Authenticity and Positivity Strivings in Marriage and Courtship

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We proposed that married persons would want their spouses to see them as they saw themselves but that dating persons would want their relationship partners to evaluate them favorably. A survey of 176 married and dating couples tested these predictions. Just as married persons were most intimate with spouses whose evaluations verified their self-views, dating persons were most intimate with partners who evaluated them favorably. For married people with negative self-views, then, intimacy increased as their spouses evaluated them more negatively. Marriage apparently precipitates a shift from a desire for positive evaluations to a desire for self-verifying evaluations.

Every individual requires the ongoing validation of his world, including crucially the validation of his identity and place in his world, by those few who are his truly significant others (Berger & Kellner, 1964, p. 4).

Of the "truly significant others" who validate our identities, marriage partners (or their equivalents) are often the key players. Spouses are uniquely positioned to offer sustained and highly credible verification of each others' self-views. By reinforcing each other's self-conceptions, spouses provide one another with a sense of authenticity, a conviction that their lives are orderly and coherent (e.g., Lecky, 1945; Swann, 1983, 1992).

The notion that marital relationships offer an important source of self-verification is hardly new: family sociologists have discussed related ideas ever since Durkheim (1951). Even so, for those who ponder the evolution of marital relationships, a troubling question remains: How can marriages be a preeminent source of authenticity when they represent an outgrowth of those notorious hotbeds of inauthenticity, courtship relationships? More generally, how can courtship relationships evolve

into marital relationships when the dynamics underlying the two kinds of relationships seem so different?

The first step in solving this puzzle is to identify the factors that distinguish courtship relationships from marital relationships. On the one hand, courtship relationships are essentially extended qualifying exams. Dating partners first present their credentials to each other and then await their partners's judgment while making a parallel assessment of their partner's qualities.[1] As such, courtship relationships represent a perpetual quest for acceptance mixed with scrutiny of the partner. This imbues such relationships with a strong element of mutual evaluation and a relatively weak sense of commitment. The affective tone of the relationship may consequently be rather volatile, for any hint of criticism may be understood as a bad omen for the future of the relationship.

For married people, the "examination" is over, the commitment is made. As a result, mutual trust blossoms where evaluation apprehension once reigned, and spouses begin to pursue the personal and mutual goals that give their lives purpose and direction. As they do so, they will become increasingly aware that their spouse has a high investment in, and a relatively sophisticated perspective on, their development as a person. Increasingly, they will find themselves turning to their spouse for his or her perspective on who they are and who they should become.

Also, as their marriage matures, people's mutual goals (e.g., maintaining a household, raising children, and launching and managing careers) will become increasingly intertwined. With spouses united in pursuing these goals, a strong sense of interdependency will emerge (Berscheid, 1983; Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1989; Waller, 1938). With it will come a recognition that the success of their cooperative efforts rests on their capacity to identify each others' weaknesses as well as strengths. They will thus interpret criticism very differently than dating part-

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[1] Although some people date for the mere fun of it, we believe that when they do they are at least somewhat concerned with courting the favor of the partner.

ners, perceiving it as a source of self-insight, an invaluable window on who they are.

Together, these factors will produce marked differences in the nature of the evaluations that dating persons and married persons want from their relationship partners. Just as dating partners will be motivated to receive favorable evaluations, marriage partners will want evaluations that seem insightful in light of what they know about themselves. If so, then the foregoing analysis may offer a useful perspective on the age-old question of whether people want others to understand them or to canonize them.

Do We Want Others to Know Us or to Adore Us?

Over the years, everyone from poets to philosophers to piano tuners has noted that people have a passion for praise. Social scientists have recently joined their ranks by showing that positivity strivings influence self-presentation (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; E. E. Jones, 1964; E. E. Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976), self-attribution (e.g., Bradeley, 1978; Greenwald, 1980; Snyder & Higgins, 1988; Zuckerman, 1979), predictions about the future (e.g., Alloy & Abramson, 1988; Kunda, 1987; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Weinstein, 1980), the targets with whom people compare themselves (e.g., Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Tesser, 1986; Wills, 1981), and belief change (e.g., Steele, 1988). Researchers interested in interpersonal attraction have echoed this thundering chorus of voices; indeed, virtually every recent reviewer of the attraction literature has either implicitly or explicitly assumed that people like those who praise them and reject those who do not (e.g., Berscheid, 1985; Huston & Levinger, 1978; S. C. Jones, 1973; Mettee & Aronson, 1974; Reis, 1985; Shrauger, 1975).

Such testimonials to the pervasiveness of positivity strivings notwithstanding, there are sound theoretical reasons to believe that people possess an independent desire for evaluations that verify their self-conceptions. Self-verification theory (e.g., Swann, 1983, 1990; for related formulations, see Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957; Lecky, 1945; Secord & Backman, 1965) assumes that people are predisposed to favor coherent, expectancy-consistent information. As they mature and form stable self-concepts, this predisposition for coherent information is reinforced and amplified by their social experiences (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934). For example, people discover that their interactions unfold smoothly when others see them as they see themselves and that trouble arises when others appraise them incongruently. People thus come to associate self-verifying evaluations with feelings of authenticity and psychological coherence and nonverifying evaluations with feelings of wariness and bemusement.

This reasoning suggests that people may seek self-verifying evaluations either because such evaluations are coherent and sensible in light of their past experiences ("epistemic" concerns) or because they want their interactions to unfold in an orderly and coherent manner ("pragmatic" concerns). Furthermore, they should strive to self-verify whether the self-view happens to be positive or negative.

Early attempts to document this provocative hypothesis were unpersuasive. Follow-ups to early anecdotal evidence (e.g., Newcomb, 1956) were ambiguous either because of method-

ological problems (e.g., Chambliss, 1965; Deutsch & Solomon, 1959) or because the designs failed to differentiate the tendency for people with positive self-views to prefer favorable evaluations from the more theoretically telling tendency for people with negative self-views to prefer unfavorable evaluations (e.g., Backman & Secord, 1962; Doherty & Secord, 1971). Worse yet, the one study that seemed free of such difficulties (i.e., Aronson & Carlsmith, 1962) proved to be unreliable (e.g., Shrauger, 1975). Understandably discouraged, many dismissed the hypothesis that people with negative self-views preferred unfavorable, self-confirming evaluations over favorable ones (e.g., Backman, 1988; Schlenker, 1985; Steele, 1988).

Recent research, however, has indicated that people with negative self-views are indeed more inclined to seek unfavorable evaluations than are people with positive self-conceptions (e.g., Hixon & Swann, 1993, Study 4; Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990, Study 3; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989, Studies 1 and 2; Swann & Read, 1981b, Studies 1 and 2; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992, Studies 3 and 4). Similarly, people with negative self-views prefer interaction partners who appraise them unfavorably, whether the alternative is interacting with favorable evaluators (e.g., Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 1992; Swann et al., 1990, Study 2; Swann et al., 1989, Study 3; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992, Studies 1 and 2; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992, Studies 1 and 2) or participating in a different experiment (Swann, Wenzlaff, & Tafarodi, 1992, Study 1). Moreover, people with negative self-views elicit evaluations that confirm their self-views (e.g., Coyne, 1976; Coyne et al., 1987; Curtis & Miller, 1986; Pelham, 1991; Swann et al., 1989; Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992, Study 3). Both global self-regard (e.g., level of depression or self-esteem; e.g., Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992) and specific self-views (e.g., "athletic" and "artistic"; see Swann et al., 1989) appear to guide such self-verification strivings. Finally, both epistemic and pragmatic reasons (e.g., Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992) seem to motivate this quest for self-verification.

The research literature therefore leads one to ask *when* are positivity strivings viable and *when* are self-verification strivings viable. Our analysis of dating versus marital relationships may offer one answer to these questions. Specifically, dating partners may prefer positive evaluations, and marriage partners may prefer self-verifying evaluations.

To test this prediction, we examined how intimate people were with relationship partners who evaluated them in a relatively favorable or unfavorable manner. We anticipated that dating partners would be more intimate with those who evaluated them positively and that marriage partners would be more intimate with spouses who evaluated them in a self-verifying manner. Most interestingly, we expected that dating persons with negative self-views would embrace partners who evaluated them favorably but married persons with negative self-views would prefer partners who evaluated them unfavorably.

Why People Self-Verify

We predicted that married participants with negative self-views would self-verify in an effort to maximize their perceptions of coherence and self-stability. Recognizing that other mo-

tives might come into play, however, we included measures designed to assess them.

Self-Improvement

Some (e.g., Trope, 1986) have argued that persons with negative self-concepts seek negative evaluations to reduce uncertainty about themselves. Uncertainty reduction may, in turn, allow people to eliminate activities (e.g., excessive reassurance seeking) that provoke unfavorable evaluations. Thus, seeking partners who appraise them unfavorably may ultimately promote self-improvement. In a similar vein, Steele (1990) has proposed that people desire and seek unfavorable evaluations because doing so allows them to identify and remedy problematic behaviors.

Winning Converts

"Converting" an enemy to a friend amounts to passing an acid test of self-worth. People might accordingly choose partners who initially evaluate them unfavorably to create the opportunity to win them over later on.

Perceived Similarity

Relationship partners who have similar values and beliefs may make one another feel good about themselves by validating their respective values and beliefs (e.g., Byrne, 1971). Conceivably, people with negative self-concepts might choose partners who appraise them unfavorably to validate their attitudes and beliefs rather than their self-concepts.

Perceived Perceptiveness

People with negative self-views may believe that evaluators who perceive them unfavorably are quite perceptive and intelligent. They may therefore seek those who evaluate them unfavorably in an effort to associate with highly competent social perceivers.

Specific Criticism, Global Acceptance

Hoping to "have it both ways," people with negative self-views may choose interaction partners who recognize their shortcomings but accept them anyway.

Dating and Married Couples at the Ranch and Mall

Method

Overview

The first step in determining whether marriage precipitates a shift from a desire for positive evaluations to a desire for self-verifying evaluations is to examine the preferences of dating versus married persons. We used a cross-sectional design to address this issue.

Participants

We recruited 180 married persons (90 couples) and 190 dating persons (95 couples) from the central Texas area. Some participants were patrons of a horse ranch and others were shoppers at a mall. (Before combining the two samples, we confirmed that sample did not interact with our effects.) We offered $10 to each couple in exchange for their participation. All participants were heterosexual. Most were Caucasian (86.1%) and had at least some college education (81%). Married persons ranged in age from 19–78 ($M = 31.9$ years), had been acquainted for 9 months to 35 years ($M = 8.5$ years), and were married for 1 month to 33 years ($M = 5.8$ years). In contrast, dating persons ranged in age from 14 to 48 years ($M = 25.5$ years), had been acquainted for less than 1 month to 15 years ($M = 2.2$ years), and had been dating for less than 1 month to 12 years ($M = 1.5$ years). We omitted data of 3 couples because the participants misunderstood the instructions and of 6 additional couples because their responses revealed troubling discrepancies that led us to question their credibility.[2]

Procedure

Members of each couple sat at opposite ends of a long table so they could not see each other's responses. After obtaining informed consent and assuring participants that their partners would never see their responses, the experimenter handed participants a questionnaire that billed the investigation as a study of "the relation between personality and close relationships." The questionnaire included items pertaining to the structure of self-knowledge and interpersonal accuracy as well as the items we focused on in this article.

The short form of the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ; Pelham & Swann, 1989) served as the measure of self-conceptions. The SAQ consists of five specific self-views that are central to perceptions of self-worth: intellectual capability, physical attractiveness, athletic ability, social skills, and aptitude in arts and music. For each attribute, participants rated themselves relative to other people their own age and gender on graduated interval scales ranging from 0 (bottom 5%) to 9 (top 5%). Previous research has shown the SAQ to be stable over a period of 4 months, test–retest $r(50) = .77$. The scale is also internally consistent (coefficient alpha = .64), which permitted us to sum the five items and use the sum scores to distinguish participants with negative self-concepts (lower third < 27), moderate self-concepts (middle third, 28–32), and positive self-concepts (upper third > 33).

After completing the self-ratings, participants filled out the principle index of partner appraisal.[3] Participants rated their partner on the five SAQ attributes, and we summed the five ratings. As expected, participants rated partners with negative self-views less favorably than partners with moderate or positive self-views, $F(2, 344) = 27.12, p < .001$ ($Ms = 29, 32,$ and 34, respectively); all three means differed from one another ($p < .05$). For those analyses that required classifying the favorability of partner evaluations, we used the same cutoffs that had been used to distinguish self-concepts (i.e., negative = lower third, or < 27; moderate = middle third, or 28–32; and positive = upper third, or > 33).

An index of intimacy was the major dependent measure. On 9-point scales, participants responded to five items, some of which tapped the affective component of intimacy (i.e., relationship satisfaction) and others of which measured behavioral components of intimacy (i.e., time spent doing things together, time spent talking to each other, discussion of problems or worries, and disclosure of personal matters). The five items were closely associated with one another, as indicated by an internal consistency of .88. Also, the intimacy score of one partner was

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[2] The responses of married participants served as the basis for Swann, Hixon, and De La Ronde's (1992) research. Their primary criterion variable was commitment, which included the five intimacy items plus plans and desire to remain in the relationship.

[3] A measure of the certainty of participants' self-concepts produced no main or interactive effects on any of the dependent measures and is not discussed further.

related to the intimacy score of the other partner within married couples, $r(81) = .61, p < .001$, and within dating couples, $r(88) = .70, p < .001$. Finally, evidence from an independent sample indicated that scores on our measure of intimacy correlated with scores on Rusbult's (1980) measure of satisfaction, $r(41) = .77, p < .001$, as well as her measure of commitment, $r(41) = .74, p < .001$.

The self-concepts, partner evaluations, and intimacy levels of participants in dating and marital relationships were quite similar. Specifically, participants involved in dating relationships did not differ from those involved in marital relationships on the measures of self-concept, $F(1, 350) = 1.41$, ns ($Ms = 30.10$ and 29.45, respectively); partner appraisal, $F < 1$ ($Ms = 31.53$ and 31.44, respectively); and intimacy, $F < 1$ ($Ms = 36.84$ and 36.04, respectively).

To illuminate the reasons underlying the intimacy levels of participants, we had them complete an additional series of items. (Because of time constraints, some of these items appeared in the ranch sample only and others appeared in the mall sample only.) To determine how positively participants thought their partner evaluated them, we had them rate the extent to which their partner "views me positively" on scales ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). On similar scales, participants also indicated the extent to which their partner "thinks I am better than I am." To determine whether participants were hoping to "win a convert," we asked them to estimate how (if at all) their partners' view of their standing on the five SAQ attributes might change if their partners were to get to know them better. Participants responded on scales ranging from 1 (*would probably become much more negative*) to 9 (*would probably become much more positive*). To determine whether participants thought their partner helped them improve themselves, we had them complete a scale ranging from 1 (*my partner does not provide me with any information that could allow me to improve myself*) to 9 (*my partner provides me with a lot of information that could allow me to improve myself*) for each of the SAQ attributes. To discover participants' global impressions of one another, we had them complete a scale ranging from 1 (*my partner is not such a good person*) to 9 (*my partner is a good person*). To assess participants' estimates of their partners' perceptiveness, we had them complete a scale ranging from 1 (*my partner is not a good judge of people's character*) to 9 (*my partner is a very good judge of people's character*). To tap participants' attitudes, we included a 9-item measure of political and social conservatism that included attitudes about recreational drugs, abortion, gun control, the death penalty, rights of women and minorities, the bible, the environment, and disciplining children. To determine how much importance participants imputed to the SAQ items, we had them rate the importance of each attribute. To determine how participants wanted to score on the SAQ items, we asked them to indicate "your view of yourself as you would ideally like to be" on each item. Finally, to determine how much people involved in dating versus marital relationships were committed to the relationship, we had participants indicate the extent to which they desired and planned to remain in the relationship.

Results and Discussion

Relation of Self-Concept, Partner Appraisal, and Relationship Type to Intimacy

We expected that dating participants would be most intimate with partners who evaluated them favorably and that married participants would be most intimate with partners who evaluated them in a self-verifying manner. Our most intriguing prediction was that dating partners with negative self-views would be most intimate with partners who evaluated them favorably but that marriage partners with negative self-views would be most intimate with partners who evaluated them unfavorably.

The regression lines plotted in Figure 1 support our predictions.[4] Furthermore, the results of a simultaneous multiple regression, with self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type as predictors and intimacy as the criterion, revealed the predicted triple interaction, $F(1, 336) = 14.15, p < .001$. (Self-concept scores were trichotomized for presentational purposes only; we entered both self-concept and partner appraisal as continuous variables in the regression.)

We decomposed the triple interaction by first examining the responses of dating participants. The left panel of Figure 1 shows that dating participants displayed positivity strivings. That is, regardless of the valance of participants' self-concepts, intimacy increased as the favorability of partners' evaluations increased, $F(1, 175) = 6.38, p < .02$. This effect was reliable for persons with positive, $F(1, 53) = 13.03, p < .001, r(53) = .44$, and negative self-conceptions, $F(1, 50) = 37.69, p < .001, r(50) = .66$, but only marginally reliable for people with moderate self-conceptions, $F(1, 70) = 3.63, p < .061, r(70) = .22$. No main or interactive effects of self-concept type emerged, nor were any of the regression lines different from one another. Also, none of the correlations between intimacy and partner evaluation differed from one another, except for the correlation in the negative self-view group, which exceeded the one in the moderate self-view group ($z = 3.05, p < .002$).

We further decomposed the triple interaction by examining the responses of married participants. The regression lines plotted in the right panel of Figure 1 revealed that married participants self-verified. A simultaneous multiple regression showed a reliable interaction between self-concept and partner appraisal, $F(1, 161) = 17.69, p < .001$. This interaction reflected a tendency for (a) participants with positive self-views to be more intimate to the extent that their partners evaluated them favorably, $F(1, 51) = 12.83, p < .001, r(51) = .45$; (b) participants with negative self-views to be more intimate to the extent that their partners evaluated them unfavorably, $F(1, 53) = 9.78, p < .003, r(53) = -.39$; and (c) participants with moderate self-concepts to be uninfluenced by the evaluations of their partners ($F < 1$).[5] Comparisons between participants with positive and negative self-views revealed differences between both the regression lines, $t(104) = 4.69, p < .001$, and the correlations between partner appraisal and intimacy ($z = 4.52, p < .001$, respectively). Comparisons between participants with positive and moderate self-views revealed no differences between the regression lines, $t(106) = 1.59, p < .15$, but the correlation between partner appraisal and intimacy was higher in the positive self-view group ($z = 2.34, p < .002$). Finally, comparisons between participants with moderate and negative self-views revealed that the regression lines were different, $t(108) = 2.23, p < .05$, and that the correlation between partner appraisal and intimacy was more negative in the negative self-view group ($z = 2.29, p < .024$).

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[4] We derived these regression lines by calculating conditional regression equations for each of the three self-concept groups.

[5] In principle, people with moderate self-views should have been most attracted to spouses who appraised them moderately. Although the pattern of means favored this hypothesis, the appropriate statistical test revealed that it was unreliable.

Intimacy as a Function of Relationship Type, Self-View and Partner's Appraisal
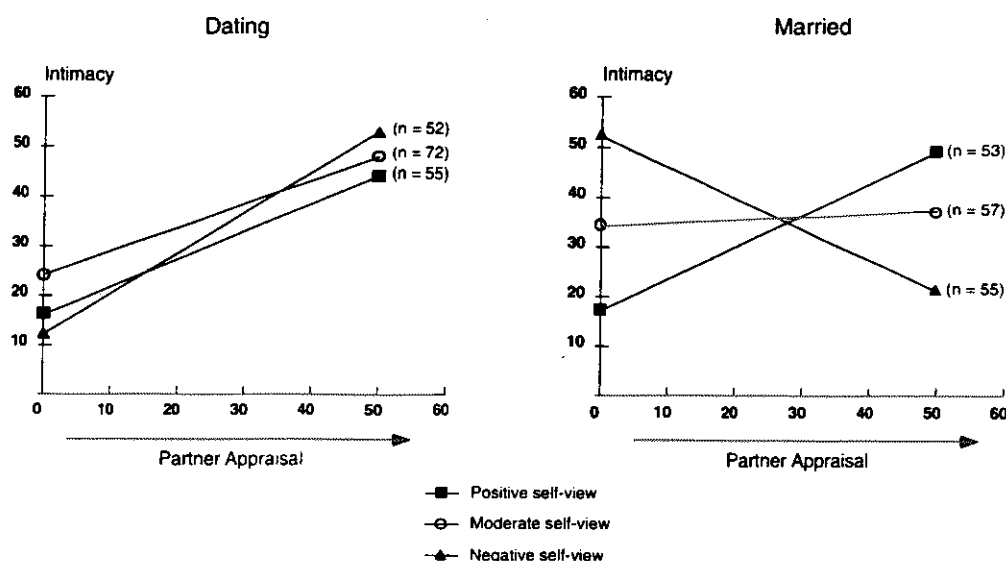

Figure 1. Intimacy and relationship type, self-view, and partner's appraisal.

Because the responses of relationship partners were interdependent (i.e., correlated), we were concerned that the *p* values based on the overall analyses might be spuriously inflated (Kenny & Judd, 1986). We dealt with this issue by replicating all of the major analyses separately by each gender. As can be seen in Appendix A, the results of these analyses suggested that our findings were not artifacts of interdependency.

Intimacy as a Function of Discrepancies Between Partner Appraisal and Self-Concept

We expected that dating partners would display a linear effect, embracing positively discrepant evaluations but not negatively discrepant ones, but that marriage partners would display a curvilinear effect, shunning both positively and negatively discrepant evaluations in favor of congruent ones. We tested these predictions by first forming three groups. We placed the participant in the congruent group if the partner's appraisal was, on the average, within 1 point of the participant's self-rating. (Because there were five SAQ attributes, this meant that the total appraisal could be no more than 5 points higher or lower than their self-rating.) We placed the participant in the negative discrepancy group if the partner appraisal was, on the average, more than 1 point lower than the participant's self-rating. We placed the participant in the positive discrepancy group if the partner appraisal was, on the average, more than 1 point higher than the participant's self-views.

We then conducted a 2 (relationship type: dating vs. married) × 3 (discrepancy: negative discrepancy, congruent appraisal, or positive discrepancy) analysis of variance (ANOVA) of intimacy scores that was designed to accommodate unequal sample sizes. As can be seen in Figure 2, there was an interaction between

marital status and type of discrepancy, $F(2, 338) = 6.91, p < .001$. Planned comparisons revealed that dating persons showed the predicted linear effect $(-1, 0, +1)$, $F(1, 176) = 21.22, p < .001$, with persons in the positive discrepancy group being more intimate than those in the congruent appraisal group, $F(1, 156) = 9.02, p < .003$, and persons in the congruent appraisal group being more intimate than those in the negative discrepancy group, $F(1, 135) = 8.07, p < .005$. In contrast, married persons displayed the predicted curvilinear effect $(-1, +2, -1)$, $F(1, 162) = 8.58, p < .004$, with spouses in the congruent group being more intimate than those in both the negative discrepancy group, $F(1, 113) = 5.52, p < .021$, and positive discrepancy group, $F(1, 150) = 5.81, p < .017$ (those in the negative and positive discrepancy groups did not differ, $F < 1$).

Although the foregoing evidence supported our predictions, we noticed that people with positive self-views were especially apt to encounter negative discrepancies and people with negative self-views were particularly apt to encounter positive ones. To ensure that this was not a problem, we repeated the foregoing analyses after adding self-concept and partner appraisal as covariates. The overall two-way interaction remained, $F(2, 336) = 5.96, p < .001$, as did the curvilinear effect among married persons, $F(1, 160) = 7.29, p < .009$, and the linear effect among dating persons, $F(1, 175) = 38.89, p < .001$.[6] These findings therefore suggest it was not just married people with negative self-views who were put off by overly favorable evaluations; even among people with positive self-views, overly favorable evaluations fostered lower levels of intimacy.

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[6] Of course, in testing for the linear effect of partner appraisal among dating persons, we did not use partner appraisal as a covariate.

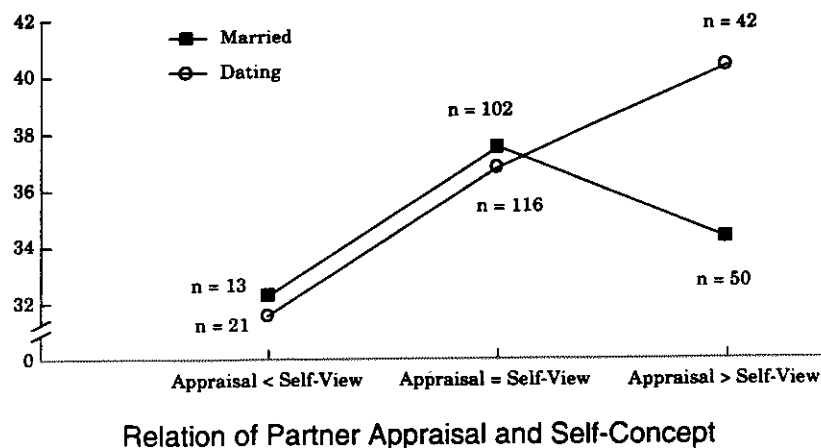## Intimacy as a Function of Self-Other Discrepancies

Figure 2. Intimacy and self–other discrepancies.

We also examined the impact of couple discrepancy (difference between partner appraisal and self-view summed across both partners) on couple intimacy (intimacy of man plus intimacy of women). As expected, among dating couples, couple intimacy increased to the extent that couple discrepancies were positive (evaluations > self-concepts), $r(85) = .59$, $p < .001$. This was not so among married participants, $r(79) = .08$, *ns*, and the difference between these two correlations was reliable ($z = 3.16$, $p < .001$). In contrast, among married couples, couple intimacy increased to the extent that there were few negative or positive couple discrepancies. That is, decrements in the absolute value of couple discrepancies were associated with more couple intimacy among married persons, $r(79) = -.30$, $p < .008$. This was not so among dating couples, $r(85) = -.07$, *ns*, but the difference between these two correlations was not reliable ($z = 1.54$, $p < .124$).

Is There Really a Marriage Shift?

Although the foregoing findings suggest that marriage transforms people from seekers of positivity into seekers of self-verification, our cross-sectional design could not test this hypothesis directly. Nevertheless, analyses of ancillary data bolstered our faith in the marriage shift hypothesis. For example, there was a tendency for the perception of the positivity of the partner to be more closely associated with intimacy within dating, $r(114) = .63$, $p < .001$, as compared with married couples, $r(55) = .36$, $p < .007$.[7] These correlations were different from one another ($z = 2.20$, $p < .03$).

Additional analyses diminished the plausibility of several alternative explanations of the effects of relationship type. Some of these analyses were prompted by the discovery of systematic differences between dating and married persons. For example, relative to dating persons, married persons were more committed to the relationship (i.e., desired the relationship to continue more), $F(1, 350) = 35.16$, $p < .001$, and planned that it would continue longer, $F(1, 350) = 73.78$, $p < .001$. Married persons

were also older and had been in the relationship longer than dating people (all *p*s < .001). Nevertheless, the analyses reported in Appendix B indicate that none of these variables could account for the effects of relationship type.

Appendix B also reports tests of several alternative explanations of the effects associated with relationship type. Although we encountered no support for these alternative explanations, we hope other researchers will use a longitudinal study to address the marital shift hypothesis more directly.

Why People With Negative Self-Views Preferred Spouses Who Evaluated Them Unfavorably

To determine why married people with negative self-views were more intimate with spouses who evaluated them unfavorably, we first examined the evidence in favor of a self-verification interpretation and then tested several rival hypotheses.

Concerns about being overvalued. We expected that married people with negative self-views would be particularly inclined to lower their intimacy level insofar as they thought that their partner evaluated them too favorably. The results confirmed this prediction; whereas there was a modest negative correlation between intimacy and perception of being evaluated too favorably among married people with negative self-views, $r(16) = -.29$, *ns*, this same correlation did not exceed zero in the other conditions, $r(153) = .08$, *ns*.

Self-improvement. Did people with negative self-views display more intimacy toward relatively critical spouses because they hoped that such spouses would help them improve themselves (e.g., Steele, 1990)? It appears not. Relative to married participants with positive self-views, married participants with

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[7] Fluctuations in the degrees of freedom reflect the fact that some participants did not complete all dependent measures. Also, overall, dating and married persons were equally positive toward their partners (all *F*s < 1.47).

negative self-views indicated that their spouses were less likely to provide them with information that would promote self-improvement, $F(2, 107) = 3.47, p < .04$. Adding self-improvement to the regression equation that related spouse appraisal to the intimacy of married participants with negative self-views diminished the spouse appraisal effect only slightly, $F(1, 35) = 3.52, p < .07, r(33) = -.30$.

Winning a convert. Was it that married people with negative self-views were more intimate with spouses who thought poorly of them because they hoped to prove such spouses wrong? The data suggest otherwise. For example, married participants estimated the extent to which they expected their spouses' evaluations on the five SAQ attributes to become more or less favorable. A one-way ANOVA of the sum of these estimates revealed a reliable effect of self-concept, such that participants with negative self-views anticipated that their spouses' evaluations would show less improvement ($M = 25.6$) than participants with moderate self-views ($M = 26.9$) and positive self-views ($M = 27.2$), $F(2, 107) = 3.54, p < .04$. Also, married participants with negative self-views showed a nonreliable tendency to be more intimate when they expected their spouses' evaluations to become less favorable, $r(37) = -.25, p < .14$.

Perceptions of perceptiveness. Were married people with negative self-views more intimate with spouses who perceived them unfavorably because they took expressions of negativity as signs of perceptiveness? Apparently not. Examination of the relationship between the intimacy of married participants with negative self-views and their perceptions of their spouses' perceptiveness revealed no correlation, $r(37) = .13, ns$. Furthermore, the reliable correlation between intimacy and spouse appraisal displayed by these participants, $r(37) = -.34, p < .04$, was not diminished by partialing out perceptions of spouses' perceptiveness, $r(36) = -.33, p < .04$.

Similarity. Was our measure of congruence between participant self-conception and spouse appraisal actually a measure of attitudinal similarity? If so, then our findings might merely reflect a tendency for married participants to like people with similar attitudes (e.g., Byrne, 1971). To test this possibility, we computed an index of attitudinal similarity by calculating the difference between the sum scores of spouses on the measure of political and social conservatism. We found that this index was independent of married participants' evaluations of one another, $r(55) = .17, p > .17$, thus showing that our measure of congruence was not the same as attitudinal similarity (or not as we measured attitudinal similarity, at least).

The similarity of participants' self-views (rather than the similarity of their political attitudes) was also incapable of explaining our findings. Although there was a tendency for married people to get into relationships with partners who had similar self-views, this tendency was quite modest, $r(162) = .23, p < .05$. Furthermore, when we added a term for the triple interaction among self-concept, partner self-concept, and relationship type to our original regression equation in which self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type were used to predict intimacy (all main and lower order interactive effects were included), we discovered that the triple interaction among self-concept, partner self-concept, and relationship type was not reliable ($F < 1$), but the triple interaction among self-concept,

partner appraisal, and relationship type was still reliable, $F(1, 329) = 6.48, p < .01$.

Unfavorable spouses derogated their partners on the specific SAQ attributes but admired them nonetheless. This hypothesis requires that the evaluations of spouses on the SAQ correlated negatively with their global evaluations of participants. The opposite was true. That is, the more negatively spouses rated their partners on the SAQ, the more inclined they were to regard them as "bad persons," $r(107) = .36, p < .001$.

Did people with negative self-views strive to avoid the "crossfire" between their desire for positivity and the desire for self-verification by acquiring favorable feedback on dimensions that they valued and self-verifying feedback on dimensions they did not? No. That is, when we examined participants' responses to how they would like to score on each of the SAQ items, we found that they averaged in the upper 30th percentile on four of the five SAQ attributes and in the upper 50th percentile on the remaining attribute (artistic). Furthermore, participants regarded all five attributes to be highly important (above the midpoint). These analyses left little doubt that participants with negative self-views regarded unfavorable evaluations on the SAQ as undesirable. Considered together with the fact that partners who evaluated each other unfavorably on the SAQ also tended to derogate each other on a global level (i.e., regard them as bad persons), these data support the notion that participants who embraced unfavorable evaluations were doing just that. And if such participants somehow convinced themselves that they would be evaluated favorably, in most instances they were sadly mistaken.

General Discussion

Our findings suggest that people want favorable evaluations from their dating partners and self-verifying evaluations from their marriage partners. Most interestingly, people with negative self-views were most intimate with dating partners who evaluated them favorably and with marital partners who evaluated them unfavorably! Moreover, this tendency for married persons to eschew overly favorable evaluations was not restricted to those with negative self-views; even people with positive self-views were less intimate with spouses whose evaluations were extremely favorable (and thus nonverifying). Apparently, when a spouse's evaluations fall outside one's "latitude of acceptance" (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1961), married people withdraw psychologically from the relationship.

Why might marriage precipitate a shift from an emphasis on positivity to an emphasis on self-verification? We suspect that the unique functions of courtship and marital relationships produce this change. Courtship relationships are presumably highly evaluative, as they provide a context wherein people may judge one another's suitability as potential mates. Marital relationships are less evaluative, for spouses tend to tacitly assume that the relationship will continue indefinitely and instead focus on helping each other pursue the complex web of mutual and personal goals that attracted them to the relationship. To this end, marriage partners prefer that their spouses recognize their strengths and weaknesses, for this will put them in a better position to recognize and develop their unique potentials.

Of course, skeptics could note that our cross-sectional design

offers relatively indirect evidence that marriage transforms people from seekers of positivity into seekers of self-verification. They might also ask why, if this "marriage shift" is so dramatic, newlyweds seldom mention it. We suspect that the marriage shift rarely provokes comment because it occurs gradually, over the period of months immediately preceding and following the marriage ceremony. In addition, the shift is probably rarely if ever conscious or explicit but is instead almost imperceptible to the persons undergoing it. Berger and Kellner (1964) put it this way:

> The protagonists of the marriage drama do not set out deliberately to re-create their world. Each continues to live in a world that is taken for granted—and keeps its taken-for-granted character even as it is metamorphosed. The new world that the married partners, Prometheus-like, have called into being is perceived by them as the normal world in which they have lived before. . . . The dramatic change that has occurred remains, in bulk, unapprehended and unarticulated. (p. 16)

Yet if the transition from dating to marriage is relatively smooth, there are surely aspects of the relationships themselves that pose daunting difficulties for both parties. Most notably, although dating relationships may quiet the desire for self-verification and marital relationships muffle the desire for positivity, both motives surely remain at least somewhat viable in both types of relationships. People may thus be compelled to walk a whisker-thin line between evaluations that are too positive or too negative.

Consider dating persons. If such persons receive unfavorable evaluations, they may not only become worried that their partner is poised to bid them goodbye, they may also feel depressed and deflated. They may be no better off if they seek and obtain excessively favorable evaluations. Although such evaluations may convince them that their partners are interested in the relationship, feelings of fraudulence and fears that their partners will "discover" them may lurk in the background.

Although married people may be even more worried by feelings of fraudulence, self-verifying negative evaluations might also cause concern. That is, even if a wife believes that she deserves to receive unfavorable feedback from her husband, actually getting such feedback may nevertheless leave her feeling that she is deficient, that her positive feelings about herself cannot be trusted, and that there is a certain inevitability to the unhappiness that she is experiencing. Nevertheless, the outcome may be even worse if her husband offers her inappropriately favorable evaluations. Although flattery may foster feelings of optimism and well-being at first, these positive feelings will be short-lived if they are genuinely disjunctive with the wife's firmly held convictions about herself. Moreover, as these positive feelings recede, the wife may begin to suspect that her silver-tongued spouse could not possibly believe what he said and that underneath it all he must wish she were better than she really is. Rather than producing a lasting sense of personal adequacy and well-being, inappropriately favorable evaluations may thus foster a sense of inauthenticity and distrust of the person who delivered them. In the spirit of this analysis, Swann, Tafarodi, and Pinel (1992) found that although people with low self-esteem enjoyed a limited amount of positive feedback, they grew anxious when it continued.

If the foregoing analysis helps illuminate the intrapsychic dynamics that attract people to congruent marriages, it says little about the interpersonal dynamics of such marriages. The modest correlation between the self-views of married participants ($r = .25$) makes it clear that people with negative self-views do not simply choose partners who have equally negative self-views. Instead, they may often enter symbiotic relationships in which one spouse thinks well of him- or herself and the other worships him or her. Consider a marriage in which the wife assumes the role of the competent person and the husband assumes the role of the relatively incompetent one. The benefits of this arrangement for the wife are quite evident, for the praise that her husband heaps on her will satisfy her desire for positivity as well as self-verification. She may also delight in the sense of security and power fostered by the belief that her spouse would not leave her no matter what she did.

The benefits of this arrangement for the husband are more subtle but may be just as compelling. Obviously, the wife's relatively unfavorable evaluations will offer him self-verification. In addition, he may satisfy his positivity strivings in a manner that is sufficiently indirect that it does not challenge the veracity of his negative self-concept: He may bask in the praise that he himself lavishes on his wife (Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988; Cialdini et al., 1976). Convinced that he will never amount to much of anything, he can at least take pleasure in the fact that he had the good fortune to land a wife who will.

Such instances reveal that although the relationships of people with negative self-views may seem twisted and bizarre on the surface, underneath they may have a logic of their own. Of course, the fact that there is an underlying logic to such relationships does not mean that they are adaptive. Consider, for example, Fry's (1962) observation that husbands and wives who enter therapy have often established implicit agreements that allow the husband to verify his belief that he is the healthier, more competent individual in the relationship, whereas the wife verifies her belief that she is the sick, dependent individual. Once such arrangements have been made, both parties cheerfully honor them, even if it requires that the wife bear the responsibility for a debilitating pathology that is as much her husband's as her own:

> The spouses reveal, upon careful study, a history of symptoms closely resembling, if not identical to, the symptoms of the patient. Usually they are reluctant to reveal this history. For example, a wife was not only unable to go out alone, but even in company she would panic if she entered a brightly lighted and/or crowded place or had to stand in line. Her husband disclaimed any emotional problems of his own at first, but then revealed he experienced occasional episodes of anxiety and so avoided certain situations. The situations he avoided were: being in crowds, standing in line, and entering brightly lighted public places. However, both marriage partners insisted the wife should be considered the patient because she was more afraid of these situations than he was. (Fry, 1962, p. 248)

The hapless "victims" in such relationships may find that it is quite difficult to break out of the cycles in which they are trapped. For one thing, the spouses of the victims are apt to provide them with negative evaluations and thus ensure that their self-concepts remain negative. Research by Swann and Predmore (1985) supports this assertion. After praising people with negative self-views these researchers had them interact with either a stranger or relationship partner. Whereas partici-

pants who interacted with a stranger after being praised later reported feeling better about themselves, those who interacted with a congruent relationship partner derived no benefit from the praise. Apparently, being in a relationship with a self-verifying partner may make the self-concepts of people with negative (and positive) self-views resistant to change.

Considering the undesirable consequences of such relationships, we are encouraged by the fact that they may self-destruct before things get too bad for the protagonists. In particular, if the favorability of mutual evaluations becomes too asymmetrical, the dynamics that ordinarily stabilize these relationships may spiral out of control. For example, if a husband with low self-esteem becomes completely convinced that he is unworthy of his wife, any sign that she is contemplating divorce may motivate him to take steps to avert rejection. In desperation, he may strive to win her over by intensifying the activities that he used to prolong the relationship from the beginning: He may desperately shower her with praise, emphasize his own foibles, and generally place himself at her mercy. Ironically, if this last-ditch strategy is done well enough, it may have just the opposite of the effect intended: The husband may persuade his wife that she ought to move on to someone who has more to offer!

Implications and Conclusions

Our findings support E. E. Jones and Gerard's (1967) early contention that the desire for positivity and the desire for authenticity form a basic antimony (see also E. E. Jones, 1990). In addition, our findings provide us with information about how these fundamental propensities manifest themselves in the context of close relationships. Apparently, positivity strivings prevail in the early stages of relationships, before people can be certain that their partners will remain in the relationship. Later, once partners have made it clear that they are in the relationship for the "long haul," self-verification strivings may take over.

This evidence for the importance of the distinction between relatively tentative, trial relationships (e.g., dating) versus relatively lasting ones (e.g., marriage) could help explain why past researchers have encountered so much evidence of positivity strivings. Even if no special effort was made to simulate a dating situation in this past research, brief interactions between strangers in psychological laboratories are bound to foster evaluation apprehension and the sense that the interaction will go poorly if participants fail to make a good impression. Our findings imply that positivity strivings should flourish under such conditions. In contrast, when people are involved in relationships in which mutual evaluation is less of an issue (e.g., marital, roommate, and friendship relationships) they should (and they do—see Swann, 1990) display self-verification strivings. In short, claims for the ubiquity of positivity strivings (e.g., Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988) may rest, in part, on the tendency of researchers to focus on fleeting relationships between people who scarcely know one another (e.g., Huston & Levinger, 1978). As researchers shift more of their attention to relationships between people who are bonded to one another, evidence of self-verification strivings should emerge more frequently.

We close on a practical note. If marriage does indeed encourage people to shift from a desire for positivity to a desire for authenticity, then it may be that courtship offers a stunningly

inadequate preparation for marriage, particularly for people who have negative self-views. If so, then we suggest, as have many before us (e.g., Averill & Boothroyd, 1977; De Rougement, 1940; Peele & Brodsky, 1976; Waller, 1938), that it might be wise to spice up the courtship process with a pinch of authenticity.

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Appendix A

Issues Related to Gender and Interdependency

Gender had no main or interactive effects when added to the regression equation in which we used self-concept, spouse appraisal, and relationship type to predict intimacy (all $Fs < 1$). We were also reassured that the interactions between gender and the other predictors in our design were inconsequential by the modest correlation between the residual scores of women and men ($r = .20$; D. Kenny, personal communication, 1991).

To determine whether any of our significant effects were due to the interdependence of the responses of participants within couples (Kenny & Judd, 1986), we determined whether these effects would replicate if the analyses were conducted separately by gender.

Relation of Self-Concept, Partner Appraisal, and Relationship Type to Intimacy

The results of a simultaneous multiple regression with self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type as predictors and intimacy as the criterion revealed the predicted three-way interaction, for women, $F(1, 165) = 5.38, p < .022$, and for men, $F(1, 163) = 8.69, p < .004$. We decomposed this interaction by first examining the responses of dating participants. Regardless of their self-concepts, dating participants displayed positivity strivings in that their intimacy increased as the favorability of their partners' appraisals increased, for women, $F(1, 87) = 3.11, p < .082$, and men, $F(1, 84) = 2.82, p < .10$. These positivity strivings were reliable for persons with positive self-concepts, for women, $F(1, 24) = 8.34, p < .008$, and men, $F(1, 27) = 4.76, p < .04$, and negative self-concepts, for women, $F(1, 27) = 21.43, p < .001$, and men, $F(1, 21) = 16.56, p < .001$. They were weak for persons with moderate self-concepts, for women, $F(1, 34) = 2.09, p < .16$, and for men, $F(1, 34) = 2.29, p < .14$. No main or interactive effects of self-concept type emerged.

Married participants self-verified. A simultaneous multiple regression showed a reliable interaction between self-concept and partner appraisal, for women, $F(1, 78) = 7.08, p < .009$, and for men, $F(1, 79) = 9.91, p < .002$. This interaction reflected a tendency for (a) men with positive self-views to be more intimate insofar as their partners evaluated them favorably, for men, $F(1, 24) = 19.04, p < .001$ (for women $p < .20$), and for (b) participants with negative self-views to be more inti-

mate insofar as their partners evaluated them unfavorably, for women, $F(1, 27) = 4.78, p < .04$, and for men, $F(1, 24) = 4.98, p < .04$.

In short, although evidence of positivity strivings was less consistent when we broke our analyses down by gender, the results generally supported our crucial prediction that favorable appraisals would foster intimacy among dating participants and self-verifying appraisals would produce intimacy among married participants. These data set the stage for a direct examination of the relation of discrepancies between self-concepts and appraisals to intimacy.

Intimacy as a Function of Discrepancies Between Partner Appraisal and Self-Concept

A 2 (relationship type: dating vs. married) × 3 (discrepancy: appraisal < self-concept, appraisal = self-concept, and appraisal > self-concept) analysis of variance (ANOVA) of intimacy scores revealed an interaction between relationship type and type of discrepancy for men, $F(2, 165) = 7.52, p < .001$. Although the interaction was not reliable for women ($F = 1.14, ns$), additional analyses revealed that their responses paralleled those of men. For example, dating persons of both genders showed the predicted linear effect ($-1, 0, +1$), for women, $F(1, 88) = 15.30, p < .001$, and for men, $F(1, 85) = 6.36, p < .01$, with men in the positive discrepancy group being more intimate than those in the congruent appraisal group, for men, $F(1, 77) = 7.38, p < .008$, but for women, $F = 1.94, p < .17$, and women in the congruent appraisal group being more intimate than those in the negative discrepancy group, for women, $F(1, 66) = 9.96, p < .002$, but for men $F < 1$. In contrast, married persons displayed the predicted curvilinear effect ($-1, +2, -1$), for women, $F(1, 79) = 4.96, p < .03$, and for men, $F(1, 80) = 7.32, p < .008$, with spouses in the congruent group being more intimate than those in the negative discrepancy group, for women, $F(1, 54) = 4.90, p < .03$, and for men, $F(1, 57) = 3.06, p < .09$. Men in the congruent appraisal group were also more intimate than those in the positive discrepancy group, for men, $F(1, 70) = 8.04, p < .006$, but for women, $F < 1$. Finally, men in the negative and positive discrepancy groups did not differ ($F < 1$), but women were marginally more intimate in the positive discrepancy group as compared with the negative discrepancy group, $F(1, 26) = 3.31, p < .08$.

(Appendix A continues on next page)

On discovering that people with positive self-views were especially apt to encounter negative discrepancies and people with negative self-views were particularly apt to encounter positive ones, we repeated these analyses after adding self-concept and partner appraisal as covariates. The two-way interaction remained for men, $F(2, 163) = 6.53, p < .002$, but not for women ($F = 1.21$, ns). The curvilinear effect among married persons remained for both genders, for women, $F(1, 77) = 4.35, p < .04$, and for men, $F(1, 78) = 4.83, p < .03$, as did the linear effect among dating persons, for women, $F(1, 87) = 23.17, p < .001$, and for men, $F(1, 84) = 15.01, p < .001$.

Positivity Strivings in Dating and Marriage Relationships

Concern with partner positivity. Perception of the positivity of the partner was closely associated with intimacy for dating women, $r(56) = .70, p < .001$, and men, $r(56) = .58$. As expected, these correlations were more modest among married women, $r(26) = .43, p < .03$, and men, $r(27) = .31, p < .11$.

Why People With Negative Self-Views Preferred Spouses Who Evaluated Them Unfavorably

Self-improvement. Relative to married women with positive self-views, married women with negative self-views indicated that their spouses were slightly less likely to provide them with information that

would promote self-improvement, $F(2, 52) = 2.53, p < .10$. Responses of the men also supported our assumption that people were not striving for self-improvement in that there was no difference between the positive and negative self-view groups ($F < 1$).

Winning a convert. The more positive their self-views, the more married women estimated that they expected their spouses' appraisals on the five Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ) attributes would become more favorable, $F(2, 52) = 2.85, p < .07$. For men, there was no such difference, $F(2, 52) = 1.44, ns$. In addition, married men with negative self-views showed a tendency to be more intimate when they expected their spouses' appraisals to become less favorable, $r(14) = -.54, p < .04$. Married women displayed a similar trend, but it was not reliable, $r(21) = -.11, ns$.

Perceptions of perceptiveness. Among those with negative self-views there was a negative correlation between intimacy and spouse appraisal, although this was reliable for women, $r(21) = -.45, p < .04$, but not for men, $r(13) = -.15, ns$. Furthermore, the reliable correlation between intimacy and spouse appraisal displayed by women was not diminished by partialing out perceptions of spouses' perceptiveness, $r(18) = -.47, p < .02$.

"Unfavorable" spouses derogated their partners on the specific SAQ attributes but admired them nonetheless. The more negatively spouses rated their partners on the SAQ, the more inclined they were to regard them as "bad persons," for women, $r(52) = .41, p < .003$, and for men, $r(53) = .29, p < .04$.

Appendix B

Was There Really a Marriage Shift?

To determine whether commitment underlay the effects of relationship type, we took the original regression equation in which self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type were used to predict intimacy and added to that equation a triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and desire/plans to remain in relationship (all main and lower order interactive effects were included). This analysis revealed that the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and desire/plans was not reliable, $F(1, 329) = 1.88, ns$, but the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type was still reliable, $F(1, 329) = 12.98, p < .001$. Thus, commitment to the relationship was not responsible for the effects of relationship type.

To test the possibility that age accounted for the effects of relationship type, we took the original multiple regression equation wherein self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type were used to predict intimacy and added a term for the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and age (all main and lower order interactive effects were included). The triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and age was not reliable ($F < 1$), but the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type was still reliable, $F(1, 328) = 6.51, p < .02$.

We also tested the hypothesis that simply being acquainted with their partners for an extended period, or being in the relationship for an extended period, caused married participants to respond differently than dating participants. After performing a log transform on the length of acquaintance and duration of the relationship variables to correct for skew, we added a term for the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and length of acquaintance to the original simultaneous multiple regression equation in which self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type were used to predict intimacy (all main and lower order interactive effects were included). This regression revealed that the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and length of acquaintance was not reliable ($F = 1.05, ns$), but

the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type was still reliable, $F(1, 326) = 5.66, p < .02$. Next, we added a term for the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and duration of relationship to our original regression equation in which self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type predicted intimacy (all main and lower order interactive effects were included). The triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and duration of relationship was not reliable ($F < 1$), but the triple interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type was still reliable, $F(1, 324) = 12.12, p < .001$. Therefore, although we identified several covariates of relationship type, none was responsible for the interaction involving self-concept, partner appraisal, and relationship type in predicting intimacy.

We also tested the possibility that different kinds of people may have selected dating versus marital relationships. If, for example, people in incongruent relationships refused to get married, one would expect that there would have been more congruence in marital relationships than in dating relationships. Contrary to this hypothesis, relationship type was unrelated to congruence. For example, the correlation between self-concept and partner appraisal was similar whether participants were dating, $r(179) = .36, p < .001$, or married, $r(164) = .42, p < .001, z < 1$. Similarly, a t test on the absolute value of the discrepancies between self-views and partner evaluations revealed no effect of relationship type ($t < 1$). Moreover, the proportion of people in relatively congruent relationships was similar in dating (64%) as compared with marital relationships (62%).[A1] Finally, similar proportions also emerged when we computed the number of couples in which both partners were evaluated

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[A1] Although it is true that we could have influenced the total number of congruent relationships simply by changing our criterion, it is still meaningful to compare the number of dating versus marital relationships that met our criterion.

congruently. For example, both members of the couple enjoyed congruence in 42% of dating relationships and both members of the couple enjoyed congruence in 41% of marital relationships. (Other types of "matches" were relatively rare: Within dating relationships, the evaluations of both partners exceeded the self-views of their partners in two couples and the evaluations of both partners were lower than the self-concepts of their partners in one couple; within married relationships, the evaluations of both partners exceeded the self-views of their spouses in four couples.) These data diminish the plausibility of a self-selection hypothesis.

We also tested the hypothesis that the effects of relationship type were due to a self-selection process wherein people gravitate toward (or remain in) dating relationships if they want positive evaluations and marital relationships if they want self-verifying evaluations. This argument requires that congruent relationships would have been overrepresented in our sample of married persons, but the foregoing analyses indicate that this was not the case.

Another rival hypothesis assumed that dating partners were so suffused with positivity strivings that they elevated their ratings of their partners and that married people simply had more realistic evaluations of their partners. This hypothesis predicts that, overall, those involved in dating relationships would have rated their partners more favorably than those involved in marital relationships but they did not.

A related explanation suggests that the emergence of realism and authenticity concerns in marriage encourages both partners to bring their self-views and evaluations into harmony with the corresponding perceptions of the partner (i.e., men would conform their self-views to women's evaluations, women would conform their evaluations to the self-views of men, and vice versa). This "mutual influence" hypothesis is undermined by the fact that length of acquaintance was unrelated to congruence in marital relationships, $r(163) = .15$, ns, as well as in dating relationships, $r(178) = -.01$, ns. This rival hypothesis also requires higher levels of congruence in marital as compared to dating relationships. As noted above, this pattern of congruence failed to materialize.

A more general difficulty with the mutual influence hypothesis is that it rests on the unlikely possibility that people will change both their chronic self-conceptions and their evaluations of their marriage partners while their level of intimacy remains stable. For example, researchers interested in the self have shown repeatedly that self-concepts are incredibly resistant to change, even in the face of years of therapy (e.g., Swann, 1985; Wylie, 1979). People's evaluations of others also display considerable stability over time (e.g., Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). In contrast, variables such as intimacy are more apt to fluctuate over time.

A final variation of the mutual influence explanation argues that only those involved in good, intimate marriages influence each other's perceptions of one another. This explanation suffers from all of the problems mentioned in the preceding paragraph: the fact that there was no more evidence of congruence late as compared with early in relationships as well as independent evidence indicating that conceptions of self and others are quite resistant to change.