

Rain on My Parade:
Perceiving Low Self-esteem in Close Others Hinders Positive Self-disclosure

by
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I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Ample evidence suggests that the behaviour of people with low self-esteem (LSEs) can lead to problems in close relationships (Wood, Hogle, & McClellan, 2009). To my knowledge, however, no research has investigated the role that perceptions of close others' self-esteem play in undermining beneficial relationship processes. In the current paper, I propose that capitalization, a process associated with greater relationship quality (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004), might be hindered by the friends, partners, or family members of LSEs. In studies 1 through 3 I obtain experimental and behavioural evidence that people are reluctant to disclose their positive experiences (i.e., capitalize) when they believe the recipient has low self-esteem. In Study 4, I show the external validity of my findings with couples having real discussions. In Studies 5a and b, I examine mechanism and find that although participants have both self- and other-focused concerns regarding capitalizing with LSEs, their self-focused concerns appear to drive their behaviour. Overall, my research suggests that the perception of others' self-esteem is a variable that guides behaviour in important social situations.

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Introduction

People with low self-esteem (LSE) tend to get the ‘short end’ of the proverbial ‘stick’ when it comes to close relationships (Wood, Hogle, & McClellan, 2009). For example, LSEs tend to underestimate the extent to which they are valued by others (Dehart, Murray, Pelham, & Rose, 2003; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose, 2001), are quick to perceive interpersonal rejection, respond negatively to their interaction partners, and ultimately bring about the very rejection they so desperately hoped to avoid (Bellavia & Murray, 2003; Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003). While there seems little doubt that LSEs’ interpersonal behaviour can have negative repercussions, does that mean the close others of LSEs are entirely blameless? To my knowledge, no research has investigated the role that the close others of LSEs play in undermining beneficial relationship processes and only one investigation examines perceptions of self-esteem in the context of close relationships (Lemay & Dudley, in press).

In the current paper, I propose that one key relational process important for fostering closeness – capitalization – might be hindered by the friends, partners, or family members of LSEs (MacGregor & Holmes, in press). Capitalization is defined as the disclosure and discussion of one’s positive personal experiences with others (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Langston, 1994). I suggest that the close others of LSEs are likely to ‘curb their enthusiasm’ when it comes to their own positive experiences, thus depriving themselves (and their loved one!) of the opportunity to feel close and connected.

Capitalization

Capitalization can involve the disclosure of a wide variety of positive events, including social and nonsocial experiences, experiences due to luck versus effort, and experiences ranging from mundane to life-altering (Gable & Reis, 2010). Underlying all examples, however, is the

notion that (to some degree or another) the discloser is doing well. Whether the individual just ‘aced’ a test and feels successful, bought a new laptop and feels fortunate, or had a fun outing with friends and feels happy, the point is that he or she has something to be pleased about, a “strength” of some sort or another (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006, p. 914).

Inherent in the term capitalization is the idea that sharing positive experiences with others allows one to benefit from savoring and reliving that experience (Gable et al., 2004). Indeed, a large body of research demonstrates that self-disclosure is associated with health and psychological benefits (for a review see Frattaroli, 2006) whereas suppressing one’s feelings can be detrimental (Gross & John, 2003; Srivastava, Tamir, McGonigal, John, & Gross, 2009). Self-disclosure is especially important for developing and maintaining closeness in relationships (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Moreover, studies on capitalization in particular suggest sharing positive events with others is associated with positive affect and well-being above and beyond the impact of the positive event itself (Gable & Reis, 2010; Gable et al.; Langston, 1994). Finally, there is even evidence that positive emotional exchanges predict relationship well-being and dissolution better than their more frequently studied negative counterparts (Gable et al., 2006).

An important factor influencing whether people engage in capitalization is the extent to which they expect their positive news to be well-received by the recipient. Gable and her colleagues (2004), for instance, argued that people are likely to share good news only when perceived responsiveness is high, that is, only when the recipient is expected to be supportive. A review by Reis and Patrick (1996) supports the notion that people are generally more willing to confide in others when they expect the recipient to respond supportively. I reasoned that perceptions of others’ self-esteem may function to help people gauge the likelihood that their

capitalization attempt will go well. As such, I sought to examine how people may tailor their disclosures of positive events according to their perceptions of the recipient's self-esteem. Specifically, I hypothesized that when people believe the recipient has low rather than high self-esteem (HSE), they will be less forthcoming in their disclosure of the positive event.

Why might capitalizing with an LSE go wrong?

Two reasons – one other-focused and one self-focused – seem particularly plausible. People may be other-focused in that they want to protect their LSE close other from information that could cause emotional discomfort – that is, they may be genuinely concerned about their loved one's well-being (Exline & Lobel, 1999). Theorizing on performance comparisons supports the notion that a person may feel less enthusiastic about their own positive outcome if it means their close other will suffer by comparison (Beach et al., 1996; Tesser, 1988). More pertinently, those who have outperformed another on a particular task are less willing to discuss their success with the outperformed to the extent that they perceive that person as feeling threatened (Exline & Lobel, 2001). LSEs tend to feel inferior in their close relationships and find social comparison generally upsetting (Derrick & Murray, 2007; Murray et al., 2005). Given this, I reasoned that the close others of LSEs may detect LSEs' feelings of inferiority and insecurity and wish to avoid 'adding fuel to the fire' by emphasizing the ways in which their own virtues and experiences are worth celebrating. A celebration may not seem worth it if it comes at the expense of another's feelings.

Alternatively, people may censor disclosures of positive news due to self-focused concerns (Exline & Lobel, 1999). That is, people may expect LSEs' fragile egos to result in poor behaviour after positive event disclosures and may wish to avoid giving them the opportunity to 'rain on their parade' (i.e., to respond unenthusiastically or with negativity). Indeed, there is

evidence that people expect interactions with less fortunate individuals to be uncomfortable and often attempt to avoid them (Hebl, Tickle, & Heatherton, 2000). Although no research to date examines whether LSEs are less responsive to others' capitalization attempts, given LSEs' tendency to behave negatively under threat, an unpleasant response to such an upward social comparison seems plausible (Murray et al., 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Moreover, research on mood regulation demonstrates that LSEs often attempt to dampen their positive moods (Wood, Heimpel, & Michela, 2003), and so perhaps they would attempt to do this for others as well. Overall, if people expect that it wouldn't be much of a celebration, why would they bother sharing? In either case, sharing one's good news with an LSE would be interpersonally costly.

On the one hand, there is reason to believe that LSEs might be particularly likely to understand and anticipate the reactions of other LSEs to capitalization attempts. For example, research demonstrating that people expect ingroup members to see the world as they do (e.g., Clement & Krueger, 2002), suggests LSEs may apply their 'insider information' to help them understand their fellow LSEs. Moreover, because the issue of insecurity is likely to be chronically accessible for LSEs (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Newman, Duff, & Baumeister, 1997), they may be particularly able to construe their social world with self-esteem in mind (Higgins & King, 1981). It may be difficult, however, for HSEs to imagine how a close other's good news could be unwelcome. On the other hand, evidence that HSEs are interested in savoring positive moods suggests they may be especially motivated to avoid letting LSEs bring them down (Wood et al., 2003). Throughout my studies I have included participant self-esteem as a potential moderator to investigate these possibilities.

Do people notice others' self-esteem?

Given the prominence of the construct of self-esteem in popular culture (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003), I surmised that people form impressions of the self-esteem of those around them. Indeed, there is evidence that LSEs give off clues regarding their self-esteem that can be readily recognized by others. For example, LSEs tend to present themselves more negatively in Facebook updates (Forest & Wood, 2010) and coders are able to accurately estimate participants' self-esteem from self-created email addresses (Chang & Swann, 2010). Findings from several studies suggest people's explicit judgments of their romantic partner's self-esteem appear to be reasonably accurate (self-other agreement, $r = .31$, Cameron, 2007; Lemay & Dudley, in press), as are perceptions of related constructs, attachment anxiety and hurt proneness (Lemay & Dudley). My own pilot data suggest perceptions of others' self-esteem are also very stable over time (approximately one month, $r = .85$, MacGregor & Holmes, 2008). These findings are consistent with a large literature showing substantial self-other agreement and rater consensus in judgments of key personality traits such as extraversion (Funder, 1980; Funder & Colvin, 1997; Human & Biesanz, 2011; Kenny, Albright, Malloy, & Kashy, 1994).

In addition to people forming reasonably accurate impressions of others' self-esteem, evidence suggests that people use this information to make negative inferences about them, even when such conclusions are objectively unwarranted. For example, LSE participants are rated less socially appealing based on their Facebook updates and email addresses (Chang & Swann; Forest & Wood). LSEs in general are expected to be less competent, intelligent, and attractive¹ (Cameron, MacGregor, Hole, & Holmes, 2011) and people are less willing to vote for political candidates identified as having LSE (Zeigler-Hill & Myers, 2009). Recent work in the area of

¹ There is actually little evidence that LSEs deserve such negative evaluations (Baumeister et al., 2003).

close relationships has also shown that people attempt to regulate their loved ones' insecurity by exaggerating affection and suppressing negative feelings (Lemay & Dudley). Taken together, it appears that 1) people make fairly accurate and stable judgments of close others' self-esteem, and 2) perceptions of others' self-esteem may function as information relevant to making meaningful social judgments.

Overview of the Present Studies

In the present studies, I examined the hypothesis that perceptions of close other self-esteem influence how people capitalize with their close others. In Studies 1, 2, and 3 I sought experimental support for my hypothesis that when people perceive low self-esteem in a close other, they will disclose their good news to that person in a less positive way. In all three studies, I manipulated participants' perceptions of a close other's self-esteem and examined the effect on actual capitalization behaviour. In Study 3, I also manipulated the type of good news disclosed to begin to understand the key ingredient influencing when people withhold from LSEs. In Study 4, I extended and replicated my findings by studying how perceptions of self-esteem predict the capitalization of romantic partners in actual discussions. Studies 5a and b were designed to explore possible mechanisms underlying the effect of perceptions of self-esteem on capitalization positivity. In Study 5a I explored the expectations that people have regarding capitalizing with LSEs versus HSEs. Finally, in Study 5b I pitted self- and other-focused concerns against one another to explain the association between perceptions of self-esteem and positive self-disclosure.

Study 1:

How Perceptions of Partner Self-esteem Affect Written Disclosures of Good News

In Study 1, participants identified something positive that happened to them recently and disclosed this information to their romantic partner in an email. In keeping with Gable and Reis' (2010) broad conceptualization of capitalization, participants could choose any type of positive event. I predicted that those who were led to believe their partner had low self-esteem would write less positive, enthusiastic emails than those who received no information about their partner's self-esteem. I included participant self-esteem as a potential moderator. I reasoned that LSEs may have special insight into how their fellow LSEs will respond, making the effect of close other self-esteem especially strong for LSE participants. As recommended by Gable and Reis, the importance of the positive event disclosed is controlled in all experimental analyses in this paper.

Method

Participants & Procedure. Eighty-seven (59 female) undergraduate students participated in a lab study in exchange for course credit. All participants were currently involved in an exclusive romantic relationship. Nine participants were excluded from the analyses due to suspicion regarding the manipulation or because they wrote about a positive event that involved their partner.

Participants began by writing down "something positive that happened to [them] recently"; this ensured the manipulation could not influence the good news they chose to share. Next, they completed a 20-item scale that ostensibly measured various aspects of their romantic partner's personality and behaviour. For example, participants rated how often their partner 'notices flaws in him/herself' and 'seeks encouragement/reassurance from me.' This scale was

specifically designed so that participants would rate the items as frequently occurring. All participants were told by the experimenter that a graduate student would code their responses so that they could receive some feedback about their partner. Control participants were told the graduate student was busy and so they would receive feedback later. Participants in the experimental condition received a sheet of feedback about their partner, which stated: “Your feedback pertains to the ‘Partner Self-Esteem Test’ subscale of the Waterford & Jackson Inventory. It appears that your partner has low to moderate self-esteem and may at times have self-esteem problems.” Afterward, participants completed the main dependent variable which was to write an email to their partner telling them about their good news.

Measures.

Self-esteem. Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965; $\alpha = .91$) in an online mass-testing questionnaire, prior to the in-lab session. Participants indicated their agreement with 10 statements on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include ‘I feel that I have a number of good qualities’ and ‘I wish I could have more respect for myself’ (reverse-scored).

Importance of Good News. Three coders rated the importance of each participant’s good news from the brief description completed early in the lab session (1 = *not at all important*, 7 = *extremely important*). The coder ratings were very reliable ($\alpha = .94$) and were therefore combined for analyses.²

² Importance ratings were unrelated to participant self-esteem in Studies 1, 2, and 5b but were correlated in Study 3, $r = .20, p = .04$. Importance ratings did not moderate the effect of perceptions of close other self-esteem in any study and so were included as covariates. In all studies including importance ratings, participants tended to identify moderately important events (for Studies 1, 2, 3, and 5b, $M_s = 3.53, 3.82, 3.59$ and 4.00 , respectively), such as doing well on a test or having a good time with friends.

Positivity of Good News Email. Two coders rated the extent to which participants emphasized the positivity of their good news in the email to their partner. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *a great deal*), they rated the following four items: ‘Overall, how positive is the email?’, ‘Overall, how much does the person mention topics other than the good news that they chose to write about?’ (reverse-scored), ‘To what extent does the person express excitement about their good news?’ and ‘To what extent does the person express their good news in a cool and calm way, with little emotion?’ (reverse-scored).

Results

Interrater reliabilities for each item were good, ranging from $\alpha = .62$ to $\alpha = .73$, with the exception of the most broad item (‘Overall, how positive is the email?’; $\alpha = .39$; $M = .61$). Nevertheless, the four items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .78$) and therefore were combined for analysis. To test whether the positivity of the email was influenced by perceptions of partner self-esteem, I regressed participants’ coded positivity scores on the main effects of the importance ratings in the first step, and dummy-coded condition variable (0 = *control* and 1 = *low self-esteem partner*) and centered self-esteem scores on the second step. The interaction was entered on the third step (Aiken & West, 1991). As expected, participants wrote less positive emails when they believed their partner had low self-esteem compared to controls $\beta = -.21$, $t(74) = -2.06$, $p = .04$. This effect was not moderated by participant self-esteem or gender, $t < 1$. In total, 24% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained (R^2 changes = .18, .05 and .01, respectively).

Discussion

My Study 1 results provide initial evidence that the self-esteem of close others may be an important cue influencing the way in which people disclose information. In recent years,

emailing and texting have become immensely popular ways to communicate with friends, partners, and family members (Jones & Fox, 2009), with half of young people sending over 50 ‘texts’ per day (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). It appears that at least in written communications, people are reluctant to fully ‘capitalize’ on their positive experiences with low self-esteem romantic partners.

Study 2:

How Perceptions of Friend Self-esteem Affect Verbal Disclosures of Accomplishments

In Study 2, I sought additional behavioural evidence that people are less forthcoming in their disclosures of positive information when they believe the recipient has low self-esteem. Specifically, I examined verbal communication between friends. As in Study 1, participant self-esteem was included as a potential moderator and the influence of the importance of participants' positive event was statistically controlled (3 coder reliability, $\alpha = .79$).

Method

Participants & Procedure. Eighty-two (42 female) undergraduate students participated in exchange for course credit. Sixteen participants were excluded from the analyses because they were suspicious of the manipulation, they refused to be videotaped, or they spoke about their friend's accomplishment rather than their own.

As in Study 1, participants began by briefly writing down something good that happened to them recently – this time, “a recent personal accomplishment.” Next, participants completed the same short questionnaire from Study 1, this time about a particular friend. This questionnaire was ostensibly used to generate participants' feedback. Participants were randomly assigned to the control (no feedback) or the experimental (low self-esteem friend) condition. After the manipulation, participants created a video that would ostensibly be sent as a link in an email to their friend. They were instructed to imagine talking to their friend and to tell their friend about the recent accomplishment.

Measures.

Self-esteem. As in Study 1, participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale ($\alpha = .90$) in an online mass-testing questionnaire, prior to the in-lab session.

Manipulation Check. Participants rated their friend on a variety of traits using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). Embedded in this list was the manipulation check – the trait ‘self-assured.’ As expected, participants in the low self-esteem feedback condition rated their friend as less self-assured than those in the control condition $F(1, 64) = 4.75, p = .03, \eta^2 = .07$.

Positivity of Accomplishment Video. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), two coders rated the extent to which participants emphasized the positivity of their accomplishment in the video. One item was focused on positive emotional expression – ‘To what extent does the person explicitly describe positive emotions that they felt as a result of the accomplishment?’ The other was focused on elaboration – ‘To what extent does the person elaborate on the importance of the accomplishment (e.g., what it means to him/her, importance of it to future goals).’

Results

Interrater reliabilities were adequate for the two coding items ($\alpha = .62$ for the positive emotion and $\alpha = .63$ for the elaboration item). The items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .69$) and were therefore combined for analysis.

As in Study 1, I used hierarchical regression to examine my hypothesis that participants are less positive when sharing good news with a purportedly low self-esteem friend. Accomplishment importance ratings were entered in the first step, and the dummy-coded (0 = *control*, 1 = *low self-esteem friend*) condition variable and centered self-esteem scores were entered on the second step. The condition by participant self-esteem interaction was entered on the third step.

As expected, participants who were led to believe their friend had low self-esteem were less positive in their accomplishment disclosures, using fewer positive emotion words and

elaborating less on the importance of the accomplishment compared to those in the control condition, $\beta = -.30$, $t(62) = -2.48$, $p = .02$. As in Study 1, this effect was not moderated by participant self-esteem or gender, $t < 1$. Overall, 17% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained (R^2 changes = .01, .16 and 0, respectively).

Discussion

Consistent with Study 1, I found that people are less forthcoming in their disclosures of positive events when they believe the recipient of the disclosure has low self-esteem. Participants used fewer positive emotion words and emphasized the importance of their accomplishment less when they believed their friend had low self-esteem. These findings suggest this effect of perceiving low self-esteem in a close other is present in both friend and romantic relationships and in both written and verbal communication.

Study 3:

How Perceptions of Friend Self-esteem Affect Different Types of Good News Disclosures

With Study 3, my main objective was to fine-tune my knowledge of when people are reluctant to capitalize with low self-esteem individuals. Specifically, I examined whether the type of good news participants share moderates the effect of perceptions of friend self-esteem on capitalization positivity. Similar to Study 1, I manipulated people's perceptions of a friend's self-esteem before they wrote a capitalization email to their friend. I anticipated that, compared to control participants, those who had been led to believe their friend had low self-esteem would write less positive emails to their friends. Like Reis and his colleagues (2010), I also suspected that this effect may be exaggerated for those who disclosed an accomplishment rather than a positive experience that just 'happened.' That is, people may intuit that positive experiences that came about due to one's own abilities or efforts (as opposed to luck) are ones that may be particularly threatening to LSEs. A comparison of the findings from Studies 1 and 2 provide initial support for my hypothesis. The effect of perceptions of self-esteem on capitalization positivity was larger in Study 2 when participants disclosed an accomplishment than in Study 1 when participants could disclose any type of good news. As in Studies 1 and 2, I controlled for the influence of the importance of the good news participants wrote about, as rated by three coders ($\alpha = .81$).

To further examine the accuracy of perceptions of others' self-esteem, I collected self-report data from participants' friends. In addition, I had participants and their friends report on the frequency with which they capitalized with one another to test whether people capitalize less often (not just less positively) with those they believe have low self-esteem.

Method

Participants & Procedure. One hundred (53 female) undergraduates participated in a lab study in exchange for course credit. Five participants were excluded from the main analyses due to suspicion, missing condition information, or improper completion of the dependent variable. All participants were asked to nominate a particular same-sex friend who would be willing to complete a short online survey. On average, participants had been friends with the person they nominated for 67 months (over 5 years). In total, data from 66 friends (36 female) were collected.

As in Studies 1 and 2, in-lab participants began by writing down something positive that happened to them recently. Half the participants were asked to identify something that “just ‘happened’ to you recently (i.e., not an accomplishment of yours, but something that just ‘happened’)” whereas the other half identified “a recent personal accomplishment.”

Next, participants completed the same 20-item friend questionnaire from Study 2; responses on this scale were ostensibly used to generate their feedback. To address the possibility that participants may have been adjusting their capitalization attempts in Studies 1 and 2 due to demand characteristics, I attempted to obscure the self-esteem feedback by providing participants in both conditions with other feedback regarding their friend. Specifically, participants in both conditions received feedback suggesting that their friend scored 10 out of 15 on the ‘Friend Decisiveness Subscale’ of the Waterford and Jackson Inventory, and that their friend has “average decisiveness, similar to most people on this dimension.” This feedback was specifically designed to be relatively uninformative, ambiguous and unrelated to other key variables in the study. Participants in the LSE feedback condition received the additional feedback that their friend scored 6 out of 15 on the ‘Friend Self-esteem Subscale’ as well as the

same comment used in Studies 1 and 2 (i.e., “It appears that your friend has low to moderate self-esteem...”). To aid in the deception, the feedback was hand-written into spaces on a printed form.

Following receipt of the feedback, participants wrote an email to their friend sharing their good news. Early on in the study, participants were led to believe that this email would actually be sent to their friend. Finally, participants completed a short questionnaire about their friend, including a manipulation check regarding their perceptions of their friend’s self-esteem. All participants were thanked, debriefed and asked not to discuss the study with their friend until after he or she had completed the online questionnaire. After the in-lab session, participants’ friends were emailed a link to the questionnaire.

Measures.

Self-esteem. Prior to their lab session, participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale in an online mass-testing questionnaire ($\alpha = .88$). Participants’ friends completed the same scale in their online questionnaire ($\alpha = .87$).

Perceptions of Friend’s Self-esteem. Participants’ perceptions of their friend’s self-esteem were measured using a revised and shortened Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (6 items). A sample item is “My friend takes a positive attitude toward him/herself.” Participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Lab participants completed the scale twice – in the mass-testing questionnaire prior to the lab session ($\alpha = .88$) and toward the end of their lab session ($\alpha = .86$). Their friends completed the same scale in the online questionnaire ($\alpha = .86$).

Positivity of Good News Email. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, two coders rated the positivity of participants’ emails according to three items. On a 7-point scale (for the first two items, 1 =

not at all, 7 = *a great deal*, for the third, 7 = *extremely*), they rated the following: “To what extent does the person express excitement about their good news?,” “To what extent does the person express their good news in a cool and calm way, with little emotion?” (reverse-scored) and “Overall, how positive is the email?” On average, interrater reliability for the items was adequate ($M = .60$). The items were combined to form a reliable index of the overall positivity of the email ($\alpha = .87$).

Capitalization Frequency. Participants and their friends completed two items measuring how frequently they capitalized with one another. On a 7-point scale (1 = *never or rarely*, 4 = *occasionally*, 7 = *very often*) they rated the following items: “I tell my friend about my accomplishments,” and “I let my friend know when something good has happened to me.” These two items were highly correlated for lab participants ($r = .87$) and their friends ($r = .85$) and were therefore combined for analyses. So that I could gauge the accuracy of the self-reports, participants and their friends also completed the following parallel items “I love to tell my friend about the good things that happen in my life” and “My friend loves to tell me about the good things that happened in his/her life” (1 = *not at all true*, 4 = *moderately true*, 7 = *completely true*). Friends’ reports were significantly correlated ($r = .34, p < .01$) suggesting that, at least to some extent, when one person reports enjoying capitalizing with their friend, the other tends to perceive that enjoyment. Given that people’s self-reports of enjoyment were associated with their frequency ratings ($r = .64, p < .001$), this finding lends some support to the validity of participants’ self-reports of capitalization frequency³.

³ Unfortunately, I did not have participants rate how frequently they thought their friend capitalized with them. This, of course, would have been the ideal way to examine the validity of the frequency self-reports.

Results

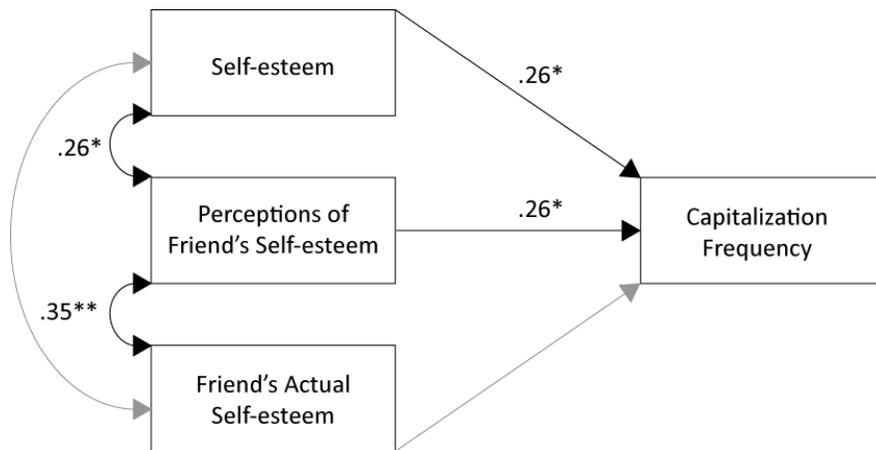
Manipulation Checks. After writing the email, participants rated their friends on a variety of characteristics, including the trait ‘insecure.’ Unlike in Study 2, those in the LSE Feedback condition did not rate their friend as more insecure than those in the control condition ($M_s = 3.3$ and 3.0 , respectively), $F(1, 93) = 1.01$, *ns*. I also expected that the good news identified by participants in the accomplishment condition would be rated by coders as more important than the good news identified by those in the just ‘happened’ condition. Indeed, this is what I found ($M_s = 3.99$ and 3.22 , respectively), $F(1, 93) = 8.67$, $p < .01$.

Frequency of Capitalization. To examine my hypothesis regarding capitalization frequency, I modeled the variables using structural equation modeling (SEM) for indistinguishable dyads (see Appendix A for complete path diagram and Figure 1 for simplified path diagram; Woody & Sadler, 2005), constraining all corresponding paths, means, variances, and covariances to be equal across friends. Participant self-esteem was controlled⁴ in the analysis and self-reported frequency of capitalization was the dependent variable. I used the following standard criteria to evaluate goodness of fit: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $> .95$, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $< .08$, and $\chi^2 p > .05$ (Kline, 2011). This model fit the data well, $\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 1.26$, $p = .26$, CFI = .99, and RMSEA = .06.

Consistent with my hypothesis, participants’ perceptions of their friend’s self-esteem were associated with self-reported frequency of capitalization. Specifically, after controlling for both participants’ own self-esteem, participants who viewed their friend as having lower self-esteem tended to report capitalizing with that friend less frequently than those who viewed their friend as having higher self-esteem.

⁴ Readers may wonder why I have controlled for self-esteem rather than examining if it moderates the effect of perceptions of close other self-esteem, as I have done in previous analyses. I did conduct an SEM analysis in which two such interaction terms were added to the model (one for each friend). The interactions were not significant.

Figure 1. Simplified path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting capitalization frequency in Study 3.



Note. Path coefficients are presented in standardized form. Non-significant paths are shown in grey and corresponding path coefficients are omitted.

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Stability and Accuracy of Perceptions of Friend Self-esteem. Similar to what I found in a previous data set regarding perceptions of partner self-esteem (MacGregor and Holmes, 2008), participants' perceptions of their friend's self-esteem were very stable (test-retest reliability for LSE Feedback participants = .43, control participants = .77, sample overall = .64). To examine the accuracy of participants' perceptions of their friend's self-esteem, I observed the correlations from the SEM analysis just described (see Figure 1). As expected, participants' perceptions of their friend's self-esteem were reasonably accurate. It appears that participants also project their own self-esteem onto their friends, a finding consistent with past work showing that people often assume their close others are similar to themselves (Lee et al., 2009; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002). Similar to past research showing little or no correlation between the self-esteem level of romantic partners (e.g., Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000), the friends' levels of self-esteem were not correlated.

Positivity of Good News Email. To test my main hypothesis I conducted a 2 (Feedback condition: LSE versus Control) by 2 (Type of good news: Accomplishment versus Just ‘happened’) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with importance ratings entered as the covariate. Participant self-esteem was dropped from the analyses, as it did not moderate the effect of the feedback in either Studies 1 or 2⁵. There were no significant main effects. However, a feedback condition by type of good news interaction emerged, $F(1, 90) = 4.34, p = .04$. As expected, in the accomplishment condition, participants who had been led to believe that their friend had low self-esteem wrote significantly less positive emails (means adjusted by importance ratings; $M_{adj} = 3.21$) than those who received control feedback ($M_{adj} = 4.08$), $F(1, 45) = 5.57, p = .02$. The feedback had no effect, however, for participants who wrote about good news that just ‘happened’, $F < 1, ns$. In the LSE Feedback condition, participants who wrote about an accomplishment wrote (marginally) less positive emails than those in the just ‘happened’ condition ($M_{adj} = 3.21$ and 3.75 , respectively), $F(1, 48) = 2.96, p = .092$. The pattern was the opposite in the control condition with those disclosing an accomplishment scoring higher on positivity ($M_{adj} = 4.08$) than those disclosing good news that just ‘happened’ ($M_{adj} = 3.50$). However, this difference was not significant $F(1, 43) = 1.72, ns$.

Discussion

In Study 3, I found further support for my hypothesis that people are reluctant to fully capitalize with low self-esteem close others. More specifically, however, I found that the type of good news being shared matters. Participants wrote less positive emails to an ostensibly low self-esteem friend than a control, but only if they were asked to disclose an accomplishment. This suggests that participants intuit that LSEs view others’ accomplishments differently from ‘any old’ positive experience. Moreover, the key difference is not that accomplishments are simply

⁵ As in Studies 1 and 2, neither gender nor participant self-esteem moderated the effect of the feedback.

more important pieces of good news – the results were obtained even though importance ratings were controlled. It appears that participants believed disclosing their accomplishment would threaten an LSE friend in a way that generic good news would not.

To further examine this issue, I revisited the data from Study 1 (in which the type of good news was not specified) and coded participants' brief good news descriptions as either accomplishments or positive things that just 'happened'. Approximately 43% of the good events were accomplishments. I ran a 2 (Feedback condition: LSE feedback vs. control) by 2 (Type of good news: Accomplishment vs. Just 'happened') ANOVA. Only the main effect of Feedback condition emerged. Why the inconsistency? I suspect that it is how participants perceive their good news that matters. In Study 1, participants were not focused on the extent to which their good news was due to their own efforts or abilities versus pure happenstance. In Study 3, however, I made these aspects of the good news explicit in the instructions. Therefore, it appears that when the random nature of the positive event is salient, people assume this randomness will be apparent to others as well, thus reducing any concerns they had about capitalizing with a LSE close other.

Study 3 also supports the notion that people's perceptions of others' self-esteem do not just influence *how* they capitalize, but *if* they capitalize. Consistent with my findings regarding capitalization positivity, the lower participants rated their friend's self-esteem, the less frequently they reported capitalizing with that friend.

Study 4:

How Perceptions of Partner Self-esteem Predict Capitalization in Discussions

Studies 1 through 3 behaviourally and experimentally demonstrate that perceptions of others' self-esteem influence how people capitalize with close others. One of the main limitations of the methodology I employed thus far is that I examined one-time disclosures. I expected, however, that a person's disclosure of good news is likely to be followed by a discussion of some sort (be it in-person, through text-messaging or email). As such, in the current study I examined capitalization interactions between romantic partners. Because of the larger scale of the study and the number of researchers involved, experimental manipulation of perceptions of partner self-esteem was not possible. Therefore, in this study I aimed to test the ecological validity of my findings by demonstrating a positive association between people's perceptions of their partner's self-esteem and how positively they actually discuss their good news with their partner.

Given the dyadic nature of the data collected in this study, I also took the opportunity to examine how people respond to others' capitalization attempts. I have speculated that people may be reluctant to capitalize with LSEs due to self-focused concerns. That is, they may expect LSEs to 'rain on their parade' by responding unenthusiastically or negatively. Therefore, in this study I examined the extent to which LSEs actually behave less supportively to their partner's positive disclosure.

Finally, I sought evidence of the relational benefit of capitalization. Gable and her colleagues (2004; 2006) have shown that capitalization and responsiveness to capitalization attempts are associated with positive outcomes such as increased marital satisfaction. However, to my knowledge, no research has specifically examined how the positivity of capitalization

attempts may be associated with relationship satisfaction over time. Therefore, I tested the hypothesis that people are more satisfied in their relationships when they feel free to openly share their positive experiences with their partner.

Method

Participants. In total 144 heterosexual couples participated in a study on goals and dating relationships. They were recruited from various on-campus sources, such as via flyers directing them to a website as well as classroom presentations. Participants received \$50 each for completion of an online premeasure and lab session as well as additional compensation for those who completed the follow-up questionnaire. Due to a data collection error, the duration of the couples' relationship was not recorded. However, on average, partners had known one another for 35 months⁶ ($SD = 30.28$, ranging from 6.5 to 229.5 months), or almost 3 years. The average age was 20.63 years ($SD = 2.38$). Video and/or audio recording errors prevented the coding of 31 couples' discussions; these couples were excluded from all analyses. Of the remaining couples, a total of 87 completed the follow-up questionnaire⁷.

Procedure. At their lab session, couples participated in two activities relevant to this research: a set of videotaped discussion tasks and a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. At the beginning of the video activity, each partner wrote down a goal that is going well for them. They were told that it should be something they feel comfortable sharing with their partner and on video. Beginning with the men, each member of the couple took a turn discussing a successful goal with their partner. Similar to Study 3 then, participants were essentially sharing an

⁶ To account for discrepant responses between partners, this value represents the average of the average of the two partner's responses.

⁷ Participants who completed the follow-up were significantly more satisfied at time 1 than those who did not complete the follow-up. Because they differed in this meaningful way, some caution in generalizing the longitudinal findings may be needed. There was no difference in capitalization positivity between those who did and did not complete the follow-up.

‘accomplishment’ (or, perhaps more accurately, multiple small accomplishments that they felt contributed to their successful goal progress). Couples were asked to discuss each goal for a full 5 minutes and were encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions in each discussion, even when they were not sharing their own goal. The experimenter left the room while couples made their videos.

For the questionnaire activity, couples sat together in a quiet room. All participants completed a questionnaire containing items measuring their perceptions of their partner’s self-esteem, amongst other measures unrelated to the current research. The follow-up questionnaire was complete online approximately 6 weeks after the lab session.

Measures.

Self-esteem. Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .88$) in an online premeasure prior to their lab session.

Perceptions of Partner’s self-esteem. As in Study 3, both members of the couple completed a 6-item revised Rosenberg scale measuring their perceptions of their partner’s self-esteem ($\alpha = .87$).

Relationship Satisfaction. In an online premeasure before their lab session ($\alpha = .87$) as well as in the 6-week follow-up questionnaire ($\alpha = .88$), participants rated their relationship satisfaction on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *strongly agree*) according to 5 items (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Sample items included “I feel satisfied with our relationship” and “Our relationship makes me very happy.”

Positivity of Successful Goal Discussion. A total of six coders rated the positivity of participants’ capitalization attempts (i.e., videotaped discussion of a successful goal). Similar to Studies 1 through 3, coders used a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*) to

rate positivity according to the following three items: “She/He expressed excitement about her/his goal success,” “She/He talked about her/his successes in a cool and calm way, with little emotion” (reverse-scored), and “She/He seemed pleased to have a chance to talk about her/his goal success.” Interrater reliabilities for the items were adequate ($\alpha = .82, .68$ and $.79$, respectively). The items formed a reliable index of the overall positivity of participants’ capitalization attempts and were therefore combined for analyses ($\alpha = .92$).

Responsiveness to Partner’s Successful Goal Disclosure. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*), six coders rated the extent to which participants were responsive to their partner’s capitalization attempt according to nine items. Sample items included “She/He was generally supportive” and “She/He was discouraging or voiced disagreement about the target’s success.” Interrater reliability for all nine items was good (ranging from $\alpha = .77$ to $.86$; see Table 1).

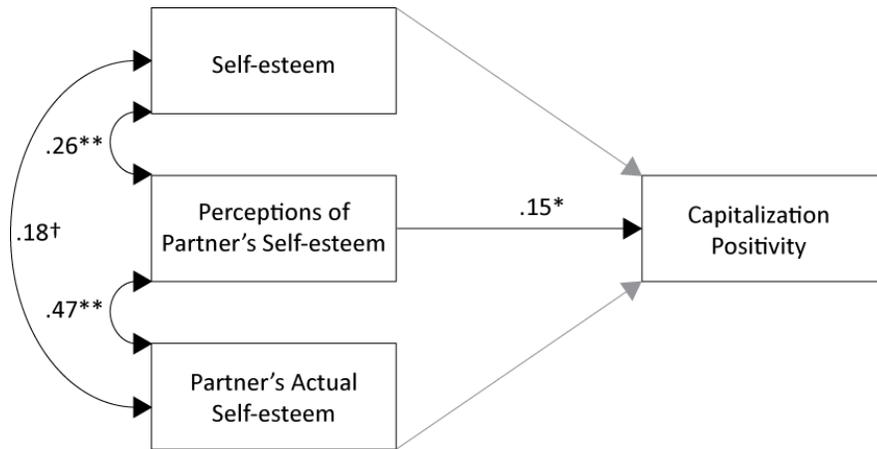
Results

Main Analysis. Similar to the dyadic analysis in Study 3, I modeled the data dyadically using SEM. Both partners’ self-esteem and perceptions of partner self-esteem scores were used to predict their positivity in their successful goal discussions (see Appendix A for complete path diagram, Figure 2 for simplified path diagram)⁸. Based on my findings from Studies 1 through 3, I did not expect the association between perceptions of partner self-esteem and positivity of disclosure to differ by gender. Therefore, as recommended by Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006) I began by testing the empirical indistinguishability of the dyad members. That is, although the partners in this sample can be distinguished on the basis of gender (unlike the friend dyads in

⁸ Due to the volume of data collected in this study, importance ratings were not made. Controlling for this variable would also make the structural equation models overly complicated. However, because (1) importance ratings did not moderate the effect of perceptions of self-esteem in Studies 1 through 3, and (2) the types of good news disclosed in this study did not appear to differ from those disclosed in the other studies, I am confident they would have little if any influence on the reported results.

Study 3), it may not be “statistically necessary” to treat them as such⁹ (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 130). Moreover, treating the dyads as indistinguishable offers greater power of estimation (Sadler, Ethier, & Woody, in press). I began by estimating a model with all corresponding paths, covariances, means and variances constrained to be equal across men and women. This model was an adequate fit for the data, $\chi^2(1, N = 113) = 1.88, p = .17, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .09$. Nevertheless, I compared this model to an unconstrained model allowing gender differences to emerge and found that the models were comparable ($\Delta \chi^2 = 16.12, df = 11, p = .14$). That is, the equality constraints did not result in a significant loss of fit. Therefore, I retained the constrained model, which treats the dyads as indistinguishable.

Figure 2. Simplified path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting capitalization discussion positivity in Study 4.



† $p = .06$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Consistent with my hypothesis, controlling for participant self-esteem, perceptions of partner self-esteem were associated with capitalization behaviour in discussions of successful goal progress. Specifically, those who perceived their partner as having lower self-esteem

⁹ Conceptually, this is akin to not including gender as a moderator in an ANOVA or a regression, even when there are males and females in the sample.

expressed less excitement, seemed less pleased to have a chance to discuss their success, and talked about their success in a more cool and calm way than those who perceived their partner as having higher self-esteem.

Accuracy, Projection, & Similarity. Similar to Study 3, participant's perceptions of their partner's self-esteem were reasonably accurate and participants projected their own self-esteem onto their partner (see Figure 2). Partners' self-esteem levels were marginally correlated.

Secondary Analysis. To examine the extent to which self-esteem is associated with responsiveness to others' capitalization attempts, I first examined the correlations between self-esteem and each coded responsiveness item separately for men and women (see Table 1). Overall there was little evidence of an association between participant self-esteem and responsiveness. Before proceeding, I conducted a principal-axis (Russell, 2002) factor analysis by a varimax rotation to determine if all items could be combined to form an index of overall responsiveness. The results revealed a two-factor structure. The first factor explained 54.2% of the variance in the items before rotation (48.3% after) and included all items except 3 and 7. The second factor explained 19.8% of the variance before rotation (25.8% after) and included items 3 and 7. There were no items with questionable factor loadings; the average loadings for the two factors were .78 and .93, respectively. I therefore combined items 3 and 7 ($r = .89$) to form a 'Judgmental' index (higher scores = more judgmental) and items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 (reverse-scored), 8, and 9 to form a 'Supportiveness' index ($\alpha = .92$). The two indices were significantly correlated ($r = -.30, p < .001$).

Table 1

Correlations between self-esteem and coded responsiveness items in Study 4

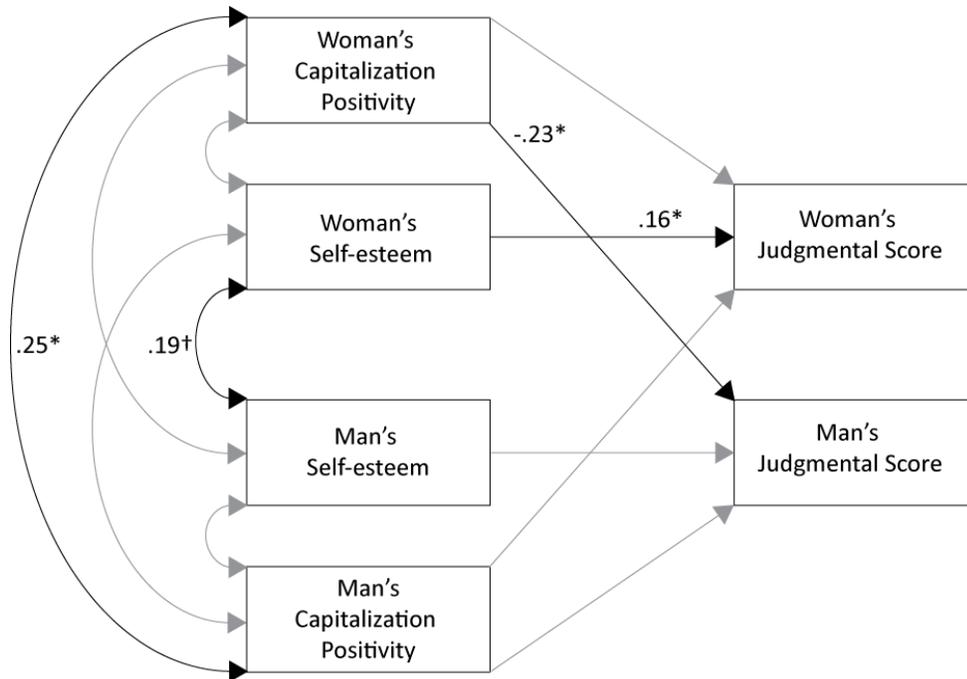
	Self-esteem	
	Men	Women
1. She/He really engaged in the discussion. ($\alpha = .84$)	.14 [†]	.02
2. She/He seemed proud/impressed. ($\alpha = .85$)	.03	.01
3. She/He seemed critical/judgmental of his/her performance. ($\alpha = .86$)	-.01	.20*
4. She/He was generally supportive. ($\alpha = .84$)	.03	-.08
5. She/He was responsive to the target's comments. ($\alpha = .81$)	.16 [†]	.07
6. She/He seemed bored or uninterested in her/his partner's success. ($\alpha = .80$)	.01	-.01
7. She/He was discouraging or voiced disagreement about the target's success. ($\alpha = .86$)	-.03	.12
8. She/He personally would be happier if the target succeeds. ($\alpha = .77$)	-.10	-.07
9. She/He seemed to enjoy discussing the target's success. ($\alpha = .83$)	.04	-.08

[†] $p < .14$, * $p < .05$

Note. $n = 109$ for all correlations except for women, items 2 to 9 $n = 108$.

Given the patterns of association between self-esteem and responsiveness were different for men and women, I proceeded by modeling the data dyadically using SEM and treated the dyads as distinguishable (i.e., allowed gender differences to emerge). Separate analyses were conducted for the Supportiveness and Judgmental dependent variables (see Appendix A for full path diagrams and Figures 3 and 4 for simplified path diagrams, respectively). Men's and women's self-esteem scores were used as predictors. To examine the unique association between self-esteem and responsiveness, I also controlled for both partners' capitalization positivity scores in the analysis. Both models were an adequate fit for the data, $\chi^2(2, N = 113) = .30$, ns , CFI = 1, RMSEA = 0 and $\chi^2(2, N = 113) = .04$, ns , CFI = 1, RMSEA = 0.

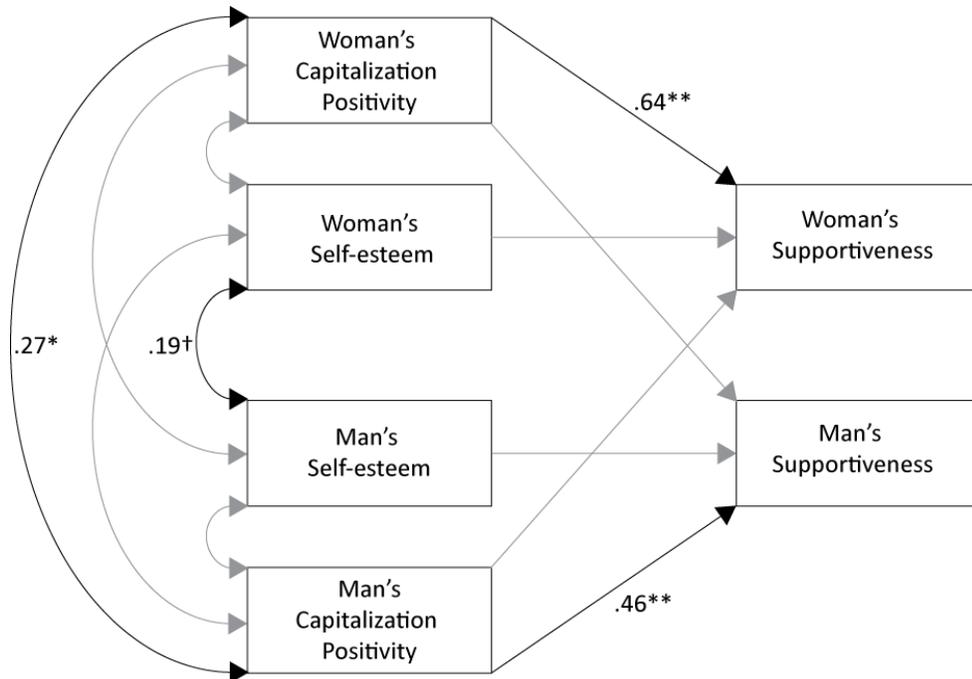
Figure 3. Simplified path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's judgmental scores in Study 4.



Note. Because there are no equality constraints, this model cannot be simplified further.
 † $p = .05$, * $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Consistent with the zero-order correlations, there was little evidence that people with low self-esteem are any less responsive than people with high self-esteem. In fact, the only significant association was in the opposite direction – higher self-esteem women were actually more judgmental. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a significant association between participants' capitalization positivity and their own supportiveness, likely capturing general tendencies toward positive expressivity. Women's capitalization positivity was also associated with men's judgmental scores – a man was less judgmental to the extent that his partner was positive in her capitalization discussion.

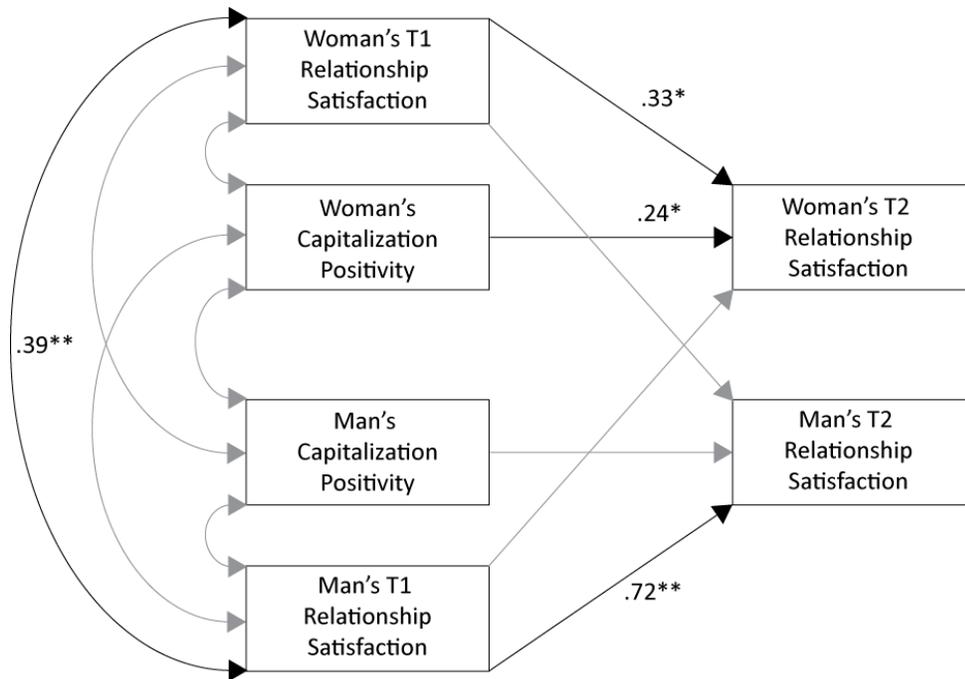
Figure 4. Simplified path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's supportiveness in Study 4.



Note. Because there are no equality constraints, this model cannot be simplified further.
 † $p = .05$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Longitudinal Analysis. To examine whether in-lab capitalization positivity predicted later relationship satisfaction, I modeled the data dyadically, controlling for participants' time 1 satisfaction (see Appendix A for full path diagram and Figure 5 for simplified path diagram). Setting equality constraints across gender resulted in poor fit and so the dyads were treated as distinguishable, $\chi^2(2, N = 87) = .07, ns, CFI = 1, RMSEA = 0$. Women's capitalization positivity was associated with greater relationship satisfaction 6 weeks later. For men, this association was trending in the same direction but did not reach significance.

Figure 5. Simplified path diagram for longitudinal dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's relationship satisfaction in Study 4.



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Discussion

Consistent with Studies 1 through 3, I found evidence that people are reluctant to fully capitalize with low self-esteem close others. In real interactions, people behaved differently when they believed their romantic partner had low self-esteem. Specifically, they expressed less positivity in their disclosures of successful goal progress than those who believed they had a high self-esteem partner. Overall, it appears that my experimental findings examining one-time disclosures in Studies 1 to 3 generalize to real capitalization discussions, the sort of which likely occur often in close relationships (Gable & Reis, 2010).

My analyses regarding responsiveness are, to my knowledge, the first to examine how LSEs and HSEs actually respond to other's positive disclosures. Interestingly, the deficiencies of

LSEs in supporting others in bad times (Collins & Ford, 2010; Feeney & Collins, 2001) seem not to extend to all types of support provision. My findings suggest that, compared to HSEs, they are just as willing and able to respond well when others share their good news. Nevertheless, as Gable and Reis (2010) point out, *perceived* responsiveness is what is most important. That is, if people expect LSEs to respond poorly, they may be reluctant to capitalize with them regardless of how LSEs actually tend to respond.

My longitudinal hypothesis was partially supported. Women who fully capitalized with their partner during an in-lab discussion were more satisfied with their relationship 6 weeks later. Consistent with Gable et al.'s (2004; 2006) findings, women appeared to benefit from freely capitalizing with their partner. The association for men was in the same direction but did not reach statistical significance.

Finally, with Study 4, I replicated the finding that people's judgments of close other self-esteem are reasonably accurate but that they also project their own self-esteem onto others.

Study 5a:

Exploring Expectations Regarding Capitalizing with Low Self-esteem Individuals

Study 5a was designed as a first step to explore why people are reluctant to capitalize with LSEs. Participants imagined sharing good news with either an LSE or HSE person and then responded to questions regarding their self- and other-focused concerns. I expected that participants would generally have more negative expectations when they imagined capitalizing with an LSE than an HSE, and that this effect may be exaggerated (or only present) when their good news was an accomplishment as opposed to something that just ‘happened.’ I included participant self-esteem as a possible moderator and controlled for the importance of participants’ good news in the analyses (3 coder reliability, $\alpha = .87$).

Method

Participants & Procedure. Ninety-seven undergraduate participants (58 female) were recruited from the university centre to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire in exchange for a chocolate bar. The mean age was 19.5 years ($SD = 2.40$). Participants began by completing the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .87$) and demographic information. Next, they were asked to briefly describe something good that happened to them. As in Study 3, I manipulated whether they thought of an accomplishment or something positive that just ‘happened.’ Participants were then asked to imagine telling either a high or low self-esteem person this good news. Specifically, they were given the instructions: “You do not need to think about someone you know, just ‘the average’ low [high] self-esteem person.” Finally, participants completed a variety of items regarding how such a person would respond and feel if told the good news.

Measures.

Expected Responses to Good News Disclosure. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), participants responded to 24 items regarding how they expected the target to respond to the capitalization (some of which were adapted from Gable et al., 2004). There were 13 items regarding expected feelings (e.g., ‘I expect a low [high] self-esteem person to feel inferior’) and 11 regarding expected behaviour (e.g., I expect a low [high] self-esteem person would not pay much attention to me’). The items were designed to map onto other- versus self-focused concerns, respectively. To confirm this however, I conducted a principal-axis factor analysis on the 24 items. In fact, a 3-factor structure emerged (see Table A1 for items and factor loadings). The first factor appeared to tap participants’ other-focused concerns and explained 49.1% of the variance before rotation (21% after). The second factor seemed to involve people’s self-focused concerns and explained 6.3% of the variance before rotation (19.7% after). The final factor encompassed people’s beliefs about how happy the target would feel for them and explained 4.4% of the variance (19.1% after).

Results

Because I was interested in examining people’s specific expectations and did not have a priori hypotheses about their content, I did not combine the items in this study for analysis. Instead, I conducted separate hierarchical regression analyses on the 17 items that loaded highest on either the self- or other-focused concerns factor. I entered importance ratings in the first step and the dummy-coded condition variables (good news type, 0 = *just ‘happened’*, 1 = *accomplishment*; self-esteem of target, 0 = *high self-esteem*, 1 = *low self-esteem*) and the continuous variable, participant self-esteem, in the second step. The three 2-way interactions were entered in the third step and the 3-way interaction (good news type X target self-esteem X

participant self-esteem) in the fourth. The type of good news that participants imagined disclosing did not significantly interact with participant or target self-esteem for any of the items and so, for the sake of simplicity in reporting, was dropped from the analyses. I therefore conducted a new set of separate regression analyses. Importance ratings were entered in the first step, participant and target self-esteem were entered on the second, and the 2-way (participant X target self-esteem) interaction was entered in the third.

A main effect of target self-esteem emerged for all self- and other-focused items (see Table 2). As I hypothesized, in almost all cases participants in the LSE target condition expected the recipient of their disclosure to feel and behave more negatively than those in the HSE condition did. There were significant participant by target self-esteem interactions for 7 of the items (5 other-focused, 2 self-focused). When they occurred, the pattern was generally that the effect of target self-esteem was exaggerated for HSEs. Compared to LSEs, HSE participants either expected a more positive reaction from the HSE target, a more negative reaction from the LSE target or both (see Table 3).

Table 2

Summary of Regression Analyses in Study 5a

Dependent Measure (Item)	Importance ratings ^a		Participant Self-esteem ^b		Target Self-esteem (high versus low) ^b		Participant X Target Self-esteem ^c	
	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Other-focused concerns								
... bad	.06	.59	-.08	-.94	.60	7.12**	.21	1.78†
... envious or jealous	.06	.56	.05	.48	.42	4.41**	.14	1.09
... inferior	.11	1.05	.00	.04	.68	8.84**	.09	.88
... that his/her experiences don't measure up	.14	1.34	-.07	-1.00	.71	9.79**	.09	.88
... upset or sad	.10	.95	-.08	-.95	.62	7.51**	.18	1.54
... unlucky	.00	.02	-.08	-.90	.58	6.75**	.40	3.74**
... angry	.03	.27	-.03	-.34	.46	4.90**	.29	2.24*
... in a bad mood	.09	.92	-.20	-2.29*	.50	5.79**	.25	2.10*
Self-focused concerns								
... annoyed with me	.02	.19	-.01	-.15	.41	4.31**	.38	3.03*
... behave in a hostile way toward me	.11	1.10	-.23	-2.40*	.35	3.74**	.00	.03
... change the subject	.09	.86	-.23	-2.36*	.31	3.20*	.32	2.44*
... react to my good news enthusiastically (R)	.09	.89	-.21	-2.45*	.53	6.20**	.00	-.01
... point out potential down sides of the good news	.04	.41	-.11	-1.12	.31	3.12*	.05	.38
... not pay much attention to me	.14	1.38	-.24	-2.55*	.29	3.01*	.16	1.23
... think of a problem with the good news	.04	.42	-.03	-.37	.47	5.05**	.08	.64
... be uninterested	.21	2.05	-.19	-1.93†	.16	1.67†	.14	1.00
... start an argument	.09	.85	-.07	-.73	.30	3.08*	.19	1.41

Note. ^a Error terms are based on $df = 94$, ^b error terms based on $df = 92$, ^c error terms based on $df = 91$
 † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 3

Predicted Scores for Participants in Each Condition in Study 5a

Dependent Measure (Item)	Low Self-esteem (-1 SD)		High Self-esteem (+1 SD)	
	LSE target	HSE target	LSE target	HSE target
Other-focused concerns				
... bad*	4.09	2.32	4.37	1.42
... envious or jealous	4.20	2.99	4.86	2.80
... inferior	4.36	1.84	4.65	1.59
... that his/her experiences don't measure up	4.90	2.11	4.87	1.52
... upset or sad	3.87	2.10	4.05	1.36
... unlucky*	3.97	2.97	5.00	1.58
... angry*	3.14	2.26	3.76	1.42
... in a bad mood*	4.01	2.75	3.95	1.30
Self-focused concerns				
... annoyed with me*	3.68	3.17	4.71	2.08
... behave in a hostile way toward me	3.28	2.08	2.51	1.30
... change the subject*	4.21	3.90	4.24	2.17
... react to my good news enthusiastically (R)	4.72	2.84	3.98	2.11
... point out potential down sides of the good news	4.62	3.54	4.34	2.95
... not pay much attention to me	3.63	3.01	3.19	1.73
... think of a problem with the good news	4.53	2.89	4.64	2.52
... be uninterested	3.19	2.95	2.87	1.91
... start an argument	2.50	1.95	2.73	1.26

Note. * indicates that a participant by target self-esteem interaction of at least $p < .10$ emerged for the item.

Discussion

Overall, the results of this exploratory study provide preliminary support for my hypothesis that people have self- and other-focused concerns that may prevent them from fully capitalizing with LSEs. LSEs are viewed as less-than-ideal recipients of capitalization attempts – they are expected to feel and behave poorly in response. Overall, the pattern of moderation by participant self-esteem (when it occurred) suggested that LSE participants had more negative expectations of the HSE target than HSE participants did, resulting in larger effects of target self-esteem for HSEs. There was no indication that LSEs had special insight into how their fellow LSEs may respond.

Unlike in Study 3, the type of good news participants imagined disclosing did not moderate the effect of target self-esteem in this study. Although the instructions were virtually identical to those of Study 3, it may be that it was too subtle a distinction given the hypothetical nature of the study. Participants did not actually have a chance to disclose their good news, and so perhaps the type of good news was not particularly salient. It is also possible that the distinction was lost because participants completed the questionnaire in the busy university centre, as opposed to a quiet lab room as in Study 3. As I previously speculated, the type of good news may only matter when it is particularly salient to the discloser.

Study 5b:

Why Are People Reluctant to Capitalize with Low Self-esteem Individuals?

In Study 5b, using a different paradigm, I sought to replicate my main finding that people are reluctant to capitalize with LSEs. My primary goal, however, was to examine why people withhold from LSEs. As in Study 5a, I examined the two possible mediators: self- and other-focused concerns. Participants imagined sharing something positive that happened to them recently with a particular friend. The salience of participants' perceptions of their friend's self-esteem was manipulated. I anticipated that, as in Studies 1 through 3, when their friend's self-esteem was salient, participants would be less willing to openly share their good news when they perceived their friend to have low rather than high self-esteem. I again included participants' self-esteem as a potential moderator and statistically controlled for the importance of participants' positive event (2 coder reliability, $\alpha = .72$).

Method

Participants & Procedure. Sixty-eight (46 female) undergraduate students participated in an online study in exchange for course credit. Participants completed a variety of questionnaires including measures of their own self-esteem ($\alpha = .91$), and their perceptions of a particular friend's self-esteem ($\alpha = .90$). Early in the questionnaire package, participants briefly identified "something good that happened to [them] recently" and were told that they would be asked to come back to it later. Participants were randomly directed to either a website in which the perceptions of friend's self-esteem scale appeared prior to or after the dependent variables. This difference in order served as my manipulation of the salience of their friend's self-esteem. For the dependent variables, participants were asked to think again about their good news and to imagine telling it to their friend. They then responded to scales measuring the extent to which

they would openly disclose the positive information, how they expected their friend to feel (other-focused concerns), and how they expected their friend to behave (self-focused concerns).

Measures.

Positivity of Expected Good News Disclosure. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) participants responded to three items ($\alpha = .90$) measuring the extent to which they felt they would really convey their positive experience to their friend. The items were: ‘When telling my friend this news, I would really convey to my friend how positive the news was,’ ‘I think I would ‘get the message across’ that I was happy with what happened,’ and ‘My friend would understand from what I told him/her that I was glad this thing had happened.’

Self-focused Concerns. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), participants responded to four items from Study 5a (adapted from Gable et al., 2004; $\alpha = .87$) regarding how they expected their friend to behave if told the good news. This served as my measure of self-focused concerns (i.e., the extent to which the friend would ‘rain on the parade.’). Participants rated the extent to which their friend would: ‘point out the potential down sides of the good event,’ ‘find a problem with the good thing that happened to me,’ ‘not pay much attention to me,’ and ‘seem disinterested.’ Higher scores indicated more negative responses from the friend.

Other-focused Concerns. Using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), participants responded to two items used in Study 5a ($\alpha = .78$) measuring how they expected their friend to feel if told the good news. This served as my measure of other-focused concerns. Participants rated the extent to which their friend would: ‘feel inferior’ and ‘feel envious or jealous.’ Higher scores indicated more negative feelings.

Results

Main Analysis. I conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to examine my hypothesis that people are less willing to share good news with a low rather than high self-esteem friend, particularly when the friend's self-esteem is salient. Importance ratings were entered in the first step, followed by the centered participant and friend self-esteem scores and the dummy-coded (1 = *salient*, 0 = *not salient*) condition variable in the second step. The three 2-way interactions were entered in the third step and the 3-way (participant self-esteem x friend self-esteem x condition) interaction was entered in the fourth. In total, 42% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the model (R^2 changes = 0, .19, .15, and .08, respectively).

As expected, participants felt they would disclose more openly if they believed their friend had high (+ 1 *SD*) rather than low (- 1 *SD*) self-esteem, $\beta = .45$, $t(62) = 3.39$, $p < .01$. However, this was qualified by a significant 3-way interaction, $\beta = .74$, $t(58) = 2.74$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 6), and I decompose its simple effects below.

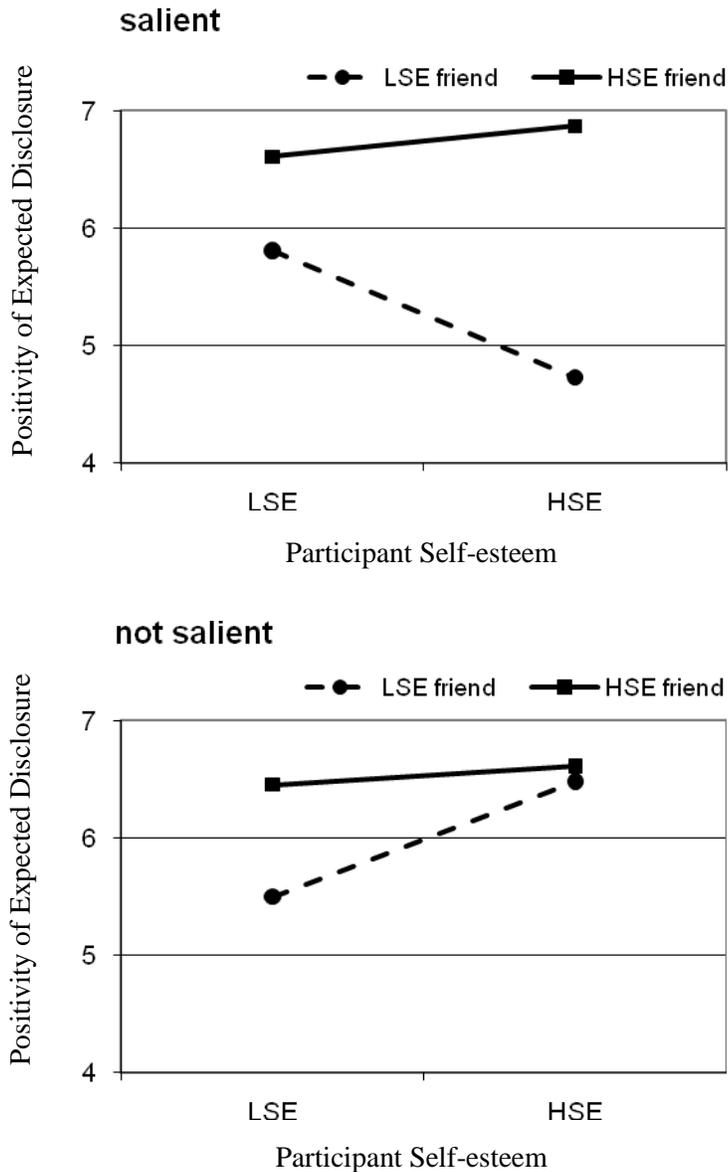
Consistent with Studies 1 through 4, participants in the salient condition were less willing to disclose if their friend had low rather than high self-esteem, and this was true for both LSEs, $\beta = .44$, $t(58) = 2.96$, $p < .01$, and HSEs, $\beta = 1.16$, $t(58) = 5.33$, $p < .001$. Interestingly, HSEs reported significantly less positive disclosure to an LSE friend than did LSEs, $\beta = -.59$, $t(58) = -3.48$, $p < .01$. No self-esteem difference emerged for those who imagined disclosing to a high self-esteem friend.

An interesting pattern emerged in the condition in which participants' friend's self-esteem had not been made salient. As expected, because of low chronic accessibility of self-esteem-related concerns, HSEs did not tailor their disclosure depending on the friend's self-esteem in this non-salient condition. In comparison, LSEs were less willing to share their good

news with an LSE friend than an HSE friend, $\beta = .52$, $t(58) = 1.82$, $p < .08$. Moreover, LSEs were significantly less willing to disclose to an LSE friend than were HSEs, $\beta = .54$, $t(58) = 2.14$, $p = .04$. For those who imagined disclosing to a high self-esteem friend, no self-esteem difference was found.¹⁰ Overall, the key difference between the two conditions is that HSEs were only reluctant to disclose to LSEs if their friend's self-esteem had been made salient, whereas LSEs were less willing to disclose to LSEs regardless.

¹⁰ I also analyzed the self- and other-focused variables as dependent variables in the same fashion. The patterns of results were the same, although the 3-way interaction was significant for self-focused concerns, $\beta = -.83$, $t(58) = -2.67$, $p < .05$, but not other-focused concerns, $\beta = -.45$, $t(58) = -1.48$, $p = .14$.

Figure 6. Positivity of expected disclosure of good news as a function of participant self-esteem and friend self-esteem when friend self-esteem is or is not salient in Study 5b.



Note: Higher numbers indicate greater positivity in expected disclosure. Both participant and perceptions of friend self-esteem are treated as continuous variables. The terms LSE and HSE correspond to ± 1 SD from the mean.

Mediation Analyses. To examine why people are reluctant to share good news with LSEs, I began by conducting a principal-axis factor analysis to ensure that the three measured variables (positivity of expected disclosure, self- and other-focused concerns) were in fact distinct constructs. All nine items were included. The results revealed the expected three-factor

structure. The three positivity of disclosure items loaded on the first factor and explained 44.5% of the variance before rotation (26% after). The 4 self-focused concerns items loaded on the second factor and explained 17.1% of the variance before rotation (24.8% after). The two other-focused concerns items loaded on the third factor and explained 9.8% of the variance before rotation (20.7% after). The average factor loadings for the three scales respectively were: .85, .71 and .78.

Having demonstrated the appropriateness of treating the items as three distinct scales, I continued by examining the correlations amongst the measured variables (see Table 4). All correlations were significant and in the expected directions, and so I proceeded using a multiple mediation bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The main advantage of this procedure is its ability to pit two mediators against one another within the same model (for a concise review of the advantages, see Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2007). Moreover, this procedure overcomes important deficiencies of the popular Baron and Kenny method (1986; e.g., the latter's often-violated assumption of normality; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The macro also easily accommodates the inclusion of multiple covariates¹¹.

My analysis used 5000 bootstrap resamples and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI; Hayes, 2009). As noted by Hayes (2009), when such a confidence interval does not include zero, one can be 95% certain that the effect is not zero (which is equivalent to rejecting the null hypothesis at $p < .05$). Examination of the specific indirect effects¹² revealed that self-focused concerns mediated the effect of perceptions of friend self-esteem on willingness to disclose (CI: .003 and .170, point estimate = .06, $SE = .04$), whereas other-focused concerns did not (CI: -.099 and .107, point estimate = .01, $SE = .05$). With both mediators included in the model, the direct

¹¹ A similar analysis can be conducted with SEM, but it is more cumbersome, particularly with covariates.

¹² A specific indirect effect represents the indirect effect of the mediator in question with all other mediators included in the model and, as such, takes into account associations between mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

effect of perceptions of friend self-esteem on willingness to disclose remained significant, $b = .28, p < .01$, indicating self-focused concerns only partially explains this association. The results were similar when participant self-esteem¹³, perceptions of friend self-esteem and condition were included as covariates (see Table A2). In addition, this pattern of findings is not due to the measure of self-focused concerns having higher reliability. The pattern holds when a less reliable two-item self-focused concerns variable is pitted against the original two-item other-focused concerns variable.

Table 4
Correlations among measured predictor variables and the dependent variable, Study 5b.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Participant Self-esteem	-	.51**	-.10	-.21†	.19
2. Friend Self-esteem	-	-	-.22†	-.45**	.43**
3. Self-focused concerns	-	-	-	.50**	-.40*
4. Other-focused concerns	-	-	-	-	-.32*
5. Positivity of disclosure	-	-	-	-	-

† $p = .08$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Discussion

In summary, in Study 5b I found further support for my hypothesis that people, regardless of their own self-esteem, are reluctant to capitalize with LSE close others. In comparison to my behavioural main effect results in Studies 1, 2, and 3, this effect was especially strong for HSEs whose friend's self-esteem had been made salient. Further, my intuition that LSEs may be particularly sensitive to others' self-esteem garnered support, although not in the way I expected. I had originally anticipated that LSEs might be particularly aware of how capitalizing with an LSE could go awry, and as a result might be more likely than HSEs to withhold good news when

¹³ I also conducted a two-groups SEM (using a self-esteem median split) to determine if the pattern of mediation was moderated by participant self-esteem. The self-focused concerns variable was a marginal mediator for both the LSE and HSE groups. Other-focused concerns did not mediate for either group.

a close other's low self-esteem was salient. What I found, however, was that even when their friend's self-esteem had not been made salient, LSEs anticipated making a less positive self-disclosure if they had thought of a low rather than a high self-esteem friend. HSEs, on the other hand, required their friend's self-esteem to be made salient in order to take it into account.

This study also provided preliminary evidence regarding why people withhold their positive experiences from LSEs. Consistent with Study 5a, I found that the lower participants perceived their friend's self-esteem, the more concerns they had about sharing their good news with that person. Nevertheless, the desire to protect LSEs from emotional harm did not drive people's reluctance to capitalize. Instead, they were less willing to share their good news largely because they expected capitalizing with an LSE to be a less positive experience for *themselves*.

General Discussion

Using a variety of methodological approaches, including experimental, dyadic, and behavioural analyses, I have examined how an important relational process is affected by a ‘new’ interpersonal construct – people’s perceptions of others’ self-esteem. People are reluctant to share their positive experiences with those they believe have low self-esteem. In Studies 1 and 2, I showed experimentally that people disclose their good news in a less positive manner to (ostensibly) LSE close others. In Study 3, I replicated this finding but also learned that if the nature of the good news disclosed is salient, people are only less positive when disclosing an accomplishment, not a positive experience that just ‘happened’ to them. Importantly, with Study 3, I also extended my findings by showing that people report capitalizing less frequently with friends they believe have low self-esteem. Study 4 lent external validity to my findings. To the extent that romantic partners viewed their loved one as having low self-esteem, they discussed successful progress on personal goals less positively in an actual discussion. Study 5b replicated the basic effect using an entirely different paradigm and revealed that the chronic insecurities of LSEs might mean they are especially attuned to the low self-esteem of others. Finally, Studies 5a and 5b demonstrated the negative expectations people have regarding capitalizing with LSEs. Interestingly, I found that people’s other-focused concerns were not what explained their reluctance to capitalize with LSEs. Rather, they withheld their good news because they expected their friend to respond unsupportively, a finding consistent with Gable and her colleagues’ (2004; 2010) suggestion that perceived or expected responsiveness is key to capitalization.

Mechanisms

At the outset, I did not make a specific prediction regarding why people would be reluctant to capitalize with LSEs. If anything, I expected (or perhaps hoped!) that people were

other-focused – that they deprived LSEs of their good news because they thought it was best for their loved one. Indeed, people who are invested in a relationship often make sacrifices for the well-being of their loved one and their relationship (Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Nevertheless, it's possible that participants did not actually have other-focused concerns; perhaps they only reported them because it is socially desirable to be concerned about others. Recent research supports the idea that when it comes to others' insecurities, people may be more self-focused. Lemay and Dudley (in press) found that those who believe they have insecure partners exaggerate affection, suppress negative sentiments, and consciously try to avoid upsetting their partner to “preserve interpersonal harmony” (p. 8). My research cannot tease apart, however, whether it is the unpleasant interaction itself that people wish to avoid, or that they intuit that fewer benefits will be reaped from such an interaction.

There are likely other mechanisms driving the effect that I have not investigated. For example, might it be a ‘downer’ to think about having a LSE close other?¹⁴ This notion is consistent with my work showing that LSEs are stigmatized; people have negative beliefs about LSEs that are largely unwarranted (Cameron et al., 2011). A person's enthusiasm regarding their positive experience may be diminished when they are reminded of their friend's LSE status. Along a similar line, perhaps people temporarily like their close other a little less when they are reminded of their LSE. Decreased liking may reduce motivation to share a bonding experience with a close other. Another possibility is that feelings of shame or guilt for wanting to self-enhance with a ‘less fortunate’ other prevent people from capitalizing with LSEs. Such explanations, however, cannot explain my correlational findings when participants' perceptions

¹⁴ Unfortunately, I did not include a mood measure in these studies. However, in several other studies in which I manipulate perceptions of a target's self-esteem, mood was unaffected. Mood was also unrelated to people's ratings of their friend's self-esteem in another study.

of their close other's self-esteem were not particularly salient. However, given I have studied established relationships, sometimes years in duration, it seems plausible that people develop habits of communicating with their close others that originated for any or all of the aforementioned reasons.

Other Processes Affected by Perceptions of Self-esteem

I anticipate that capitalization is not the only interpersonal process affected by perceptions of self-esteem. Indeed, Lemay and Dudley have already shown that perceiving insecurity in a partner is associated with exaggeration of positive and concealment of negative feelings regarding the partner. By extension, I imagine that people may also complement LSEs more frequently and criticize them less. The disclosure of negative information regarding the self may also be affected. For example, do people intuit Murray and her colleagues' (2005) finding that LSEs feel better when a fault in their partner is revealed? If so, people may actually be more forthcoming in their disclosures when they have a negative experience to share (which could help offset missed opportunities from not capitalizing). However, given that self-focused concerns seem to drive people's disclosures with LSEs, it may also be that those who are interested in moving past their negative experiences may not want to disclose with someone who they believe won't help them cheer up. Thus far, I have speculated about the disclosure of valenced information. But how do people feel about discussing, say, politics with LSE individuals? Unless LSEs are seen as particularly "touchy" about disagreements, broaching emotionally 'neutral' topics with LSEs may not give people pause¹⁵. Overall, the notion that my findings are not unique to capitalization per se only highlights the importance of considering perceptions of others' self-esteem in close relationships. Moreover, even if people simply

¹⁵ Unless, of course, they endorse the stereotype that LSEs are less sociable and intelligent (Cameron et al., 2011). Even if they do, however, such stereotypes may not be applied to close others who are seen in a more individuated way (Neuberg & Fiske, 1987).

disclose less with LSEs in general, the underlying mechanism for one process may not be the same for all.

Limitations & Alternative Explanation

My research is limited in two key ways. First, I have examined this phenomenon only within North American culture. Ample evidence, however, suggests that East-Asian cultures do not view self-esteem in the same way as westerners, nor do they have such an emphasis on the importance of high self-esteem (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho, 2002). Although such collectivist cultures are known for being particularly concerned with maintaining interpersonal harmony, my findings may not hold if people do not have the same beliefs about others' self-esteem. A second limitation is that I have not fully explored the notion that people capitalize with LSEs less often. My self-report results regarding frequency from Study 3 should be replicated and further explored. It may be that people pick and choose who they tell what – capitalizing with HSEs but complaining with LSEs, for example.

An alternative explanation for my findings is that participants tailored their capitalization attempts due to demand characteristics. I believe this is very unlikely for several reasons. First, the varied methodologies employed make it implausible. In Study 3, I obscured the low self-esteem feedback by giving all participants feedback on an additional aspect of their friend's personality. Moreover, the effect replicates correlationally (e.g., the dyadic analyses in Studies 3 and 4) when participants have had no explicit feedback about their close other's self-esteem. Second, what the experimenter demand would be in my studies is not perfectly clear. Yes, people may have assumed that they should dampen their enthusiasm to spare an LSE person's feelings. However, it seems equally likely that participants assumed that increasing enthusiasm is an appropriate way to improve an LSE's mood or demonstrate that they are excited to communicate

with their LSE friend. Overall, demand does not seem a plausible explanation for my findings. Nevertheless, in future research, it may be beneficial to use a less explicit way of manipulating perceptions of others' self-esteem.

Future Research & Unanswered Questions

A thorough review by Baumeister and colleagues (2003) argued quite convincingly that, despite western society's fascination with self-esteem, this personality variable actually predicts few objective outcomes. My research, however, suggests that the *perceptions* people have of others' self-esteem may in fact have important predictive power, even beyond the context of close relationships. For example, I have found that at least under some circumstances, people are less willing to hire a person they believe has LSE (MacGregor, Cameron, & Holmes, 2010). Perhaps in response to the possibility of discrimination, LSEs try to conceal their low self-esteem from others (Cameron, Hole, & Cornelius, 2010), which may also have negative consequences (Smart & Wegner, 2000). Overall, more research on how people treat this stigmatized group is needed.

Research dedicated to how and when people perceive others' self-esteem would also be useful. I (and others, e.g., Lemay & Dudley, in press) have demonstrated that people's perceptions of close other self-esteem are reasonably accurate and very stable over time. However, little is known about how people's judgments of others' self-esteem are formed. My research suggests that, in part, people use their own self-esteem to fill in informational gaps. Chang and Swann (2010) found that participant ratings of other's self-esteem from video clips were largely based on how "put-together" and well-dressed the target was. People may also use cues of neurotic, touchy behaviour by others to reach such conclusions. Amidst the accuracy in perception there is also error, however. For example, in an undergraduate sample of Canadians,

participants guessed that approximately 60% of their peers had low self-esteem (Cameron & Hole, 2011), a gross exaggeration of its actual prevalence. In the present research, people also had unnecessarily low expectations for how LSEs will respond to them - Study 4 showed that LSE partners were actually no less responsive than HSE partners.

Research on when others' self-esteem is made salient would also be useful to determine how often people actually take others' self-esteem into account. I had hypothesized that a person's own self-esteem might influence how attuned they are to others', but this hypothesis was not well supported. Unexpectedly, in Study 5b when the friend's self-esteem was salient, HSEs actually expected to be less positive with an LSE friend than LSEs did. In hindsight, perhaps this finding is not all that surprising, given that HSEs do tend to be more socially tuned than LSEs (Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988; Furr & Funder, 1998). Nevertheless, my behavioural results showed no evidence of moderation by participant self-esteem. This inconsistency may simply suggest that people are not entirely accurate at forecasting how they will actually disclose (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). The finding that only LSEs expected to disclose less positively to LSEs when their friend's self-esteem was not salient does suggest that LSEs may be particularly sensitive to the self-esteem of others in some contexts¹⁶. However, this result is also inconsistent with my behavioural findings in Study 4 showing that people disclose less positively even without a reminder of their partner's LSE. Again, it appears that what people say they will do versus what they actually do may be two different things.

Implications

My findings have important ramifications for interpersonal relationships and personal well-being. Although there may be short-term advantages to withholding good news from LSEs,

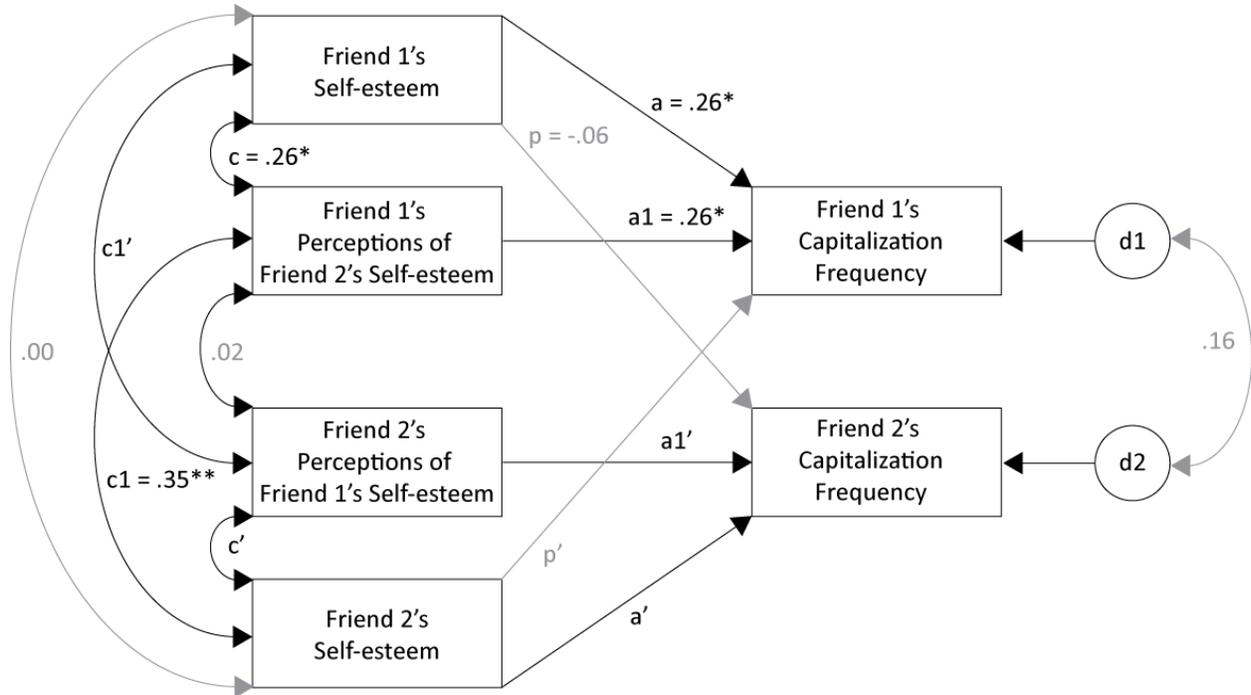
¹⁶ It appears, however, that LSEs are not generally more accurate than HSEs in detecting others' self-esteem. In Studies 3 and 4, I found no association between participant self-esteem and the absolute difference between their perceptions of close other self-esteem and their close other's actual self-esteem.

such as avoiding conflict, the long-term advantages of capitalizing with loved ones are clear. Partners who capitalize with one another enjoy greater life satisfaction and the more people they capitalize with, the greater the benefits obtained (Gable et al., 2004). In addition to missing out on the benefits of capitalization, over time, this censoring behaviour may result in feelings of inauthenticity and resentment toward LSEs. Indeed, feeling understood by one's partner has been identified as a key ingredient to intimate relationships (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Lemay and Dudley also demonstrated that inauthenticity is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction over time. The notion that people want to feel truly known by others is also well-documented (Swann, de la Ronde, & Hixon, 1994) and regulating what one does and does not communicate to an LSE may be cognitive costly (Vohs, Baumeister, & Ciarocco, 2005).

On the one hand, I am happy to report findings that do not focus on the relational missteps of LSEs themselves. Although such a focus is certainly warranted, my research is unique in that it shifts the focus to the behaviour of LSEs' close others. On the other hand, given that relationships involving LSEs tend to be less satisfying (Murray et al., 2001), my findings are particularly unfortunate. The very people who could most benefit from capitalization are the ones who may be denied its value.

Appendix A: Full Path Diagrams for Dyadic Analyses in Studies 3 and 4.

Figure A1. Full path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting capitalization frequency in Study 3.

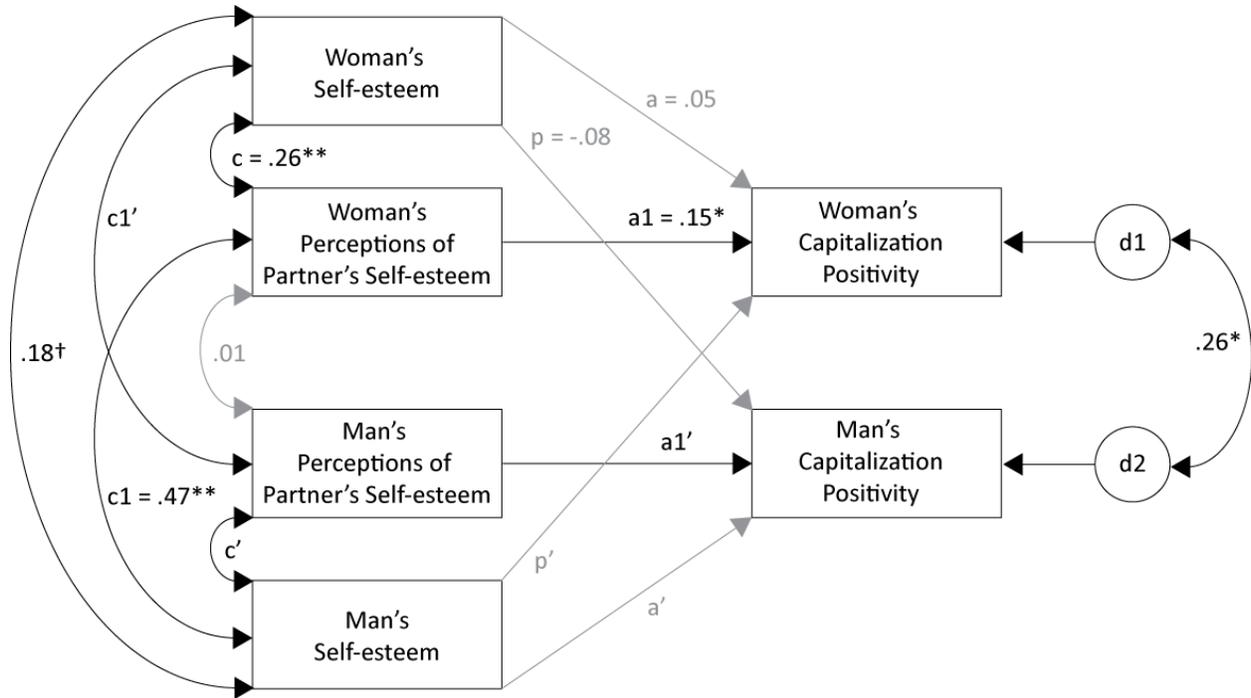


Note. Path coefficients presented in standardized form. Non-significant paths are shown in grey.

Primed letters indicate paths set to equal.

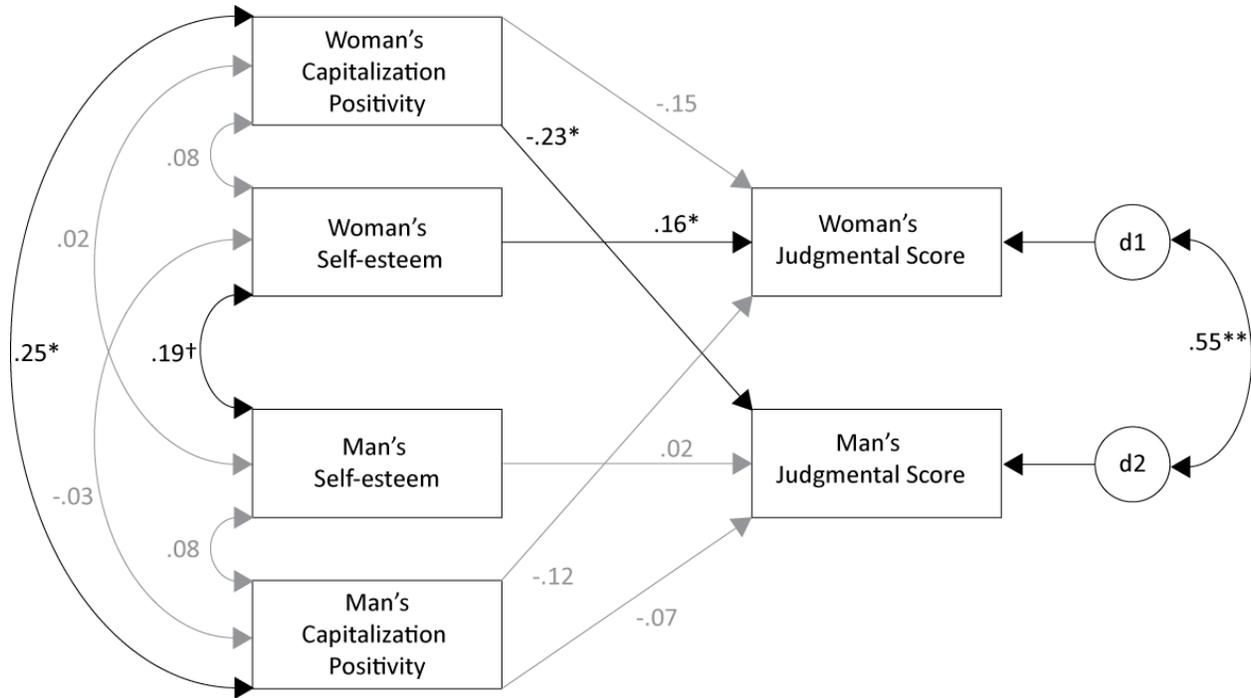
* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Figure A2. Full path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting capitalization discussion positivity in Study 4.



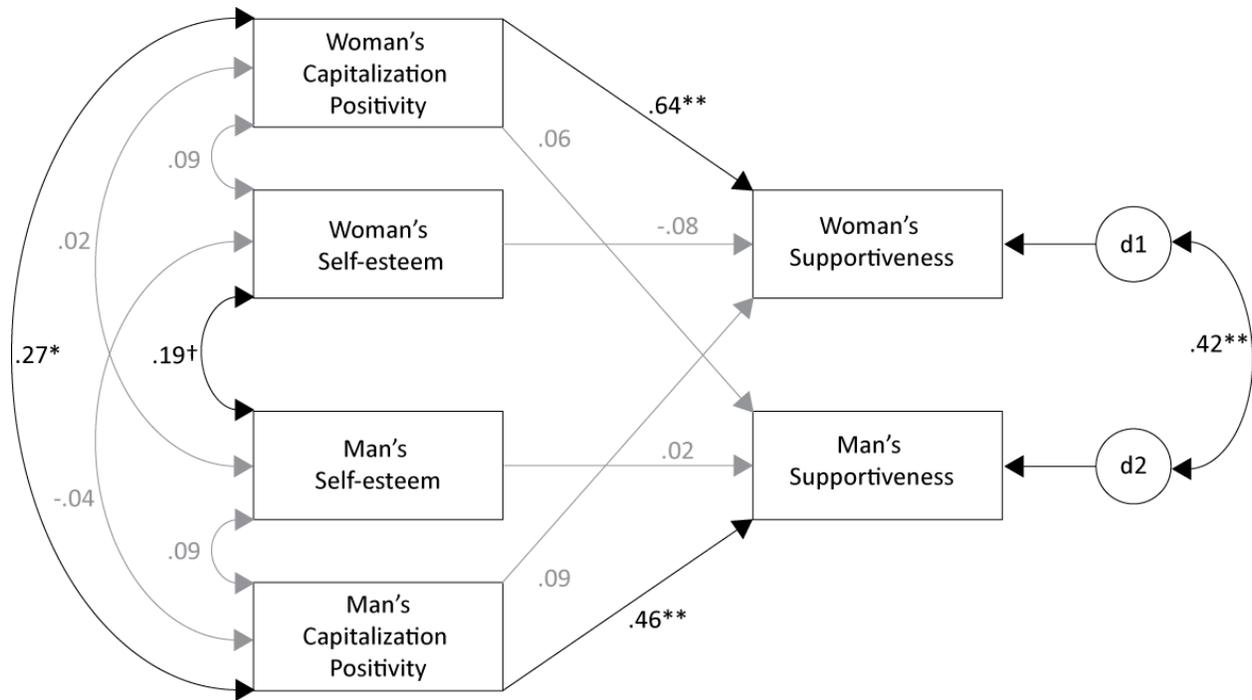
Note. Non-significant paths are shown in grey. Primed letters indicate paths set to equal.
 $^\dagger p = .06$, $* p < .05$, $** p < .001$

Figure A3. Full path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's judgmental scores in Study 4.



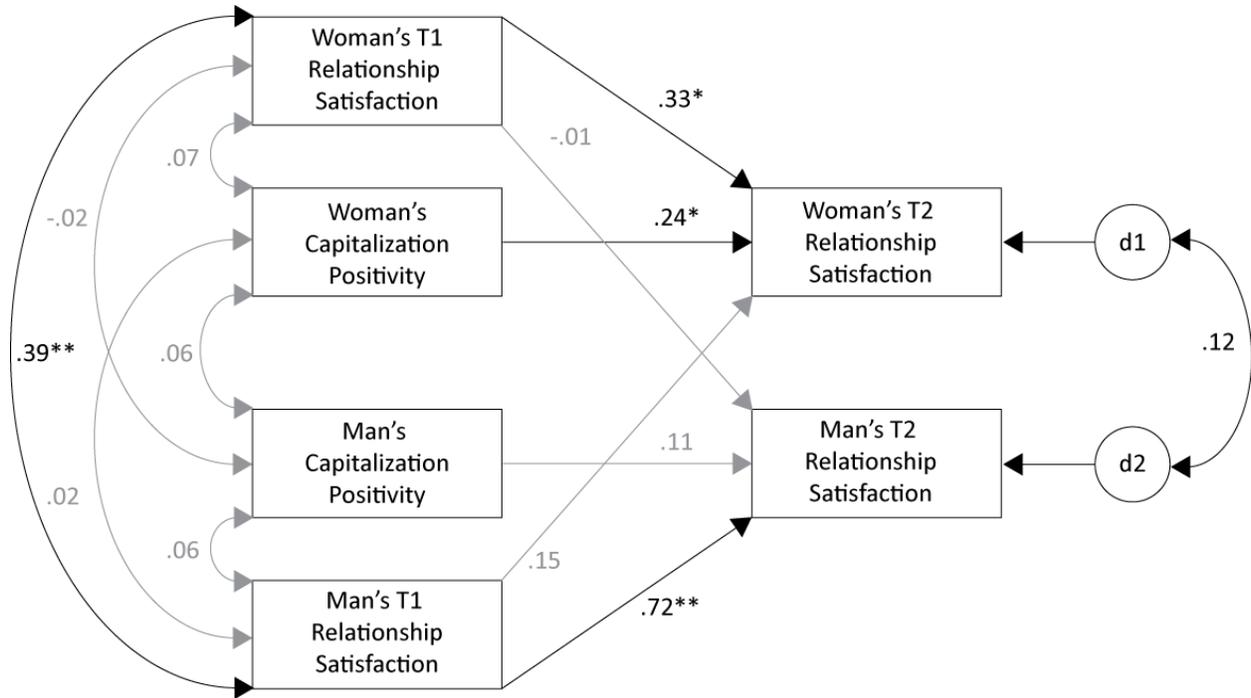
$^\dagger p = .05$, $* p < .05$ $** p < .001$

Figure A4. Full path diagram for dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's supportiveness in Study 4.



† $p = .05$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Figure A5. Full path diagram for longitudinal dyadic analysis predicting men's and women's relationship satisfaction in Study 4.



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Appendix B: Supplemental Tables

Table A1

<i>Expectation Items and Factor Loadings in Study 5a</i>			
Items	Factor		
	1: Other-focused concerns	2: Self-focused concerns	3: Happy for me
I expect a low [high] self-esteem person would [feel]...			
Other-focused concerns			
... bad	.716	.080	-.243
... envious or jealous	.595	.332	-.116
... inferior	.709	.222	-.276
... that his/her experiences don't measure up	.670	.336	-.152
... upset or sad	.676	.248	-.097
... unlucky	.682	.279	-.272
... angry	.541	.259	-.334
... in a bad mood	.645	.236	-.340
Self-focused concerns			
... annoyed with me	.416	.534	-.400
... behave in a hostile way toward me	.379	.672	-.231
... change the subject	.275	.603	-.413
... react to my good news enthusiastically	-.296	-.543	.526
... point out potential down sides of the good news	.267	.700	-.215
... not pay much attention to me	.251	.731	-.333
... think of a problem with the good news	.437	.691	-.226
... be uninterested	.092	.565	-.304
... start an argument	.362	.573	-.289
Happy for me			
... happy for me	-.276	-.377	.706
... proud of me	-.247	-.245	.622
... excited for me	-.279	-.273	.819
... in a good mood	-.491	-.188	.476
... want to talk to me and ask me questions about my good news	-.364	-.266	.629
... be glad the good thing happened to me	-.168	-.468	.648
... think that I deserved the good thing that happened to me	-.152	-.215	.672

Table A2

Summary of Multiple Mediation Analysis Controlling for Self-esteem, Perceptions of Friend Self-esteem and Condition, Study 5b

Mediator	CIs	Point estimate	SE
Self-focused Concerns	.009 and .191	.06	.04
Other-focused Concerns	-.107 and .118	.00	.06

direct effect, $b = .29$, $p < .01$

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