worth tend to generally believe that the regard of others is dependent on the self possessing positive, desirable attributes (Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996) so they refuse to accept that positive evaluations could be real, even if explicitly faced with them. People with low self-worth are also more likely to misinterpret their romantic partner's negative moods as

indications of negative feelings directed toward the self or of unfavorable evaluations of the relationship rather than consider outside causes of the partner's feelings (Bellavia & Murray, 1999). Low self-worth seems to predispose individuals to less positive world views, sensitize them to negative stimuli within relationships, and promote less positive reflected appraisals in response to interpersonal threats.

People with low self-worth consistently report feeling poorly regarded and less accepted by others (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) and seem doubtful of or unable to accurately perceive their relationship partner's actual love and acceptance of them, which is most pronounced after negative events. DeHart et al. (2003) found that mothers and children with low self-esteem reported feeling less loved than mothers and children with high self-esteem and used their own perceived self-regard to inform their beliefs about how much the other loved them, even though their corresponding mother or child reported loving and accepting them more than they perceived. Murray et al. (2000) revealed that people with high self-esteem believed that their partners saw them positively and reported more favorable perceptions of partners and higher relationship well-being. In addition to using their own positive self-evaluations to color their perceptions of their partner's feelings toward them after adverse events, people with high self-esteem also believe that their partners accept their faults and view

the continuation of the relationship as supporting evidence for these beliefs (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998).

Reflected Appraisal Valence

The research literature discussed above supports the idea that an individual's view of their relationship partner's regard after experiencing an adverse event is primarily informed by their own self-worth. Accordingly, the valence (positivity or negativity) of the self-evaluations determine the valence of the reflected appraisals, so low self-worth is associated with negative perceived regard after negative events while high self-worth corresponds to positive perceived regard after negative events. Self-worth may influence reflected appraisal valence by affecting approach and avoidance goals.

In response to interpersonally threatening stimuli, people with low self-worth tend to prefer avoidant social goals (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998) which are associated with more negative attitudes and physical movement away from objectionable, risky, or harmful outcomes (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2003). Avoidant social goals predict negative or threatening interpretations of stimuli along with more negative evaluations of others (Gomez & Gomez, 2002; Strachman & Gable, 2006). Avoidant goals are also linked to rejection sensitivity (Ayduk, Mendoza-Denton, Mischel, Downey, Peake, & Rodriguez, 2000) and a self-protection

orientation, which influences the perception of negative reflected appraisals. In situations of potential relational risk with romantic relationship partners, people with low self-worth will prioritize self-protection goals to avoid further interpersonal rejection by distancing themselves from their partner, both physically and psychologically (Murray et al., 2008; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). These patterns of findings indicate that people with low self-worth are predisposed to perceive the world through a negative lens and that their poor self views would be projected onto others resulting in negative reflected appraisals.

On the other end of the spectrum, people with high self-worth tend to use approach social goals when faced with interpersonal threats (Murray et al., 1998) and these types of goals are associated with more positive attitudes along with physical movement toward preferred, constructive outcomes (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2003). Approach social goals also predict optimistic interpretations of stimuli and a tendency toward positively evaluating others (Gomez & Gomez, 2002; Strachman & Gable, 2006). Those with high self worth favor connectedness goals, specifically seek out interactions with relationship partners, and focus on interpersonal acceptance (Ayduk et al., 2000; Murray et al., 2008; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). These tendencies and associations indicate that people with high self-worth perceive the world through a more optimistic light, so their

positive self views are projected onto others leading to positive reflected appraisals.

Effects of Negative Events on Romantic Partners

Romantic relationships are one of the most important types of relationships for satisfying adults' fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) which can protect them from the consequences of stressful life events (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). The risk regulation theory proposes that the inherent interpersonal risks associated with interdependent life requires a cognitive, affective, and behavioral regulatory system for resolving conflict between the goals of self-protection and relationship promotion, with the overarching goal being to optimize sense of assurance possible in one's particular relationship circumstances (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). After a threatening event, the automatic human response is to prioritize relationship promotion by seeking out connectedness with the relationship partner, however, an individual's self-worth triggers a control system that actually determines the final response to such threats. Threat responses then affect an individual's beliefs and behavior, which indirectly affect the individual's romantic relationship partner. Thus, negative events that occur to one relationship partner can have effects on the well-being of the other partner, who did not directly experience a negative event.

When experiencing interpersonal threats, people with low self-esteem have a control system that attends to self-protection which prompts them to avoid situations of dependence or trusting their partner. People with low self-worth also respond to this rejection anxiety by evaluating their partner's qualities more negatively and by relying less on their partner as a source of self-esteem and comfort (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998, 2002). The relational distancing that occurs after negative events precipitates more conflict, criticism, and impediments to goal-seeking behavior (Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). Essentially, people with low self-worth become sources of stress as well as stress aggravators to their partners (Coyne & Downey, 1991). Partners of people with low self-worth then become less satisfied in their relationships over time and, consequently, behave more poorly which creates a cycle of detrimental views and behavior that causes the relationship to deteriorate (Green, Campbell, & Davis, 2007; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). The harmful influence of a partner with low self-worth can then extend to the other relationship partner, creating an indirect interpersonal threat situation that may have an impact on how the individual navigates their response to an adverse event.

On the other hand, people with high self-worth experiencing interpersonal threats have a control system that attends to connectedness-seeking which prompts them to hunt for situations of dependence to re-

establish bonds with their partner and even view the partner more favorably (Murray, Aloni, Holmes, Derrick, Anthony, & Leder, 2007; Murray et al., 2008). These healthy relationship behaviors increase felt levels of support, comfort, security, and acceptance which help to mitigate the negative affective impacts of negative events (Coyne & Downey, 1991; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). If people respond to negative events in the same way due to stress spillover, low self-worth will prompt people experiencing adverse events to pursue avoidance goals which will lead to negative reflected appraisals. However, people with high self-worth will pursue approach goals and closeness to the partner through more positive beliefs and behaviors within the relationship. The effects of high self-worth on an individual's response to negative events will extend to their relationship partner, as it would with partners of people with low self-worth. However, people with high self-worth tend to respond more positively to interpersonal threats (Murray et al., 2007; 2008) and this positive, approach-oriented coping response will likely have a comforting effect on that person's relationship partner, which will contribute to positive reflected appraisals for both relationship members.

Additionally, Taylor's (1991) mobilization-minimization theory describes how negative events trigger intense and immediate physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social responses which are followed by

corresponding reactions meant to minimize or even erase the impact of the event. Individuals respond to generally negative events in ways similar to their response orientations to interpersonal threats. Borrowing an example from Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, and Ellsworth (1998), a poor work performance evaluation may trigger some self-dissatisfaction and feelings of failure, which would prompt the individual to expect their romantic partner to be disappointed (i.e., negative reflected appraisal) rather than imagining that partner as a potential source of comfort and support. Such a harmful impact on relationship functioning would be exacerbated by an individual's pre-existing sense of low self-worth. On the other hand, a person with high self worth in the same situation might be troubled by the negative work evaluation, but would not transfer those self-doubts to their romantic partner. In fact, the more self-confident person would instead self-affirm by focusing on or even exaggerating perceptions of her partner's positive regard (i.e., positive reflected appraisal). This evidence demonstrates that negative events impact both the individual experiencing the events directly and the individual's relationship partner in ways that influence their reflected appraisals, which may in turn be impacted by each partner's sense of self-worth.

CHAPTER 4

SELF-WORTH, SELF-DISCREPANCY, AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS

The research discussed above describes how an individual's own self-worth is expected to moderate the influence of negative events on reflected appraisals. Reflected appraisals reported after experiencing negative events correspond to self-worth-based appraisals reported after interpersonal threats. In this literature, explicit self-esteem (one's self-reported sense of self-worth and self-acceptance) is the self attribute typically used as an indicator of self-worth (Murray et al, 1996; Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003), however, I argue that there is evidence that self-discrepancy may be more closely related to self-worth, both theoretically and functionally, and thus, a more potent moderator of the effect of negative events on reflected appraisals.

Self-esteem is a bi-dimensional construct reflecting perceived social worth and perceived self-competence or self-efficacy (Cast & Burke, 2002; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995), however, the most commonly used measure of explicit self-esteem in studies of reflected appraisals, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), may not fully assess both components (Cast & Burke, 2002). Additionally, self-discrepancy is an evaluative aspect

of the self that has recently been shown to predict interpersonal judgments (i.e., competence, warmth) with distinct effects that operate above and beyond the contributions of explicit self-esteem (Hallinger, DeHart, & Burrows, 2017; unpublished data). Such self-evaluations may be a more potent moderator of the relationship between adverse events and reflected appraisals. Additionally, the interdependent nature of romantic relationships and the demonstrated effect of stress spillover suggests that an individual's partner's self-discrepancy could also uniquely impact the negative events-reflected appraisals relationship.

Self-worth as Bi-dimensional Construct

The two-dimensional theory of self-esteem (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001) proposes that individuals determine whether or not they are a 'person of value' by defining self-worth as a bi-dimensional construct consisting of social worth (i.e., socially dependent self-liking based on perceived social approval and acceptance; acceptable vs unacceptable) and personal efficacy (i.e., self-competence based on perceived abilities or capability; strong vs weak; Cast & Burke, 2002; Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Both components are highly correlated and interdependent, yet qualitatively (and conceptually) distinct (Bosson & Swann, 1999; Tafarodi, 1999).

Social worth is the internalized perspective of the other (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) or internalized sense of positive regard from others (Bosson & Swann, 1999) somewhat based on "moral character, attractiveness and other aspects of social worth" (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). Sociometer Theory directly positions self-esteem as an indicator of perceived social worth or relational value (Leary, 2005). On the other hand, the personal efficacy component is the result of perceived goal attainment (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) or successfully matching situational meanings to identity standards (Cast & Burke, 2002) or "an evaluation of one's ability to successfully bring about desired outcomes" (Bosson & Swann, 1999). In fact, related research also generally supports the theory proposing that all global judgments, of self and others, rest on an evaluation of the individual's competence and warmth or conceptually similar trait pairings (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Herbst, Gaertner, & Insko, 2003; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005; Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998).

Many research studies on reflected appraisals, particularly those by Murray and colleagues, rely on Rosenberg's 10-item Self-esteem Scale scores as the sole indicator of self-worth, however, the Self-esteem Scale neither theoretically nor functionally distinguishes between social worth and personal efficacy. Rosenberg himself asserted that global self-esteem is a unidimensional construct akin to self-liking or self-perceived goodness while

only nominally acknowledging self-competence as a possible contributor to self-esteem, but not a fundamental dimension of it (Rosenberg, 1979; Tafarodi & Swann, 2001).

Empirically, the Self-esteem Scale has been found to primarily assess self-liking aka self-warmth (Cast & Burke, 2002; Mar, DeYoung, Higgins, & Peterson, 2006) and the self-liking subscale from the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale (SLCS; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) has been found to correlate highly with the full Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($r = .70$; Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003). Tafarodi and Milne (2002) more thoroughly deconstruct the dimensionality of the Self-Esteem Scale and conclude that the Self-esteem Scale seems to semantically reflect two dimensions, but aligns more strongly with self-liking when compared to the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale. Because of these disagreements about whether the widely used Self-Esteem Scale assesses both components of self-worth, there may be additional effects of self-evaluations on reflected appraisals that the current research is missing.

Self-evaluations as Informational Source for Self-worth

Self-evaluations are judgments of the self based on a comparison to the ideal self, which directly informs self-worth (Sheeran & Abraham, 1994). As the evaluative source of self-esteem, self-evaluations may uniquely impact reflected appraisals.

Actual:ideal self-discrepancy (the inverse of self-congruence) is the measure of how much one's actual self – the person you feel you currently are right now – matches or is dissimilar to one's ideal self – the kind of person you would most like to be (Higgins, 1987). An individual's ideal self represents a desired state that may not have yet been attained and produces discomfort which acts as a motivational component to alter thoughts and behavior (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Sheeran & Abraham, 1994). The ideal self possesses coveted traits and is consistently seen as both socially desirable (liked) and capable (respected) indicating that it is an evaluatively worthy state of being. High self-discrepancy indicates less similarity between an individual's actual or current self and their ideal self (negative self-evaluation), while low self-discrepancy indicates greater similarity between the actual self and the ideal self (positive self-evaluation).

Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy and Self-worth

Self-discrepancy Theory states that discomfort with the self is produced when an individual's *perceived actual self* does not match that individual's *ideal self* (Higgins, 1987). The greater the discrepancy, the greater the felt dissatisfaction due to unfulfilled hopes and desires. The effects of self-discrepancy on the individual's self-perceptions can also be understood using an extended prediction of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

within the context of the self where the distress produced by discrepancies between beliefs (*ideal self*) and behaviors (*actual self*) should encourage the perceiver to initiate change in one of those dimensions (Festinger, 1957). Social Cognitive Theory similarly proposes that self-dissatisfaction is a strong motivator for change-oriented behavior due to the perceiver's strong desire to obtain self-satisfaction and avoid negative self-evaluations (Bandura, 2001).

High self-discrepancy, marked by feelings of worthlessness, self-dissatisfaction, and self-rejection, is undesirable and is indicative of low self-worth (Sheeran & Abraham, 1994; Strauman, Lemieux, & Coe, 1993). High self-discrepancy is also associated with a diffused identity (i.e., easily irritated, withdraw when frustrated, self-defeating, lack of life direction; Hoegh & Bourgeois, 2002). On the other hand, low self-discrepancy is the most desirable state of being, associated with an achieved identity (i.e., dependable, responsible, imaginative, giving), self-satisfaction, high self-esteem, and high self-worth (Klohn & Mendelsohn, 1998). Actual:ideal self-discrepancy uses the ideal self as a comparative anchor for evaluating the self which then generates an individual's perceived self-worth. Therefore, actual:ideal self-discrepancy, or self-evaluation, is an attitudinal judgment and self-worth, or self-acceptance, is the affective response to such an assessment.

Despite these theoretical distinctions, self-evaluations and self-worth may appear to represent the same basic construct. In fact, depending on how they are measured, self-evaluations can be highly correlated with global explicit self-esteem (almost .70) and often have similar relationships with other variables such as self-satisfaction or interpersonal attraction (Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008; Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1998). However, even a 136-item self-attribute measure of self-discrepancy could only account for half of the variance in explicit self-esteem (Marsh, 1986). Self-discrepancy also exhibited significant effects on interpersonal evaluations distinct from the influence of self-esteem (Hallinger & DeHart, 2017b; Hallinger, DeHart, & Burrows, 2017; unpublished data). These results indicate that self-discrepancy is a similar, yet operationally distinct construct from explicit self-esteem. As theoretically and functionally distinct factors, self-discrepancy and self-esteem may exert unique influences on the association between negative events and reflected appraisals.

Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy and Negative Events

People high in actual:ideal self-discrepancy tend to have low self-worth and are likely to perceive negative events much like people with low self-worth. People with high self-discrepancy exhibit various types of emotional distress or negative self-evaluation including disappointment, sadness, and dissatisfaction (Strauman & Higgins, 1988; Strauman, Lemieux, & Coe,

1993), feelings of shame (e.g., Bessenoff & Snow, 2006; Tangney, Niedenthal, Covert, & Barlow, 1998), and low self-esteem (Moretti & Higgins, 1990). These individuals are then expected to exhibit the same pattern of influences on the negative events-reflected appraisals association as people with low self-worth.

People with high self-discrepancy are more easily stressed in general because their self-concepts are weaker or more vulnerable (Butler, Hokanson, & Flynn, 1994). New parents who reported high self-discrepancy, before the birth of their child, began to feel sad and dejected after the birth, even for planned pregnancies (Alexander & Higgins, 1993). Negative relationship experiences contribute to dejection-related affect (i.e., sadness, depression) which subsequently produces even higher actual:ideal self-discrepancy (Green, Campbell, & Davis, 2007). High self-discrepancy is also associated with lower self-esteem and negative reflected appraisals, especially for individuals experiencing adverse life events, such as unemployment (Sheeran & Abraham, 1994; Wylie, 1974). The self-dissatisfaction inherent in people with high self-discrepancy makes them prone to feelings of rejection and worthlessness (Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986) which are then projected more strongly onto the already negative association between adverse events and others' perceived regard. Therefore, people with high self-discrepancy are expected to report more

pronounced negative associations between negative experiences and reflected appraisals.

People with low self-discrepancy have higher self-regard and perceive negative events similar to people with high self-worth. Low actual:ideal self-discrepancy is associated with greater self-satisfaction, high self-esteem, and a positive sense of self-worth (Klohn & Mendelsohn, 1998). Low self-discrepancy is also positively related to subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and positive affective states (joy, love) while also negatively related to neuroticism and negative affective states (anger, fear, sadness, shame; Pavot, Fujita, & Diener, 1997). These individuals have positive self-evaluations and should project these positive self-images onto their perceptions of their romantic partners' regard, counteracting the impact of negative events on reflected appraisals to some extent. People with high self-worth tend to report more positive reflected appraisals after adverse interpersonal interactions, in line with the predictions of the Dependency Regulation Model, and this response is likely to diminish or reverse the negative association between negative events and reflected appraisals.

More recently, actual:ideal self-discrepancy has been found to predict coping efficacy in response to discrimination significantly better than self-esteem (Hallinger & DeHart, 2017a; unpublished manuscript). Self-discrepancy also influences evaluations of the self's competence and warmth

significantly better than self-esteem (Hallinger, DeHart, & Burrows, 2017; unpublished data). Competence and warmth form the basis of intrapersonal and interpersonal evaluations (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) and are respective analogues to personal efficacy and social worth, which are the foundational components of self-worth (Cast & Burke, 2002; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Self-discrepancy is an evaluation of the self that significantly contributes to self-worth (Sheeran & Abraham, 1994), may be the basis by which self-esteem level is determined (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), and therefore may subsequently be more integral to the formation of reflected appraisals than the ubiquitous self-esteem.

Interdependence and Partner Effects

An individual's self-evaluations may influence the valence of the negative event-reflected appraisals association, however, there may also be additional effects of their romantic partner's self-evaluation on this relationship. As discussed in previous sections, the affect and behavior of one relationship partner can influence the other partner, while the experiences of one partner can still impact both relationship members due to stress spillover (Bolger et al., 1989; Murray et al., 2007; 2008; Repetti & Wood, 1997). The current study focuses on the effects of both partners' self-evaluations on the relation between negative events and reflected appraisals within one partner.

An individual's level of actual:ideal self-discrepancy (high or low) is related to perceptions of self-worth, which predicts traits and behaviors that may positively or negatively impact their relationship partner. People with high actual:ideal self-discrepancy (negative self-evaluations) tend to be inherently insecure, dejected, irritable, and self-defeating (Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Sheeran & Abraham, 1994) and so are less supportive to their romantic partner and are more relationally distant, in general (Coyne & Downey, 1991). People with negative self-concepts also tend to be more hostile toward their partner during negative experiences and display more relationship-damaging behaviors that trigger angry reactions in their partner (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). Being treated poorly or not supported by a relationship partner during a time of distress diminishes one's feelings of acceptance and worth, subsequently producing negative reflected appraisals (Green, Campbell, & Davis, 2007; Lemay & Clark, 2008). Having a romantic partner who is unsupportive and displays undesirable behavior will likely intensify the negative association between adverse events and reflected appraisals, further diminishing the individual's perceived regard.

In fact, men with insecurely attached relationship partners have been shown to exhibit greater physiological stress (cortisol reactivity) in anticipation of, during, and after relationship conflict than men with securely

attached partners (Powers, Pietromonaco, Gunlicks, & Sayer, 2006), indicating that a partner's low self-worth creates additional harmful consequences for individuals coping with interpersonal threats. Similarly, after experiencing greater numbers of racially discriminatory experiences, individuals with romantic partners high in self-discrepancy reported significantly higher stress levels than those with less self-discrepant partners (Hallinger & DeHart, 2017a; unpublished manuscript). Thus, individuals are likely to report diminished perceived regard after negative events, exacerbated by the impact of romantic partners who are high in self-discrepancy (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Coyne & Downey, 1991; Nezlek & Allen, 2006).

Conversely, people with positive self-evaluations (low actual:ideal self-discrepancy) and high self-worth are more socially dependable and giving to their romantic partners, increasing the partner's feelings of social acceptance and positive reflected appraisals (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). Even after experiencing interpersonal threats, individuals whose partners provide greater social support experience reductions in stress (Powers et al., 2006). Surprisingly, people with partners low in self-discrepancy actually reported lower stress in response to higher numbers of racial discrimination events as compared to fewer events (Hallinger & DeHart; 2017a; unpublished manuscript). These findings indicate that more

(versus less) discrimination resulted in lower stress presumably due to the enhanced coping support provided by partners with positive self-evaluations. Low self-discrepancy appears to be related to more effective coping strategies, particularly when individuals are under more pronounced duress.

Constructive, supportive relationship partners may function as a stress-buffering resource after adverse events by engaging in relationship-promoting behaviors or cognitions that also enhance perceived regard. These associations between a romantic partner's self-worth and impacts on the individual's regulatory functioning support the likelihood of a moderating effect of a partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy on the tendency for negative events to reduce reflected appraisals. Essentially, if an individual's romantic partner is high in self-discrepancy (negative self-evaluation), then the impact on the negative events-reflected appraisals relationship will produce even more negative reflected appraisals and if the romantic partner is low in self-discrepancy (positive self-evaluation), then the impact on the negative events-reflected appraisals relationship will produce more positive reflected appraisals.

Interaction of Self and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy

To my knowledge, there is no work assessing whether an individual's actual:ideal self-discrepancy interacts with their romantic partner's self-discrepancy when influencing perceived regard. However, there is some

related work that suggests that the partners' self-discrepancy may moderate the relationship between negative events, actor self-discrepancy and perceived regard. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, and Kashy (2005) found that whether partners displayed more positive or more [relatively] negative behavior during a relationship conflict had a differential impact on the distress levels of individuals with high versus low anxious attachment styles.

When the romantic partner behaved more positively during a relationship conflict, individuals with low anxious attachment (high self-evaluation) reported significantly less distress while individuals with high anxious attachment (low self-evaluation) reported more distress. The partners' supportive behavior indirectly enhanced the low-anxious individuals' coping success, but not that of the high-anxious individual who were not comforted by their partners' actions. It is then likely that romantic partners with low self-discrepancy (high self-evaluation), who tend to be more supportive (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993), would behave in ways that prompt feelings of love and acceptance (positive reflected appraisals) in individuals with low self-discrepancy (high self-evaluation) while eliciting fewer feelings of love and acceptance from individuals with high self-discrepancy (low self-evaluation). Although partners of people with low self-evaluations attempt to compensate with more relationship-promoting behavior to increase comfort and felt

acceptance (Lemay & Dudley, 2011), people with low self-worth are less likely to perceive, accept, or fully appreciate the social support offered (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001), so individuals high in self-discrepancy are expected to misperceive the support of the low self-discrepancy partner and instead experience more negative reflected appraisals than would normally occur after negative events.

On the other hand, when the romantic partner behaved more negatively during a relationship conflict (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005), individuals with low anxious attachment (high self-evaluation) were more significantly distressed while those with high anxious attachment (low self-evaluation) reported a slight increase in distress. Essentially, the negativity of romantic partner's behavior significantly influences the post-conflict distress of individuals with low anxious attachment, but not that of high anxious attachment individuals. These results could mean that romantic partners with high self-discrepancy (low self-evaluation), who generally offer less social support than those with low self-discrepancy (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993), will display unsupportive behavior that make individuals with low self-discrepancy and those with high self-discrepancy feel even less loved and accepted than they normally would after experiencing negative events.

The current study seeks to determine whether actual:ideal self-discrepancy actually moderates the inverse association between negative events and reflected appraisals. Additionally, the self-discrepancy of both members of the romantic couple will be measured to assess the interdependent relationship between actor (individual's self-discrepancy) and partner (romantic partner's self-discrepancy) effects on the relation between the individual's experiences of negative events and their subsequently reported reflected appraisals. Therefore, how the partner's self-discrepancy interacts with the moderating effect of actor's self-discrepancy on the relation between the actor's negative events and reflected appraisals will also be examined.

CHAPTER 5

CURRENT STUDY

In the current study, the goal was to explore how actor's and partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy influences the relationship between negative events and relationship functioning. Although previous research has demonstrated that self-esteem is strongly associated with both self-discrepancy and negative events, the current study is original in its aim to link actual:ideal self-discrepancy to relationship functioning. Actual:ideal self-discrepancy may be a more comprehensive measure of self-worth and is expected to moderate the negative events- relationship functioning association, even when controlling for the effect of self-esteem. Additionally, the current study features only African American couples in order to complement the literature on relationship functioning, which disproportionately focuses on European American couples. Therefore, this study will contribute to both the self-discrepancy and the romantic relationship literatures by seeking evidence that self-evaluations based on the ideal self can greatly influence our perceptions of interactions with our romantic partners, particularly under stressful conditions (independent of the effects of explicit self-esteem). The current study also examines the effects

of actor's and partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancies on adverse events and relationship functioning in the aforementioned contexts, adding to our understanding of how actor's and partner's self-evaluations interact.

Hypotheses

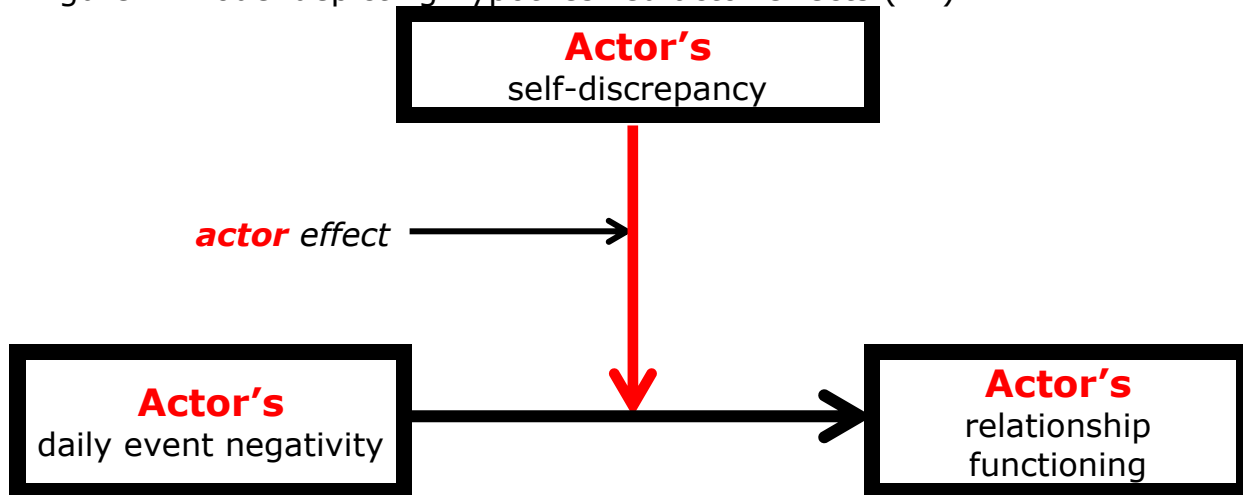
The impact of an individual's own traits on the negative events-relationship functioning association is called an 'actor effect', while the impact of the individual's romantic partner's traits on the negative events-relationship functioning association is called a 'partner effect'. Thus, the effect of the actor's self-evaluation on the actor's perceived relationship functioning after the actor experiences highly negative events would be referred to as the 'actor effect' here. The effect of the romantic partner's self-evaluation on the actor's perceived relationship functioning after the actor experiences highly negative events is the 'partner effect'. Visual representations of these effects appear after the relevant hypotheses below.

Actor Effects

H1: I predict that actors' self-discrepancy will moderate the relation between the actor's ratings of daily event negativity and the actor's daily perceived relationship functioning, even when controlling for the effects of the actor's explicit self-esteem. Specifically, I predict that individuals with low self-discrepancy (actor effect; positive self-evaluation) will report more positive daily relationship functioning on days they experience highly

negative daily events versus days they experience events that are less negative, even when controlling for actor's explicit self-esteem. However, individuals with high self-discrepancy (actor effect; negative self-evaluation) will either report no change in daily relationship functioning or report more negative daily relationship functioning on days they experience highly negative daily events versus days they experience less negative events.

Figure 1. Model depicting hypothesized actor effects (H1).

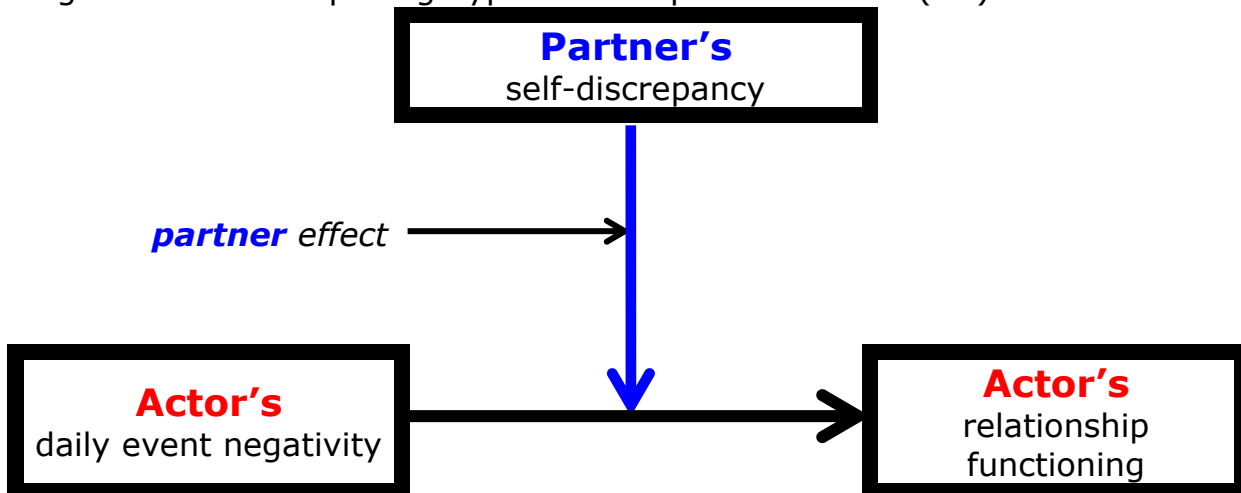


Partner Effects

H2: Additionally, I predict that each participant's romantic partner's self-discrepancy will moderate the relation between the actor's ratings of daily event negativity and actor's daily perceived relationship functioning, even when controlling for the effects of actor's explicit self-esteem. I expect that individuals whose romantic partners have low actual:ideal self-discrepancy (partner effect; positive self-evaluation) will report more

positive daily relationship functioning on days the participant experiences highly negative daily events than on days they experience less negative events. People whose romantic partners have high actual:ideal self-discrepancy (partner effect; negative self-evaluation) will either report no change in actor's daily relationship functioning or report more negative daily relationship functioning on days they experience highly negative daily events versus days they experience less negative events.

Figure 2. Model depicting hypothesized partner effects (H2).



Actor & Partner Interaction Effects

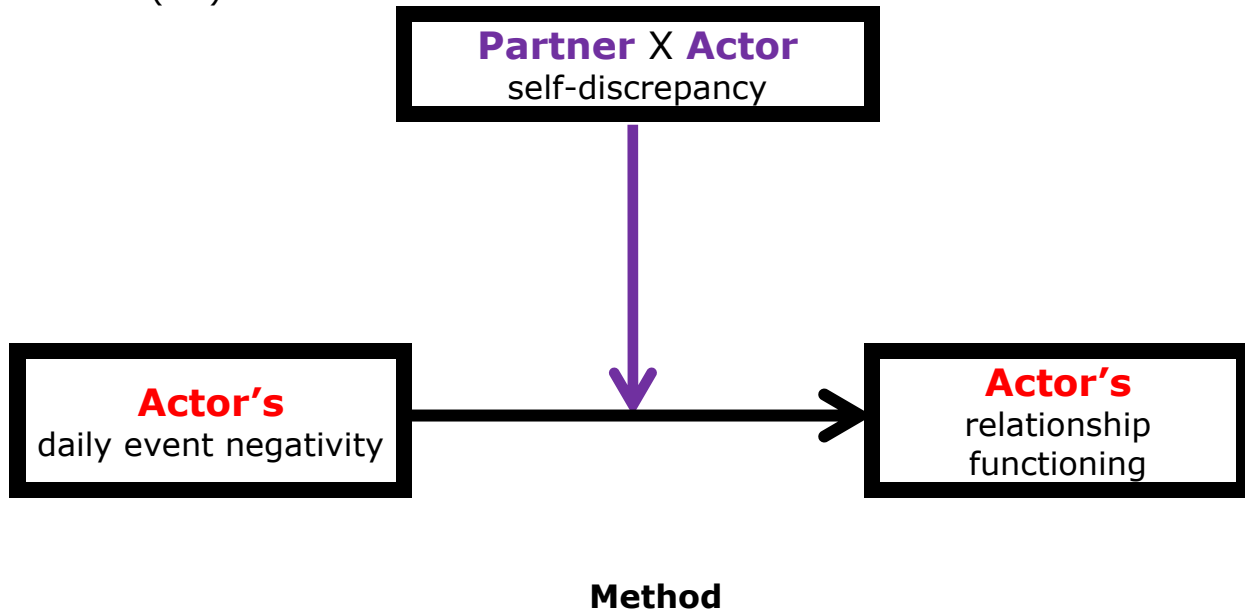
H3: Finally, there will be a significant 3-way interaction between actor's self-discrepancy, partner's self-discrepancy, and actors' daily negativity of events predicting actors' relationship functioning.

I predict that there will be a significant 2-way interaction between actors' self-discrepancy and actor's daily event negativity for people with

partners who are low in self-discrepancy. When the partner has low self-discrepancy (positive self-evaluation), actors with low self-discrepancy will report more positive relationship functioning on days they experience highly negative daily events as compared to days when they experience less negative events. In contrast, when the partner has low self-discrepancy (positive self-evaluation), actors with high self-discrepancy (negative self-evaluations) will not report a change in daily relationship functioning on days they experience extremely negative daily events versus days they experience less negative events.

I predict that there will be a significant 2-way interaction between actors' self-discrepancy and actor event negativity for people with partners who are high in self-discrepancy. When the romantic partner has high self-discrepancy (negative self-evaluation), actors with low self-discrepancy will report more positive relationship functioning on days they experience highly negative daily events compared to days they experience less negative events. However, unlike the patterns above, when both the romantic partner and the actor have high self-discrepancy (negative self-evaluation), actors will report more negative relationship functioning on days they experience highly negative daily events as compared to days they experience less negative events.

Figure 3. Model depicting hypothesized interaction of actor and partner effects (H3).



Participants

One hundred fifty dating or married heterosexual African American romantic couples ($N=300$) cohabiting in the Chicagoland area were recruited for the Daily Interpersonal Experiences Study through advertisements placed on the Chicago Transit Authority's Red Line trains; posters or brochures placed on community bulletin boards in grocery stores, gyms, and kiosks; internet posts submitted to online classified websites (i.e., Craigslist.org, Facebook's Loclville.com, Chicago Reader online, etc.) or community message boards (i.e., DNAinfo/Everyblock, NextDoor.com, Patch.com, etc.); and a dedicated study website (CouplesStudy.weebly.com). Interested couples contacted our laboratory by telephone or via email and were

screened for eligibility (i.e., at least 18 years of age, daily access to the internet, living together full-time, both identify as African American).

Originally, 180 same-sex and heterosexual couples were recruited, however, the statistical analysis used is unable to accurately estimate effects for dyad members that cannot be consistently distinguished on some intrinsic variable such as gender or birth order, so the 30 same-sex couples could not be included in this study (see description of proposed analyses). Even with the inclusion of the same-sex couples, there are not enough individuals to represent adequate variability to make statistical comparisons to the cross-sex couples.

Participants received \$50 compensation per couple if they both completed the initial background survey and an additional \$125 per couple if they both completed daily diary surveys for 21 consecutive days.

Participants were paid based on their daily completion of the daily diary surveys and each couple was mailed payment at the conclusion of their cohort's 21-day session. For each of the 21 days that both members of a couple completed their respective daily diary survey, the couple was given one entry into a lottery to win an additional \$500.

Procedure

All participants were asked to come to the research lab with their romantic partner where they first attended a 30-minute group orientation

session in which they received detailed instructions for the entire study and were allowed to ask questions about the process. After the orientation, each participant was seated at a cubicle to independently complete a 90-minute online background survey. Beginning the first Monday following the group orientation session they attended, each participant was emailed a link to complete a 10-minute daily survey. The emails were sent to every participant at 8:00pm each night for 21 consecutive calendar days and had to be completed by 4:00am to count toward the previous day. Participants were instructed to complete the survey at the end of their day, to skip the survey for any day that they were unable to begin the survey by the 4am cutoff, and to avoid discussing their survey responses with their romantic partner.

Background Measures

The background survey contained a number of measures assessing basic demographic information (i.e., gender, age, highest level of education attained, etc.) and individual traits/attributes which were not all used for the proposed study, so only those measures relevant to the aims of the current proposal are described below. Participant traits such as age, gender, marital status, relationship length, and explicit self-esteem are used as potential covariates when actor's and partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy are assessed as independent variables.

Age. Participants were asked to indicate their birth day, month, and year.

Gender. Female or male.

Marital status. Participants were asked to indicate their marital status and the responses were dichotomized into cohabiting (single/never married; divorced; widowed) or married.

Relationship length. Participants were asked to indicate how long they have been involved with their current romantic relationship in years and months.

Explicit self-esteem. The Rosenberg (1965) Self-esteem Scale was used to assess trait self-esteem as a control variable because actual:ideal self-discrepancy and self-esteem are often highly correlated (Klohn & Mendelsohn, 1998). Participants responded to the 10-items (e.g., "I take a positive attitude toward myself") using a 7-point Likert-type scale indicating level of agreement (1=*disagree very much*; 7 = *agree very much*). The negative items were reverse scored and the resulting total was averaged in such a way that higher scores indicate high self-esteem and lower scores indicate low self-esteem (see Appendix; $\alpha = .81$).

Actual:Ideal self-discrepancy. Participants' actual:ideal self-discrepancy was measured using an adapted portion of the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ; Green, Campbell, & Davis, 2007; Pelham & Swann,

1989) that assessed actual:ideal self-discrepancy for 10 traits (i.e., intellectual ability, physical attractiveness, social skills, sense of humor, etc.). Participants indicated their perception of their proximity to their ideal self by marking a point along a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=*not at all like my ideal self*; 7 = *completely like my ideal self*). Scores were obtained by averaging the items and recoding them so that lower numbers represented low self-discrepancy and higher numbers represented high self-discrepancy (see Appendix; $\alpha = .86$).

Daily Diary Measures

The daily diary survey contained a number of measures assessing individual experiences and perceptions (i.e., relationship quality and commitment) which were not all used for the proposed study, so only the daily measures relevant to the current proposal are described below.

Daily event negativity. The negativity of daily events was assessed by having participants rate the presence of 26 discrete negative life events each day (e.g., "a friend/acquaintance did not show up on time") on the Inventory of Small Life Events (Zautra, Guarnaccia, & Dohrenwend, 1986). Negative events related to interactions with their romantic partner (e.g., "I argued with my spouse/partner") were excluded from the analysis. When participants indicated that a negative event actually occurred that day, they were then asked to rate how negative the event was using a 7-point Likert-

type scale (1=*not at all negative*; 7 = *extremely negative*). Scores were obtained by averaging the negativity ratings of the events reported so that higher scores represent experiencing very negative events and lower scores represent experiencing less negative events (see Appendix).

Daily reflected appraisals. The individual's perceptions of how much their romantic partner loves and accepts them on a daily basis were assessed using the Reflected Appraisals scale, a 7-item measure (Murray et al., 1998) that determined how positively each participant believed that their partner viewed them each day (e.g., "Today, I am confident that my partner will always want to look beyond my faults and see the best in me").

Participants indicated agreement with these statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Scores were obtained by averaging the agreement with the statements so that higher scores represent positive reflected appraisals and lower scores represent negative reflected appraisals (see Appendix; $\alpha = .95$).

Daily relationship closeness. Individuals' daily perceptions of closeness and connectedness to their relationship partner were assessed using a 3-item measure where participants indicated agreement with statements (i.e., "Today, I had a very strong emotional bond with my partner") using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Scores were obtained by averaging the agreement with the

statements so that higher scores represent high relationship closeness and lower scores represent low relationship closeness (see Appendix; $\alpha = .92$).

Daily relationship satisfaction. Participants' daily feelings of satisfaction with their romantic relationship was assessed using a 4-item measure (adapted from DeHart et al., 2003) where participants indicated agreement with statements (i.e., "Today, my relationship with my partner was very rewarding") using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Scores were obtained by averaging the agreement with the statements so that higher scores represent high relationship satisfaction and lower scores represent low relationship satisfaction (see Appendix; $\alpha = .62$).

Daily event positivity. In order to control for possible effects of positive event experiences on the impact of negative daily events, positive daily events were also assessed by having participants rate the presence of 22 positive life events each day (e.g., "I completed work on a major task or project") on the Inventory of Small Life Events (Zautra, Guarnaccia, & Dohrenwend, 1986). Positive events related to interactions with their romantic partner (e.g., "I expressed love to my spouse/partner") were excluded from the analysis. If a positive event actually occurred, the participants were asked to rate how positive the event was using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=*not at all positive*; 7 = *extremely positive*). Scores

were obtained by averaging the positivity ratings of the events reported so that higher scores represent experiencing very positive events and lower scores represent experiencing less positive events (see Appendix).

Daily negative affect. Individuals' daily negative mood was assessed using a 6-item portion of the 12-item Mood Scale. Participants indicated the extent that they felt a particular negative emotion (e.g., distressed, angry, dejected) following the reporting of daily events (positive and negative) using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all; 7=extremely). Scores were obtained by averaging the agreement with the statements so that higher scores represent more negative affect and lower scores represent less negative affect (see Appendix; $\alpha = .88$).

Results

To determine the moderating contribution of each relationship dyad member's actual:ideal self-discrepancy to the influence of the actor's daily event negativity on the actor's daily relationship functioning, which is a dyadic interaction study containing two levels of analysis with individuals (Level 1) nested within couple (Level 2), I used the methods outlined to test the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) with multilevel regression analyses. The APIM controls for the interdependence in dyad members' daily responses by running a series of multilevel regression models with the MIXED MODELS procedure in SPSS for

distinguishable dyadic data (Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Kashy & Kenny, 2000; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). The APIM assumes that an actor's outcome may be influenced by the effects of both actor and partner variables. Thus, this procedure allows for the simultaneous estimation of regression equations examining both the effect of the individual's actual:ideal self-discrepancy on their own daily relationship functioning after experiencing negative daily events (actor effect) and the effect of their partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy on the actor's daily relationship functioning after negative daily events (partner effect). In the current study, all mixed predictor variables (variables that vary both within and between dyads, such as self-discrepancy or self-esteem) were modeled as Level 1 variables (Campbell & Kashy, 2002).

Although the original sample contained both cross-sex (female:male) and same-sex couples (male:male and female:female), there is no meaningful way to differentiate the same-sex dyad members from each other (i.e., gender or birth order). Normally, the couples can be designated as indistinguishable dyads in order to run APIM. As of now, the APIM procedure for indistinguishable dyads cannot be conducted specifically on over-time data, such as the daily event data used in this study, so the analysis was limited to only cross-sex (heterosexual) couples run as distinguishable dyads (Kenny & Ledermann, 2010).

The predictors of actor's daily relationship functioning in this multilevel multiple regression equation were all continuous mixed variables (scores differed both within- and between-dyads) including (a) actor's actual:ideal self-discrepancy, (b) partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy, (c) actor's daily event negativity, (d) the 2-way interaction (cross-product) term for actor's self-discrepancy and actor's daily event negativity, (e) the 2-way interaction term for partner's self-discrepancy and actor's daily event negativity, (f) the 2-way interaction between actor's self-discrepancy and partner's self-discrepancy, and (g) the 3-way interaction term for actor's self-discrepancy, partner's self-discrepancy, and actor's daily event negativity. Additionally, actor's age, actor's gender, actor's explicit self-esteem, couple's marital status, couple's relationship length, actor's daily negative affect, and actor's daily event positivity were included as covariates in the tested model.

The dyadic data structure contains two levels of analysis with within-person across-day effects at Level 1 and between-persons effects nested within couples at Level 2. Additionally, I followed the procedures of Aiken and West (1991) for using continuous predictor variables in regression by grand mean centering all of the continuous predictor variables (by subtracting their respective sample means) and then used those centered variables in the following analyses.

Correlations

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables and covariates of interest. The daily diary variables were first aggregated across the 21 days and then the resulting aggregated values were used with the background variables in the correlation calculations. Actor's daily reflected appraisals were very strongly positively correlated to actor's daily relationship closeness, $r = .81, p < .001$, and to actor's daily relationship satisfaction, $r = .81, p < .001$, while actor's daily relationship closeness was also strongly positively correlated with actor's daily relationship satisfaction, $r = .88, p < .001$, indicating that the three variables likely represent very similar measures of daily relationship functioning. Additionally, each dependent variable produced very similar results in the 4-way and 3-way multilevel regression analyses, so all three dependent variables were combined to form one indicator of actor's daily relationship functioning which was used in the multilevel regression analyses described in the following section.

Examining the correlations in Table 1 reveals that there was a weak negative association between actor's daily perceived relationship functioning (see discussion of this variable in following paragraph) and actor's daily event negativity indicating that as individual's reported experiencing daily events they perceived as more negative, they tended to view their daily

relationship functioning more favorably. There were also weak positive correlations between actor's self-discrepancy and partner's self-discrepancy as well as between actor's daily relationship functioning and actor's self-discrepancy. These findings suggest that there is a slight tendency for both members of a romantic couple to have similar self-ratings of their proximity to their own ideal self. In other words, if one member of the couple sees themselves as similar to their own ideal self, then it is somewhat likely that their romantic partner will also see him/herself as similar to his/her own ideal self. Additionally, if an individual believes they are similar to their own ideal self, then they have slight tendency to view their daily relationship functioning more poorly, but if they believe they are dissimilar to their own ideal self, then they are somewhat likely to view their daily relationship functioning more positively.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the between person and aggregate daily variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Actor's Age [†]	37.61	12.38	--									
2. Relationship Length [†]	7.21	8.34	.62**	--								
3. Marital Status	-.28	.96	.26**	.53**	--							
4. Actor's Gender	-.03	1.00	-.11*	.01	.00	--						
5. Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	6.25	.83	.12*	.06	.08	.02	--					
6. Actor's Daily Negative Affect	2.18	1.27	-.17**	-.14*	-.14*	.09	.32**	--				
7. Actor's Daily Event Positivity	12.27	14.69	-.06	.00	.01	-.04	.02	.00	--			
8. Actor's Daily Event Negativity	6.16	15.63	-.06	-.06	-.11	-.06	-.08	.16**	.74**	--		
9. Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy	5.76	.97	-.05	-.07	-.10	.06	.33**	-.14*	.10	-.02	--	
10. Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy	5.76	.97	-.03	-.07	-.07	-.06	.08	-.01	.06	.03	.13*	--
11. Actor's Daily Relationship Functioning	5.51	1.12	.09	.05	.13*	-.01	.26**	-.38**	.01	-.13*	.17**	.06

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, [†] in years, gender (-1=male; 1=female), marital status (-1=cohabiting; 1=married)

Actor's Daily Event Negativity, Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy, and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy

The analysis examining the 3-way Actor's Daily Event Negativity x Actor's Self-discrepancy x Partner's Self-discrepancy interaction revealed statistically significant positive main effects of Actor's Age, Actor's Marital Status, Actor's Daily Negative Affect, Actor's Daily Event Positivity, and Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy on Actor's Daily Relationship

Functioning (see Table 2). The analysis also revealed a statistically significant negative effect of Relationship Length and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy on Actor's Daily Relationship Functioning. This pattern of results indicates that individuals view their daily relationship functioning more favorably when they are older, are married rather than just co-habiting, have been in their current relationship for a relatively shorter period of time, experience more negative moods, perceive desirable daily events as being more enjoyable, perceive a greater difference between their actual self and their ideal self, and have a romantic partner that self-reports perceiving his/her own actual self as being more similar to his/her own ideal self.

There was a statistically significant 2-way interaction of Actor's Daily Event Negativity x Partner's Self-discrepancy predicting Actor's Daily Relationship Functioning, along with a significant positive 2-way interaction of Actor's Self-discrepancy x Partner's Self-discrepancy predicting Actor's Daily Relationship Functioning. However, the originally predicted 3-way Actor's Daily Event Negativity x Actor's Self-discrepancy x Partner's Self-discrepancy interaction was not significant (see Table 2)¹. These results suggest that the relation between an individual's daily event negativity and their perceived relationship functioning is dependent on whether their relationship partner has high or low actual:ideal self-discrepancy. Similarly,

¹ Neither actor's gender, $B = -.01$, $t(1676.32) = -1.57$, $p = .12$, nor the couples' marital status, $B = .00$, $t(158.15) = .34$, $p = .74$, moderated any of the effects reported.

the relation between an individual's self-discrepancy and their perceived relationship functioning is also dependent on whether their relationship partner has high or low actual:ideal self-discrepancy. On the other hand, the relation between event negativity and relationship functioning does not differ based on the participant's self-discrepancy level.

Table 2. Multilevel Modeling Results for Actor-Partner Interdependence Model of Actor's and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Moderating Effect of Actor's Daily Event Negativity on Actor's Daily Perceived Relationship Functioning.

	Relationship Functioning			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Actor's Age	.01	.00	2.98	.003
Relationship Length	-.002	.00	-4.75	.000
Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	.05	.03	1.73	.084
Actor's Marital Status	.19	.04	4.98	.000
Actor's Gender	.01	.02	.47	.637
Actor's Daily Negative Affect	.16	.01	15.22	.000
Actor's Daily Event Positivity	.01	.00	4.10	.000
Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.01	-1.08	.285
Actor's Self-discrepancy	.09	.04	2.45	.014
Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.25	.04	-6.53	.000
Actor's Daily Event Negativity × Actor's Self-discrepancy	-.004	.01	-.51	.613
Actor's Daily Event Negativity × Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.03	.01	-4.24	.000
Actor's Self-discrepancy × Partner's Self-discrepancy	.32	.05	6.72	.000
Actor's Daily Event Negativity × Actor's Self-discrepancy × Partner's Self-discrepancy	.01	.01	.73	.464

Actor's Daily Event Negativity and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy

Next, I determined the nature of the significant Actor's Daily Event Negativity x Partner's Self-discrepancy interaction by calculating two variables to represent partners' scores that are one standard deviation above (i.e., high partner self-discrepancy) and below (i.e., low partner self-discrepancy) the mean on actual:ideal self-discrepancy (Aiken & West, 1991). The analyses were then run using the newly computed high and low partner's self-discrepancy variables in place of the original partner's self-discrepancy variable. As illustrated by the regression lines appearing in Figure 4, simple slope tests revealed that actor's daily event negativity was negatively associated with actor's daily relationship functioning for those with a romantic partner who was high in actual:ideal self-discrepancy, $B = -.01$, $t(2033.79) = -4.76$, $p < .001$. When their romantic partner was high in self-discrepancy (low self-evaluation), individuals (actors) who perceived the daily negative events they experienced as being more harmful reported poorer daily relationship functioning than those who perceived daily negative events as being less harmful.

For individuals whose romantic partner was low in self-discrepancy, the negative association between actor's daily event negativity and actor's daily relationship functioning was marginally significant, $B = -.01$, $t(2141.07) = -1.89$, $p = .059$. When their romantic partner was low in self-discrepancy (high self-evaluation), individuals who perceived daily negative

events as more harmful tended to report poorer daily relationship

functioning than those who viewed daily negative events as less harmful.

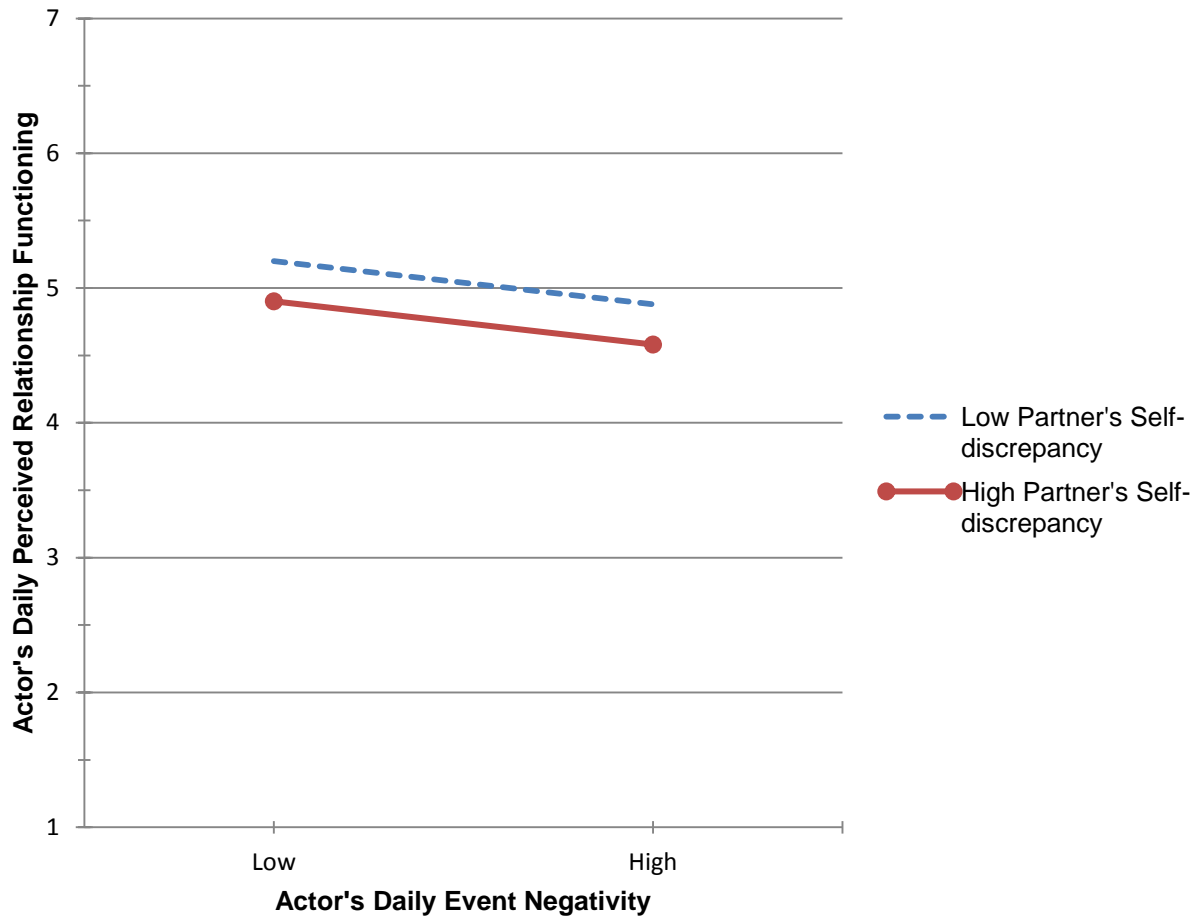
Table 3. Multilevel Simple Slope Analyses of High Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Moderating Effect of Actor's Daily Event Negativity on Actor's Daily Perceived Relationship Functioning.

	Relationship Functioning			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Actor's Age	.02	.00	5.23	.000
Relationship Length	-.002	.00	-3.93	.000
Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	-.001	.04	-.02	.987
Actor's Marital Status	.10	.05	1.99	.047
Actor's Gender	.02	.02	.66	.510
Actor's Daily Negative Affect	.19	.01	18.26	.000
Actor's Daily Event Positivity	.01	.00	3.72	.000
Actor's Self-discrepancy	.07	.04	1.52	.129
High Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.02	.12	-.17	.868
Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.00	-4.76	.000
High Partner's Self-discrepancy x Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.00	-2.13	.033

Table 4. Multilevel Simple Slope Analyses of Low Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Moderating Effect of Actor's Daily Event Negativity on Actor's Daily Perceived Relationship Functioning.

	Relationship Functioning			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Actor's Age	.02	.00	4.41	.000
Relationship Length	-.002	.00	-3.11	.002
Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	.13	.04	3.52	.000
Actor's Marital Status	-.15	.05	-2.87	.004
Actor's Gender	-.01	.02	-.45	.653
Actor's Daily Negative Affect	.18	.01	15.83	.000
Actor's Daily Event Positivity	.01	.00	3.98	.000
Actor's Self-discrepancy	-.09	.04	-2.11	.035
Low Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.11	.11	-1.01	.316
Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.00	-1.89	.059
Low Partner's Self-discrepancy x Actor's Daily Event Negativity	.001	.00	.20	.839

Figure 4. Predicting actor's daily perceived relationship functioning from actor's daily event negativity and partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy.



Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy and Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy

Next, I determined the nature of the significant Actor's Self-discrepancy x Partner's Self-discrepancy interaction by again using the previously calculated high partner self-discrepancy and low partner self-discrepancy variables. As illustrated by the regression lines appearing in Figure 5, simple slope tests revealed that actor's actual:ideal self-

discrepancy was positively associated with actor's daily relationship functioning for those with a romantic partner who was high in actual:ideal self-discrepancy, $B = .30$, $t(1928.78) = 6.09$, $p < .001$. When their romantic partner was high in self-discrepancy (low self-evaluation), individuals (actors) who were high in self-discrepancy as well reported better, more favorable daily relationship functioning than individuals who were low in self-discrepancy (high self-evaluation). Conversely, actor's self-discrepancy was negatively associated with actor's daily relationship functioning for those with a romantic partner who was low in self-discrepancy, $B = -.26$, $t(881.93) = -4.67$, $p < .001$. When their romantic partner was low in self-discrepancy, individuals who were high in self-discrepancy reported poorer daily relationship functioning than individuals who were low in self-discrepancy. Partners with high self-discrepancy had the most favorable relationship interactions with actors who also had high self-discrepancy, while partners with low self-discrepancy had the most favorable relationship interactions with actors who also had low self-discrepancy.

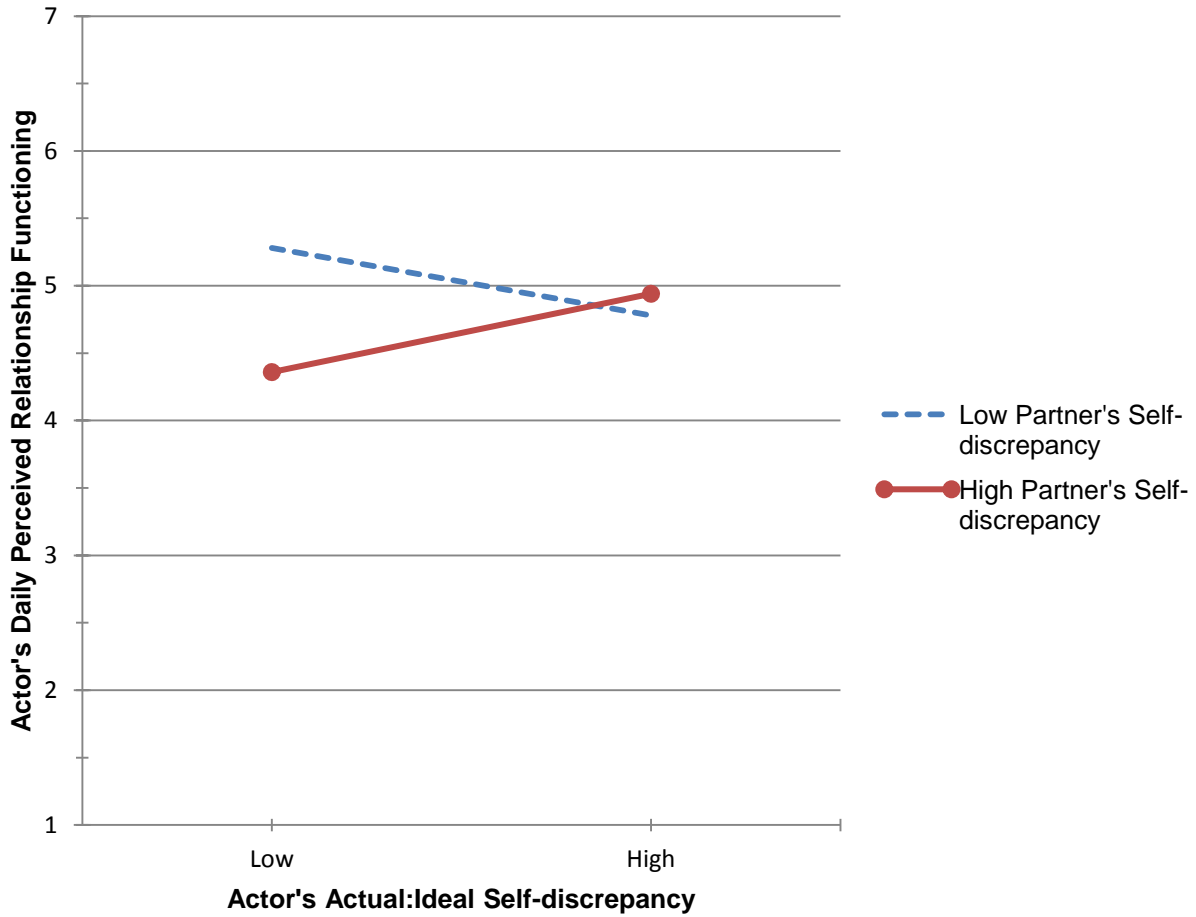
Table 5. Multilevel Simple Slope Analyses of High Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Moderating Effect of Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy on Actor's Daily Perceived Relationship Functioning.

	Relationship Functioning			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Actor's Age	.02	.00	4.41	.000
Relationship Length	-.002	.00	-4.53	.000
Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	.06	.04	1.64	.101
Actor's Marital Status	.16	.05	3.33	.001
Actor's Gender	.04	.02	1.73	.084
Actor's Daily Negative Affect	.19	.01	18.17	.000
Actor's Daily Event Positivity	.01	.00	4.31	.000
Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.00	-5.13	.000
High Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.18	.12	-1.51	.136
Actor's Self-discrepancy	.30	.05	6.09	.000
High Partner's Self-discrepancy x Actor's Self-discrepancy	.64	.07	9.26	.000

Table 6. Multilevel Simple Slope Analyses of Low Partner's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Moderating Effect of Actor's Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy on Actor's Daily Perceived Relationship Functioning.

	Relationship Functioning			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Actor's Age	.02	.00	4.84	.000
Relationship Length	-.002	.00	-3.10	.002
Actor's Explicit Self-esteem	.13	.04	3.49	.001
Actor's Marital Status	-.18	.05	-3.54	.000
Actor's Gender	-.02	.02	-.74	.461
Actor's Daily Negative Affect	.18	.01	15.65	.000
Actor's Daily Event Positivity	.01	.00	3.95	.000
Actor's Daily Event Negativity	-.01	.00	-4.11	.000
Low Partner's Self-discrepancy	-.08	.12	-.67	.508
Actor's Self-discrepancy	-.26	.06	-4.67	.000
Low Partner's Self-discrepancy x Actor's Self-discrepancy	.31	.07	4.43	.000

Figure 5. Predicting actor's daily perceived relationship functioning from actor's actual:ideal self-discrepancy and partner's actual:ideal self-discrepancy.



CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the role of actor and partner actual:ideal self-discrepancy as potential moderators of the relation between daily event negativity and perceptions of daily relationship functioning in African American couples. The tests did not support the prediction that actor's self-discrepancy would moderate the relationship between daily event negativity and perceived daily relationship functioning (H1) nor the prediction that actor's and partner's self-discrepancy would interact to moderate the relation between daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning (H3). However, the tests partially supported the prediction that partner's self-discrepancy would moderate the relationship between daily event negativity and perceived daily relationship functioning (H2). The hypothesized association was positive for people whose partner had low self-discrepancy (positive self-evaluation) and either no association or a negative association for people whose partner had high self-discrepancy. The observed pattern was actually a negative relation for everyone, though people whose partners had low self-discrepancy reported more positive relationship functioning than people whose partners had high self-

discrepancy, regardless of level of event negativity. The results also indicate that partner's self-discrepancy moderates the relationship between actor's self-discrepancy and daily relationship functioning, an effect for which there was no previous prediction. When members of the couple had matching levels of self-discrepancy, they reported better relationship functioning than couples with differing levels of self-discrepancy, even after controlling for self-esteem.

Moderating Effects of Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy

Contrary to predictions, there was no moderating impact of actor's self-discrepancy on the relation between daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning (H1), though partner's self-discrepancy did moderate this association (H2). There was also no interaction of actor's self-discrepancy and partner's self-discrepancy moderating the influence of daily event negativity on daily relationship functioning (H3). Why did partner's self-discrepancy affect relationship functioning after negative events while actor's self-discrepancy did not? Perhaps adverse experiences make individuals in long-term relationships more vulnerable and open to the influence of their partner's behavioral tendencies rather than to their own self-evaluations. Negative events are distressing, regardless of an individual's sense of self-worth, so it may be that members of older cohabiting and married couples are more attuned to their partner's social

support or are more likely to base their relationship evaluations on the support they receive from the partner rather than projecting their own self-worth onto the relationship. Considering the methodological limitations, assessing relationship functioning at the end of the day after the couple has had the chance to interact may have had an effect on these findings. If relationship evaluations had been measured soon after the occurrence of the negative events, actor's self-discrepancy may have been a more significant predictor. Allowing even a few hours to pass after the negative events actually occurred may have diluted the effects of actor's self-discrepancy. One possibility for eliminating this influence on perceived relationship functioning is to use event-contingent experience sampling. The current study's methodology could be altered slightly to have participants complete the measures of interest after experiencing one of a short list of negative events, rather than at the end of each day. There would be a loss of variability with the smaller number of events to choose from, however, gaining greater insight from immediate responses could provide a more nuanced understanding of the temporal differences in the impact of actor's versus partner's self-discrepancy on perceptions of relationship functioning after adverse experiences.

Partner's self-discrepancy significantly moderated the relation between actor's daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning (H2). When

interpreting the simple slope analyses, there is a negative relation between daily event negativity and daily relationship functioning, but this is only statistically significant when the individual's romantic partner is high in self-discrepancy (poor self-evaluation) and is marginally significant when the romantic partner has low self-discrepancy (positive self-evaluation).

Hypothesis 2 originally predicted that individuals whose romantic partners had low actual:ideal self-discrepancy would report more positive daily relationship functioning on days the participant experienced highly negative daily events than on days they experienced less harmful events while those whose romantic partners had high self-discrepancy would either report no change or more negative relationship functioning on days they experienced highly negative daily events versus less negative events.

Unlike previous work finding that a romantic partner's low self-discrepancy contributed to enhanced coping after experiencing greater numbers of racially discriminatory events as compared to fewer such events (Hallinger & DeHart, 2017a; unpublished manuscript; Hallinger et. al, 2017; unpublished data), in this case, perceptions of relationship functioning suffered after highly negative events, regardless of the partner's level of self-discrepancy, though there may be an overall relationship benefit to having a partner with low self-discrepancy. Perhaps in the studies on racial discrimination and stress, the romantic partner was a more effective coping

support because both relationship members were African American and could relate to such problematic experiences. However, in the present study, the negative experiences range across different domains that the individual's partner may not be quite as competent in or their level of expertise may not be relevant to the situation. Some African Americans could likely experience similar types of racial discrimination, but there may be more idiosyncratic differences in experiences of and responses to general adverse events. For example, African American women may encounter both racism and sexism while African American men only encounter racism and might not be effective buffers against the detrimental effects of experiences of sexism on their partners. However, it should be noted that there was no observable impact of gender either directly on perceptions of daily relationship functioning nor on the hypothesized interaction of actor's and partner's self-discrepancy on the association between daily event negativity and relationship functioning.

Partner's Self-discrepancy and Actor's Self-discrepancy

The analyses revealed that actor's actual:ideal self-discrepancy was positively associated with daily relationship functioning and that partner's self-discrepancy significantly moderated this relation. The observed interaction indicated that relationships where both romantic partners reported matching levels of self-discrepancy were seen to have better

relationship functioning, in general, than when both partners had differing levels of self-discrepancy. Even couples with matching high self-discrepancy (low self-evaluations) reported better relationship functioning than couples where one member had low self-discrepancy (high self-evaluation). People with high self-discrepancy were expected to be more reactive to their partner's self-evaluation in this study since previous research suggests that people with high self-discrepancy reported very low levels of stress in response to higher numbers of racially discriminatory events versus lower numbers of discriminatory events when they had a romantic partner with low self-discrepancy (Hallinger & DeHart, 2017a; unpublished manuscript). Despite these indications that a low self-discrepancy partner would likely exhibit caring, accommodating behaviors that might make a high self-discrepancy individual feel more satisfied with the relationship, this low self-discrepancy partner's comforting, supportive behavior still falls short of the desirability of matching self-discrepancy.

When both members of a couple have similar levels of self-discrepancy, perhaps there is greater understanding of each member's reactions to daily life, producing higher levels of closeness and satisfaction. Viewed through self-affirmation theory, this finding among matching couples may be due to the lack of pressure to explain or defend one's response pattern. Those with matched self-discrepancy likely feel better understood, enhancing their

sense of connection as well as felt love and acceptance. Partners with mismatched self-discrepancy may experience greater tension and conflict because of their differing reactions to daily experiences. Misunderstandings surrounding alternative behavioral patterns both within and outside of the relationship are likely to reduce relationship closeness and satisfaction.

Strengths, Limitations, & Future Research

The findings in the present study extend the sparse literature investigating the impact of self-discrepancy on romantic relationships and provide evidence that these effects can be detected above and beyond the contributions of self-esteem. Previous research has established that aspects of the self, such as self-worth, have a significant influence on views of romantic partners and relationship functioning, but self-discrepancy receives very little attention from these investigations. The burgeoning literature demonstrating the association between ideal similarity, how closely you believe another individual resembles your own ideal self, and attraction indicates that comparisons to one's ideal self may play a pivotal role in intrapersonal and interpersonal judgments, and by extension, of relationship functioning. One goal of the current study is to highlight the contributions of the ideal self to individuals' social interactions.

Intentionally recruiting African American couples helps to complement the literature on relationship functioning, which disproportionately focuses

on convenience samples of European American couples. Cultural differences in behavioral norms, even within the same nation, may have an impact on aspects of the self relevant to relationship functioning. Additionally, coping with the unique daily pressures that people from marginalized groups face might spur the development of novel protective mechanisms that do not occur in non-marginalized groups.

Utilizing a community sample of adults allowed for the investigation of effects that occur in a population other than that of college students, which helps to reduce the limitations of solely observing a single educational and socioeconomic background. The sample also enabled a comparison of information from both cohabiting and married couples. The participants are involved in longer, more committed relationships, which tell us more about the long-term influences of self-traits on relationship functioning.

From a purely methodological perspective, the current study measured actual:ideal self-discrepancy using a comparative process priming participants to attend to the possible differences between actual self and ideal self, rather than measuring both separately and calculating a difference rating. While the latter process has been relatively effective in other work, using the former comparative process helps to exacerbate any differences that exist between the actual self and the ideal self. Explicit self-esteem scores typically skew toward the higher end, possibly due to the desire to

think of and present the self positively. There may be similar biases at work when asking participants to separately evaluate their current self. When the ideal self scale is subsequently presented, there may be very little room left to detect the distinction between the two. Priming participants to focus on the perceived differences between their actual self and their ideal self provides a score less prone to a ceiling effect.

A glaring limitation of the current study is the exclusion of same-sex couples from the analyses. Although both same-sex and cross-sex couples were recruited into the study, the analyzed sample was limited to heterosexual couples because the APIM method for over-time data cannot accommodate indistinguishable couples. There must be a meaningful subject variable (ie., gender, birth order, etc.) with which to distinguish each couple member. Simply labeling each individual as Partner #1 or Partner #2 is neither meaningful nor does it reflect a subject variable. In fact, this labeling process can lead to a different pattern of results depending on how the partners are labeled. No other investigator with access to the same data set would be able to exactly recreate this pattern of partner identification and the resulting data would produce different values for almost all variables and comparisons.

Although the multilevel regression approach allowed for the simultaneous estimation of effects for both members of each couple, the

observed relationships between the variables are still correlational in nature and cannot indicate causation. Perhaps relationship functioning influences one's actual:ideal self-discrepancy or vice versa or it is an interrelated cycle of influence. The analysis can only discover that the association exists.

However, the participants' self-discrepancy was measured once at the start of the study while their perceived relationship functioning was assessed on a daily basis using a daily diary survey for 3 weeks. Would a daily assessment of self-discrepancy have yielded different results? This question would be an excellent focus of a future investigation. The stability of self-discrepancy over time as well as its contribution to daily relationship functioning would be an intriguing addition to the current literature.

Overall, the current study found some interesting associations between actual:ideal self-discrepancy and romantic relationship functioning in general as well as in response to adverse experiences. Considering the current data and unpublished data previously collected by this author, self-discrepancy impacts various interactions between relationship partners beyond the established contributions of explicit self-esteem. Individuals' bi-dimensional self-evaluations may play a more critical role in interpersonal relations than originally thought and further investigations of self-discrepancy could yield greater insights into the role of comparisons to the ideal self in social experiences.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF SURVEY MEASURES ADMINISTERED

Age

What is your date of birth?

Month – Day – Year

Gender

What is your gender?

Male – Female

Partner's Gender

What is your partner's gender?

Male – Female

Marital Status

What is your current marital status?

1=married

2=single/never married

3=divorced

4=widowed

Relationship Length

How long have you and your partner been together? Years – Months

Explicit Self-Esteem

1=Strongly disagree; 7=Strongly agree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. I feel that I am a failure.
4. I feel that I am able to do things as well as most people.
5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. I feel that I am useless.
10. I think that I am no good at all.

Daily Positive Events Scale

0=Did not occur; 1=Not at all positive; 7=Extremely positive

1. I received money as a refund.
2. I went to a club or organized group meeting.
3. I started an interesting project at my work or volunteer site.
4. I played a sport, game, or cards with friends.
5. I made a new friend or acquaintance.
6. I helped a family member (other than my spouse) with a problem.
7. I completed work on a major task or project.
8. I was praised by a family member (other than my spouse).

9. I awoke feeling relaxed and alert.
10. I went out with friends.
11. I visited with family member(s).
12. I received a letter from a family member (other than my spouse).
13. I put money in savings.
14. I paid off a debt.
15. I talked with a family member I had not seen for a long time.
16. I had my employment benefits extended.
17. I received a compliment from a friend/acquaintance.
18. I had a party or other social gathering.
19. I visited with friends.
20. I solved a complicated problem at my work or volunteer site.
21. I changed to a more healthy diet.
22. I received a gift from a family member (other than my spouse).
23. I had a long conversation with my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]
24. My relationship with my spouse/partner changed for the better. [*excluded*]
25. I received a special gift from my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]
26. I expressed love to my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]
27. I kissed and/or had pleasing contact with my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]
28. I celebrated a special occasion with my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]

Daily Mood Scale

1=Not at all; 7=Extremely

1. distressed
2. excited [*excluded*]
3. angry
4. interested [*excluded*]
5. dejected
6. cheerful [*excluded*]
7. ashamed
8. alert [*excluded*]
9. nervous
10. happy [*excluded*]
11. sad
12. proud [*excluded*]

Actual:Ideal Self-discrepancy Scale

1=Not at all like my ideal self; 7=Completely like my ideal self

1. Intellectual ability

2. Social skills/social competence
3. Artistic and/or musical ability
4. Athletic ability
5. Physical attractiveness
6. Leadership ability
7. Common sense
8. Emotional stability
9. Sense of humor
10. Discipline

Daily Negative Events Scale

0=Did not occur; 1=Not at all negative; 7=Extremely negative

1. A friend/acquaintance did not show up on time.
2. I had an unexpected expense over \$50 but under \$500.
3. People acted as if they were better than me.
4. I found a large error in my check book balance.
5. My rent or mortgage payment increased.
6. I was treated with less courtesy than other people.
7. I ran out of money and could not cover living expenses.
8. I was treated with less respect than other people.
9. I was insulted or called names.
10. A friend/acquaintance did not return my call.
11. People acted as if they thought I was not smart.
12. I was not invited to a party/activity given by friends.
13. I met an unfriendly or rude person.
14. People acted as if they were afraid of me.
15. I was criticized by a friend/acquaintance.
16. My authority to make decisions at work was reduced.
17. I was forced to visit with family when I did not want to.
18. There was not enough work to keep me busy.
19. I was criticized by a family member (other than spouse).
20. I had trouble sleeping.
21. I received poorer service than others at restaurants/stores.
22. People acted as if they thought I was dishonest.
23. I had added pressure to work harder or faster.
24. I had an argument with a family member (other than spouse).
25. I argued with a friend/acquaintance.
26. I was threatened or harassed.
27. My spouse/partner stopped being affectionate. [*excluded*]
28. I argued with my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]
29. I was criticized by my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]

30. My spouse/partner was away from home overnight. [*excluded*]
 31. I disagreed with my spouse/partner on a topic of importance.
 [*excluded*]
 32. I was critical of my spouse/partner. [*excluded*]

Daily Reflected Appraisals Scale

1=Strongly disagree; 7=Strongly agree

1. Today, I am confident that my partner will always want to look beyond my faults and see the best in me.
2. Today, I couldn't do anything that would make my partner think less of me.
3. Today, my partner loves me just as I am; he/she wouldn't want to change me in any way.
4. Today, my partner makes me feel very secure and confident about myself.
5. Today, my partner is less critical of my faults than I am.
6. Today, my partner sees special qualities in me, qualities that other people might not see.
7. Today, my partner overlooks most of my faults.

Daily Relationship Closeness Scale

1=Strongly disagree; 7=Strongly agree

1. Today, I felt very close to my romantic partner.
2. Today, I had a very strong emotional bond with my partner.
3. How close, or interconnected, do you feel with your partner today?

Daily Relationship Satisfaction Scale

1=Strongly disagree; 7=Strongly agree

1. Today, I was extremely satisfied with my relationship with my partner.
2. Today, I had a very strong relationship with my partner.
3. Today, I did not feel that my current relationship was successful.
4. Today, my relationship with my partner was very rewarding, i.e., gratifying, fulfilling.

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VITA

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At Roosevelt University, Dr. Hallinger was inducted into the Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology (now Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology) and served as the group's president from 2006 to 2008. Dr. Hallinger was awarded a Student Journalist Award and press credentials by the United Nations NGO Committee on Mental Health in order to attend and document the United Nations Conference on Human Rights at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France in September 2008.

Dr. Hallinger was awarded the Illinois State Board of Education's Diversifying Faculty in Higher Education Fellowship from 2009 to 2012 to support her doctoral studies and was also awarded a Child & Family Research Assistantship by Loyola University from 2014-2015. While at

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Dr. Hallinger currently lives in Chicago with her spouse, Phillip C. Hallinger, where she is employed by the Cook County Health & Hospitals System building a robust research support infrastructure, continues to work as a behavioral interventions consultant, and teaches in Loyola's School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS). Dr. Hallinger also serves on Loyola's Applied Psychology Program Advisory Board, SCPS' Faculty Advisory Board, and on the Parenting Adverse Childhood Experience's Public Awareness Steering Committee.