FACTORS IN THE SOCIAL SUPPORT PROCESS: SELF-EVALUATION MAINTENANCE AND REJECTION SENSITIVITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the process of social support exchange within dating relationships. Rejection sensitivity and processes related to self-evaluation maintenance were examined as they related to various reactions to advice from a dating partner. It was predicted that individuals who were higher in rejection sensitivity would anticipate and perceive advice more negatively, and would have more negative emotional and behavioral responses to advice than individuals low in rejection sensitivity. Further, it was predicted that individuals who received advice in a high-relevance area would have more negative reactions than individuals receiving advice in a low-relevance area. Finally, relevance was expected to interact with rejection sensitivity. Participants were recruited as couples and were separated throughout the study. They were asked to identify areas of high or low relevance and potential problems in these areas, for which they received advice from their "partner". Reactions to advice were assessed through self-report measures, the lexical decision task, and a text-analysis program applied to advice participants gave back to partners. Results revealed that low-rejection sensitive individuals manifested more varied reactions depending on the relevance of the area in which they received advice. This was in contrast to high rejection sensitive individuals, who reacted similarly regardless of relevance.

Implications of these findings for the relationships of rejection sensitive individuals and directions for future research are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Social support, Romantic Relationships, Advice, Rejection sensitivity, Self-evaluation Maintenance, Lexical decision task, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

Social support is most often cited as it relates to positive health and psychological outcomes. High levels of social support have been implicated in a variety of positive health outcomes including immunological functioning (Jemmott & Magloire, 1988, Baron, Cutrona, Hicklin, Russell, & Lubaroff, 1990), cardiovascular functioning (Glynn, Christenfeld, & Gerin, 1999), health behaviors (Kelsey, Campbell, Tessaro, Bendict, Belton, Fernandez, Henriquez-Roldan, Devellis, 2000; Reis & Franks, 1994), substance abuse (Broome, Simpson, & Joe, 2002), and smoking cessation (McBride, Pollak, Lyna, Lipkus, Samsa, & Bepler, 2001). Further, lack of adequate support has been shown to be associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988, Grant, Patterson, & Yager, 1988; Phifer & Murrell, 1986). For example, social support as a predictor of morbidity and mortality has been shown to be of the same magnitude as such risk factors as smoking, high blood pressure, and obesity (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). Social support offered by the marital relationship has garnered specific attention, as marriage is a central relationship for many adults. Extensive research supports the role of marriage in better health outcomes (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001), and this appears to be particularly true for men. For example, male coronary bypass patients who experienced greater social support were found to use less pain medication and were discharged more quickly from intensive care (Kulik & Mahler, 1989).

Psychological adjustment has also been found to be associated with social support, including better quality of life among those living with chronic physical problems (Gielen,

McDonnell, Wu, O'Campo, & Faden, 2001; Post, Ros, & Schrijvers, 1999) and higher levels of self-esteem and optimism (McNicholas, 2002, Brisette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002.). The stress-buffering model has gained support in the area of intimate partner violence, with high levels of social support found to be associated with significantly reduced risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and suicide attempts among abused women (Coker, Smith, Thompson, McKeown, Bethea, & Davis, 2002). Lack of social support has been found by several researchers to be a strong predictor of PTSD symptoms following trauma (see meta-analysis by Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000). Extensive research also supports a relationship between marital dissatisfaction, a good proxy variable for social support among married individuals, and depression (Fincham & Beach, 1999), such that treating marital discord is, in many instances, associated with a significant improvement in depressive symptomatology (Beach & O'Leary, 1992). Perceptions of declining spousal support during the transition into parenthood have also been associated with increases in postpartum depression (Simpson, Rholes, Campbell, Tran, & Wilson, 2003). Additionally, Hooley and Teasdale (1989) found that the best predictor of relapse in patients who had recovered from depression was their perception that their partner was overly critical.

Early models of social support grew from an implicit assumption that social support was inherently good and would positively impact a variety of outcomes. A popular model developed by Cohen & Wills (1985), aptly termed the direct effect model, proposed that the greater a given individual's social support network (including friends, family, coworkers), the more likely that individual would be to experience less distress and more positive affect, regardless of stress level. Thus, the concept of social support was imbued with positive attributes regardless of its function or necessity. An alternative model, the stress-buffering model of social support, posited

that the relationship between social support and positive outcomes was moderated by stress level; that is, social support serves as a buffer from negative, stress-related outcomes under conditions of high stress, but has relatively little impact under conditions of low-stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). In this model, the benefits of social support depend on the presence of a stressor so that, under conditions of low stress, social support has relatively little impact. Despite differences in their portrayal of the circumstances under which social support is useful, both models of social support share the assumption that social support can be treated as ranging from neutral to positive with no potentially "negative" outcomes. In addition, both models would lead to the prediction that more support is better (or at least no worse) than less support.

Although research demonstrating a positive relationship between social support and positive outcomes lends support to these models, a substantial amount of research warns that the relationship between social support and outcomes may not be as linear and monotonic as the models suggest. Several studies have failed to support a link between social support and positive outcomes (Sherbourne & Hays, 1990), and some have even linked certain types of social support to negative outcomes. For example, research in the area of pain has found that spousal encouragement and attention to pain are associated with negative outcomes such as reduced health behaviors and increased perceptions of pain (Turk, Kerns, & Rosenberg, 1992). Silverstein and Chen (1996) found that in older adults, moderate levels of support from adult children were beneficial, while increasing amounts of support were associated with a decline in well-being, particularly among those who did not endorse strong expectations of support from their children. In terms of neutral findings, a meta-analysis of the relationship between social support and health suggests that, over 67 studies, the amount of shared variance between these

variables alone is insufficient to warrant conclusions that they are significantly linked (Smith, Fernengel, Holcroft, & Gerald, 1994).

A small overall effect of social support could be evidence that beneficial effects are limited to certain groups or certain conditions. For example, although much of the research involving social support in marriage finds a positive impact on health, these benefits are often greater for men than for women (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001, Glynn, Christenfeld, & Gerin, 1999). Alternatively, differential effects for different types of support could obscure the overall relationship between social support and health outcomes. Supporting this possibility, Pretorius (1996) found overall positive effects of social support on health, but found that for men, presence of tangible support was related to high levels of depression under high stress conditions. In the same way, social support delivered as social control, where interactions involve influence and regulation of one individual by another, have been found to be associated with both increases in health-enhancing behavior and increases in distress by the recipient (Lewis & Rook, 1999). Likewise, differential effects over time could obscure observed relationships. While some studies demonstrate positive effects on quality of life (Kennedy, Marsh, Lowe, Grey, Short, & Rogers, 2000), others have shown that social support in the context of chronic stressors diminishes over time (Hyduk, 1996).

Taken together, the above findings suggest the need for a more fine-grained approach to research in social support. That is, it appears likely that researchers need to consider the existence of other variables beyond stressful life circumstances that potentially moderate the effect of social support (Coyne & Delongis, 1986). Additional studies of social support have provided insight into variables potentially deserving of attention in social support research. Jou and Fukada (2002), in a study of Japanese university students, found that feelings of non-

reciprocity of support, both in the direction of giving and receiving insufficient support, were associated with decreases in physical and emotional health. This suggests that the positive effects of social support may be mediated by perceived relationship outcomes rather than being a direct function of received support. Other factors that may influence the relationship between outcomes and social support include intrapersonal characteristics of the giver and recipient of social support. Dakof and Taylor (1990) found that the impact of social support on cancer patients was partly dependent on the source of support so that particular supportive behaviors were perceived as more or less helpful depending on from whom they came. Silverstein and Chen (1996) obtained findings supporting the notion that the recipient's expectations of support have implications for the impact that support will have on outcomes, while Lutz & Lakey (2001) and Lakey and colleagues (2002) found evidence that recipients of support weight various personality traits of support-givers differently in judging supportiveness. Additional research supports the importance of characteristics of the supportive transaction in how support is perceived (Vinokur, Schul, & Caplan, 1987, Heller & Lakey, Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1990). Thus, research extending beyond direct and stress-buffering effect models has supported the notion that social support may be best considered an interpersonal exchange, the outcome of which depends on a number of factors, including the relationship in which the support is exchanged, the process by which it is exchanged, the nature of the stressor requiring support, and finally, intrapersonal characteristics (e.g. cognitive, emotional) of both giver and recipient.

One model that has the potential to help identify functionally distinct aspects of social support is the Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model (Tesser, 1988). By focusing on the potential self-evaluation impact of different types of support under different circumstances, this model may begin to bring conceptual order to the social support literature.

Social Support and Self-Evaluation Maintenance

Self-evaluation maintenance is a process that potentially explains variability in the receipt of support across individuals. As described by Tesser & Campbell (1982), people are ultimately motivated to maintain high-levels of self-evaluation, and the performance of other individuals has implications for self-evaluation maintenance. In his self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) model, Tesser (1988) proposes two opposing processes through which self-evaluation maintenance might occur: comparison and reflection. Reflection describes the process by which individuals attempt to bolster self-evaluation through their association with a close other who has performed well (i.e. "basking in the reflected glory of others"). Comparison, on the other hand, refers to a process by which individuals protect against threats to self-evaluation that may result from being outperformed by a close other (i.e. "feeling small in comparison to another's outstanding performance"). The key factor in whether or not being outperformed by a close other will provoke reflection or comparison is the importance, or self-relevance, of the area in which one is being outperformed. Thus, the relevance of the area to one's self concept gives differential meaning to the outstanding performance of a close other. When we are outperformed by a close other in an area of not much importance to us, positive reflection will tend to occur; we are glorified in our associations with this close other who has performed so well. However, when we are outperformed by a close other in an area of high personal relevance, negative comparison will likely occur; that is, we will experience a decrement to our self-evaluation because a close other has outperformed us.

Accordingly, the SEM model identifies three key parameters: closeness, relevance, and performance. Self-evaluation is threatened only under conditions in which a close other outperforms the self in an area high in self-relevance. SEM theory predicts that, in this event, the

outperformed individual will make psychological adjustments along one or all of these parameters to prevent self-evaluation from being damaged. The closeness of the self to the outperforming other might be reduced (e.g. spending less time with the person or convincing oneself that the relationship is not that important). In the same way, the performance of the other may be derogated (criticizing the other's performance or attributing it to good luck). Finally, the self-relevance of the area in which one was outperformed may be reduced (e.g. telling oneself that the area was not important, focus on other important areas).

The SEM model has been explored within the context of close committed relationships, specifically in terms of how sympathetic feelings for the partner might impact the social comparison process (Beach et al. 1998). This extended SEM model holds that, in these types of relationships, the pleasantness of outperforming a partner might be attenuated due to feelings of sympathy for the partner, whose self-evaluation has been thus threatened. The comparison process, which protects against threat to self-evaluation, thus interacts with other processes inherent in the close committed relationship, such as caring about the needs of the partner, including the partner's need for self-evaluation maintenance. The extended SEM model thus predicts that people in close committed relationships are not only interested in their own maintenance of self-evaluation, but in their partner's as well.

While the original SEM model places relevance to self as the key determinant of affective responses to SEM processes, the extended SEM model suggests that partner relevance is important in determining comparison outcomes as well. Within the array of areas which might prompt comparison, some of these areas are likely to be more relevant to the self than the partner, some more relevant to the partner than the self, and some important to both or neither. The extended SEM model predicts that the emotional consequences of the comparison process

depend on the balance of self versus partner relevance. For those areas important to one partner but not the other, exceptional performance by the one for whom the area is important should produce positive reactions that are based both on outperforming the partner, and on the knowledge that the area was not important to the partner and has likely not threatened the partner's self-evaluation. Indeed, the partner may even have been granted the chance to bask in the glory reflected by one's exceptional performance. Likewise, being outperformed by the partner in areas low in self-relevance but high in partner relevance ought to produce positive affect, both as a result of basking in reflected glory and feeling good that the partner has experienced a boon to his or her self-evaluation. This process would likely look quite different in the case of being outperformed by the partner in areas high in self-relevance, or outperforming the partner in areas known to be high in partner relevance.

Directive social support, such as advice, can be conceptualized as a form of social feedback about performance. Accordingly, it is possible that advice might elicit SEM processes that could exert an influence on affective reactions to the advice. If stressors are perceived as a sign that one is not handling the self-relevant area well, then one is vulnerable to being "outperformed" by others. However, in order to compare favorably in relation to the performance of others within self-relevant areas, one should be capable of handling stressors within this area of high relevance.

If the presence of a stressor in an area of high self-relevance heightens the possibility of self-evaluation threat, then directive social support, like advice, offered by others may be interpreted as a sign that one is performing inadequately. Social support may be interpreted as calling into question one's ability to handle the stressor, thus serving as a threat to one's self-evaluation. It may be considered synonymous with comparing unfavorably to others who are

more competent; their position of offering support inherently implies greater knowledge and ability to handle the stressor. In this way, social support in the context of a stressor may behave differently depending on whether this stressor is in an area of high, or low, relevance and therefore associated with more, or less, self-evaluation threat. In particular, it could be argued that social support within the context of an area of high self-relevance creates the potential for negative social comparison whereas directive support in a low-relevance area creates an opportunity for positive reflection. This argument supposes that receiving support from others in one's social network in areas high in self-relevance is threatening to the maintenance of self-evaluation because it may imply that one is incompetent to handle stressors in this area or that others are somehow more capable and therefore in a position to inform one how to better respond. In contrast, in areas of low self-relevance, it is less threatening to believe that others are more competent and so directive social support from others should be less threatening and even welcome. In accord with findings based on the extended SEM model, it is reasonable to expect that support from a partner might have stronger implications for affective responses in receiving support. Specifically, receiving partner support in areas important to the partner as well as the self would likely produce more negative affect than receiving support in areas low in self-relevance.

The SEM model accounts for reactions to comparison as well. As stated by SEM theory, areas high in relevance are those to which our self-evaluation is mainly tied; thus, comparing favorably to others in these areas has significant implications for our self-concept. In the face of superior performance by close others in areas high in self-relevance, adjustments along the dimensions of relational closeness, other performance, or the relative importance of the area may be made in order to reduce the detriment to self-evaluation. If being given social support is

considered evidence of being outperformed, then it stands to reason that the same adjustments would take place. The recipient motivated by maintenance of self-evaluation may denigrate the advice and support (in effect denigrating the performance of others), may decrease the importance of the area, or may decrease the level of closeness of the support relationship.

Thus, SEM processes may be useful in understanding variability in the receipt of social support in close relationships. As Beach et al. (1996) highlight, social support that appears quite similar topographically can have quite different implications for perceived support. In areas low in self-relevance to the support recipient, support is more likely to be perceived as helpful and welcomed, whereas in areas high in self-relevance, support may be perceived as threatening to self-evaluation maintenance, and as a result of SEM processes, perceived as unsupportive or otherwise denigrated.

Social-information processing and perceived support

Over the past 15 years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the role of "perceived support" as a critical element in understanding social support effects. This development once again emphasizes the perceived relationship between the support recipient and others rather than the characteristics of the support received. In its original conceptualization, perceived social support was defined as the general perception or belief that others are available to provide emotional or practical support when needed. High levels of perceived social support have been found to be a boon to mental health in particular (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Several studies have supported the notion that high perceived support serves as a buffer against the impact of environmental stressors on psychological adjustment (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and that perceived support accounts for unique variance in social support outcomes over and above actual support

(Lepore, Evans, & Schneider, 1991, Thuen & Eikeland, 1998, Wethington & Kessler, 1985, Norris & Kaniasty, 1996).

Perceived support has been examined by some along the lines of social information processing theory. This theory is based on the notion that social interactions or situations serve as stimuli that undergo a number of cognitive processes, namely encoding, representation, and storage in memory (Dodge, 1993). These processes in turn influence behavioral response choices to the social stimulus. Within-individual variations in response to social stimuli are attributed to variations in processing elicited by stimulus cues (Dodge, 1993), while between-individual differences in processing of similar social stimuli are attributed to individual differences in processing (Dodge, 1993).

Encoding refers to the manner in which external stimuli are brought into the cognitive system for processing. Encoding is influenced by the sensory input, or cues, available, selective attention to this input, and storage of selected input into short-term memory for later processing. Selective attention is a key factor in encoding, in that it serves to simplify processing by effectively deciding what information from the social stimulus will be attended to, and therefore brought into the system for processing, and what information will be excluded (Bargh, 1982). Thus, from the beginning, the processing of social information is biased as a function of what information is attended to and what is ignored. Selective attention is a product of both internal motives and goals, such as self-evaluation maintenance, and external factors, such as prior social experiences (Baldwin, 1992).

The second step in processing of social input involves the formation of a mental representation of this information. It is at this stage that meaning is attributed to the stimulus. For example, a given recipient of social support might attribute negative meaning to the event,

interpreting it as disingenuous or unhelpful, while another might attribute positive meaning, viewing the support as evidence of being cared about by an important other. As in encoding, the meaning that a particular individual gives to a social stimulus is determined by internal goals, needs, and learning history, as well as external factors, such as the situational context in which the social input is embedded. Mental representations serve to elicit both behavioral and emotional responses to social input, in effect serving as cues to these responses. After a mental representation has formed from social stimuli, it is stored in memory. However, it is effectively a biased memory, a product of selective encoding of stimulus cues and the mental representation that has formed from them.

Evidence suggests that, over time and across similar social situations, mental representations tend to become associated with certain specific response patterns (e.g. receipt of social support cues appreciation gestures) (Dodge, Pettit, McClasky, & Brown, 1986). However, an additional process, aptly termed response evaluation, influences response choices as well. A given mental representation produces a variety of viable response options, such that response evaluation serves as the response selection phase of the process. Response evaluation involves evaluation of the acceptability of response options, such that the enacted response is the response deemed acceptable. Response evaluation can occur consciously or non-consciously, and is thought to grow in complexity with age and experience. Further, a number of factors may truncate this step in processing, such as strong emotion, physiological arousal, or altered psychophysiological states (such as inebriation), such that immediate gratification is favored over in-depth processing (Dodge, 1993). The final step in the process is enacting the chosen response. The response can manifest in a variety of ways, including verbalization, motor movement, physiological responses, or subsequent cognitive processing.

Perceived social support has been examined as a cognitive factor that influences social-information-processing. Lakey and Cassady (1990) hypothesize that perceptions of social support are a function of a "cognitive personality variable in which stable, organized beliefs about the quality of one's interpersonal relationships lead to biased interpretation and recall of social interactions". This is similar to the notion of schemata, or internal representations of our environment that influence our expectations of subsequent social interactions and influence our processing of those interactions. Baldwin (1992) describes them as "maps that help navigate the social world". Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason (1992) describe support schemata specifically as "individuals' perceptions of the supportiveness of others or knowledge structures whose content include information about the likelihood that others, in general, will be able or willing to meet one's needs for support." This description suggests that individuals develop cognitive traits (e.g. expectations, schema) based on experiences of social support in past relationships. That is, individuals who have supportive family relationships early in life develop positive support schemata such that they expect subsequent relationships to be supportive, while individuals who consistently experience early relationships as non-supportive are likely to develop negative support schemata, thus expecting subsequent relationships to be non-supportive. This notion fits with Bowlby's (1980) concept of internal working models of relationships, which holds that early relationship experiences result in the development of cognitive structures that impact processing of subsequent relationship events. In this case, early experiences of support, whether consistently present or absent, result in the individual developing working models of relationships in general being supportive or non-supportive, respectively. These working models, in turn, influence encoding, formation of representation, and response evaluation in subsequent support situations.

Research suggests that perceptions of support are just as important to outcomes as actual support (Wethington & Kessler, 1986), presumably because they in large measure determine the extent to which a given supportive behavior will actually be considered supportive by the recipient, rather than being considered insulting or hurtful (Beach, Fincham, Katz, & Bradbury, 1996). Working from literature on cognitive biases in depression, Lakey & Cassidy hypothesized that, in individuals with a tendency toward low perceived support, this cognitive personality variable would bias processing of social support in several important ways. Specifically, these cognitive biases would a) result in the supportive attempts of others being perceived as unhelpful, b) facilitate recall of past support that was perceived as unhelpful, and c) inhibit the recall of past support that was perceived as helpful (Lakey & Cassady, 1990). A series of studies found support for these hypotheses. Lakey and Cassady demonstrated that perceived social support was more closely associated with a number of cognitive personality variables (e.g. self-esteem, dysfunctional attitudes, and control beliefs) than to enacted support (support received from the environment). Further, students low in perceived support tended to perceive the supportive attempts of others as unhelpful and to recall fewer instances of supportive behavior as compared to students high in perceived support. Pierce, Sarason, and Sarason (1992) also found that positive expectancies of support are associated with an evaluation of support being more helpful than negative expectancies of support.

Additional studies support the important role of perceived support in social support outcomes. Lepore, Evans, & Schneider (1991) conducted a study of changes in perceived social support as a function of overcrowding in off-campus housing. Through phone interviews, these researchers located individuals living in crowded conditions and followed them at two weeks, two months, and eight months following onset of living in these conditions. Results

demonstrated that at two months, perceived social support moderated the relationship between the stressor (crowding) and psychological functioning such that those with high perceived support experienced little change in psychological functioning over the two-month time span, whereas those with low perceived support experienced increased psychological distress. Changes in psychological functioning were also measured at eight months following onset of living in crowded conditions. After this lengthy period of exposure to overcrowding, the function of perceived social support in relation to psychological functioning changed from moderating to mediating this relationship. Specifically, at eight months, perceived social support was greatly attenuated in the sample, presumably as a result of the stress of overcrowding, and accounted for increases in psychological distress.

Perceived support, and the information processing underlying individual differences in this construct, thus appear to be important in the outcome of social support in interpersonal relationships. In particular, individual differences appear to have an impact on how social support is processed, such that topographically similar instances of social support have the potential to produce quite different outcomes for different individuals. One construct that may help further illuminate these important individual differences is rejection sensitivity.

Rejection sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity is defined as the tendency to anxiously or angrily expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection. This construct has gained support as a cognitive-affective processing disposition that influences the manner in which individuals high in rejection sensitivity (HRS) experience interpersonal interactions. Downey and Feldman (1996) demonstrated that HRS individuals endorsed feeling rejected following experimentally manipulated ambiguous rejecting feedback, whereas individuals low in rejection sensitivity

(LRS) did not feel rejected, suggesting a tendency in HRS individuals to read rejection into ambiguous situations. Further, HRS individuals demonstrated an increased likelihood to attribute hurtful intent to their partner's negative behavior (such as being distant or inattentive). Further, rejection sensitivity was found to have unique ability to predict attributions of hurtful intent to negative partner behavior when considered with other close constructs such as social anxiety and avoidance, neuroticism, attachment style, and self-esteem.

The development of rejection sensitivity in an individual is conceptualized in much the same way as that of perceived support, such that sensitivity to rejection develops as a function of internal needs and social history (please see previous sections on social cognition). Using Bowlby's (1980) language to describe this, early experiences of relationships are internalized as internal working models, or schemas, of these types of relationships. These models are a function of an efficient cognitive system that utilizes such cognitive structures to facilitate processing of subsequent, similar information. In this way, internal working models of relationships serve as a sort of template of relationships in general, and influence expectations and perceptions of subsequent relationships.

According to this theory, individuals who experience rejection in response to expressed needs in early relationships will tend to develop internal working models of relationships as being rejecting. In this way, rejection sensitive individuals will tend to be sensitive to social cues denoting rejection – they expect rejection as a consequence of their internal working models and will thus be primed to attend to such cues (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Indeed, a number of studies demonstrate that individuals tend to seek out or selectively attend to schema-confirming information (confirmation bias) as opposed to information contradicting one (Johnston, 1996, Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). In the case of rejection, this would occur as a function of selectively

attending to cues consistent with rejection, perceiving ambiguous stimuli or interpreting ambiguous information as rejecting, and showing biased recall favoring rejecting information. Thus, as a function of this biased cognitive processing that both stems from and supports a rejecting internal working model of relationships, subsequent social information is more likely to be interpreted as rejecting. Thus, rejection becomes a readily accessible construct, and opposing constructs, such as acceptance, become difficult to access.

The case of rejection sensitivity, then, points out at once the advantages and disadvantages of cognitive structures such as internal working models. While such constructs are responsible for making efficient the processing of a vast amount of stimuli, they simplify by sifting out information that is irrelevant or inconsistent with themselves. In this way, they are self-maintaining and biased, favoring confirmation over accuracy, to the extent that they may become rigid and inflexible in their application to contradictory stimuli. The implications for HRS individuals are vast. These individuals are to operate under a system biased to seek out evidence of rejection in interpersonal relationships, thus potentially preventing these individuals from fully experiencing acceptance. Further, as the definition suggests, rejection sensitive individuals are likely to have strong reactions to perceived rejection. While these overreactions may be the product of perceiving rejection where no rejection occurred, the negativity of such overreactions may be sufficient to bring on subsequent rejection. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the negative overreactions of HRS individuals to perceived rejection, in many cases where no actual rejection occurred, lead to rejection.

A great deal of research exists to support the notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy in the relationships of rejection sensitive individuals. Overreactions enacted by HRS individuals have been found to manifest as hostility (Downey & Feldman, 1996, Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, &

Shoda, 1999), relationship aggression (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000, Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998, Downey, Lebolt, Rincon, & Freitas, 1998), reduced supportiveness (Ayduk, May, Downey, & Higgins, 2003) and reduced closeness and relationship satisfaction (Downey & Feldman, 1996, Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). Such overreactions have a significant impact on the relationships in which they occur, with findings suggesting declines in satisfaction for both partners and an increase in conflictual interactions (Downey et al., 1998, Downey & Feldman, 1996), as well as increased rejection by the partner (Downey et al., 1998).

Upon consideration of the manner in which rejection sensitivity is theorized to develop, namely as a mental representation of relationships that forms as a consequence of early experiences of rejection, rejection sensitivity seems closely linked to perceived support. Indeed, one could go as far as to say that individuals who have low perceived support, which has been discussed as a mental representation of relationships that forms as a consequence of early non-supportive experiences, are rejection sensitive. This argument is based on the assumption that not being supported in relationships when needs for support are expressed is synonymous with rejection. This argument makes sense in terms of much rejection sensitivity literature that has examined ambiguous cues of rejection. While lack of support might not be a sufficiently strong cue to be considered an obvious rejection, it seems plausible that it might be considered ambiguous and therefore likely to be interpreted as rejection by those sensitive to this possibility.

The equivocal and sometimes negative association between social support and positive outcomes, however, highlights another potential way that rejection sensitivity factors into social support. While social support is usually considered a *positive* relationship exchange, it is possible that in some cases it is interpreted differently by the recipient. In particular, we might suspect that those with a cognitive bias to perceive others negatively or to attribute their intent to harm or

insult would do the same in the context of social support. Rejection sensitivity is potentially such as bias. Thus, those who anxiously expect and readily perceive rejection in the actions of others might read this even into positively intended behaviors, such as social support.

Social support might be interpreted as rejecting in a variety of ways. For example, social support in the form of directive advice might be interpreted by the RS individual as suggesting that he or she is not capable or sufficiently intelligent to consider his or her own solutions. Advice might also be interpreted as suggesting that the giver of support considers him or herself to be in a superior position, and therefore qualified to advise the RS recipient in his or her own affairs. Emotionally supportive statements might also be interpreted as rejecting, with the giver of support seen as ignoring or minimizing one's distress or attempting to placate rather than to help.

In the current study, it is proposed that social support is sometimes interpreted as rejecting and responded to with negativity, and that this may be more likely for those high in rejection sensitivity than for those low in rejection sensitivity. The hypothesized effect of RS is based on the expectation that RS will influence the "construct accessibility" of rejection. Constructs such as schema or internal working models have been discussed previously as residual cognitive structures or templates, built from consistent, similar experiences that come to influence the perception of subsequent similar stimuli (Bargh & Tota, 1988). Construct accessibility refers to the differential ability of such constructs to influence perception depending on their frequency of use. In the current context, this leads to the expectation that the more frequently or recently a given construct such as rejection is used, or *accessed*, in the processing of information within a given domain, the more readily accessible that construct is likely to be in the future; that is, the less stimulus energy will be required to access it again (Bargh &

Pietromonaco, 1982) and a larger array of stimulus features will be perceived as instances of it. Further, constructs high in accessibility, or those that are chronically accessible, may be activated automatically, without conscious processing (Bargh, 1982).

Rejection sensitivity as described previously may be viewed as an example of such a construct that could become activated, or accessed, within the context of help-seeking. Those who are high in rejection sensitivity, by definition, are likely to possess chronically accessible constructs involving an expectation of being rejected when asking for help. Thus, in situations where social support is relevant, this construct has a high probability of being activated, causing the rejection sensitive individual to assign a high probability to the likelihood that useful support will not be forthcoming and that a rejecting response is likely. Thus, the rejection sensitive individual, when placed in a social support situation, might be expected to withdraw (Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001) or to engage in any number of other overreactions that have been associated with rejection sensitivity, such as hostility (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and reduced supportiveness (Ayduk et al., 2003). In addition, with increasing instances of a rejection construct being activated, the rejection construct is likely to apply to a broader range of stimuli – this likely accounts for findings demonstrating that ambiguous social situations are reacted to by the rejection sensitive individual as though they were rejecting. We predict that rejection sensitivity as a chronically accessible construct may govern the processing of ostensibly positive exchanges, such as social support, as well. Advice is, as discussed earlier, inherently ambiguous, possessing the potential to threaten or affirm the self, depending on how it is interpreted. Accordingly, a task designed to index degree of threat, such as the lexical decision task as it is used in this study, should manifest the differences between high and low rejection sensitive individuals. If true, it would suggest one way that rejection sensitivity exerts a negative impact

on perceived support. As a function of the biased processing that is a function of rejection sensitivity, RS individuals are likely to perceive less support in their interpersonal relationships and moreover, to perceive supportive behaviors as actually rejecting.

Rejection sensitivity and SEM processes

Rejection sensitivity might cause a bias in favor of perceiving social support as rejecting. If so, this tendency may be relevant for understanding reactions to advice, and may supplement predictions based on the SEM model regarding reactions to advice in high and low relevance areas. If rejection sensitivity makes individuals more sensitive to threat in their environment, one would expect that HRS individuals would be more attentive to comparison threat and more reactive to it. So, if social support can be seen as evidence that the giver is somehow better than the recipient, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that HRS individuals will be particularly likely to react to this threat. In addition, it is possible that, for the HRS individual, the social comparisons that may be induced by receiving social support carry more than threat to self-evaluation because they may be interpreted as being rejecting as well. Thus, where social comparison situations have implications for self-evaluation in all individuals, they potentially could have more meaning for HRS people. Baldwin (1994) describes this well as it relates to the internal working model of rejection, "the sense of self, including inference processes for self-evaluation, can be derived from well-learned scripts of interpersonal evaluation". So, a well-learned script for rejection potentially has implications for self-evaluation. "A person might learn …that failures" (or inadequacies) "tend to lead to criticism and rejection by significant others, and this expectation will shape his or her evaluations of self".

Literature in the area of social comparison supports this view of rejection sensitivity. Social comparison literature has grown from Festinger's (1954) assertion that

there is an inherent drive in man to "evaluate his opinions and abilities". This theory broadly states that humans are motivated to gain information about the self within the environment, and that this information about the self is often relative, or defined in terms of information about others. In effect, information about how we measure in regards to a given trait or characteristic is informed by how others measure in terms of that trait or characteristic. Thus, I might wonder about my clinical or research abilities as a fifth year graduate student of a clinical psychology program, and look to the clinical and research accomplishments of other fifth year clinical students to provide me with that information. Inherent to social comparison, then, is the tendency to compare ourselves with close others – that is, others who are similar to us in various ways. If I am curious about my fifth year clinical student abilities, it does not make much sense for me to compare myself to a first year medical student, as this comparison does not yield relevant information.

Specific literature has addressed what conditions prompt individuals to engage in social comparison. One factor in particular that is consistently associated with social comparison is uncertainty (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999, Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). Conditions of stress, novelty, or competition appear to motivate attempts to gain information about the self through comparison with others (Stapel & Tesser, 2001). Presumably, social comparison occurs as a mechanism for reducing uncertainty about the self. Similarly, traits associated with uncertainty, such as depression, neuroticism, and self-esteem, have been found to be associated with social comparison tendencies (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999, Campbell, 1990).

People who are high in rejection sensitivity have been shown to be defensive in the face of perceived rejection (studies showing hostility, self-fulfilling prophecy). It is likely that rejection sensitivity, by definition, is a trait variable that is associated with a high level of

uncertainty. More specifically, people who are said to be rejection sensitive likely experience a great deal of uncertainty, specifically in terms of whether they will be rejected in interpersonal interactions. Thus, for these individuals, social situations become associated with a sense of unrest. Social comparison has been found to be associated with uncertainty about the self, presumably because the information gained as a result of comparisons yields information about the self that reduces uncertainty (Festinger, 1954). Thus, one might expect that rejection sensitivity is associated with higher levels of social comparison in terms of making sense of the uncertainty associated with anticipated rejection. In this way, rejection sensitivity is perhaps similar to other dispositions associated with uncertainty, like self-esteem, depression, and neuroticism.

If rejection sensitivity is associated with increased social comparison, what implication might this have for self-evaluation maintenance? If rejection sensitivity serves to make an individual more disposed to social comparison, then that individual should be more likely to show SEM effects than an individual low in rejection sensitivity. While rejection sensitivity and SEM have not been examined as they relate to one another specifically, it is possible to examine their literatures separately to explore the possibility of a link between them. What is perhaps most relevant is the reactions rejection sensitive individuals have to perceived rejection in interpersonal relationships. Several studies have demonstrated that RS individuals tend to respond to perceived rejection with hostility (Downey & Feldman, 1996, Purdie & Downey, 2000), relationship aggression (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000), and reduced closeness (Downey & Feldman, 1996, Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). In terms of SEM adjustments, these reactions could perhaps best be considered as adjusting the closeness of the relationship to

less close. However, as these studies were not conducted within the context of the SEM or social support, it remains an interesting question how rejection sensitivity impacts these constructs.

The proposed study

The above treatment of social support, rejection sensitivity, and self-evaluation processes suggests a plausible relationship among these variables. I suspect that HRS individual's sensitivity to rejection will influence the outcome of social support from their partner, resulting in more negative perceptions of, and emotional and behavioral responses to, support from a romantic partner than will be true for LRS individuals. This negative response will manifest in both conscious and unconscious ways. I also anticipate a relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-evaluation processes, such that HRS individuals will be more likely to engage in social comparison than those low in rejection sensitivity. This will have significant implications for how self-evaluation maintenance interacts with rejection sensitivity to impact social support outcomes. Taking from what is known of HRS individuals' heightened response to rejection, it may be the case that these individuals will react more negatively to being given advice in both self-relevant and non-self-relevant areas than low rejection sensitive (LRS) individuals. Thus, HRS individuals may respond as though threatened, independent of relevance condition, such that relevance condition and rejection sensitivity interact. Alternatively, differences between HRS and LRS individuals might manifest themselves by prompting HRS individuals to respond more extremely to the ambiguous threat of advice in the high relevance condition. This is, again, an interaction, albeit of a different nature than the first. Finally, it is possible that rejection sensitivity would produce a main effect on reaction times, resulting in condition effects that are largely unchanged between HRS and LRS individuals, but with different mean levels for HRS relative to LRS individuals.

Thus, this study brings together several components that potentially impact social support outcomes. It extends the rejection sensitivity literature by examining it within the context of positive relationship exchanges (social support), and examining it as a variable that may dispose an individual to increased incidences of social comparison or self-evaluation threat, which in turn may influence the receipt of social support.

Measurement issues

The discussion of the primary variables under study, social comparison in particular, has focused heavily on processes going on largely outside conscious awareness. This necessarily has implications for measurement of dependent variables of interest, such that it becomes necessary to determine a method of measurement that will reflect these underlying processes. While self-report measures are convenient and often useful tools in psychological research, due to their reliance on reporting of factors within conscious awareness, they are not ideal. One must assume in using a self-report measure to study a given phenomenon that the individual responding is keenly and accurately aware of that phenomenon to the point that their self-report is unbiased. However, as Greenwald et al. (2002) describe, there are two general classes of factors that potentially interfere with accurate self-report. Response factors refer to an individual's willingness to report accurately on oneself, which may be influenced by factors such as self-presentation and demand characteristics. Introspective limits account for the notion that, due to a lack of subjective awareness of the many factors influencing processing of a given domain, participants are limited in their ability to accurately indicate a true score on a related self-report measure.

A great deal of evidence supports the notion that information processing occurs both implicitly and explicitly; however, because explicit processing is within subjective awareness, it

is the form of processing that can be reported through subjective means (i. e. self-report). However, implicit processing has been found to exert a substantial influence on behavioral outcomes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995) and explicit and implicit measures of the same construct have been found to yield differential results (Greenwald. Banaji, Rudman, Farnham, Nosek, & Mellott, 2002, Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000, Greenwald & Farnham, 2000).

Implicit measures

Implicit measures are used to examine processes outside of conscious awareness. These types of measures provide a valuable alternative to self-report in providing a means of examining the non-conscious processes underlying a given phenomenon without activating the various biases and heuristics inherent in conscious processing. In particular, implicit measures allow for a glimpse of more transient, automatic reactions to a given stimulus, while self-report often provides an index of more stable, accessible, and consciously constructed attitudes or reactions (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Thus, while a given individual may express awareness of the origin of these attitudes or reactions, they will likely be expressing only what they are *consciously* privy to. Implicit measures allow the researcher some ability to follow implicit, or non-conscious, determinants of behavior.

In the current investigation, a lexical decision task is utilized to assess implicit reactions to advice. This approach allows for access to non-conscious processes underlying evaluative reactions to advice from a romantic partner that are not subject to the biases of self report outlined above. Additionally, implicit measures may tap more accurately into transient shifts in self-evaluation than self-report based on recall of emotions would likely accomplish.

Alternative measures

LIWC. While implicit measures give the researcher a view into internal processes that occur beyond the eye of awareness, they alone do not speak to how these internal processes influence outcomes. If the idea is that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive outcomes are determined in part by non-conscious processes, then it is necessary to employ measures to demonstrate such outcomes in order to know how non-conscious processes and outcomes are associated. Indeed, the wealth of studies demonstrating both that implicit and explicit processes differ only slightly and that they differ a great deal, suggests that explicit measures should likely be present in order to disambiguate the association between implicit measure and outcome.

One behavioral manifestation of internal processes is language. That psychological states or processes can be inferred from language is not a new idea in psychology. Certain DSM-IV criteria for psychological disorders depend on language. Disorganized thought, a criterion for schizophrenia, is inferred from disorganized speech characterized by derailment, tangentiality, and language that is incomprehensible. Racing thoughts, a symptom of mania, are discerned from pressured speech. Sigmund Freud believed that unconscious processes were sometimes given voice in "slips of the tongue". Thus, language provides a window into internal psychological and emotional states.

However straightforward this assertion about language, research into how psychological processes manifest in the spoken or written word has been sporadic. Researchers have sampled only a portion of numerous factors as they relate to language, such as gender, age, therapeutic change, and personality. An additional challenge has been the development of text analysis programs that adequately assess relevant dimensions of language. Finally, the issue of language as a reliable and valid tool for measuring various factors deserves attention. Despite these

challenges, progress has been made and suggests that language is a useful tool with which to study psychological processes.

Linguistic characteristics have been analyzed using a variety of approaches in the literature. These approaches are characterized by three basic formats. Judge-based thematic content analysis involves the use of judges to identify the presence of critical thematic references in text samples on the basis of empirically derived coding systems. Word pattern analysis utilizes a bottom-up approach in detecting patterns of covariance between words. Word count strategies can be applied to both linguistic content and style and are based on the assumption that inferences can be made regarding psychological processes from language over and above literal meaning and semantic content. For a review of existing text analysis strategies, see Pennebaker, Mehl, & Neiderhoffer, 2003.

Psychometric properties of language as an indicator have been examined, with stability and consistency of word use examined over short and long-term time intervals are encouraging. Gleser et al. (1959) found an average correlation of 0.51 for 21 language categories between 2-minute intervals. Pennebaker and King (1999) examined writing samples in a variety of formats, including diaries, college written assignments, and journal entries across years. Cronbach alpha coefficients across 72 language variables within each category of writing was .59. Linguistic style has been found to be related to a variety of trait variables, and found to change reliably with age regardless of writing format (Pennebaker & Stone, 2002), to vary by gender (Pennebaker & King, 1999, Goldshmidt & Weller, 2000) even in terms of brain activity (Baxter et al., 2003), and to be associated with a number of individual difference variables such as positive affect, neuroticism, and need for cognition (Pennebaker & King, 1999).

In addition to more stable characteristics of language, some aspects of language have been shown to change as a function of situation. In a fascinating study of the power of the situation on language, Pennebaker and Lay (2002) used text analysis to examine the speeches of Rudy Giuliani over his eight-year term as mayor of New York, a time period which included the occurrence of the bombing of the World Trade Center as well as several difficult events in his personal life. Following the occurrence of such personal difficulties as being diagnosed with prostate cancer and divorcing his wife, he was found to use almost triple the amount of first person singular pronouns, slightly more positive words, and more simple language than prior to these events. This change was associated with a change in the perception of the public, namely that he was becoming a warm person. His language in press conferences was found to change again following the bombing of the World Trade Center in becoming more complex and involving increased use of both more positive and negative emotion words. Additional research has found language to vary as a function of formal versus informal settings, social exchange partner, and psychotherapy (Pennebaker, Mayne & Francis, 1997).

Thus, language has the potential to contain a great deal of information that is reflective of internal processes of the individual who communicates it. Given the present study's goal of understanding reactions to advice from a partner, language becomes a potentially important method of capturing such reactions. In particular, reactions to social support may be reflected in word use, as might the behavioral overreactions that typify the response of HRS individuals to rejection. These possibilities are examined in the current study. In particular, participants in the present study were invited to give advice to their partners after receiving advice from the partner. The prediction that rejection sensitivity is likely to influence how advice from the partner is received has the potential to manifest in the language that participants use to frame advice to

their partners. This possibility is examined with the help of a text analysis program called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (Pennebaker & Francis, 1999).

Additional measures that are used to disambiguate implicit findings related to receipt of advice include participant self-report of emotional reactions to advice and participant ratings of advice provided by their partner. In much the same way as language, such measures likely shed light on how implicit processes related to receipt of social support influence outcomes. They speak to what is present in the subjective awareness of the recipient, thus providing information about how the participant understands or experiences social support.

Specific predictions

1. HRS individuals will be more likely than LRS individuals to rate advice from their partner more negatively along a variety of dimensions, including helpfulness, supportiveness, and tone; this will be true for both high and low relevance conditions. Accordingly, there will be a main effect of rejection sensitivity on ratings of advice.
2. HRS individuals will be more likely to endorse engaging in social comparisons than LRS individuals.
3. In response to advice from their partner, individuals in the high-relevance condition will tend to demonstrate more slowed reaction times than those in the low-relevance condition to positive words associated with intelligence and competence in the lexical decision task. The effect will be most pronounced for the positively valenced words because negative words often produce slower reaction times overall regardless of experimental condition. Accordingly, there will be a main effect of relevance on lexical decision-making response times for positively valenced words. In addition, there will be an interaction of relevance by rejection sensitivity, at least for positive words, reflecting

the differential impact of the relevance manipulation for high versus low rejection sensitive individuals.

4. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity will tend to use more negatively valenced words in the advice they give to their partner. This result will be amplified in the high relevance condition. This will produce an interaction of rejection sensitivity and condition in predicting valence of advice given to partner.

5. Tendency to compare will account for (or mediate) the effect of the interaction of rejection sensitivity and condition on reported emotional experience. That is, when tendency to compare is controlled, the interaction of rejection sensitivity and condition will be reduced to non-significance.

6. Tendency to compare will not account for (or mediate) the main effect of rejection sensitivity on reported emotional experience. That is, when tendency to compare is controlled, the main effect of RS will not be reduced to non-significance.

7. Negative reaction to partner advice will mediate the effects of condition and rejection sensitivity on valence of advice given to partner.

Method

Participants

Participants were couples, one of whom was recruited from the research pool of a large southeastern university. Participants who were part of the research pool gained course credit for their participation in the study, while their partner was paid five dollars for participating. Because males and females were not recruited independently their data could not be treated as independent observations. Accordingly, all analyses were conducted separately for males and females. Where results of these analyses suggested that gender might be a variable for consideration, analyses were run on the entire sample examining gender as a factor. These analyses were overpowered because the degrees of freedom were double the number of couples. Accordingly, they provided a sensitive test of the possibility that gender was a significant moderator of observed effects. Because gender was not found to be a significant factor in these analyses, it is safe to assume that gender would not emerge as a significant moderator in more stringent tests and so no further examination of gender as a moderator was pursued.

Materials

Self report measures

Demographics

This measure provided relevant information about participants, such as age, gender, race, as well as information about the relationship in which they were involved at the time of the study, including length and exclusivity.

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (Downey & Feldman, 1996)

This measure operationalizes rejection sensitivity as involving both general expectations of rejection and anxiety about its occurrence. As such, it involves 18 hypothetical situations involving parents, peers, and romantic partner, and in which rejection is a possible outcome. Participants respond along two dimensions: degree of anxiety about the anticipated outcome and expectations of the outcome as being acceptance or rejection. A Likert-type scale is used for both dimensions, with 1 representing the lowest degree of anxiety and least likelihood acceptance (most rejection) and 6 representing the maximum degree of anxiety and expectation of acceptance (least rejection). Scoring involves weighting the expected likelihood of rejection by degree of anxiety over its occurrence.

The RSQ has been found to correlate with other aspects of rejection sensitivity, namely ready perceptions of rejection in ambiguous social situations and overreactions to perceived rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and has demonstrated high internal reliability (.83) and test-retest reliability (.83). In a separate sample, the RSQ was re-administered 4 months following initial administration, and scores correlated at .78. Similar values were obtained for the current sample (α=.86 males, α=.85 females). Data from the RSQ was used in a variety of ways in the study. Analyses with reaction time data required that the measure be dichotomized into "low" and "high" rejection sensitive groups. Because couples were recruited, and thus members of the dyad were not independent of one another, analyses were run for each gender separately. Thus, the splitting of the continuous rejection sensitivity variable into groups via median split was done within each gender rather than for the sample as a whole.

Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999)

This measure was designed to measure individual differences in social comparison orientation. The INCOM consists of 11 items (two are reverse scored) describing statements of social comparison, and participants are asked to rate on a scale of one to five the extent to which they agree with each statement. The scale was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis, which indicated that a two-factor (labeled ability and opinions) solution provided the best fit, but that a one-factor solution was also viable. The scale was found to have high internal consistency (α=.83) and adequate temporal stability, although the authors note that the measure is sensitive to situational factors and would thus be expected to change somewhat. Reliability in the current sample was acceptable (α=.70 males, α=.80 females).

Questions related to anticipation of and perceptions of advice

As these measures are similar, they will be described together. These measures, the first assessing participants' anticipatory reactions to advice (Anticipation Questions) and the second assessing their emotional reactions to the advice once it is received (Perception Questions), were developed by the investigators specifically for this study. Questions related to anticipation of advice involved gauging the participant's predictions regarding certain characteristics of the advice to be received (e.g. the tone in which it would be delivered, how helpful it might be, what the content might be) as well as characteristics of the partner in giving the advice (e.g. his or her thoughts about the participants ability to deal with the problem area, his or her willingness to help). The questions related to perceptions of advice are nearly identical to the anticipation questions, except that they are framed to pertain to advice received rather than advice anticipated.

Reliability analysis for the anticipation questions revealed that the third item impaired acceptable reliability. Thus, it was removed, and an index of anticipatory reactions was developed that included the remaining items (α=.74 males, α=.69 females). The same item was problematic for the perception questions, so that the index of perceptions of advice was derived with the exclusion of the third item. Reliability was acceptable (α=.81 males, α= .79 females)

PANAS items

Additionally, the set of perception questions includes emotion words taken from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) in order to gain a sense of emotional reactions to advice. At the conception of the PANAS, these words were found through a factor analysis of 60 emotion words to have substantial loadings on either the positive or negative emotion factor and minimal loadings on the other. For the purposes of the current study, the following instruction sets will be used: "Please indicate using the provided scale how much you feel the following in response to your partner's advice" for emotional reactions to advice. While it would have been theoretically interesting to assess change in emotional reactions pre- and post-advice, this would have required placement of emotion words before the reaction time task and potentially led to priming effects. Reliability for the positive words in the current sample was strong (α=.89 males, α=.86 females). Reliability for negative emotion words was also acceptable (α=.78, α=.83 females).

Lexical Decision Task

This task involved a visual presentation on the computer screen of several letter strings that were either words or non-words. Participants responded by pressing a key with their left index finger if a non-word was presented, and pressing a key with their right index finger if a word was presented. The words presented to participants were either neutral (e.g. building) or

valenced words related to intelligence or competence. Further, both negatively and positively-valenced intelligence and competence words were presented. Within the neutral word group, words were either filler neutral words, or words matched for length and frequency of occurrence in the human lexicon. A fixation point in the center of the computer monitor preceded each letter string for a duration of 250 ms, and the inter-trial interval subsequent to each response and the appearance of the fixation point for the next trial was 750 ms. Reaction times to words and non-words were recorded by the computer for later analysis.

The presence of outliers is a frequently encountered problem in reaction time research (Ratcliff, 1993). While outliers are likely to be present throughout the distribution, those that overlap with normal data cannot usually be identified and thus dealt with. There are a variety of methods for dealing with outliers. Short reaction times, or those occurring to the left of the distribution of normal responses, are usually rare and easy to identify. Those that extend to the right of the distribution (long reaction times) are more commonly encountered and are more likely to be confused with long reaction times that do reflect the processes under study. To use the language of Ratcliff, they "hide in the tail". Care in dealing with these types of outliers is of great importance, as they have the potential to greatly impact the parameters of the distribution.

Based on the recommendation by Ratcliff that cutoff scores be used to trim reaction time data, the following procedures were used in this study. The first trimming procedure involved calculating the accuracy of individual participants in responding correctly to the LDT task. Three participants were less than 80% accurate and were thus trimmed from the study. The remaining reaction times were subjected to a z-score transformation within valence (i.e. positive, negative, neutral), and reaction times that fell at 2 standard deviations above or below the mean were trimmed from the sample. After being trimmed, individual reaction times were averaged within

wordtype yielding an average reaction time score for each of the following word categories: general neutral words, positive intelligence words, positive self-efficacy words, negative intelligence and self-efficacy words, and neutral words matched to valenced words by length and frequency of occurrence.

Advice ratings

Participants were asked to rate each advice comment provided by their partner using a Likert-type scale. Advice rating dimensions for each advice statement include helpfulness, how the comment made the participant feel (not good at all to very good), and how comfortable they were with the comment. Each advice comment was read aloud by the experimenter, participants rated each comment along the above dimensions, and the experimenter recorded the ratings.

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC: Pennebaker & Francis, 1993)

The LIWC is a text analysis program that assesses the degree to which a sample of writing contains specific language characteristics, such as emotional and cognitive words. Within a given sample of text, the LIWC calculates the total number of words, sentences, percentages of unique words, and dictionary words. The sums of each of the scales are converted to percentage of total words in the sample.

The program is comprised of two basic parts, a text processing module and an external support dictionary. The dictionary file is composed of over 2000 words and wordstems that are assigned to one or more of 61 subdictionaries or scales. Each subdictionary is composed of groups of related words that tap a particular dimension of language, such as negative emotion or positive emotion. The dictionaries were developed by groups of judges, Roget's Thesaurus, dictionaries, emotion and other types of questionnaires, as well as analyses of words used by previous samples of participants writing about emotional and control topics. Once lists of words

were compiled, at least three judges independently determined if each word should go into a given category. This process involved two judgment stages. A given word's inclusion into a broad category required agreement between at least two judges. Then three new judges evaluated the word within the broad category (e.g. all negative emotion words) and assigned the word to one or more subcategories. Reliabilities among judges were computed at each stage of evaluation. Percent agreement among the three judges was 93.1% and 98.1% for each stage respectively.

Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SADS; Watson & Friend, 1969)

This measure assesses distress or anxiety and avoidance of social situations. It is comprised of a total of 27 true-false items, 14 of which assess nervousness or anxiety in public social situations or situations with unfamiliar people and 14 statements pertaining to avoidance of social situations. Psychometric properties were evaluated following development of the scale and found to be adequate, with a test-retest reliability of .78 over a one-month interval. This measure has been used to control for social anxiety in studies of rejection sensitivity (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and it is for this purpose that it was included in the present study. Reliability was adequate, and similar for both females and males (α=.86).

Quality of Marriage Index (QMI: Norton, 1983)

The QMI is a widely used measure of relationship satisfaction. It is comprised of 6 relationship descriptors (e.g. "we have a good relationship" and "my relationship with my partner makes me happy") and a Likert-type scale that assesses agreement with each descriptors. Reliability for the current sample was acceptable (α=.89 males, α=.90 females).

Post-experimental questions

This measure consists of 11 questions designed to be read by the experimenter in an interview format. The questions were developed specifically for this study to serve as a validity check, to gauge reactions to tasks involved in the study, and to assess various characteristics of the participant's dating relationship.

Procedure

Participants presented as couples and were kept together as experimenters explained the purpose of the study. Following completion of consent forms, couples were separated into different rooms in the lab such that each member of the dyad worked with one investigator throughout the duration of the study. The procedure for each member of the couple was the same.

Participants were first asked to decide on two areas of high personal relevance for them, and two areas of low relevance. High relevance areas were defined by the experimenter as those in which the participant a) feels more experienced than their partner, b) usually makes decisions, and c) desires to have control. A general list of potential areas was provided, with examples such as career, money, and health. They also rated on a Likert-type scale their and their partner's expertise in each area, which were checked by the investigator to ensure that they matched the relevance condition (i.e. areas of high relevance being areas in which the participant was more expert, those of low relevance areas in which the partner was more expert). When the ratings did not match in this way, relevance was explained in more detail by the experimenter and participants were asked to provide new relevance areas.

After selection of areas and expertise ratings, participants were prompted to consider current or potential future problems in each area, specifically problems that would not involve

their partner. For each problem given, participants rated on a scale of 1-7 in terms how urgent it was that they avoid or be ready for the problem, the controllability of the problem, and the likelihood that it would be a problem within the next couple of months. If this last rating fell below 10%, the participant was asked to provide a new problem. All relevance areas, problems, and ratings provided by the participant were recorded by the experimenter.

Following collection of this data, participants were told that the problems would be given to their partner for the partner to provide advice and support. After being told this by the experimenter, participants were asked to complete the Anticipation Questions, as well as the demographic questionnaire, the RSQ, and the INCOM, which were on computer. While the participant completed these measures, the experimenter left the room and developed five directive advice statements and one support statement for each problem listed by the participant.

Upon returning to the room, the experimenter set up the practice trials for the Lexical Decision Task, which the participant completed. The investigator then read the advice ostensibly provided by the participant's partner. Immediately following delivery of advice, the participant completed the lexical decision task (LDT) on the computer and the Perception Questions. The experimenter then went through the advice statements one at a time, and participants rated the advice in terms of its helpfulness, and the extent to which the statement evoked good feelings and comfort. These ratings were recorded by the experimenter. Participants were informed that they would have the opportunity to provide their partner with advice, and were provided with the problems listed by their partner, which were obtained by the experimenter when they left the room previously. Participants verbally gave advice, which was recorded by the experimenter. Participants also completed other questionnaires relevant to the study, namely the SADS and the QMI.

Following the protocol involving advice, a positive mood induction was conducted in which participants were asked to provide lists of the following: things their partner does that are most helpful to them, that make them feel good about the partner, and things they would tell other couples about what makes for a good relationship. Finally, post-experimental questions for evaluation of the study and to ensure dating status were administered. Participants were debriefed and relevant paperwork for course credit was completed. Participants receiving cash were paid five dollars upon completion.

Hypothesis Testing

Analyses examined the influence of rejection sensitivity on participants' anticipatory reactions and expectations of advice and support from their partner, as well as emotional responses to that advice. Further, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and tendency toward social comparison was examined. All analyses involving self-report data were conducted in a multiple regression format. Where moderation and mediation were relevant, the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed. Additionally, level of threat to self-evaluation, as captured by reaction times to negatively and positively valenced intelligence and competence words, as a function of relevance and level of rejection sensitivity were examined in an ANOVA format. Finally, behavioral reactions to advice from the partner in the form of advice to the partner, examined by the LIWC program and codings of advice, support, and helpfulness, were examined through the use of MANOVAs with word categories as dependent variables.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Sample Characteristics

The initial sample, including pilot data, included 276 individuals (138 couples). Data from the eight pilot couples was collected prior to the start of the current study to refine study procedures. Fourteen couples were discarded because they endorsed dating for a shorter time period than the required three months, characterizing themselves as "friends", or because one partner endorsed dating other people during the course of the relationship (i.e. not dating exclusively). Thirteen additional couples were trimmed because experimenters suggested that there was a problem with their data. Examples of problems included being suspicious that the advice came from the experimenter rather than from their partner, or admitting that they were not actually dating at the end of the study. Thirteen additional people were trimmed due to missing computer questionnaire data or because they responded to reaction time data with less than 80% accuracy. This left a final usable sample of 100 men and 99 women.

Because all analyses were carried out separately for males and females, sample characteristics are presented separately for each gender in Table 1. Ages ranged from 17 to 24, with the highest proportion of both males and females falling in the 19-20-year-old range. The sample was comprised primarily of white individuals, with approximately 3% of individuals of either gender describing themselves as black and 3% as Asian. Additionally, 3% of the female sample endorsed being Native American, and 1% of males as Latina. The largest proportion of both males and females reported dating steadily and living within 60 miles of one another. The largest proportion of the sample reported having less than 30 contacts per month. Finally, a slight

majority of couples endorsed having dated one another less than 6 months (those who endorsed dating less than 3 months were trimmed at an earlier stage due to meeting exclusion criteria), with broadly similar proportions endorsing relationships between 7-12 months and 13-24 months in length.

Participants' age, race, and length and exclusivity of the current relationship were examined as they relate to rejection sensitivity. None were related in either males or females. These demographic variables were examined as they related to dependent variables of interest, namely anticipatory reactions, perceptions of advice, positive and negative affect, and reaction times. None were related in the female sample, while length of the relationship was negatively correlated with anticipation of advice and positive affect for males. Thus, length of the relationship was controlled for in males when analyses involved these variables.

Additional variables that were assessed as potential confounds included social anxiety as measured by the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale and relationship quality as measured by the Quality of Marriage Index. Relationship quality significantly correlated with negative affect and perceptions of advice for males and females, and with anticipations of advice for females. Thus, relationship quality was controlled for in regression analyses involving these variables. A significant positive correlation between social anxiety and rejection sensitivity was obtained for males (r=.249) and females (r=.269). Thus, social anxiety was controlled for in all analyses involving rejection sensitivity.

Anticipation and perception of advice

Participants' anticipatory reactions to their partners' advice, as reflected in their responses to the Anticipation Questions, were examined as they related to level of rejection sensitivity and relevance condition. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity (HRS) were expected

to endorse more negative (or less positive) expectations of their partners' impending advice than those low in rejection sensitivity (LRS). Further, this pattern of results was expected to differ for HRS and LRS individuals depending on the relevance condition. Analysis of moderation was conducted (Baron & Kenny, 1986), with anticipatory reactions regressed upon social anxiety, rejection sensitivity, relevance condition, and the product of these two variables. Further, because relationship length was significantly correlated with anticipatory reactions in males, and relationship quality was significantly correlated with anticipatory reactions in females, these variables were covaried out of analysis of moderation for the relevance gender. To diminish multicollinearity between first-order (rejection sensitivity) and higher order (product term) terms, rejection sensitivity was centered before conducting analyses of moderation (Aiken & West, 1991). Condition is a dichotomous variable and was not centered. Social anxiety, relevance condition and rejection sensitivity were entered at steps 1 and 2 (as well as length of relationship for males and relationship quality for females), followed by the product term (condition x rejection sensitivity) at step 3 (Table 5). The product term was non-significant in both the male and female sample (b_{males}=.096, $b_{females}$=.003, respectively), so that relevance did not moderate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and anticipation of advice. A significant main effect of rejection sensitivity was found for males (b=-.061, $\underline{p}\leq.05$), but not females (b=.018, non-significant). Thus, it appears that HRS males have more negative anticipations of advice from their partner than LRS males, independent of the relevance of the area in which advice is offered.

When condition and rejection sensitivity were examined as predictors of perceptions of advice, with social anxiety and relationship quality included as covariates, the product term was significant for males (b=.123, p≤05) but not females (b=.054, non-significant)(Figure 2). While relevance condition and rejection sensitivity exerted no significant main effects for females,

rejection sensitivity was a significant predictor of perceptions of advice in males (b= -.213, $p \leq .05$) and condition, a marginally significant predictor of perceptions of advice (b= -.294, $p = .07$) (Table 6).

Because the anticipation and perception questions were essentially the same in nature, and they were separated by the delivery of advice, they were analyzed as a within-subjects pre advice-post advice measure, along with social anxiety, rejection sensitivity, and condition as between-subjects factors. Only the within-subjects factor was significant for males and females, with both HRS and LRS individuals tending to endorse more negative anticipations of advice than perceptions of advice. Neither rejection sensitivity nor condition was a significant predictor of differential scores on anticipation and perceptions of advice.

Rejection sensitivity, SEM, and reactions to partner advice

Self-reported reactions

Reactions to receipt of advice included self-reported emotional reactions, implicit reactions as captured by reaction time data, and behavioral reactions as assessed through text analysis of advice given back to the partner. The hypothesis that self-reported emotional reactions to the receipt of advice from a partner would vary as a function of rejection sensitivity were examined in a multiple regression format. Specifically, rejection sensitivity was examined as a predictor of the following reactions to advice: ratings of helpfulness, comfort and good feeling, overall perceptions of advice, and positive and negative affect immediately following receipt of advice. It was predicted that the impact of rejection sensitivity on these variables would be moderated by relevance. Analysis of moderation was conducted separately for each type of reaction, which involved regressing type of reaction onto rejection sensitivity, condition, and their product term in steps.

The analysis involving positive affect following receipt of advice from the partner was slightly different for males and females. Namely, because length of the current relationship was significantly correlated with positive affect for males, length of relationship was controlled for in this group. When positive affect was regressed on length of relationship, social anxiety, rejection sensitivity, relevance condition, and the product term, the product term was significant for males ($b=.138$, $p\leq.05$), suggesting that relevance condition moderates the impact of rejection sensitivity on positive affect following receipt of advice (Figure 1). Further, rejection sensitivity exerted a significant main effect ($b= -.177$, $p\leq=.05$) and condition a marginal main effect ($b= -.286$, $p=.07$). No predictors of positive affect were significant for females (Table 7). When condition, rejection sensitivity, and their product were examined as predictors of negative affect, and social anxiety entered as a covariate, none were found to significantly predict negative affect in females (Table 8).

When helpfulness ratings were regressed on condition, rejection sensitivity, and their product, with social anxiety entered as a covariate, the product term for both males and females was non-significant, such that relevance condition did not moderate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and ratings of helpfulness for males or females. No significant main effects of rejection sensitivity or relevance were obtained (Table 9). When ratings of good feelings inspired by advice were regressed on these predictors, the product term was significant for males ($b=.226$, $p\leq.001$) but not females. Thus, condition moderated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and good feelings resulting from advice from the partner for males, but not females (Figure 3). In addition to the significant product term, rejection sensitivity exerted significant main effects for males ($b= -.345$, $p\leq.001$) but not females (Table 10). A similar pattern of results was obtained when comfort ratings were regressed on social anxiety, rejection sensitivity,

condition, and their product term (Table 11). The product term in this analysis was significant for males (b=.172, $p \leq .05$) (Figure 4) and non-significant for females. Further, rejection sensitivity exerted a significant main effect for males (b= -.336, $p \leq .01$) but not females.

While significant product terms indicate that the slopes of the regression lines for the two predictors are significantly different, it is important to examine in what manner the slopes differ from one another, and whether each slope differs significantly from zero. Aiken and West (1991) provide recommendations for explicating analyses of moderation via simple slopes analysis. This involves determining the simple slope for the interaction term by calculating the predicted values for the dependent variable of interest at values both one standard deviation above and below the mean value of the moderator. These slopes are then subjected to regression analyses in order to determine if they differ significantly from zero, and from one another. Thus, for each significant moderation analysis noted above, new variables were created that represented one standard deviation above and one below the mean of rejection sensitivity. The cross-products of each of these variables with condition were created. The following dependent variables, for which moderation was significant, were regressed on condition, the respective new variable, and the relevant cross product: perceptions of advice, positive affect, good feelings, and comfort. Parameter estimates of condition at each level (high and low) of rejection sensitivity indicate the degree of association between condition and the relevant dependent variable at this level of rejection sensitivity. T-tests of these slopes indicated whether they differed significantly from zero. Explication analyses were done only for males, as no significant moderations were found for females.

For perceptions of advice, the simple slope of relevance at low levels of rejection sensitivity was significantly different from zero (b=-.62, $p \leq .01$), while the simple slope of

relevance at high levels of rejection sensitivity did not differ significantly from zero (b=-.07, non-significant) (Figure 2). For positive affect, the simple slope of condition at low levels of rejection sensitivity significantly differed from zero (b=-.63, $p \leq .01$), while the simple slope of condition at high levels of rejection sensitivity did not differ significantly from zero. (b=.14, non-significant). A plot of the simple slopes can be found in Figure 1. The same pattern was found for comfort (Figure 4), as the simple slope of condition at low levels of rejection sensitivity was significantly different from zero (b=-.76, $p \leq .01$), while the simple slope of condition at high levels of rejection sensitivity was not significantly different from zero (b=.17, non-significant). Finally, for ratings of good feeling, the simple slope of condition at low rejection sensitivity was significantly different from zero (b=-.89, $p \leq .001$) while the simple slope of condition at high levels of rejection sensitivity was not significantly different from zero (b=.34, non-significant) (Figure 3). As shown, LRS individuals express a much broader range of affective reactions to advice, in terms of positive affect, good feelings, and comfort with advice than do HRS individuals. The pattern of slopes suggests that HRS individuals were relatively insensitive to relevance, and responded similarly whether the advice was given in an area of high personal relevance in which they expressed being more expert, or low in personal significance and in which they expressed having less expertise. In contrast, LRS individuals experienced much more positive reactions in the high relevance condition, and similar or more negative reactions in the low relevance condition.

Implicit Reactions

In addition to self-reported reactions to advice, implicit reactions were measured through participants' reaction times to negative and positive intelligence and competence words. HRS individuals were expected to manifest slower reaction times than LRS individuals to words

associated with intelligence and competence, independently of condition. This pattern was expected to be more pronounced, however, in the high relevance condition, such that an interaction was predicted as well. A 2 (high vs low relevance) x 2 (high vs low rejection sensitivity) x 3 (word type: positive, negative, neutral) mixed model ANOVA was utilized to examine these hypotheses, with between- subjects factors of relevance and rejection sensitivity, and the within-subjects factor of word type. Social anxiety was entered as a covariate due to its significant correlation with rejection sensitivity. Due to high standard deviations relative to mean reaction times within word type, reaction time data was log transformed. The assumption of sphericity was violated for females ($\chi 2 = 14.305$, $p \leq .001$), the more conservative Greenhouse-Geisser statistic was used to test for significance. Word-type (positive, negative, neutral) was significant for both males and females ($F_{males}=17.214$, $p \leq .0001$, $F_{females}=4.270$, $p \leq .05$). Post-hoc contrasts revealed significant reaction time differences between the positive word category and control-neutral word category for both males and females ($F_{males}=13.408$, $p \leq .0001$, $F_{females}=6.129$, $p \leq .05$) and between the negative word category and control-neutral word category for both groups ($F_{males}=31.806$, $p \leq .0001$, $F_{females}=7.993$, $p \leq 001$).

Finally, tests of between-subjects revealed a significant interaction between rejection sensitivity and condition for males ($F_{males}=3.950$, $p \leq .05$) and females ($F_{females}=5.599$, $p \leq .05$). Independent-samples t-tests were run within each word type to examine mean reaction time differences between high and low relevance conditions within LRS and HRS groups. For LRS males, differences in mean reaction times to negative (Figure 6), positive (Figure 5), and neutral (Figure 7) words between low and high relevance groups were significantly different ($t_{negative}= 1.984$, $p \leq .05$; $t_{positive}= -2.006$, $p \leq .05$; $t_{neutral}= -2.071$, $p \leq .05$). For LRS females, differences in mean reaction times to negative words between low and high relevance groups were significant

different (t=-2.078, p≤.05) (Figure 9), while differences in reaction times to positive (Figure 8) and neutral words (Figure 10) did not differ for low and high relevance groups. Within the HRS group, differences in mean reaction times between low and high relevance groups were non-significant for all word types for both males and females, suggesting that relevance condition did not impact reaction times in HRS individuals.

Although general neutral words account for the impact of individual differences on reaction time, a better control group for target words in the lexical decision task (LDT) are words that match the target group in terms of length and frequency of occurrence in the human lexicon. Additionally, given that positive and negative words tend to behave differently in the LDT, and are thus not necessarily comparable, separate analyses were conducted involving these differentially-valenced words, with their respective control groups consisting of neutral words matched for length and frequency of occurrence. Again, these analyses were run separately in males and females. For negative words, a significant main effect of word type (target versus matched-neutral word) was obtained for both males and females (F_{males}=28.472, $p \leq .0001$, $F_{females}$=9.823, $p \leq .01$). Examination of male and female group means suggested that reaction times to negative intelligence and competence words were consistently slower than reaction times to neutral matched words, which is consistent with typical LDT data. No significant interactions occurred between word type and either between-subjects variable, suggesting that neither rejection sensitivity nor condition interacted with word type to impact reaction times. However, a significant interaction between rejection sensitivity and relevance condition was obtained for males (F=4.614, p≤.05) and females (F=4.106, p≤.05). A plot of the interaction revealed that, for target negative words, HRS individuals reacted more slowly to negative words in the high relevance condition than in the low relevance condition. This pattern of results was

the opposite for LRS individuals, who reacted more slowly to negative words in the low relevance condition than the high relevance condition. The same overall pattern was found in the control neutral word category for negative words.

For positive words, a significant main effect of word type (target versus matched neutral word) was obtained for both males ($F=10.580$, $p\leq.01$) and a marginal main effect was obtained for females ($F=3.334$, $p=.07$). As with negative words, examination of male and female group means suggested that reaction times to positive intelligence and competence words were consistently slower than reaction times to neutral matched words, which is consistent with typical LDT data. In terms of between-subjects effects, a significant interaction between rejection sensitivity and relevance condition was obtained for females ($F=5.737$, $p\leq.05$), and a marginally significant interaction obtained for males ($F=3.269$, $p=.074$). A plot of the interaction revealed that, for target positive words, HRS females reacted more slowly to positive words in the high relevance condition than in the low relevance condition. As it did with negative words, this pattern of results reverses for LRS females, who reacted more slowly to positive words in the low relevance condition than the high relevance condition. The same overall pattern of results was obtained for males. Within the control neutral word category, HRS individuals in the high relevance condition were slower to react than they were in the low relevance condition, whereas LRS individuals were slower to react in the low relevance condition that the high relevance condition.

Although a pattern was expected to emerge in terms of reaction times to target positive and negative words, a pattern of reaction times to matched-control words was not anticipated. Differential reaction times to neutral-matched words suggested the possibility that condition or rejection sensitivity was impacting reaction times through a more general mechanism than

facilitation or inhibition of positively or negatively valenced words. In order to more sensitivity examine the extent to which reaction times to target words might be influenced by responding to the task in general, as opposed to valence in particular, positive and negative target words were regressed upon their respective matched-neutral words in separate regression analyses. The results illustrated that the proportion of variance accounted for in reaction times to positive target words by reaction times to matched-neutral words was approximately 78% for both groups, and for negative target and matched words was 65% for males and 55% for females. Thus, a significant proportion of variance in reaction times could be attributed to responding in general, and relatively little to valence specifically. Given that the residual variance could appropriately be considered to isolate the impact of valence of the target word on reaction times, regression analyses were run using the respective positive and negative residuals as the dependent variables, and condition, rejection sensitivity, and their product as predictors. Results for both negative and positive word groups were non-significant for males and females, suggesting that valence imparted little impact on reaction times. All results for reaction times are therefore interpreted as indicative of general effects on reaction times to all words rather than specific effects on valenced words only.

Behavioral Reactions

In addition to implicit and self-reported reactions to advice, behavioral reactions were assessed through examining word use in advice given by participants back to their partners. Advice statements were analyzed via the LIWC program, which provided an index of the proportion of the total sample that was comprised of various word categories. Categories chosen for analyzing advice included negative emotion words (anxiety, anger, sadness), positive emotion words (positive feelings, optimism), and words indicative of various cognitive

processes, including insight words (e.g. think, know), discrepancy words (should, could), tentativeness (maybe, perhaps) and certainty (always, never). The various word categories were subjected to separate 2 (high vs low rejection sensitivity) x 2 (high vs low relevance) MANOVAs. For the negative word category, a significant interaction effect was found for general negative words ($F=5.395$, $p\leq.05$), and for sadness specifically ($F=5.465$, $p\leq.05$) in males. Independent samples t-tests and a plot of the interaction effect indicate that LRS males in the high relevance condition used a non-significantly larger proportion of sadness words in the advice to their partner than those in the low relevance condition; HRS males exhibited the opposite pattern, but again, mean differences in sadness words between relevance conditions were non-significant (Figure 11). No significant main or interaction effects were found for anxiety or anger word use in males. Further, no interaction effects were found in females for sadness, anxiety, or anger words; however, rejection sensitivity exerted a marginal main effect for sadness ($F=3.572$, $p=.06$) in females. No significant interaction or main effects were found for positive words in males or females. For words connoting cognitive processes, a significant interaction between relevance and rejection sensitivity was found for use of tentative words in females ($F=5.465$, $p\leq.05$) (Figure 12). Independent-samples t-tests and a plot of this interaction revealed that HRS females used a non-significantly larger proportion of tentative words in the low relevance condition than in the high relevance condition; the opposite was true for LRS females, and the difference in means between relevance conditions was non-significant. Condition exerted a significant main effect on use of both insight words ($F=9.671$, $p\leq.01$) and a marginal effect on discrepancy words ($F=3.739$, $p=.06$) in females. No significant main effects or interactions were found for cognitive process words in males.

Social Comparison

It was predicted that HRS individuals would exhibit an increased tendency towards social comparison over LRS individuals, and that this would likely mediate the impact of rejection sensitivity and relevance together on the dependent variables of interest. A significant positive correlation between rejection sensitivity and tendency to engage in social comparison was obtained for males ($r=.206$, $p<.01$), but not females ($r=.15$, $p=.14$).Thus, it was appropriate to proceed with analysis of mediation for those variables shown to be impacted by relevance and rejection sensitivity in males only. These were the self-reported ratings of positive affect, good feelings, and comfort following delivery of advice. This analysis involves creating a model based on moderation, namely involving relevance condition, rejection sensitivity, and the product of these variables, with the addition of social comparison as a mediator. Thus, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), the first required step of mediated moderation was accomplished previously when the rejection sensitivity by condition product term was found to significantly predict positive affect, good feelings, and comfort in males. Thus, the second step involved regressing the mediator (social comparison) on rejection sensitivity, condition, and their product term. Because no significant relationship was found between the product term and the mediator, it can be concluded that social comparison does not mediate the relationship between the interactive effects of rejection sensitivity and condition and positive affect or ratings of advice.

Discussion

The pattern of results suggests that rejection sensitivity and relevance are important factors in the receipt of advice from a romantic partner. These results are particularly interesting when considered within the theoretical framework of self-evaluation maintenance (Tesser, 1980). The most striking feature of the results is the consistency with which high rejection sensitivity participants differed from low rejection sensitivity participants in terms of their response to advice from partners across relevance conditions. This was evident in all three modalities with which reactions to advice were assessed, although results produced by the Lexical Decision Task (LDT) require some qualification.

The LDT task was intended to provide information regarding reactivity to self-evaluation threat through differential responding to negative and positive intelligence and competence words. It was insufficiently sensitive, however, to effects stemming from word valence, and could thus not adequately detect implicit reactions to self-evaluation threat. If SEM processes were operative in response to advice, and if the LDT task were to show differential response to positive and negative words, it would be expected that response times to positive and negative intelligence and competence words would differ significantly from response times to neutral words, and that a pattern of differential responding to valenced words depending on relevance would emerge. On the other hand, no condition effect would be expected to emerge with neutral words. However, in the current study a similar pattern of differential responding across condition emerged for both neutral and valenced words. In addition, regression of neutral words onto valenced words resulted in a large proportion of variance being accounted for. This suggests that findings must be interpreted as being due to the interaction of rejection sensitivity and relevance

condition as they affect response to words in general Responding in general could be a function of attention or overall engagement in the task, such that HRS individuals appear similarly responsive despite relevance, while LRS individuals are more engaged and attentive after receiving advice in a high relevance area.

Self-report measures gauging participants' response to advice were designed to capture overt responses to partner advice, and the LIWC program was designed to detected subtle differences in word usage following receipt of advice from a partner. The finding that responses to advice from partners in a high relevance areas was more positive than for advice in a low relevance areas might seem to contradict predictions informed by SEM theory, namely that individuals tend to react more negatively to advice in self-relevant domains. However, relationship protective accommodations and attributions are well documented in the relationships literature (e.g., Rusbult et al, 1991). Because LRS individuals are more sensitive to the potential for high relevance advice to be threatening to the relationship, they may be motivated to alter their responses to advice in certain ways that diminish this potentially negative impact. Supportive of this notion, LRS individuals consistently responded more *positively* to advice from a "partner" under conditions of high relevance. This condition would have been the most likely to pose a threat to self-evaluation maintenance. One possible explanation for the self-report results concerns the manner in which the high relevance condition impacted how LRS individuals thought about their relationship when asked to respond to advice. Specifically, if receiving advice in the high relevance condition was experienced as threatening, then the responses of LRS individuals may reflect a heightened tendency to affirm the relationship and the value of the partner following advice delivered in a more threatening context (Murray et al., 2002). Both the threatening nature of highly relevant advice, and the potential for responses

driven by this perception (e.g., defensive, hostile) may have been more salient to LRS participants. When considered this way, positive responses may be indicative of behavior enacted with the goal of modulating negative reactions to threat for the good of the relationship. If this is true, it suggests that LRS individuals may be more skillful in protecting their romantic relationships from the potential detrimental impact of threat.

Individuals high in rejection sensitivity, on the other hand, demonstrate a marked lack of responsivity to relevance. That is, their self-reported reactions to advice were not significantly different between the high and low relevance conditions. Extending the previous line of reasoning to HRS individuals, it appears that they are not as aware of situations that have the potential to threaten their relationships and are not as skillful in enacting processes that protect their relationships from threat. This notion is supported by research suggesting that the relationships of rejection sensitive individuals are more distressed and that these individuals do not attend to social information in ways that promote positive social exchange (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

This interpretation of self-report data may also be applied to results of the LIWC text analysis, particularly in terms of findings related to the use of tentative words. The writing sample of advice statements obtained from participants provides an alternative implicit measure of affective and cognitive processes taking place following the receipt of advice from a partner. The finding that LRS participants in the high relevance condition used a higher proportion of tentative words in advice given back to their partners is supportive of the notion that these individuals are more conscious of the impact that their behavior may have on their partner, and further that they engage in behaviors that promote relationship functioning. Tentativeness in

giving advice to a partner may suggest an attempt to decrease the threat of advice, which would be particularly useful for partners in the high relevance condition.

In terms of additional LIWC findings, the higher proportion of sadness words used by LRS males in the high relevance condition is supportive of predictions based on SEM theory, namely that receiving high relevance advice should produce negative affect. Although it was initially predicted that this would more likely be the case for HRS individuals, these results are consistent with the interpretation that LRS individuals are sensitive to threat in their relationships and react more strongly to it. The findings regarding HRS males' use of sadness words may suggest that they are less responsive to self-evaluation threat. Although the relevance of the area in which advice from a partner was received was not predictive of self-reported or implicit responses, it was predictive for females of the use of words connoting insight and discrepancy in the advice they gave back to their partners. The insight word category as defined by LIWC includes such words as 'know', 'think' and 'consider', while the discrepancy category includes 'should', 'would', and 'could'. Females in the high relevance condition used a higher proportion of insight words and a lower proportion of discrepancy words than those in the low relevance condition. No specific predictions were made regarding use of words denoting cognitive processing; however, using fewer discrepancy words might be useful in conveying less of an "expert" role to the partner. Higher proportions of insight words may also have the effect of "hedging" in that advising an individual to think about or consider certain ideas is much less directive than providing specific advice on behaviors that the individual should or should not engage in.

The supposition that LRS individuals are more responsive to contextual factors such as relevance may also be useful in explaining the reaction time results. LRS individuals

demonstrated a tendency to respond more quickly to words in the LDT in the high relevance condition; HRS responded similarly in both conditions. If the responses of LRS individuals to other measures in this study are influenced by threat, such that LRS individuals experience more threat in the high relevance condition, then it makes sense that their reaction times might be faster in this condition as well. Said differently, the threat produced by receiving advice in an area high in self-relevance is more arousing to LRS individuals, which is manifested in faster reaction times. HRS individuals, on the other hand, are equally activated in both conditions. If the LDT offers insight into arousal produced by threat, it follows that HRS individuals do not experience differential levels of threat based on the relevance of the area in which they are receiving advice.

In light of significant findings regarding the interaction between rejection sensitivity and relevance as they impacted perceptions of advice, it would be expected that these variables would significantly impact anticipation of advice. However, the lack of findings supporting this supposition potentially makes sense in that all participants in the study anticipated advice more negatively. Thus, negative anticipation of advice may be so common an experience that differences due to level of rejection sensitivity could not be detected. In addition, the "anxious anticipation" piece of rejection sensitivity has typically been examined as it relates to individuals seeking for needs to be met in relationships and therefore being in a position to be rejected. This study did not present rejection sensitive individuals with this same scenario, but rather put them in a position of getting advice without asking for it; in other words, having no choice. It may be the case that such a setup reduced the anticipatory anxiety that would have been experienced had these individuals sought advice on their own volition.

The discussion thus far highlights the consistency with which individuals who are high in rejection sensitivity, males in particular, respond to a variety of stimuli, regardless of context. This provides potentially important insights into the nature of rejection sensitivity as it relates to cognitive interdependence (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998) and prosocial motivation in romantic relationships. Cognitive interdependence refers to mental representations that individuals develop of their relationships that involve the tendency to perceive the self in relationships as less individual and more part of a "pluralistic self-and-partner collective" (Agnew et al., 1998). Studies have demonstrated that cognitive interdependence and commitment level interact over time in relationships, such that higher levels of one predict positive change in the other over time. Also, interdependence and commitment have been shown to be associated with the extent to which individuals feel a given relationship meets their needs, and with satisfaction in the relationship. This last point is particularly pertinent to the interpretation of results in the current study. Although commitment was not studied directly, rejection sensitivity was significantly and negatively correlated with relationship quality for both males and females. Further, rejection sensitivity is theorized to be a disposition that ultimately develops from a history of having needs for acceptance not met in central relationships. It seems reasonable to suspect that as a result of this history and more negative experience with relationships, rejection sensitive individuals would be less likely to develop strong commitment and cognitive interdependence in their romantic relationships.

Individuals who are committed to their relationships have been shown to engage in a variety of motivated behaviors that protect their relationships, such as alternative partner derogation (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989), sacrificing individualistic pursuits for the good of the relationship (Van Lange et al, 1997), and accommodation, or choosing constructive rather than

destructive responses to a partner's negative behavior (Rusbult et al, 1991). Interdependence theorists suggest that the behavior of the committed, interdependent partner is motivated by concerns broader than the self, namely the relationship, such that self-interests are preempted by relationship interests. This is consistent with the reactions to advice by LRS participants in the present research. This is also consistent with the "self-fulfilling prophecy" that has been shown to characterize the relationships of HRS individuals. If these individuals are rejected in early relationships and do not have the experience of satisfactory relationships that meet their needs, it follows then that they would be unlikely to find interdependence reinforcing - in fact, sacrificing for a relationship in which one is consistently rejected would probably be considered quite counterproductive. Thus, rejection sensitive individuals might be expected to report lower commitment to romantic relationships and less cognitive interdependence, thus resulting in a tendency to choose behavior that serves the self rather than the relationship.

Although this interpretation of the results is plausible, research directly examining rejection sensitivity as it relates to commitment, cognitive interdependence, and prosocial motivation in the exchange of advice is required before a firm conclusion can be drawn. The current research was limited by the fact that these variables were not directly assessed, and that participants were not giving advice directly to one another, a situation that could substantially alter the manner in which advice is given and received. Qualitative research of this nature could provide valuable information regarding the extent to which advice is given and received in a pro-relationship fashion. Research on rejection sensitivity in close relationships has thus far not examined the possibility that the heightened distress in these relationships may be due in part to lack of pro-relationship motivation on the part of those high in rejection sensitivity. Further, differences in HRS and LRS individuals in terms of arousal to situations and behaviors that

might harm the relationship have not been examined. It is important to examine the extent to which HRS individuals engage in motivated processing of relationship relevant information. It is possible that their increased hostility and defensiveness in romantic relationships is driven less by an acute experience of being rejected and the urge to protect against hurt than by being less oriented in general to the relationship and less motivated to engage in behaviors that maintain it.

In conclusion, the present research contributes to the literature regarding the exchange of advice in romantic relationships, particularly among the rejection sensitive. Though not all of the hypotheses guiding this research were unequivocally supported by the data, reasons for the empirical "fuzziness" have been offered and future directions in this research arena have been suggested. Additional research is likely to further illuminate the connection between pro-relationship motivation and the exchange of advice in romantic relationships, as well as further detail the nature of rejection sensitivity as it relates to the processing of relationship-relevant information.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1.

Sample Characteristics.

Characteristic	Males	Females
Age		
17-18	16%	35%
19-20	54%	45%
21-22	21%	17%
23-24	8%	2%
Race		
White	93%	90%
black	3%	2%
Asian	3%	4%
Latina	1%	0%
Native American	0%	3%
Status		
dating regularly	10%	4%
dating steadily	85%	92%
engaged or married	3%	2%
Other	2%	2%
Contact		
30 times or more per month	31%	37%
less than 30 times per month	69%	63%
Proximity		
Live within 60 miles	95%	91%
Do not live within 60 miles	5%	9%
Months dating		
6 months or less	31%	29%
7-12 months	24%	25%
13-24 months	21%	22%
25-36 months	13%	12%
greater than 36 months	10%	11%

Table 2.

Reliability Coefficients for Relevant Study Measures.

Measure	α male	α female
Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire	.70	.80
Anticipation Questions (3rd item deleted)	.74	.69
Perception Questions (3rd item deleted)	.81	.79
PANAS		
Positive Emotion Words	.89	.86
Negative Emotion Words	.78	.83
Social Avoidance and Distress Scale	.86	.86
Quality of Marriage Index	.89	.90

Table 3.

Correlations among Predictor and Criterion Variables for Multiple Regressions in Males.

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Condition	--	-.06	-.058	-.188	-.188	.115	-.085	-.183	-.169
2. Rejection Sensitivity	--	--	-.234*	-.172	.032	.173	-.053	-.100	-.294**
3. Anticipatory Reactions	--	--	--	.544**	.478**	-.181	.403**	.412**	.390**
4. Perceptions of Advice	--	--	--	--	.566**	-.278**	.608**	.546**	.406**
5. Positive Affect	--	--	--	--	--	-.020	.433**	.460**	.297**
6. Negative Affect	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.026	-.140	-.262**
7. Helpfulness	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.640**	.482**
8. Good Feelings	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.807**
9. Comfort	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$

Table 4.

Correlations among Predictor and Criterion Variables for Multiple Regressions in Females.

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Condition	--	-.053	-.004	.036	.067	.109	-.050	-.087	-.029
2. Rejection Sensitivity	--	--	-.004	-.029	.016	.050	-.074	-.029	-.064
3. Anticipatory Reactions	--	--	--	.440**	.360**	-.165	.189	.144	.131
4. Perceptions of Advice	--	--	--	--	.444**	-.292**	.628**	.625**	.596**
5. Positive Affect	--	--	--	--	--	-.006	.310**	.238*	.249*
6. Negative Affect	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.112	-.168	-.171
7. Helpfulness	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.639**	.543**
8. Good Feelings	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.882**
9. Comfort	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

$p \leq .05$, $^{**}p \leq .01$

Table 5.

Predicting Anticipatory Reactions.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Anticipatory Reactions *on*						
(Length of Relationship - males only),	-.011*	-.215*				
(Relationship Quality - females only),				.454***	.383***	
Social Anxiety,	-.338	-.063		.186	.038	
Relevance,	-.145	-.089		.017	.011	
Rejection Sensitivity	-.061*	-.201	.104	.018	.063	.141
2. Anticipatory Reactions *on*						
(Length of Relationship - males only)	-.011*	-.209*				
(Relationship Quality - females only)				.454***	.386***	
Social Anxiety,	-.431	-.081		.188	.038	
Relevance,	-.134	-.082		.017	.011	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.200	-.665		.014	.047	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.096	.495	.129	.003	.016	.141

*$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

Table 6.

Predicting Perceptions of Advice.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Perceptions *on*						
Social Anxiety,	-.017	-.003		.517	.101	
Relationship Quality,	.438**	.329**		.485**	.394**	
Relevance,	-.311	-.185		.025	.015	
Rejection Sensitivity	-.035	-.112	.172	.017	.055	.161
2. Perceptions *on*						
Social Anxiety,	-.130	-.024		.561	.110	
Relationship Quality,	.463**	.347**		.484**	.392**	
Relevance,	-.294	-.175		.020	.012	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.213*	-.687*		-.061	-.201	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.123*	.617*	.211	.054	.268	.169

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .001$

Table 7.

Predicting Positive Affect.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Positive Affect *on*						
(Length of Relationship - males only)	-.009	-.169				
Social Anxiety,	-1.276*	-.246		-.366	-.082	
Relevance,	-.303	-.191		.103	.073	
Rejection Sensitivity	.024	.080	.137	.009	.034	.010
2. Positive Affect *on*						
(Length of Relationship - males only)	-.008	-.160*				
Social Anxiety,	-1.407**	-.271**		-.335	-.075	
Relevance,	-.286	-.180		.100	.071	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.177*	-.605*		-.050	-.191	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.138*	.731*	.191	.041	.236	.016

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$

Table 8.

Predicting Negative Affect.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Negative Affect *on*						
Social Anxiety,	.227	.098		-.251	-.116	
Relationship Quality	-.141*	-.251*		-.175**	-.334**	
Relevance,	.094	.133		.073	.106	
Rejection Sensitivity	.012	.094	.118	-.002	-.013	.136
2. Negative Affect *on*						
Social Anxiety,	.219	.095		-.251	-.116	
Relationship Quality,	-.140*	-.249		-.175**	-.344**	
Relevance,	.096	.135		.073	.106	
Rejection Sensitivity,	.001	.004		-.002	-.013	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.008	.097	.119	.000	.000	.136

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .001$

Table 9.

Predicting Helpfulness Ratings.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Helpfulness Ratings *on*						
Social Anxiety,	-.591	-.104		.341	.054	
Relevance,	-.106	-.061		-.094	-.047	
Rejection Sensitivity	-.009	-.027	.018	-.031	-.084	.010
2. Helpfulness Ratings *on*						
Social Anxiety,	-.667	-.118		.410	.065	
Relevance,	-.097	-.056		-.099	-.050	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.134	-.418		-.161	-.434	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.086	.417	.035	.091	.367	.024

*$p \leq .05$

Table 10.

Predicting Ratings of Good Feeling.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Ratings of Good Feeling *on*						
Social Anxiety	-1.424*	-.219*		.560	.094	
Relevance,	-.300	-.151		-.186	-.098	
Rejection Sensitivity	-.016	-.043	.082	-.018	-.050	.016
2. Ratings of Good Feeling *on*						
Social Anxiety	-1.623**	-.250		.564	.094	
Relevance,	-.275	-.138		-.186	-.098	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.345***	-.936***		-.026	-.072	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.226***	.953***	.174	.006	.023	.017

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$,***$p \leq .001$

Table 11.

Predicting Ratings of Comfort.

	Males			Females		
Step	b	β	R^2	b	β	R^2
1. Ratings of Comfort *on*						
Social Anxiety	-2.081**	-.300**		.398	.064	
Relevance,	-.312	-.147		-.061	-.031	
Rejection Sensitivity	-.086*	-.218*	.194	-.029	-.079	.008
2. Ratings of Comfort *on*						
Social Anxiety	-2.233***	-.322***		.391	.063	
Relevance,	-.293	-.138		-.061	-.031	
Rejection Sensitivity,	-.336**	-.857**		-.018	-.048	
Relevance * Rejection Sensitivity	.172*	.681*	.241	-.008	-.033	.008

*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$, ***$p \leq .001$

Table 12.

Mean Reaction Scores for High Rejection Sensitive (HRS) and Low Rejection Sensitive (LRS) Males and Females by Pre (Anticipation)-Post (Perception), with Social Anxiety as Covariate.

	Males		Females	
Wordtype	LRS (n=48)	HRS (n=48)	LRS (n=49)	HRS (n=49)
Anticipation				
M	5.323	5.128	5.490	5.323
SD	.119	.119	.115	.117
Perception				
M	5.701	5.472	5.906	5.708
SD	.121	.121	.117	.119

Table 13.

Mean Reaction Times to Negative Words, Positive Words, and Neutral Words for High Rejection Sensitive (HRS) and Low Rejection Sensitive (LRS) Males and Females by Relevance Condition with Social Anxiety as Covariate.

	Males				Females			
	LRS		HRS		LRS		HRS	
Wordtype	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=21)	High Relevance (n=30)	Low Relevance (n=20)
Positive								
M	648.39	730.84	694.04	672.04	641.56	708.30	667.19	621.16
SE	26.777	30.46	26.70	30.97	23.09	26.47	22.14	28.17
Negative								
M	670.66	735.34	711.54	685.60	656.48	718.47	660.48	635.16
SE	23.88	27.16	23.82	27.62	17.55	20.12	16.84	21.42
Neutral								
M	563.71	611.79	592.99	576.18	559.97	598.06	568.43	555.33
SE	16.41	18.66	16.36	18.98	15.24	17.48	14.62	18.60

Table 14.

Mean Proportion of Total Written Advice Sample Comprised of Words Connoting Positive Feelings, Optimism, Sadness, Anxiety, Anger for Males and Females.

	Males				Females			
	LRS		HRS		LRS		HRS	
Emotion Word	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=21)	High Relevance (n=30)	Low Relevance (n=20)
Positive Feelings								
M	.484	.374	.468	.351	.522	.378	.331	.675
SD	.161	.180	.161	.187	.166	.191	.159	.203
Optimism								
M	.554	.539	.565	.464	.443	.299	.416	.734
SD	.201	.223	.200	.232	.159	.182	.152	.194
Anxiety								
M	1.142	.954	.587	1.095	.786	.271	.537	.806
SD	.286	.319	.286	.332	.207	.237	.198	.253
Anger								
M	.343	.324	.269	.226	.403	.249	.324	.199
SD	.160	.178	.159	.185	.149	.199	.143	.181
Sadness								
M	.180	.-.010	.077	.399	.185	.200	.050	.007
SD	.104	.115	.103	.120	.079	.091	.076	.097

Table 15.

Mean Proportion of Total Written Advice Sample Comprised of Words Connoting Insight, Discrepancy, Tentativeness, and Certainty for Males and Females.

	Males				Females			
	LRS		HRS		LRS		HRS	
Cognitive Word	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=22)	High Relevance (n=28)	Low Relevance (n=21)	High Relevance (n=30)	Low Relevance (n=20)
Insight								
M	.662	.867	1.049	1.406	1.246	.561	1.636	.807
SD	.352	.392	.351	.407	.223	.256	.214	.272
Discrepancy								
M	1.182	.353	.887	.799	.784	1.449	.607	1.205
SD	.255	.284	.254	.295	.299	.343	.287	.365
Tentativeness								
M	.692	.941	1.030	1.495	1.839	.868	.901	1.509
SD	.241	.269	.241	.279	.312	.358	.300	.381
Certainty								
M	1.170	.909	1.502	1.150	1.016	.555	.829	.696
SD	.275	.306	.274	.318	.213	.245	.205	.260

APPENDIX B: FIGURES

Figure 1. Regression of positive affect on length of relationship, social anxiety, rejection sensitivity, relevance, and rejection sensitivity by relevance product term for males.

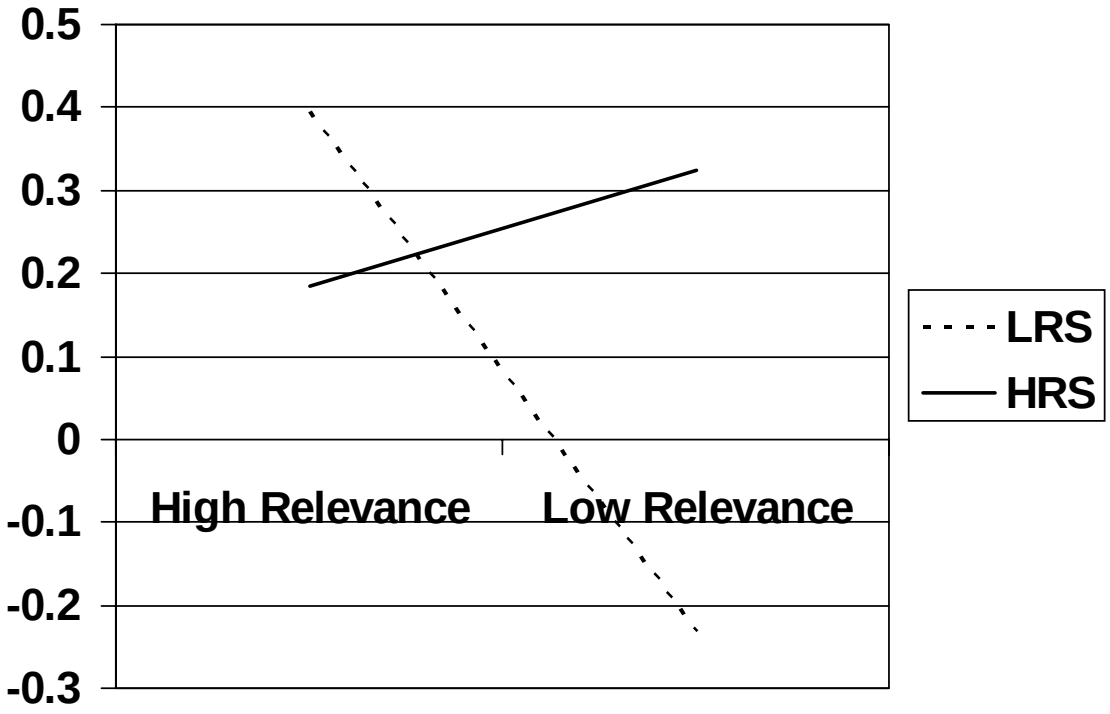


Figure 2. Regression of perceptions of advice on social anxiety, relationship quality, rejection sensitivity, condition, and rejection sensitivity by condition product term for males.

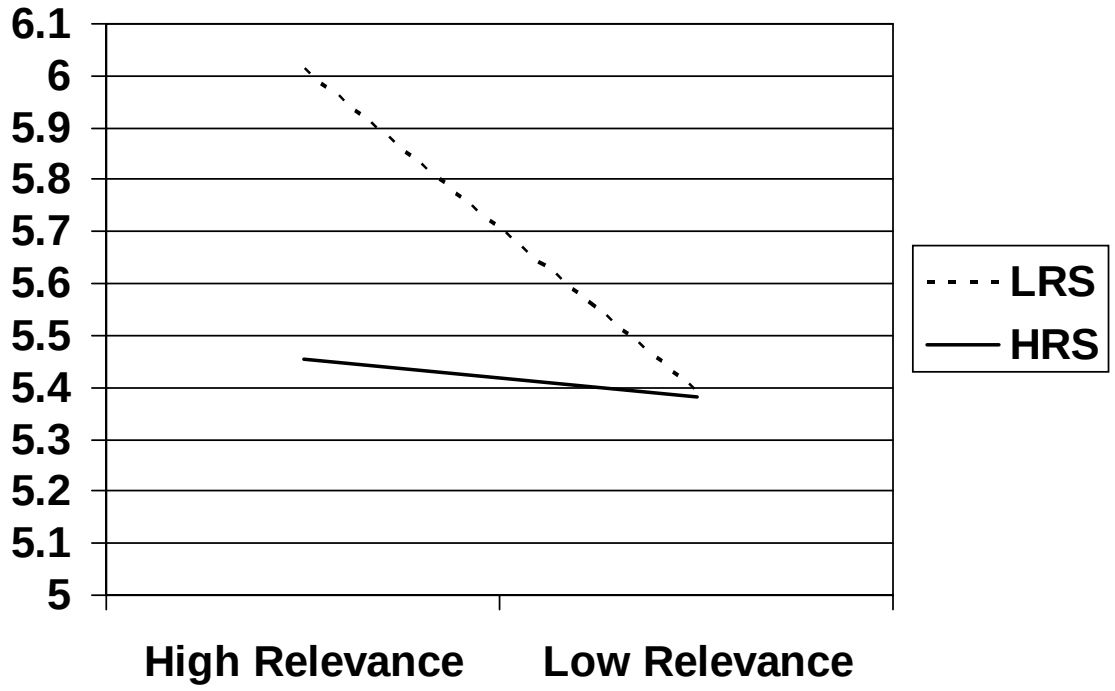


Figure 3. Regression of good feelings on social anxiety, relevance, rejection sensitivity, and rejection sensitivity by relevance product term for males.

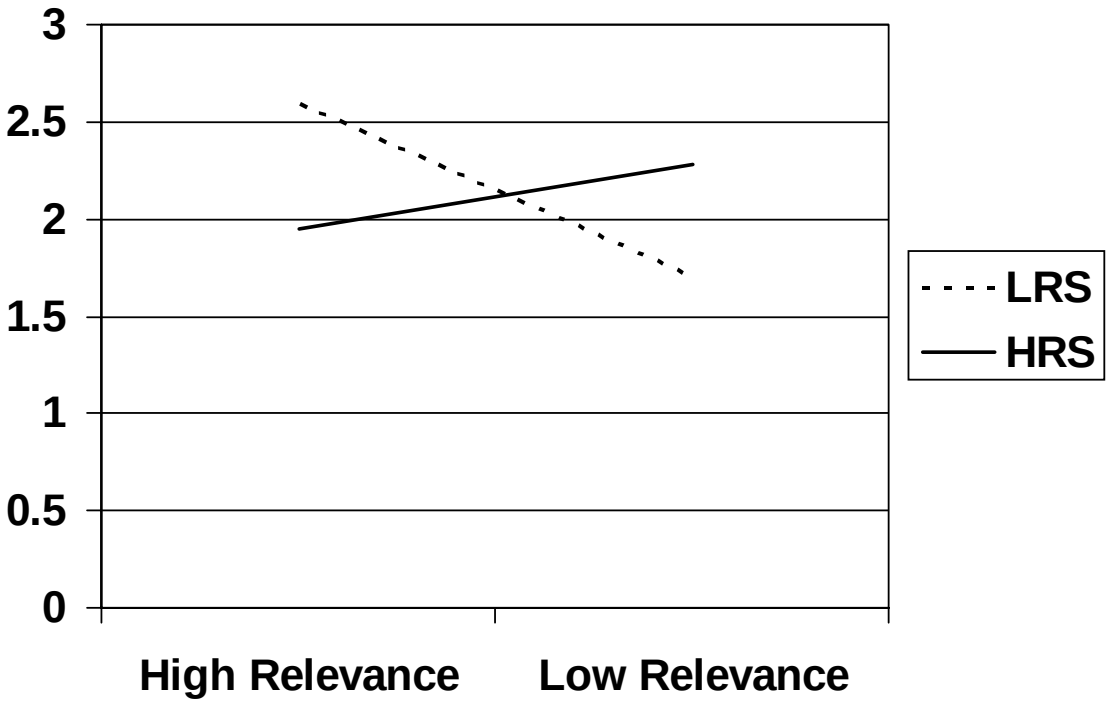


Figure 4. Regression of comfort ratings on social anxiety, rejection sensitivity, relevance, and rejection sensitivity by relevance product term for males.

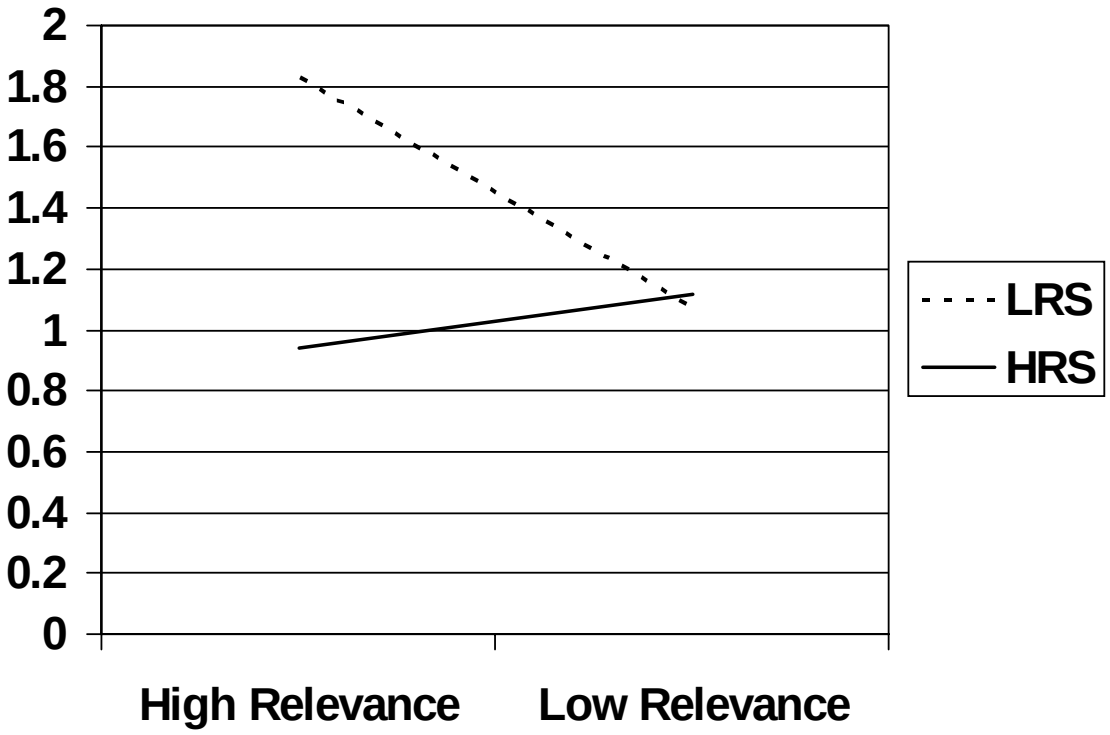


Figure 5. Reaction times to negative intelligence and competence words for LRS and HRS males by relevance condition.

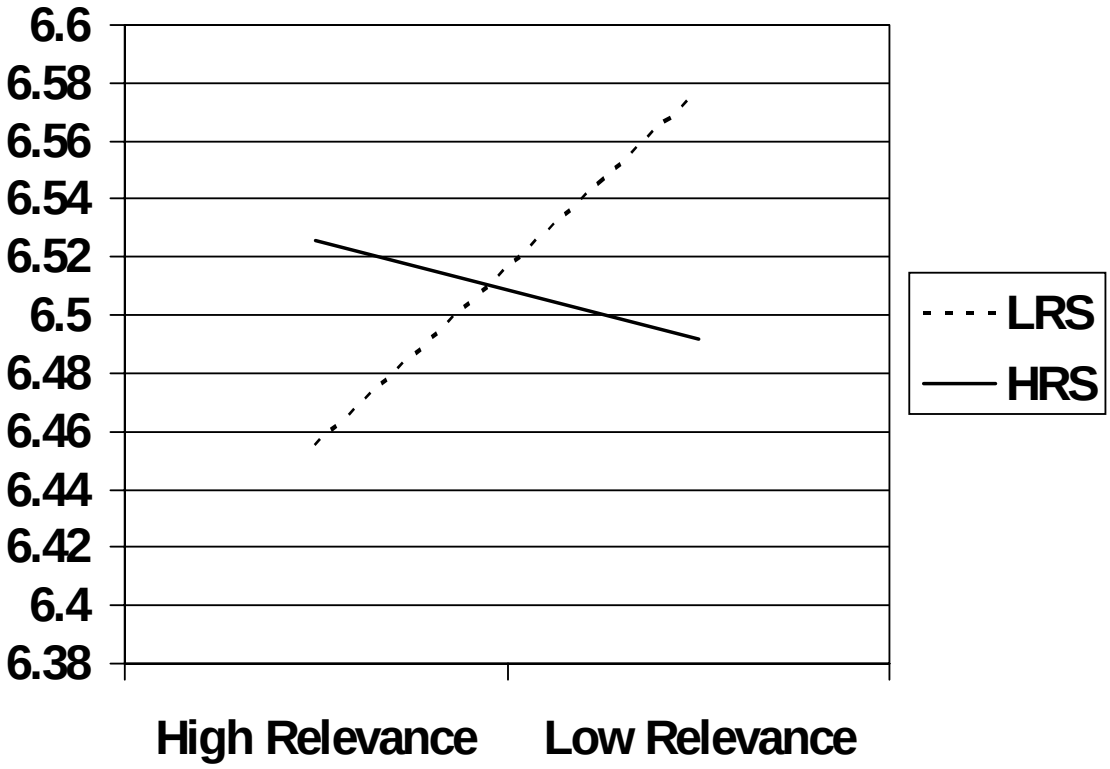


Figure 6. Reaction times to positive intelligence and competence words for LRS and HRS males by relevance condition.

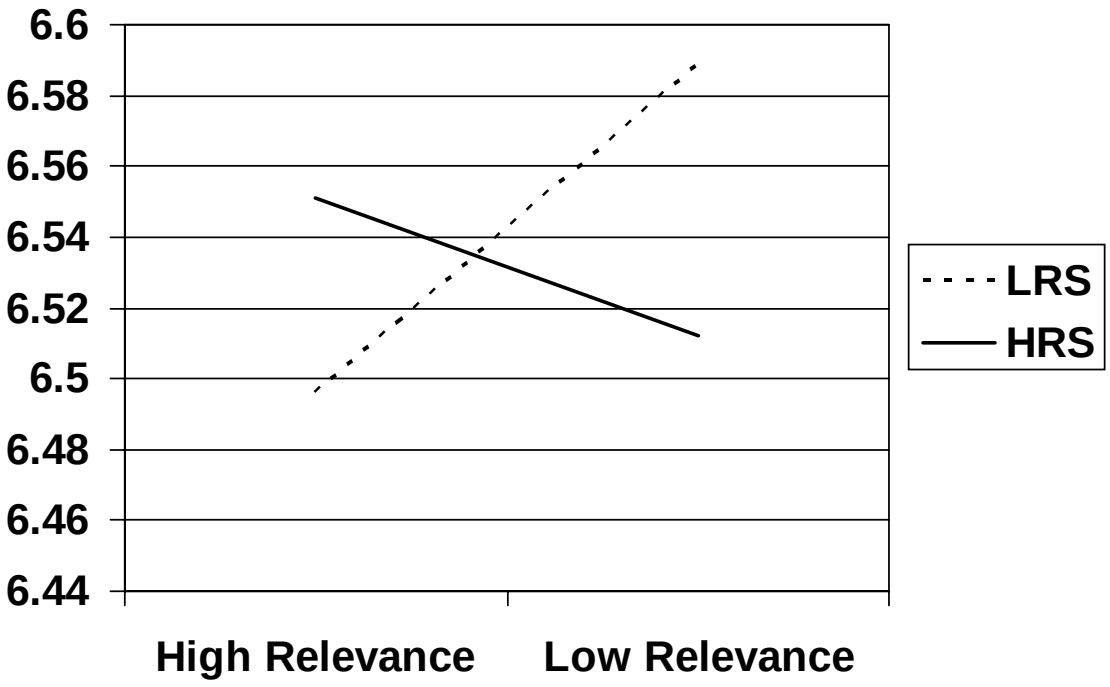


Figure 7. Reaction times to neutral words for LRS and HRS males by relevance condition.

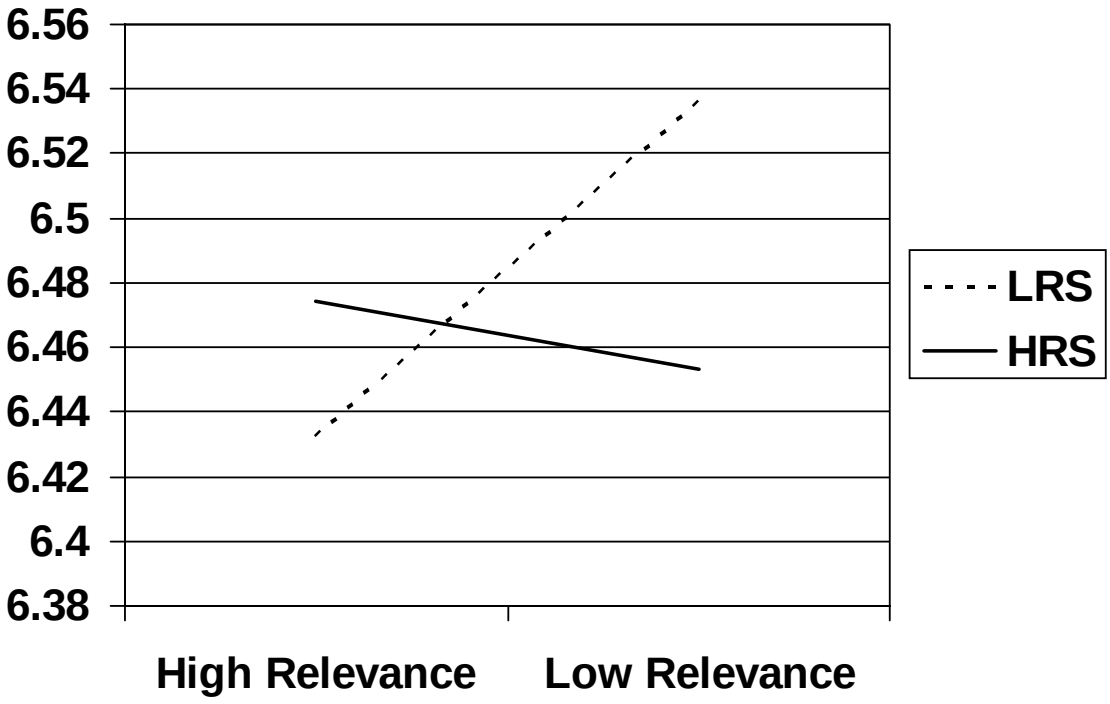


Figure 8. Reaction times to negative intelligence and competence words for LRS and HRS females by relevance condition.

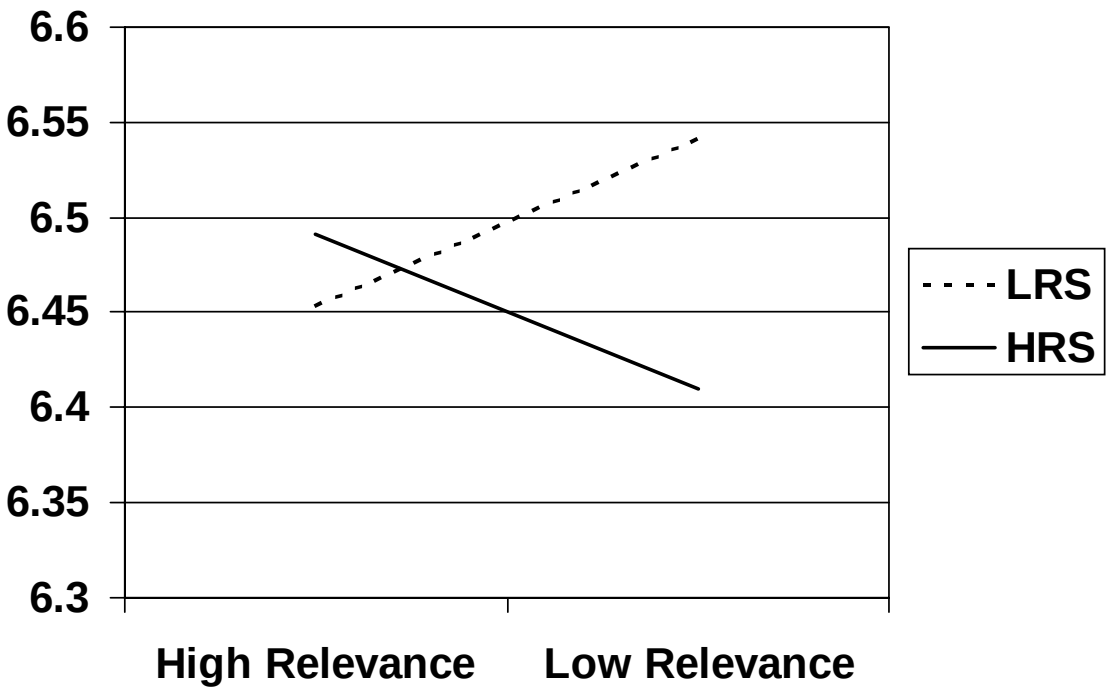


Figure 9. Reaction times to positive intelligence and competence words for LRS and HRS females by relevance condition.

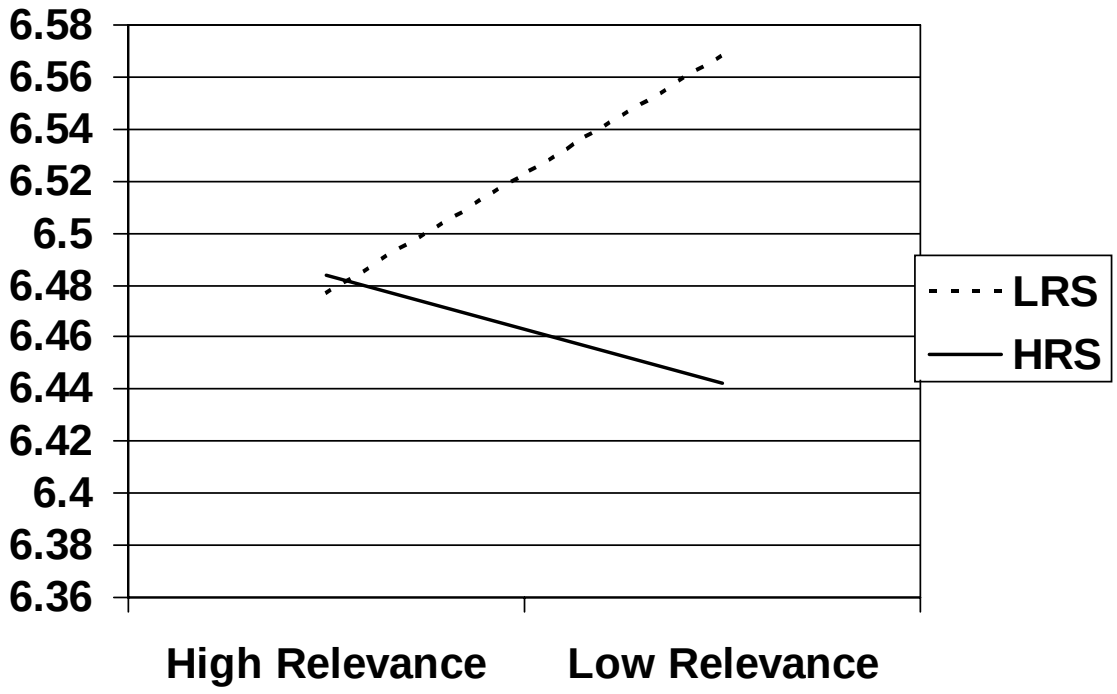


Figure 10. Reaction times to neutral words for LRS and HRS females by relevance condition.

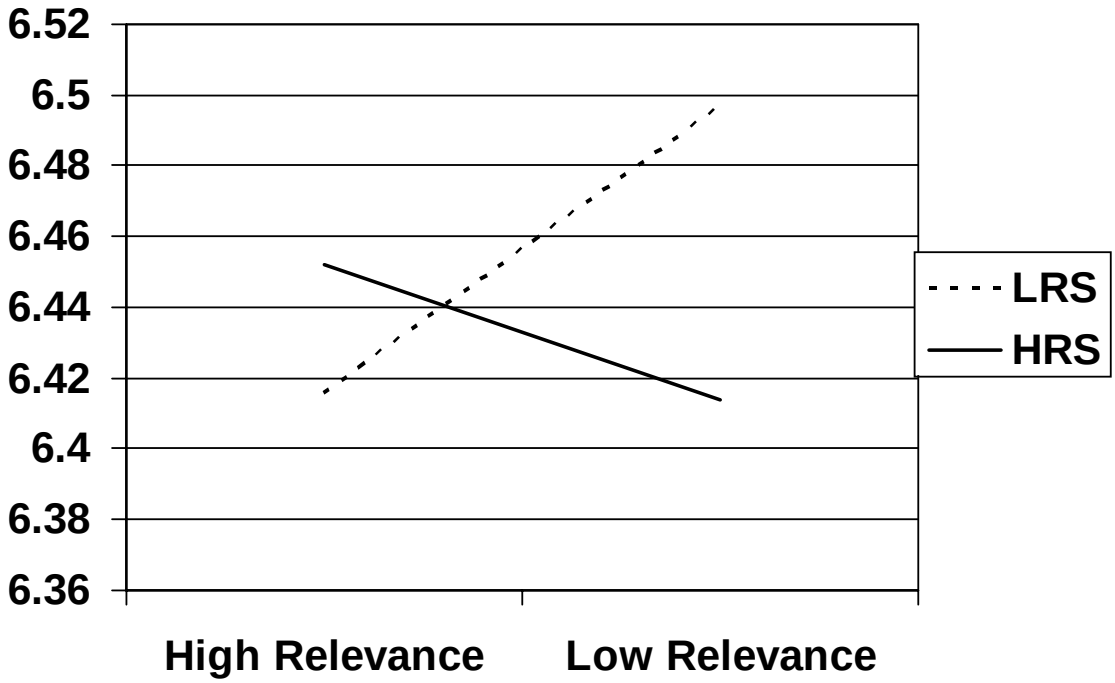


Figure 11. Proportion of sadness words for LRS and HRS males by relevance condition.

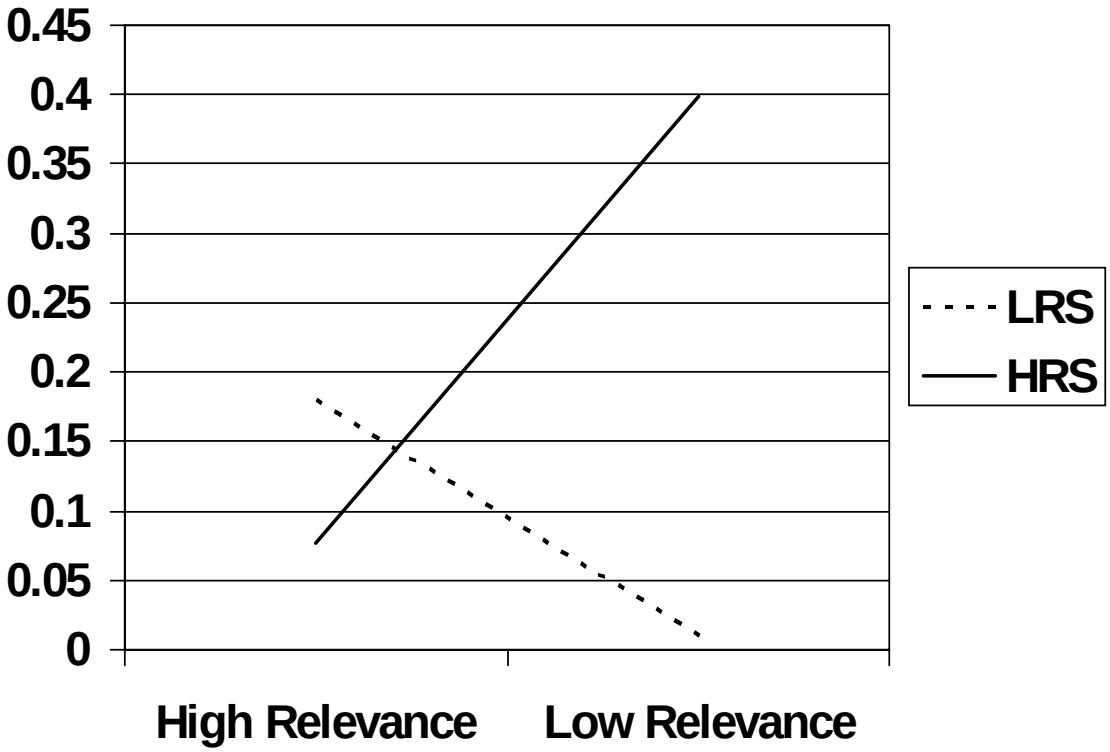
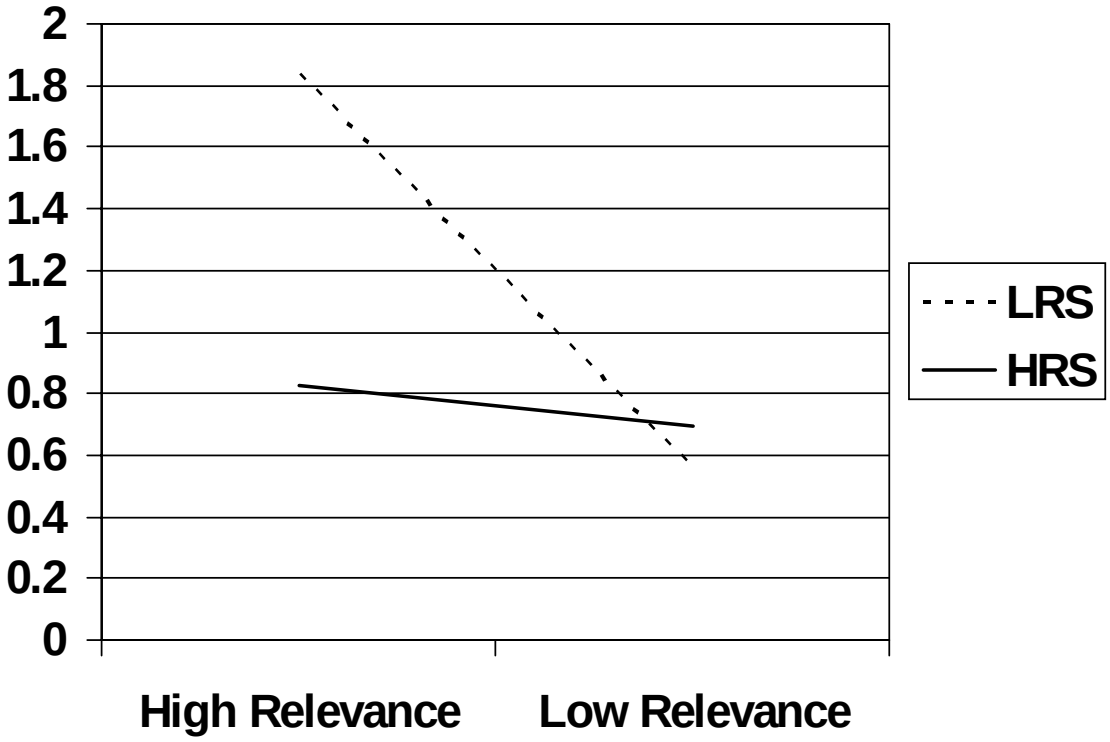


Figure 12. Proportion of tentative words for LRS and HRS females by relevance condition.



APPENDIX C: MEASURES

RSQ

Please rate your responses to the questions following each hypothetical situation.

You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.

1. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your classmate would want to help you out?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
2. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to help me out.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.

3. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to move in with you?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
4. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to move in with me.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You ask your parents for help in deciding what programs to apply to.

5. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to help you with the decision?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
6. I would expect that my parents would willingly agree to help me with my decision.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.

7. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not he/she would want to go out on a date with you?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
8. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to go out with me.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, so you tell him/her so.

9. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to spend the evening with you?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
10. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to spend the evening with me.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses.

11. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to give you the money?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
12. I would expect that my parents would willingly give me the extra money.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

After class, you tell your professor that you have been having some trouble with a section of the course and ask if he/she can give you some extra help.

13. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your professor would want to help you?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
14. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to help me.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.

15. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk to you?	1 very unconcerned	2	3	4	5	6 very concerned
16. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to talk to me.	1 very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6 very likely

You ask someone in one of your classes to coffee.

17. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your classmate would want to have coffee with you? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

18. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to have coffee with me. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

After graduation, you can't find a job and ask your parents if you can live at home for a while.

19. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to let you move back home? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

20. I would expect that my parents would willingly agree to let me move back home. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

You ask a friend to go on vacation with you over Spring Break.

21. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to go on vacation with you? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

22. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to go on vacation with me. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.

23. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to see you? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

24. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to see with me. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

You ask a friend if you can borrow something of his/hers.

25. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to let you borrow something? 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unconcerned … very concerned)

26. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to let me borrow something. 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unlikely … very likely)

You ask your parents to come on an occasion important to you.

27. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to come to the occasion? 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unconcerned … very concerned)

28. I would expect that my parents would willingly agree to come to the occasion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unlikely … very likely)

You ask a friend to do you a big favor.

29. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to do the favor? 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unconcerned … very concerned)

30. I would expect that he/she would willingly do the favor. 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unlikely … very likely)

You ask your boyfriend if he/she really loves you.

31. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to say he/she really loves you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unconcerned … very concerned)

32. I would expect that he/she would say they really love me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 (very unlikely … very likely)

You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room, and then you ask them to dance.

33. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to dance with you? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

34. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to dance with me. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to come home to meet your parents.

35. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to meet your parents? 1 (very unconcerned) 2 3 4 5 6 (very concerned)

36. I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to meet my parents. 1 (very unlikely) 2 3 4 5 6 (very likely)

INCOM

Most people compare themselves from time to time with others. For example, they may compare the way they feel, their opinions, their abilities, and/or their situation with those of other people. There is nothing particularly 'good' or 'bad' about this type of comparison, and some people do it more than others. We would like to find out how often you compare yourself with other people. To do that we would like to ask you to indicate how much you agree with *each* statement below, by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly				agree

1. I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing.
2. I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things.
3. If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done.
4. I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g. social skills, popularity) with other people.
5. I am not the type of person who compares often with others.
6. I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.
7. I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences.
8. I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face.
9. I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do.
10. If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it.
11. I *never* consider my situation in life relative to that of other people.

Anticipation Questions:

1. What do you anticipate will be the tone of your partner's comments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
negative			neutral			positive

2. To what extent do you think your partner is confident in your ability or willingness to deal with the problems you listed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
my partner isn't at all confident			my partner is somewhat confident			my partner is completely confident

3. To what extent do you think your partner has concerns about your ability or willingness to deal effectively with the problems you listed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
my partner is very concerned			my partner is somewhat concerned			my partner is not at all concerned

4. How helpful do you anticipate your partner's comments will be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all helpful			somewhat helpful			very helpful

5. How will your partner's comments make you feel?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not very good			good			extremely good

6. What percent of your partner's comments will be:

a.) advice? _____%
b.) general supportive comments? _____%
c.) other positive comments? _____%
d.) warnings or things to watch out for? _____%
e.) concerns? _____%
f.) negative comments? _____%

7. To what extent do you predict your partner would be willing to help you out with the problems you listed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all willing			somewhat willing			totally willing

<u>Perception Questions</u>:

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

1. Please indicate, using the above scale, **the extent to which you feel the following as a result of your partner's advice.**

_____ interested	_____ irritable
_____ distressed	_____ alert
_____ excited	_____ ashamed
_____ upset	_____ inspired
_____ strong	_____ nervous
_____ guilty	_____ determined
_____ scared	_____ attentive
_____ hostile	_____ jittery
_____ enthusiastic	_____ active
_____ proud	_____ afraid

2. What was the tone of your partner's comments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
negative			neutral			positive

3. To what extent does your partner's advice show that he or she has confidence in your ability or willingness to deal with the problems you listed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
my partner isn't at all confident			my partner is somewhat confident			my partner is completely confident

4. To what extent do your partner's comments show that he or she has concerns about your ability or willingness to deal effectively with the problems you listed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
my partner is very concerned			my partner is somewhat concerned			my partner is not at all concerned

5. How helpful were your partner's comments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all helpful			somewhat helpful			very helpful

6. How did your partner's comments make you feel?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not very good			good			extremely good

7. What percent of your partner's comments were be:

a.) advice? _____%
b.) general supportive comments? _____%
c.) other positive comments? _____%
d.) warnings or things to watch out for? _____%
e.) concerns? _____%
f.) negative comments? _____%

SAD

1. I feel relaxed even in unfamiliar social situations.	T	F
2. I try to avoid situations which force me to be very sociable.	T	F
3. It is easy for me to relax when I am with strangers.	T	F
4. I have no particular desire to avoid people.	T	F
5. I often find social occasions upsetting.	T	F
6. I usually feel calm and comfortable at social occasions.	T	F
7. I am usually at ease when talking to someone of the opposite sex.	T	F
8. I try to avoid talking to people unless I know them well.	T	F
9. If the chance comes to meet new people, I often take it.	T	F
10. I often feel nervous or tense in casual get-togethers in which both sexes are present.	T	F
11. I am usually nervous with people unless I know them well.	T	F
12. I usually feel relaxed when I am with a group of people.	T	F
13. I often want to get away from people.	T	F
14. I usually feel uncomfortable when I am in a group of people I don't know.	T	F
15. I usually feel relaxed when I meet someone for the first time.	T	F
16. Being introduced to people makes me tense and nervous.	T	F
17. Even though a room is full of strangers, I may enter it anyway.	T	F
18. I would avoid walking up and joining a large group of people.	T	F
19. When my supervisors want to talk with me, I talk willingly.	T	F
20. I often feel on edge when I am with a group of people.	T	F
21. I tend to withdraw from people.	T	F

22. I don't mind talking to people at parties or social gatherings. T F

23. I am seldom at ease in a large group of people. T F

24. I often think up excuses in order to avoid social engagements. T F

25. I sometimes take the responsibility for introducing people to each other. T F

26. I try to avoid formal social occasions. T F

27. I find it easy to relax with other people. T F

QMI

Please give each question a moment's thought and then answer it with your partner in mind, using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very strong disagreement			neither strong agreement or disagreement			very strong agreement

1. We have a good relationship. 1-7 _____
2. My relationship with my partner is very stable. 1-7 _____
3. Our relationship is strong. 1-7 _____
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy. 1-7 _____
5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner. 1-7 _____

On the scale below, please indicate the point which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, in your relationship. The middle point, "happy" (4) represents the degree of happiness which most people get from their dating relationships. The scale gradually increases on the right side for those few people who experience extreme joy in their relationship and decreases on the left for those people who are extremely unhappy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very unhappy			happy			perfectly happy

Word List for LDT

IMAGINATIVE
INTELLIGENT
SOPHISTICATED
CLEVER
INVENTIVE
INGENIOUS
RESOURCEFUL
LOGICAL
SMART
CAPABLE
PROFICIENT
COMPETENT
SKILLED
ADEPT
KNOWLEDGEABLE
UNITELLIGENT
DULL
IDIOTIC
STUPID
SLOW
DENSE
BRAINLESS
THICKHEADED
MORONIC
CHILDISH
SIMPLISTIC
INEPT
BUNGLING
INEFFECTUAL
USELESS
VOCABULARY
RETIREMENT
ELECTRICITY
IMPORT
PHONOGRAPH
RIVERSIDE
TRACEABLE
CANDIDATE
SKIRT
SUBSTANTIAL
BALCONY
TELEGRAPH
MEAL
GADGET
LOCOMOTIVE
INSUFFICIENCY
RANCH
MODERATION
BARREL
TEXT
CHEESE
HIGHRISE
GLAMOROUS
PATROLMAN
SURGEON
CASINO
BANJO
TYPICALLY
ENCYCLOPEDIA
BASKET
ACTOR
FACTORY
ABSTRACT
LEGEND
MEDICINE
TANGENT
BASEMENT
THERMAL
MOUNTAIN
MYSTERY
COCKTAIL
CALENDAR
FARMER
GIANT
MIDNIGHT
ADMISSION
GARAGE
SELDOM
SILVER
BARREL
LUXURY
SUBSTANCE
BUTTER
VEHICLE
VETERAN
CONSUMER
DEALER
BENCH
MAGAZINE
BASEBALL
POWDER
EQUATION
LEARN
GARDEN
MACHINE
OCCASION
YELLOW
COMPUTER
ORIGINAL
WINDOW
ISLAND
YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON
LIBRARY
BUILDING
AGENCY
MUSICAL
NORMAL
MAJOR
TEACHER
TOMORROW
ACADEMIC
WEATHER
OBJECTIVE
JUDGMENT
VILLAGE
FUNCTION
LIQUID
AMOUNT
COLOR
AIRCRAFT
BACKGROUND
HABIT
PLANET
ACADEMY