
Let's be friends: Relational self-construal and the development of intimacy

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Abstract

Two studies examined the role of relational self-construal in the development and maintenance of intimacy in roommate relationships. In Study 1, 98 roommate pairs completed questionnaires assessing attitudes toward their relationship. Results showed that high relationals disclosed more personal information than lows, which was then associated with their roommates' perceptions of relationship quality. In Study 2, 142 roommate pairs followed the Study 1 procedure with a 1-month follow-up session for the participants (86% returned). Results replicated the findings of Study 1 and showed reciprocated disclosure from the roommates, followed by increased disclosure by the participants at Time 2. These findings support the H. T. Reis and P. Shaver (1988) intimacy model and indicate the importance of the self-construal in this interpersonal process.

Development and maintenance of close relationships are among the most important predictors of psychological well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers & Diener, 1995). The importance of relationships, however, varies among individuals, as does the rate at which intimacy develops in a relationship. Whereas some individuals find themselves taking years to create a deep, supportive relationship, others are able to develop an intimate relationship during its initial stages. Researchers have articulated the processes through which intimate relationships develop (Reis & Shaver, 1988), but few have addressed the role of individual differences in the self in these processes. Nor have researchers investigated the development of closeness and intimacy in the early stages of friendship. The research reported here examines how a particular representation of the self—relational self-construal—is involved in behaviors that help promote and sustain a close

and satisfying relationship. More specifically, these studies investigate the role of relational self-construal in the processes outlined in the Reis and Shaver model of intimacy development among previously unacquainted same-sex roommates.

Development of Intimacy

Reis and Shaver (1988) define intimacy as “an interpersonal process that involves communication of personal feelings and information to another person who responds warmly and sympathetically” (p. 375). According to this model, the development of intimacy begins with disclosure of emotional or personal information by one of the partners. Revealing emotional and private information about oneself communicates trust, liking for the partner, and commitment to increased intimacy in the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994; Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). Emotional self-disclosures also reveal centrally important aspects of the self, allowing the partner to verify and validate these self-views (Reis & Patrick, 1996). As a result, emotional disclosures are more strongly associated with relationship development and

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intimacy than are factual or behavioral disclosures (Goodstein & Reinecker, 1974; see Dindia, 2000 for a review).

The impact of self-disclosure on a relationship, however, depends upon the partner's response. Reis and Patrick (1996) argue that the key characteristics of responsiveness that lead to relationship development are behaviors that communicate understanding (the listener appropriately perceives the speaker's core self), validation (the listener demonstrates respect and acceptance of the speaker), and caring (the listener communicates affection and liking for the person). Some evidence suggests that responsiveness is more important than self-disclosure in the development of intimacy in relationships (Lin, 1992, reported by Reis & Patrick). Others have found that perceptions that one's partner is responsive to one's needs mediate the association between self-disclosure and intimacy in a relationship (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Lippert & Prager, 2001).

This mediation effect is most apparent in the 1998 study by Laurenceau and his colleagues. After every social interaction of 10 min or more, college students reported their degree of self-disclosure, their perceptions of a partner's disclosure and responsiveness, and the level of intimacy. Focusing their analyses at the level of the interaction or episode, Laurenceau and others found that students' reports of their own and their partners' self-disclosures predicted the students' assessments of intimacy in the relationship. The effects of both disclosure variables on intimacy were mediated by the students' perceptions of the partner's responsiveness.

Laurenceau and his colleagues also found substantial individual variation in the path coefficients in their model, leading them to speculate that there were important individual differences in motives, skills, and goals that could influence this process. Participant gender and attachment style did not account for this variation in their study; thus they encouraged further research on other individual difference factors that may affect this process. Attachment styles have been a frequent focus of researchers interested in individual differences in the development of close relation-

ships (Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; see Collins & Feeney, 2004; Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer, & Pietromonaco, 2004 for reviews). Although self-conceptions are implicated in formulations of attachment styles, there has been little empirical investigation into multiple components of self in that literature (but see Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). We seek to address that gap in the literature, focusing on an individual difference in self-construal that influences how individuals go about developing a new relationship. In addition, these studies extend the work of Laurenceau and his colleagues by examining disclosure and responsiveness in the early stages of an ongoing relationship, rather than in short interactions with multiple partners.

Self and Close Relationships

How individuals define themselves influences how they think, feel, and interact with others. In general, Western social-personality psychologists have assumed an independent self-construal, which is "an entity that (a) comprises a unique, bounded configuration of internal attributes (e.g., preferences, traits, abilities, motives, values, and rights and (b) behaves primarily as a consequence of these internal attributes" (Markus & Kitayama, 1994, p. 569). This conceptualization of the independent self-construal is based on the assumption that people seek to define the self as autonomous and separate from relationships and social contexts. Although theorists have long posited a fundamentally *social* self (James, 1890/1983; Mead, 1934), social-personality psychologists have historically marginalized the role of relationships in research on the self. Only relatively recently have researchers argued for a central role for relationships in the construction and definition of the self-system (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; see Sedikides & Brewer, 2001, for a review).

Our research focuses on individual differences in the extent to which people define themselves in terms of close relationships, termed *relational self-construal*. In the highly relational self-construal, the self-space includes representations of one's important relationships,

in addition to representations of one's central characteristics, abilities, attributes, and preferences. We conceptualize relational self-construal as a relatively stable, higher-order self-structure that organizes and directs lower-order elements of the self-concept (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002). For individuals with highly relational self-construals, verifying and enhancing self-esteem will entail verifying and enhancing close relationships. Thus, these individuals will be more likely than low relationals to behave in ways that create, maintain, and enhance closeness with others.

Empirical support for these hypotheses is beginning to accumulate. For example, individuals with a highly relational self-construal are more likely than other people to consider the needs and wishes of close others when making an important decision (Cross et al., 2000). High relationals are less likely than lows to derogate a friend's performance on a task in order to enhance the self (Bacon, 2001, see also Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002). When relational self-construal is either chronically activated (as in Cross et al., 2002) or experimentally primed (as in Stapel & Koomen, 2001), individuals tend to perceive the self as similar to interaction partners, which can form a sense of connection with the other (Mikulincer, Orbach, & Iavnieli, 1998).

Given that persons with highly relational self-construals seek to develop and maintain close relationships, they should be more likely than others to engage in the intimacy-enhancing processes described by Reis and Shaver (1988). Although research on intimacy most often focuses on romantic relationships, we assume that the same processes are involved in the development of closeness in friendships. In a study designed to simulate the early stages of a new friendship, pairs of unacquainted college students were asked to respond to a series of icebreaker questions intended to promote closeness (Cross et al., 2000, Study 3). After 15 min of interaction, the participants described their own and their partner's behaviors in the interaction and their satisfaction with the interaction. The partners of individuals who scored high on a measure of relational self-construal viewed them as more open and responsive than other participants. In addition, the partners of

the highly relational participants were more satisfied with the interaction than were the partners of low relationals. The current studies expand upon this finding, examining the association between relational self-construal, self-disclosure, and responsiveness. In addition, they take into account the reactions of participants' roommates in these relationships and the resulting changes in relationship quality.

The Development of Closeness among New Roommates

Most of the research by social psychologists on the development and maintenance of close relationships has focused on romantic and marital relationships and has overlooked friendships (but see Hays, 1988). Yet a review of the developmental significance of friendships affirmed their association with well-being across the lifespan (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). When asked to describe their most important relationship, college students were as likely to describe a friendship (33%) as they were to describe a romantic relationship (32%) (Cross et al., 2000). Thus, these studies emphasize the development of friendship; specifically, they examine the development of friendship among previously unacquainted roommates.

Focusing on the development of a relationship among new, unacquainted roommates provides several theoretical and practical advantages to the researcher. First, it permits the examination of intimacy during the initial stages of a natural, long-term relationship. Many other studies of close relationships require that people identify themselves as "dating," "friends," or already a part of a couple before they begin the study. As a result, the earliest stages of the development of a relationship—when the two people are just becoming acquainted or deciding whether or not to be friends—has largely escaped investigation. When unacquainted persons are required to live together, the processes of relationship development may unfold relatively quickly. Thus the researcher may be more likely to observe change in the partners' views of the relationship over a relatively short period of time compared to more established relationships.

Second, when roommates are assigned to live together, they are less likely than

roommates who have selected each other to have similar personalities, interests, and values. Individuals' perceptions of similarity with a relationship partner are often positively correlated with their satisfaction with the relationship (Aube & Koestner, 1995; Deutsch, Sullivan, Sage, & Basile, 1991); thus, unacquainted roommates may be required to be especially intentional in their efforts to develop a close relationship, if one is desired. Unlike other newly developing friendships, roommate relationships are relatively difficult to exit; so individuals may be somewhat more likely to persist in their efforts to develop a good relationship or at least a livable relationship. Finally, there is the possibility of greater variance in the thoughts and behaviors among roommates who were not previously friends than would be the case in preexisting friendship pairs. Some pairs will hit it off immediately and will engage in high levels of disclosure and responsiveness, whereas others will not fit well together and will engage in very little relationship-enhancing behavior.

To date, there is no research using the Reis and Shaver (1988) model to examine the role of self in the process of intimacy development among roommate pairs. Although the Cross et al. (2000, Study 3) and Laurenceau et al. (1998) studies described earlier provide the basis for the current research, neither have examined the role of self-construal in this process using data from both members of the relationship, while at the same time investigating relationship dynamics that exist outside of a lab setting. Thus, these studies are the first to address the possibility that disclosing intimate information may be a function of self-construal. Because persons with highly relational self-construals are motivated to create intimacy in their relationships, we hypothesize that they will engage in behaviors that lead to such intimacy and closeness, specifically emotional self-disclosure and responsiveness to their partner's disclosures. Although a partner's self-disclosure and sensitive responding may enhance a person's relational self-construal, we conceptualize relational self-construal as a relatively stable individual difference that people bring to the relationship (see the

Method section for evidence of temporal stability). Thus, in these studies, the relationship-relevant motives, needs, and goals participants bring to the relationship are represented by their relative level of relational self-construal.

In two studies, we investigate how individuals' levels of relational self-construal influence their interactions with new, unfamiliar roommates and their roommates' subsequent perceptions of the relationship. In Study 1, we examined the Reis and Shaver (1988) model using cross-sectional data from new roommates in the early weeks of living together. Study 2 seeks to replicate and extend Study 1; it assesses both roommates' self-construal, self-disclosures, and responsiveness and examines the association of these variables with change in one partner's evaluations of the quality of the relationship.

Study 1

Study 1 investigated closeness among roommate pairs during the first few weeks of living together. We examined the association among self-construal, self-disclosure, responsiveness, and the closeness of the relationship in the early stages of a new and somewhat obligatory relationship. An earlier study (Cross et al., 2000, Study 3) showed that in a dyadic interaction among strangers, the participants' satisfaction with the interaction was a function of their partners' self-construals, their partners' reports of self-disclosure, and their own perceptions of their partners' responsiveness. In this study, we examined roommate pairs and added a third intervening variable—the roommates' perceptions of their partners' self-disclosures (see Figure 1; in the remainder of the article, the initial volunteers who signed up for the study will be referred to as the "participants," and their roommates will be referred to as the "roommates").

We predicted that people with a highly relational self-construal would disclose emotional information about themselves and would be responsive to their partners' disclosures. The participants' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with their roommates may also influence levels of disclosure (Collins & Miller, 1994); so relationships quality was included as

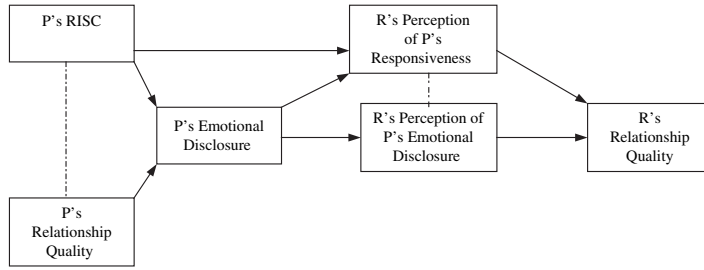


Figure 1. Proposed Intimacy Model, Study 1. P = participant (first person contacted); R = roommate.

a predictor of emotional disclosure. As shown in Figure 1, we expected participants' self-reports of disclosure to predict roommates' perceptions of the other's disclosure and responsiveness. The roommates' perceptions of the other's disclosure and responsiveness should then predict the roommates' reports of the quality of the relationship.

Method

Participants and procedure

Research participants were asked to sign up for the study if they (a) were living with a same-sex roommate for the first time and (b) they did not know that person well before the semester began.¹ For the first phase of the study, participants were seated in university classrooms in groups of 2–10. They provided informed consent and completed a questionnaire packet, which included the measures described below. A total of 176 introductory psychology students completed the questionnaire in exchange for extra course credit (73% female, 27% male). Twenty participants (12 women and 8 men) who indicated they knew their roommates well before the beginning of the semester were dropped from all subsequent analyses,

resulting in a sample of 156 participants.² Of these 156, 148 (95%) gave us permission to contact their roommates (50% of those who refused permission were women). Comparisons of the participants who gave permission to contact their roommates and those who did not revealed no differences in any of the measures described below. Upon completion of the questionnaire packet and (if chosen) the roommate information sheet, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Roommates were sent the questionnaire by mail. This questionnaire included a three-digit identification number, which linked the roommate to the participant. They were asked to complete the questionnaire alone, not to discuss it with their roommate, and to return it within 10 days. In exchange for completing the questionnaire, their names were entered into a drawing for \$50. They were told that a \$50 prize would be given for every 50 questionnaires returned. The roommates were also asked to write down contact information in case they won the lottery, but this sheet was separated from responses immediately upon receipt by the researchers. Responses were returned in prepaid envelopes directly to the researchers. A total of 95 roommates (85% female, 15% male) of the 148 eligible roommates returned completed questionnaires for a return rate of 64%.

To determine if there was a difference in the relationships of the roommates who responded and roommates who did not respond, we compared the responses of the participants whose roommates returned the questionnaire to those whose roommates did not on the measures described below. These analyses were conducted

1. Both of the studies mentioned here used data from the same participants that were sampled in Cross and Morris (2003; Study 1 and Study 2, respectively).
 2. We normally exclude all non-U.S. citizens from analyses, as culture confounds the effects of relational self-construal. However, all the participants in Study 1 were U.S. citizens; so, this exclusion was unnecessary. In Study 2, we excluded non-U.S. citizens from all analyses.

for only the participants who gave permission to contact their roommates. No significant differences were found between these two groups ($p > .10$). Roommates in relationships described by the participants as close were no more or less likely to respond to the questionnaire than were other roommates.

Materials

The packet of materials completed by the participants included all the measures described below. The roommates completed shorter versions of some of the scales, which are noted below. Tests of kurtosis showed that all the variables were normally distributed ($ps > .10$). Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for measures included in these analyses are listed in Table 1. Additional measures for other purposes were included in the packets; they will not be discussed further here.

Relational-interdependent self-construal. The Relational Interdependent Self-Construal scale (RISC; Cross et al., 2000) was used to assess individual differences in defining the self, based on close relationships. All the items refer to a self-definition in terms of close relationships in general and do not explicitly refer to specific relationships. The scale correlates

moderately with the Clark, Ouellette, Powell, and Millberg (1987) Communal Orientation Scale ($r = .41$), Singelis' (1994) Interdependent Self-Construal Scale ($r = .41$), and Davis' (1980) Empathic Concern Scale ($r = .34$) (Cross et al.). The RISC scale has acceptable test-retest reliability ($rs > .70$ over 1 month, $rs > .60$ over 2 months; Cross et al.). Some sample items are, "My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am," "When I feel close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am," and "In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image." Responses to the 11-item scale were made on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Emotional disclosure. Emotional self-disclosure was measured with five items from a scale by Miller, Berg, and Archer (1983). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they talked with their roommate about several topics. The items used to assess emotional disclosure were "My deepest feelings," "What I like and dislike about myself," "My worst fears," "Things I have done which I am proud of," and "My close relationships with other people." Responses were made on a 4-point scale (1 = *discussed not at all*,

Table 1. Correlations, descriptive statistics, and reliability coefficients, Study 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Participant variables						
1. RISC scale	—	.26**	.10	.10	.20**	.16*
2. Emotional disclosure		—	.46**	.38**	.34**	.33**
3. Relationship quality			—	.18*	.15*	.21*
Roommate variables						
4. Perception of participants' emotional disclosure				—	.68**	.66**
5. Perception of participants' responsiveness					—	.82**
6. Relationship quality						—
Number of items	11	5	28	5	7	20
<i>M</i>	5.52	2.23	0.00	2.40	3.52	0.00
<i>SD</i>	0.81	0.76	3.46	0.74	1.01	3.39
α	.89	.83	.89	.84	.93	.88

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4 = *discussed fully and completely*). The roommates were asked to complete this scale for their perceptions of self-disclosure from the participants.

Perceived responsiveness. The seven-item *social support* subscale from the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991) assesses the degree to which one can rely on the other for help and was used as our measure of responsiveness. Sample items are “To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?” and “To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?” Responses were made using a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *quite a lot*).

Relationship quality index. Several dimensions of relationship quality were measured and combined into a single index. Participants and the roommates completed a three-item measure of relationship *strength* adapted from Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996). The items were “Overall, how strong is your relationship with your roommate?” “Overall, how successful is your relationship with your roommate?” and “Overall, how satisfied are you with your roommate?” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$ for participants and $.91$ for their roommates). Participants and their roommates also completed a four-item measure of relationship *commitment* adapted from Rusbult (1983). These items were “To what extent are you committed to your relationship with your roommate?” “For what length of time would you like your relationship with your roommate to last?” “To what extent are you attached to your roommate?” and “How likely is it that you will end your relationship with your roommate in the near future?” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$ for participants and $.87$ for their roommates). Finally, the participants and the roommates completed the *depth* and *conflict* subscales of the QRI (Pierce et al., 1991). Sample items from the eight-item *depth* of closeness subscale include “How significant is this relationship in your life?” and “How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?” (Cronbach’s α s = $.93$ for participants and for

the roommates). Sample items from the *conflict* subscale of the QRI include “How much does this person try to control or influence your life?” and “How critical is this person of you?” Participants completed the full 13-item measure of conflict (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$), whereas roommates completed only 5 of the items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). Responses to all the above items were made using a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *quite a lot*). A relationship quality index was created by obtaining the Z-scores from the strength, commitment, depth, and conflict measures and then subtracting the conflict score from the sum of the other three measures (strength + commitment + depth – conflict). Composite reliability coefficients of $.88$ for participants and $.89$ for roommates were obtained by using the calculation described in Nunnally (1978).

Background information. The questionnaire packet completed by the participants also included items requesting information about their gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship status, and how long they had lived with the roommate.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses showed that the participants’ RISC scale scores correlated positively with their reports of emotional disclosure to the roommate, as well as with the roommates’ perception of the participants’ responsiveness and the roommates’ reports of relationship quality (see Table 1). As hypothesized, the participants’ reports of the quality of the relationship were also related to their reports of disclosure to the roommate. Independent sample *t* tests revealed that women had higher RISC scale scores than men ($M_{\text{women}} = 5.68$, $SD = 0.73$; $M_{\text{men}} = 5.03$, $SD = 0.86$), $t(154) = 4.62$, $p < .01$. This gender difference is addressed later in tests of the proposed model. There were no other significant gender differences.

To test the hypothesized paths shown in Figure 1, a series of linear regression analyses were conducted first. These analyses included (where appropriate) the stability coefficient from participants’ relationship quality to roommates’ relationship quality to control for shared variance across common measures (this

path is not shown in the figure). The results of these analyses showed that all the paths in the proposed model were significant and were in the predicted direction ($p < .05$). Structural equation analyses using maximum likelihood estimation from the LISREL 8.5 program were used to test this model. Conventional fit criteria use a nonsignificant chi-square statistic (although this is often significant due to its sensitivity to sample size), and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 0.90 or above. Hu and Bentler (1999) state that additional fit criteria should be reported for models using large samples. A model fits the data well if the comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.95 or above and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.06 or less (although 0.10 or less is considered an acceptable fit). Thus, we have included all these fit indices for all structural equation model (SEM) analyses.

The model fit the data well, $\chi^2(5, N = 156) = 25.52, p < .01$; GFI = .95, CFI = .95, RMSEA = 0.06; see Figure 2. These results reveal that individual differences in relational self-construal predicted variation in emotional disclosure. Individuals with a highly relational self-construal were more willing than people with a low relational self-construal to share emotional or personal information about themselves to their roommates. People with highly relational self-construals were also more likely to be viewed by their roommates as responsive. The roommates' perceptions of their partners' emotional disclosure and responsiveness were related; these perceptions in turn were

related to the roommates' evaluations of relationship quality.

The participants' RISC scale scores had a significant indirect effect on the roommates' perceptions of the participants' emotional disclosure ($\beta = .08, p < .05$), the roommates' perceptions of the participants' responsiveness ($\beta = .07, p < .05$), and the roommates' relationship quality ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). Participants' emotional disclosure also had a significant indirect effect on roommates' relationship quality ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). The stability path from participants' relationship quality to roommates' relationship quality was also positive and significant ($\beta = .17, p < .01$; this path is not shown in the figure).

Due to the large sample of women, the model may be more representative of women's roommate relationships than of relationships between men. To test for interaction effects by gender, we first constrained the paths between men and women to be invariant. This stacked model fit the data well, $\chi^2(18, N = 156) = 73.89, p < .01$; GFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.08, but was significantly different from the model in which the paths were allowed to vary, $\Delta\chi^2(8) = 44.46, p < .01$. This indicates that some of the paths in the model were significantly different between men and women. A path was considered to be moderated by gender if an equality constraint across the two subsamples resulted in a model fit that was significantly different from the fit of the stacked model using no constraints. The

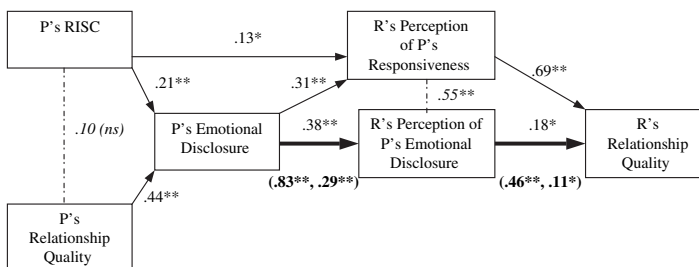


Figure 2. Intimacy Model, Study 1. The stability coefficient between P's relationship quality and R's relationship quality was estimated but is not shown. P = participant (first person contacted); R = roommate. Paths moderated by gender are indicated with bold arrows, and the coefficients for women and men are presented in bold and in parentheses (**men, women**). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

results of these tests showed that two paths significantly varied between men and women ($p < .05$; these paths are indicated with bold arrows in Figure 2). The results revealed a stronger association between participants' emotional disclosure and roommates' perceptions of participants' disclosure for men ($\beta = .83, p < .01$) than for women ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) and a stronger association between roommates' perception of participants' disclosure and roommates' relationship quality for men ($\beta = .46, p < .01$) than for women ($\beta = .11, p < .05$). The final model, with all but the two aforementioned paths constrained to be equal across groups, fit the data well, $\chi^2(16, N = 156) = 40.64, p < .01$; GFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07.

In summary, these findings show that emotional disclosure and responsiveness contribute to feelings of closeness and commitment in a new relationship, supporting the Reis and Shaver (1988) model. Moreover, the SEM results indicate that individual differences in relational self-construal are associated with levels of self-disclosure, suggesting that the highly relational participants seek to create a social atmosphere conducive to the development of close relationships by sharing sensitive information about themselves. Whereas the Laurenceau et al. (1998) and the Lin (1992) studies focused on within-individual ratings of the elements of the intimacy model (i.e., participants' ratings of others' self-disclosure, responsiveness, and their own intimacy in the interaction), this study went further by using data from both members of a relationship. The stacked model analyses showed that these patterns are evident for both men and women but that emotional disclosure may be more salient to the partner when it is conveyed between men than between women. They also revealed that emotional disclosure is a strong predictor of relationship quality for men.

How enduring is this pattern? Although this study provides insight into the processes of relationship development, it is based on cross-sectional data and so says little about the temporal relations among the variables. Study 2 examines the degree to which this pattern of relationship development is both reciprocal and continuous.

Study 2

The Reis and Shaver (1988) model of intimacy suggests that relationship development is an ongoing process and that the relationship can be maintained through continued, reciprocated disclosure (see also Derlega et al., 1993; Dindia, 1994, 2000; Guerrero, Eloy, & Wabnick, 1993). Study 2 expands upon the findings of Study 1 by including the roommates' reports of disclosure and the participants' response to the roommate 1 month later. By including the participants' reactions to the roommate at a later time point, we allow for an examination of changes in participants' relationship quality and emotional disclosure extended over time. This is outlined in more detail below.

Our predictions concerning the expanded model are indicated in Figure 3. First, we begin with the model examined in Study 1 (indicated as "Cycle 1" in Figure 3). Participants with a highly relational self-construal will be more likely to engage in emotional disclosure, controlling for perceived relationship quality. Again, we expect a positive association between the participants' disclosure and their roommates' perceptions of the participants' disclosure and responsiveness. We also expect that highly relational participants will behave in ways that are perceived as responsive by the roommate. The roommates' perceptions of the participants' disclosure and responsiveness will predict the roommates' relationship quality. At this point, the second cycle of intimacy development begins (indicated as "Cycle 2" in Figure 3), in which the roommates' self-construal score and relationship quality predict their reports of self-disclosure. In this second cycle, we expect a repeat of the pattern of associations shown in Cycle 1. The roommates' RISC scale scores and self-disclosure will then predict participants' perceptions and relationship quality at Time 2, beginning a third cycle of increased emotional disclosure.

We expect that the participants' perceptions of their roommates' disclosure and responsiveness will predict change in the participants' relationship quality from Time 1 to Time 2, which will then be associated with an increase in the participants' emotional disclosure from

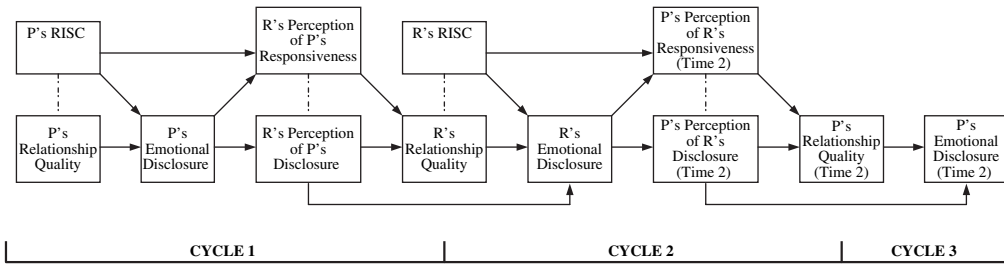


Figure 3. Proposed Intimacy Model, Study 2. P = participant (first person contacted); R = roommate.

Time 1 to Time 2. A predictor variable predicts change in an outcome variable to the degree that the path coefficient from the predictor to the outcome at Time 2 is significant after controlling for the association between Time 1 and Time 2 measures of the outcome variable (Malloy, 1992). Thus, we estimated the stability coefficients from Time 1 to Time 2 for relationship quality and disclosure (these paths were predicted but not indicated in Figure 3 for the sake of simplicity). This temporal extension of the model can provide more conclusive evidence that this is an interpersonal process, in which both members' self-construals, behaviors, and perceptions of the relationship contribute to the development of intimacy over time. This study also seeks to demonstrate the cyclical pattern of this process, in which positive relationship perceptions and behaviors increase over time as they are reciprocated between the partners.

Study 2 again focused on students living together for the first time. We made several modifications, however, by using a measure of partner responsiveness that was more specific than the measure used in Study 1, a more elaborate measure of relationship quality, and a conflict measure based on the frequency of negative interactions. The participants returned 1 month after the initial data collection session and completed a second assessment of the relationship.

Method

Participants and procedure

Students in undergraduate introductory psychology courses participated in this study

for extra course credit. The participants were asked to sign up for the study only if they were living with a same-sex roommate for the first time. The first phase of the study was conducted just as in Study 1 in groups of 2–15 people. Participants provided informed consent, completed a questionnaire packet, and if they chose, gave permission to the researchers to contact their roommates. Participants were then thanked and reminded of their second session.

A total of 281 introductory psychology students (81% female, 19% male) completed the first phase of the study. Twenty-one people were excluded for living with their roommates prior to the beginning of the semester, 10 were excluded for living with an opposite sex roommate, an additional 6 were excluded for being noncitizens, and 3 were excluded as outliers on the RISC scale (more than 3.29 *SD* from the mean).³ This brought the total number of participants at Time 1 to 241 (83% female, 17% male). Of this group, 91% gave permission to contact their roommates (the rate was 91% for women and 89% for men), and there were no significant differences between those who did and did not give permission on any Time 1 variables.

As in Study 1, the questionnaire was sent to the roommates by mail, offering the same incentives and using the same data collection procedures as were described in Study 1. A total of 142 roommates (87% female, 13% male) of the final group of participants returned completed questionnaires for a return

3. This Z-score cutoff point was established by Fidell and Tabachnick (2003) as a legitimate indicator of outliers that can be excluded from analysis.

rate of 64%. The *t* tests of the responses of the participants whose roommates returned the questionnaire with those who did not (only for those who gave permission to contact their roommates) revealed only one significant difference: Participants whose roommates responded to the questionnaire scored higher on the RISC scale ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 0.67$) than did those whose roommates did not respond ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(219) = 2.09$, $p < .05$. This difference suggests that highly relational participants may have created an atmosphere more conducive to cooperation from the roommate than low relationals. There were, however, no differences between these groups in the variables assessing the quality of their roommate relationships.

A total of 209 participants (82% female, 18% male) from the first phase returned 1 month later, for a return rate of 86%. There were no significant differences on any of the Time 1 measures between those who completed both waves of data collection and those who did not. Upon completion, participants were thoroughly debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Materials

The participants at Time 1 and their roommates completed the following measures: the RISC scale, measures of emotional disclosure to and from the other person, perceived roommate responsiveness, and the relationship quality measures. The participants at Time 2 completed the measures of emotional disclosure to and from their roommate, perceived roommate responsiveness, and the relationship quality measures. The measures that were described for Study 1 used the identical response scales in Study 2, thus they are not described further here. Tests of kurtosis showed that all the variables were normally distributed ($ps > .10$). Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all measures are listed in Table 2.

Perceived responsiveness. Eight items from the scale used to assess partner responsiveness in the Cross et al. (2000) study were adapted for this study (several of these items

come from the Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr, 1997, Interaction Supportiveness Scale). Examples of items include "My roommate seems sensitive to my feelings" and "My roommate tries to see things from my point of view." Responses were made on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Relationship quality index. Participants and the roommates completed the measures of relationship *strength* (Murray et al., 1996; Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$ for participants at Time 1, .91 at Time 2, and .92 for their roommates), *commitment* (Rusbult, 1983; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$ for participants at Time 1, .89 at Time 2, and .86 for their roommates), and *depth* (Pierce et al., 1991; Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$ for participants at Time 1, Time 2, and for their roommates) described in Study 1. Both participants and their roommates also completed a two-item measure of *subjective closeness* from Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto (1989). These items were "Relative to *all* your other relationships (both same and opposite sex), how would you characterize your relationship with your roommate?" and "Relative to what you know about *other people's* roommate relationships, how would you characterize your relationship with your roommate?" (italicized emphasis included in the items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$ for participants at Time 1, .88 at Time 2, and .88 for their roommates). Responses were made on a 5-point scale (1 = *not as close as others'*, 5 = *much closer than others'*). Participants and roommates also completed a five-item measure of the degree of *liking* they had toward their roommate which was adapted from Stafford and Canary (1991) to be specific to roommate relationships. Sample items include "I admire my roommate" and "My roommate's good points far outweigh his/her bad points" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ for participants at Time 1, .93 at Time 2, and .92 for their roommates). All the above measures used a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *quite a lot*) unless otherwise stated. Finally, participants and their roommates completed an eight-item measure of *conflict* that is based on the frequency of negative interactions (Lepore, 1992). This measure was adapted to

Table 2. Correlations, descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients, Study 2

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Participant variables (Time 1)												
1. RISC scale	—	.22**	.17*	.16*	.15*	.13*	.19**	.18*	.18*	.13*	.26**	.23**
2. Emotional disclosure		—	.65**	.03	.54**	.58**	.33**	.47**	.67**	.52**	.13*	.52**
3. Relationship quality			—	.03	.39**	.38**	.22**	.45**	.52**	.36**	.10*	.67**
Roommate variables												
4. RISC scale				—	.14*	.02	.03	.10*	.05	.06	.15*	.09
5. Emotional disclosure					—	.85**	.53**	.66**	.44**	.49**	.19*	.40**
6. Perception of participants' emotional disclosure						—	.49**	.58**	.43**	.44**	.16*	.36**
7. Perception of participants' responsiveness							—	.77**	.27**	.28**	.24**	.29**
8. Relationship quality								—	.39**	.37**	.22**	.43**
Participant variables (Time 2)												
9. Emotional disclosure									—	.74**	.35**	.63**
10. Perception of roommates' emotional disclosure										—	.40**	.54**
11. Perception of roommates' responsiveness											—	.57**
12. Relationship quality												—
Number of items	11	5	30	11	5	5	8	30	5	5	8	30
<i>M</i>	5.51	0.07	2.55	5.59	0.03	2.56	2.59	4.13	0.06	2.33	2.30	3.88
<i>SD</i>	0.66	4.06	0.80	0.78	4.06	0.78	0.80	0.86	4.01	0.77	0.79	0.86
α	.83	.93	.82	.87	.92	.87	.87	.93	.89	.84	.83	.84

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

be specific to roommate relationships. They were asked to specify how often particular incidents occurred during the past 2 weeks using a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *about every day*). Sample items include “You fought with your roommate” and “You and your roommate criticized each other” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$ for participants at Time 1, $.82$ at Time 2, and $.87$ for their roommates). A relationship quality index was created by obtaining the Z-scores from the strength, commitment, depth, subjective closeness, liking, and conflict measures, then subtracting the conflict score from the sum of the other five measures (strength + commitment + depth + subjective closeness + liking – conflict; Composite reliability coefficient = $.93$ for participants at Time 1, $.89$ at Time 2, and $.92$ for their roommates).

Background information. The questionnaire packet completed by the participants also included items requesting information about their gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship status, and how long they had lived with their roommates.

Results and Discussion

Gender differences

Women had higher scores on the RISC scale than men ($M_{\text{women}} = 5.59$, $SD = 0.64$; $M_{\text{men}} = 5.01$, $SD = 0.61$), $t(238) = 4.42$, $p < .01$, but there was no significant gender difference for roommates’ RISC scale scores ($M_{\text{women}} = 5.60$, $SD = 0.79$; $M_{\text{men}} = 5.47$, $SD = 0.68$), $t(138) = 0.68$, *ns*. Women also had higher scores than men on all Time 2 variables, which included Time 2 perception of roommates’ emotional disclosure ($M_{\text{women}} = 2.37$, $SD = 0.80$; $M_{\text{men}} = 1.94$, $SD = 0.64$), $t(203) = 3.06$, $p < .01$, Time 2 perception of roommates’ responsiveness ($M_{\text{women}} = 3.96$, $SD = 0.86$; $M_{\text{men}} = 3.50$, $SD = 0.72$), $t(204) = 2.94$, $p < .01$, Time 2 relationship quality ($M_{\text{women}} = 0.31$, $SD = 4.12$; $M_{\text{men}} = -1.13$, $SD = 3.26$), $t(204) = 1.97$, $p = .05$, and Time 2 emotional disclosure ($M_{\text{women}} = 2.39$, $SD = 0.72$; $M_{\text{men}} = 2.08$, $SD = 0.70$), $t(203) = 2.23$, $p < .05$. These gender differences are addressed later in tests of the proposed model.

Preliminary correlation analyses showed that participants’ RISC scale scores were positively associated ($ps < .05$) with all the other variables included in the model (see Table 2). The roommates’ RISC scale scores correlated positively with their reports of emotional self-disclosure and relationship quality and with the participants’ Time 2 perceptions of the roommates’ responsiveness. Roommates’ RISC scale scores also correlated positively with their own emotional disclosure and relationship quality and with the participants’ Time 2 perceptions of the roommates’ emotional disclosure and responsiveness.

A series of linear regression analyses were conducted first to test the paths indicated in Figure 3. Using the same procedure as in Study 1, we estimated the stability coefficients among constructs that were used for the participants at both time points (e.g., between participants’ Time 1 relationship quality and participants’ Time 2 relationship quality; these paths are not shown in the figure). Paths were also estimated between constructs in the model that were common to both participants and roommates (e.g., between participants’ Time 1 relationship quality and roommates’ relationship quality). Based on the results from the correlation and regression analyses, two paths were added to the model. The added paths were between participants’ RISC scale score and Time 2 perception of roommates’ responsiveness ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) and between participants’ Time 1 disclosure and participants’ Time 2 perception of roommates’ disclosure ($\beta = .44$, $p < .01$). Structural equation analyses using maximum likelihood estimation from the LISREL 8.5 program were used to test this model. The model fit the data well, $\chi^2(34, N = 241) = 185.82$, $p < .01$; GFI = $.90$, CFI = $.95$, RMSEA = $.10$; see Figure 4.

This analysis replicated most of the findings from Study 1, revealing that the participants’ RISC scale scores and relationship quality scores were positively related to their self-reports of emotional disclosure (see Figure 4; see Table 3 for indirect and total effects of participants’ and roommates’ RISC scale scores on subsequent variables in the model). Emotional disclosure in turn related to the roommates’ perceptions of the participants’

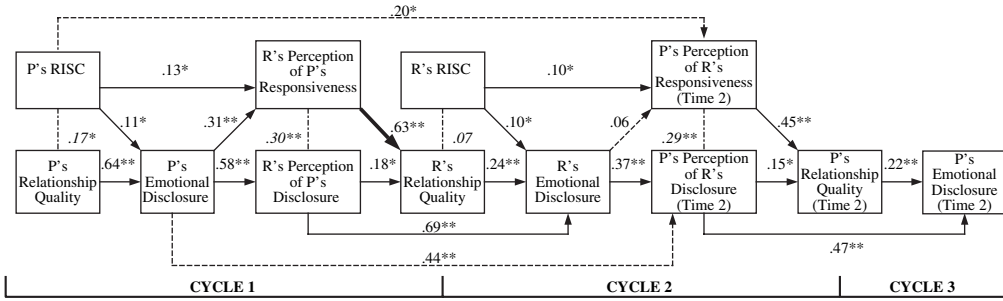


Figure 4. Intimacy Model, Study 2. Stability coefficients between any variables shared among Time 1 participant variables, roommate variables, and Time 2 participant variables were estimated but are not shown (e.g., paths were estimated between P’s Time 1 relationship quality, R’s relationship quality, and P’s Time 2 relationship quality). Paths added post hoc are indicated with dashed arrows. P = participant (first person contacted); R = roommate. The path moderated by gender is indicated with a bold arrow ($\beta = .33, p < .01$ for men, $\beta = .68, p < .01$ for women). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

emotional disclosure. These perceptions predicted the roommates’ relationship quality both directly and indirectly through their association with the roommates’ perceptions of the participants’ responsiveness. The associations found for the participants in Cycle 1 were then replicated for the roommates in Cycle 2 (see Figure 4). For the participants at Time 2, perceptions of the roommates’ disclosure and responsiveness predicted positive change in relationship quality at Time 2. Evidence for the start of a third cycle was supported in that the increase in participants’ relationship qual-

ity predicted an increase in their emotional disclosure from Time 1 to Time 2. As was the case in Study 1, the stability coefficients among measures used multiple times were all positive and significant ($ps < .01$; these paths are not shown in the figure).

Table 3 shows the indirect and total effects of participants’ RISC scale scores on the roommate variables and their own Time 2 variables and roommates’ RISC scale scores on the participant Time 2 variables. Participants’ RISC scale scores had significant total effects on all the roommate variables and all their own

Table 3. Total and indirect effects of participants’ RISC scores and roommates’ RISC scores (Study 2)

Variables	Participant RISC		Roommate RISC	
	Indirect	Total	Indirect	Total
Roommate variables				
Perception of participants’ emotional disclosure	.06*	.06*	—	—
Perception of participants’ responsiveness	.03*	.16**	—	—
Relationship quality	.11**	.11**	—	—
Emotional disclosure	.09**	.09**	—	.10**
Participant variables (Time 2)				
Perception of roommates’ emotional disclosure	.07**	.07**	.04*	.04*
Perception of roommates’ responsiveness	.07**	.25**	.01	.11**
Relationship quality	.12**	.12**	.06*	.06*
Emotional disclosure	.09**	.09**	.05*	.05*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Time 2 variables, and roommates' RISC scores had significant total effects on all the participant Time 2 variables ($ps < .05$). Thus, variation in self-construal predicts both intrapersonal (e.g., positive perceptions of the partner and relationship quality) and interpersonal (e.g., eliciting emotional disclosure and positive perceptions from the partner) aspects of the relationship. High relationals view their relationships in a more positive light and are viewed by others as more responsive and open than are lows.

To test for moderation by gender, we followed the procedure described in Study 1 and constrained the paths between men and women to be invariant. This model fit the data well, $\chi^2(96, N = 241) = 334.32, p < .01$; GFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.08, but was significantly different from the model in which the paths were allowed to vary, $\Delta\chi^2(29) = 53.25, p < .01$. This again indicated that gender moderates some of the paths in the model. A path was considered moderated if an equality constraint across the two subsamples resulted in a model fit that was significantly different from the fit of the model using no constraints. The results of these tests showed that only one path significantly varied between men and women ($p < .05$; this path is indicated with a bold arrow in Figure 4). For women, there was a stronger association between the roommates' perception of the participants' responsiveness and roommates' relationship quality ($\beta = .68, p < .01$) than for men ($\beta = .33, p < .01$). The final model, with all but the aforementioned path constrained to be equal across groups, fit the data well, $\chi^2(95, N = 241) = 311.96, p < .01$; GFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.09.

These findings provide further evidence that individual differences in relational self-construal are associated with emotional disclosure, which contribute to a partner's feelings of relationship quality. This pattern was evident for both members of the relationship, and it existed within both male and female roommate relationships. Perceptions of disclosure from one partner were associated with reciprocated disclosure from and heightened levels of relationship quality in the other partner. In summary, people with a highly rela-

tional self-construal disclose to their partners, elicit intimate disclosure from their partners, then reciprocate with more of their own disclosure. This cycle strengthens the quality of the relationship and helps promote behaviors that enhance the relationship further.

General Discussion

How people develop and maintain relationships depends upon how they have defined and constructed the self. If individuals primarily define themselves in terms of close relationships, then they will seek to develop and maintain close, harmonious relationships. Roommate relationships provide a window into relationship development that is hard to find in other, already established relationships. Many first-time roommates are unacquainted with each other before living together; so, intentional strategies to develop closeness may show results quickly in these relationships. We hypothesized that students who have constructed a highly relational self-construal would seek to develop a close, or at least harmonious, relationship in this situation. In two different samples, we examined the processes that contribute to closeness among college roommates living together for the first time.

The results of these studies converged in many ways. Both studies show that individual differences in relational self-construal were associated with the process of developing close relationships. Both studies reveal that relational self-construal is positively associated with emotional disclosure after controlling for initial levels of perceived relationship quality. Thus, people with highly relational self-construals tend to disclose intimate information even when the initial assessment of the relationship is not entirely positive. This suggests that people with highly relational self-construals are looking for ways to improve their relationships even in the early stages of development. Both studies also indicate that relational self-construal and emotional disclosure are associated with positive perceptions by the recipient of this disclosure, and these perceptions are in turn related to the recipient's relationship quality.

Study 2 extended the findings of Study 1 by showing that the pattern of associations

between the RISC scale, disclosure, responsiveness, and relationship quality fit for both the roommates and the participants 1 month later. The expanded model in Study 2 built upon the Study 1 findings by showing that disclosure is reciprocated by the recipient, thus continuing a cycle of disclosure, positive partner perceptions, and relationship quality. The significant indirect effects of the RISC scale on the partner's relationship quality and emotional disclosure demonstrate that individual differences in relational self-construal influence the degree to which intimacy is developed within roommate relationships. This research provides further evidence for the formation and continuation of a supportive social atmosphere among people with a highly relational self-construal.

Despite the low representation of men in the two samples (men constituted no more than 27% of the sample across the two studies), stacked model analyses showed that in general the paths in the two models were not moderated by gender, with only a few exceptions. In Study 1, there were stronger associations for men than for women for two paths: (a) between their own emotional disclosure and their roommates' perceptions of participants' emotional disclosure and (b) between roommates' perceptions of participants' emotional disclosure and roommates' relationship quality. In Study 2, there was a stronger association between roommates' perception of participants' responsiveness and roommates' relationship quality for women than for men. Otherwise, there is no evidence here to suggest that (a) gender is driving the theoretically central associations in either model or that (b) male and female roommates differ substantially in their relationship development or relationship maintenance strategies. Although gender differences found in self-disclosure are small or inconsistent (see Dindia & Allen, 1992), some research has found that men consider such topics as family history, personal tastes, and opinions as relatively intimate disclosures (Dindia & Allen; Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990; Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980; Snell, Miller, & Belk, 1988) and have a stronger tendency than women to avoid disclosing infor-

mation that is more personal than this (Snell, Miller, Belk, Garcia-Falconi, & Hernandez-Sanchez, 1989; Stokes, Fuehrer, & Childs, 1980). Considering this, future studies that examine intimacy processes should define the content of intimate disclosure more specifically.

This research expands upon previous research on the Reis and Shaver (1988) intimacy model in several ways. First, these are the first studies to examine these processes in roommate relationships. We investigated roommate relationships exclusively because they allow for the examination of intimacy in its initial stages. Although Cross et al. (2000; Study 3) found an association between relational self-construal, disclosure, and the partner's satisfaction with the interaction, it left unanswered the question of whether these associations would also be found in a relationship that forced the partners together for several months. Roommate relationships are ongoing relationships; so the participants' responses in both studies were in reference to natural relationship settings, as opposed to responses based on brief exposure in a laboratory or classroom. Previously unacquainted roommates may also lack the similarity of interests, values, and opinions that may form the foundation of other friendships, making the development of a close relationship more difficult.

Second, Study 2 is the first study to examine this particular model using longitudinal data. By assessing participants' relationship quality and emotional disclosure at two time points (1 month apart), we were able to examine changes in participants' behaviors as a function of the perceptions they have of their roommates' behavior. Thus, the elements that compose the intimacy development process were shown to accumulate over time, rather than stabilize or decrease.

Third, this is the only study that has examined this process using data from both members of the relationship. Laurenceau et al. (1998) used an experience sampling method to examine the elements of the Reis and Shaver (1988) intimacy model for a single individual across several relationships. In contrast, these studies examine both partners'

evaluations of a single, ongoing relationship. Obtaining assessments from both members of the relationship allows for more extensive investigation of the interpersonal aspects of this process and investigation of how both members influence each other's perceptions of the relationship (Bernieri, Zuckerman, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1994; Kurtz & Sherker, 2003). In addition, focusing on a single relationship permits a more comprehensive examination of specific behaviors (e.g., disclosure) and long-term interaction patterns that may be difficult to obtain when exploring multiple relationships. Finally, Study 2 provides a unique look at the contributions of each partner's relational self-construal, self-disclosure, and responsiveness to changes in relationship quality over a 1-month period.

These studies provide additional insight into the role of the self within the intimacy process. Because individuals with highly relational self-construals are motivated to develop and maintain close relationships, they will behave in a manner that not only establishes such closeness in the relationship but also elicits motivation from the partner to develop and maintain that relationship. These studies reveal that the development of intimacy is an interpersonal, dynamic behavioral process, not simply optimistic or biased illusions about the relationship. Thus, people with a highly relational self-construal exert care and effort to ensure an enduring close relationship rather than simply demonstrating courtesy for the sake of convenience (e.g., avoiding conflict with the person with whom they have to share a room for the next year). They take the opportunity to attempt to form a meaningful relationship with their roommates. They perceive their roommates as potential friends and construct a social atmosphere with the roommate that fosters a closer relationship.

What are the negative consequences of having a highly relational self-construal? One may suspect that highly relational people present an intimate side of themselves too early in the relationship, making the recipient either uncomfortable (I don't want to make myself vulnerable to someone I don't know) or suspicious (This person wants me to feel sorry for them so they can get something in return).

However, the recipient's response depends on whether he or she perceives the discloser as a friend or as a stranger (Derlega, Winstead, Wong, & Greenspan, 1987; Town & Harvey, 1981; Wortman, Adelman, Herman, & Greenberg, 1976). Disclosed information from a stranger is often attributed to the discloser (That person must tell his personal story to everyone), whereas disclosed information from a friend is viewed as a sign of trust (He sees me as a person that he can trust). Thus, attributions of disclosed information by a friend typically result in reciprocated disclosure from the recipient (Derlega et al., 1987), which is evident in these findings. If highly relational people were disclosing too early in the relationship, the recipient would avoid reciprocated disclosure. Instead, we found that the recipients responded by disclosing intimate information back to the highly relational individual.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although Study 2 examined the intimacy process using longitudinal data, the time interval between assessments was only 1 month. Thus, it is unclear whether the reciprocation of emotional disclosure (a) continues to increase over time or (b) continues to elicit positive perceptions from the roommate in latter stages of the relationship. Several researchers argue that self-disclosure is a continuous process that lasts as long as the relationship (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981; Baxter, 1988; Baxter & Montgomery, 2000; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998; Rawlins, 1983). Relationship partners are continually changing, so they can never fully reveal themselves; there is always something new to say (Dindia, 2000; Spencer, 1994). Longitudinal studies with longer durations would allow for a more prolonged examination of the intimacy model proposed by Reis and Shaver (1988).

We must also consider the possibility that the responsiveness items and the relationship quality items tap the same construct. The bivariate correlation of these two measures was quite strong in both studies (see Tables 1 and 2), suggesting that at the very least they tap a similar construct. Whether or not this

association indicates a multicollinearity problem requires a test of tolerance. Kline (1998) states that any tolerance values ($1 - R^2$) less than .10 indicate a problem with multicollinearity (i.e., less than 10% of the variance is not redundant with the other variables). We computed the tolerance values for both studies and found that none of the values were below the .10 cutoff point. The minimum tolerance value in Study 1 was .27 for the roommates' perception of the participants' responsiveness, and the lowest tolerance value for Study 2 was .18 for participants' Time 2 relationship quality. These results suggest that the variables in the models are not redundant and therefore that multicollinearity is not an issue. Even if these constructs in the model are conceptually similar, the findings show that relational self-construal has the hypothesized association with emotional disclosure and an indirect influence on relationship quality. Conceptually, perceived responsiveness and perceived relationship quality focus on distinct aspects of the relationship. Whereas perceived responsiveness reflects an attitude toward the partner, relationship quality indicates one's attitudes toward the relationship. Although the partner and the relationship are not mutually exclusive, they are nonetheless entities that can be distinguished when considering relationship perceptions (Rusbult, Kumashiro, Coolsen, & Kirchner, 2004).

The current research examines the intimacy process using correlational data; so, several possible causal patterns among the variables were not tested. For example, we treat relational self-construal as a stable individual difference variable, but RISC scale scores could potentially be sensitive to relationship quality (although the quite small bivariate correlations argue against this). Cross et al. (2000; Study 1) found that relational self-construal was stable over time. Thus, framing relational self-construal in terms of an individual difference predictor in the two models is appropriate. Although this construct may change over time, this change is likely to be relatively slow (at least slower than 1 month). The goal of this research was to test the Reis and Shaver (1988) intimacy model with people who were unacquainted and to take into account the individ-

uals' self-construals. Specifying alternative associations among the variables in the two models may be interesting, but would not reflect the Reis and Shaver model, and would generate models that were data driven rather than theory driven.

Conclusions

Researchers have seldom examined the development of relationships among relative strangers. Often, however, people are placed into situations in which they know no one, but over time they may develop close and important relationships with others in that situation. Similarly, researchers have investigated intimacy processes in romantic relationships but have seldom examined the generalizability of their work to other types of close relationships (with some notable exceptions such as Winstead, Derlega, Montgomery, & Pilkington, 1995; see Hartup & Stevens, 1997 for a review). These studies extend research on intimacy, close relationships, and the self by showing that individual differences in self-construal influence behavior in new, involuntary relationships. Thus, defining the self in terms of close relationships has an important influence on people's cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes, which leads to effective relationship-promoting behavior.

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