Am I Who I Think You Want Me to Be: Perceived Meta-Ideals in Romantic Relationships

by

Tamara A. Sucharyna

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Psychology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Table of Contents

Abstract

People hold images of themselves, of their ideal partner, and of the ideal relationship (Simpson, Fletcher, & Campbell, 2001). The present study examined *Perceived Meta-Ideals* (PMI): people's conceptions of who they think their partners want them to be, whereas *Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity* (PMIS) is how close individuals feel they are to their PMI. 143 dyads in a romantic relationship were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: primed similar/dissimilar to the PMI, and no prime control. Individuals higher in self-esteem (HSEs) reported higher PMIS than individuals lower in self-esteem (LSEs). Higher PMIS lead to an overestimation of the amount of positive qualities that the partner is looking for. HSEs were more satisfied in their relationship and reported a greater self-other overlap, and higher PMIS predicted relationship satisfaction. Finally, self-other overlap mediated the relationship between PMIS and the desire to become the PMI.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer sincere thanks to Dr. Marian Morry for her guidance. I also thank the members of my graduate committee for their feedback: Dr. Jacquie Vorauer of the Department of Psychology at the University of Manitoba, and Dr. Nick Turner of Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba.

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Am I Who I Think You Want Me to Be: Perceived Meta-Ideals in Romantic Relationships

Most people have no problem painting a picture of their ideal romantic partner. Ideal partners are those that possess desirable traits. These traits may range from being understanding to outgoing to having a respectable income. There are many sources from which people create their ideals. For example, one's past and present relationships, novels, TV shows, and movies. Popular media often emphasizes that the ideal partner (commonly referred to as "the one") is somewhere out there for everyone. Although being with a partner who possesses desirable traits is preferred, not everyone is fortunate enough to find their ideal partner.

According to the Ideal Standards Model, people hold images of themselves, their ideal partner, and of the ideal relationship (Simpson, Fletcher, & Campbell, 2001). Images of an ideal partner are referred to as *ideal partner perceptions*. People automatically and largely unconsciously gauge whether their current partner and relationship is consistent with their ideal standards (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). The term used to describe the consistency between ideal standards and partner and relationship perceptions is *ideal perception consistency* (Fletcher et al., 2000). Ideal-perception consistency allows people to determine whether their current relationship partner is a good mate. For example, if Mary's ideal partner is financially secure and romantic, but John, her partner, holds a minimum wage job and often forgets their anniversary, then John would not be consistent with Mary's ideal. Through *metaperceptions* – people's beliefs about how they are viewed by others – John also has perceptions about how Mary views him. These perceptions may or not may not be accurate. Additionally, people may also believe that their partners are or are not discrepant from their ideal (ideal-perception discrepancies) and partners may believe that they are or are not discrepant from their perceptions of their partner's ideal (ideal partner discrepancies).

With this in mind, one might then ask what effect does priming participants to feel close to and far away from their partner's ideal have on relationship outcomes such as relationship satisfaction and an overlap between the self and other. Are there individual differences in ideal partner discrepancies? The present study presents possible answers to these questions.

Ideal Standards Model

According to Fletcher and Simpson (2000), ideal partner and ideal relationship perceptions serve three major functions: a) *evaluation* of the quality of the partner or relationship, b) *explanation* of relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or other relationship conflicts, and c) *regulation* of partners' behaviour or relationship events. For example, Mary can evaluate the quality of her partner, John, and their relationship by assessing how they both compare to her ideal standards. She can explain her satisfaction in the relationship by attributing it to the fact that John closely matches her ideal standards. Lastly, Mary can explicitly tell John what her expectations are in forming and maintaining a cohesive relationship. Fletcher and Simpson also posit that ideal perceptions are guided by two motives: a) partner-enhancement motives and b) accuracy motives. Individuals who engage in partner-enhancement feel the need to see the partner or relationship positively. These people try to reduce ideal-perception discrepancies by rationalizing mismatches or even altering what they value in their partner or relationship (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000). This process is largely done unconsciously and is often exhibited by individuals who are highly invested in their current relationship. On the other hand, people are guided by accuracy motives when they need to make important relationship decisions (e.g., what to do when there are available attractive alternative partners or during times of conflict) or when there are sizeable ideal-perception discrepancies. In this case, an individual may choose to change his or her own behaviour, the partner's behaviour, or terminate the

relationship. The latter action may occur if a discrepancy is viewed as too large to mend. As a result, the individual may withdraw from the current relationship, seek alternatives, or engage in enjoyable activities (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000).

What traits do people often include in their ideal standards? Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, and Giles (1999) conducted a study to determine the perceived importance of peoples' ideal standards regarding their ideal partners and their ideal relationships. They asked participants to rate their perceived importance of each trait. A factor analysis revealed that ideal partner perceptions center on three major dimensions. Namely, ideal partner traits were relevant to a) warmth and trustworthiness (WT), b) vitality and attractiveness (VA), and c) status and resources (SR). Ideal-relationship traits were relevant to a) intimacy, loyalty, and stability, and b) excitement and passion. Standards across these dimensions act as a means in which to compare current and potential mates and relationships to one's ideals standards. Fletcher et al. (1999) found that among a sample of primarily dating individuals, perceived matches between one's ideal standards and the traits of actual romantic partners and relationships predicted relationship satisfaction. Indeed, other researchers have also found that people tend to idealize their partners (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). However, causal statements cannot be made from Fletcher and colleagues' study because it was cross-sectional. Thus, Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000) conducted a longitudinal study. Their sample consisted of individuals in a newly formed dating relationship. Specifically, individuals had to have only been dating their partner for roughly four weeks or less. Fletcher et al. (2000) assessed participants' ideal standards for their partner and relationship via the Ideal Partner Scale and the Ideal Relationship Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999) respectively. Fletcher and colleagues (2000) also assessed participants' perceptions of their current partner or relationship, and relationship quality once a month for three months.

Then, they assessed the same measures one year after the beginning of the relationship. As predicted, perceived matches between participants' ideal standards and their current partner and relationship during the first month of the relationship predicted increases in relationship satisfaction a year later. Additionally, reporting high levels of relationship satisfaction did not affect participants' ideal-perception consistency ratings over time.

Ideal Standards Model and Ideal-Perception Discrepancies

According to the Ideal Standards Model, people have perceptions about how discrepant their partners are from their ideal standards as well as perceptions about how discrepant they themselves are from their partners' ideal standards. These perceived discrepancies have important implications for emotional and relationship outcomes. In a recent study, Overall and Fletcher (2010) recruited university students dating six months or more to assess the consequences of individuals perceiving regulation attempts from romantic partners. *Partner regulation* describes the act by which a romantic partner attempts to change his or her partner in to someone that does not match the partner's ideal for the self, whereas *perceived partner regulation* describes an individual perceiving that the partner is attempting to change them in to someone he or she does not want to be (Overall, Fletcher, & Simpson, 2006). In particular, Overall and Fletcher were interested in the potential consequences that perceiving regulation from the partner has on the individual's self and relationship evaluations. Overall and Fletcher assessed participants' self-perceptions (the extent to which each attribute described themselves), *inferred ideal consistency* (the extent to which people thought they matched their partners' ideal standards on each trait), perceived regulation from the partner, perceptions of partner's regulation strategies, relationship quality, and self-esteem. Results indicated that perceiving regulation attempts from the partner is associated with people believing that they are failing to

meet their partner's ideal in the targeted domain (lower ideal consistency). Both negative regulation strategies (e.g., guilt or derogation) and lower inferred ideal consistency predicted lower relationship quality for the perceiver and more negative perceptions of targeted self-attributes. On the other hand, perceiving more positive regulation strategies (e.g., communicating concern) resulted in participants feeling more similar to their partner's ideal.

Although people make use of cognitive strategies such as partner-enhancement when they perceive their partner as discrepant from their ideal, these strategies sometimes fail. When individuals can no longer rationalize the ideal-perception discrepancies, they try to regulate their partners' behaviour (Overall et al., 2006). Overall and colleagues (2006) investigated the relationship between ideal partner consistency and regulation attempts across two studies. Participants were recruited from a university sample and reported to have been involved in their relationship for six months or more. Study 1 only recruited one member of the dyad. The researchers used the Ideal Partner Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999) to assess participants' ratings of the extent to which each attribute was important in describing their ideal partner and how accurately each attribute described their current partner. Participants also completed ideal-perception consistency ratings. Next, participants rated the extent to which they a) had desired change in that specific aspect of their partner during the past 6 months, b) had tried to change that aspect of their partner during the past 6 months, and c) were successful in their attempts to change the aspect(s) of their partner. Finally, participants rated their relationship quality.

Results indicated that participants attempted to regulate their partners the more they perceived lower ideal-perception consistency. Regulation attempts were domain-specific. For example, if Mary viewed John as not being warm enough, she would specifically attempt to regulate John's warm-related attributes. Ideal-perception consistency also remained a significant

predictor of regulation attempts even when controlling for ideal standards.

Additionally, the relationship between regulation and ideal-perception consistency was moderated by perceived regulation success. Specifically, the more people tried to change their partners, the lower the ideal-perception consistency they perceived. On the other hand, people who viewed their regulation attempts as successful perceived higher ideal-perception consistency. Ideal-perception consistency across all three dimensions also mediated the relationship between partner regulation and relationship quality. The more people tried to regulate their partners over a six month period, was correlated with lower ideal-perception consistency, which was then correlated with lower relationship quality. People also reported lower relationship quality when they perceived their regulation attempts as unsuccessful, and this effect occurred because the unsuccessful regulation attempts lowered ideal-perception consistency.

The measures used in Study 2 were the same as those from Study 1 with the addition of measures to assess a) self-perceptions, b) inferred ideal-perception consistency, c) self-ideal perception consistency, d) self-regulation, and e) perceptions of partners' regulations. Both pair members of a romantic couple responded to the measures. Results replicated those in Study 1 with the addition of a few new findings: the more people perceived negative regulation attempts from their partner, the more negative self-perceptions they had, but only for warmth/trustworthiness attributes. It is likely that self-perceptions on the WT dimension are more vulnerable to partner's expectations than are VA and SR because of the importance placed on WT attributes in a romantic relationship (Overall et al., 2006). The more people perceived negative regulation attempts from their partner, the further away they felt from their partner's ideal standards. Finally, people tried to change their attributes in a specific domain when they

perceived their partner's regulatory attempts for that particular attribute. Participants from Study 2 were contacted 6 months after their initial session to measure their ideal-perception consistency and partner regulation attempts over time. The more people tried to regulate their partner the more they perceived their partner as not matching their ideal. Additionally, the lower ideal-perception consistency the more people tried to regulate their partner. Taken together, Overall et al.'s results suggest that although partner regulation is intended to improve the quality of the relationship, it actually tends to reduce relationship quality for both the individual and the partner.

The effect of ideal-perception discrepancies differs to the extent that an individual believes their partner versus themselves to be the source of the discrepancy. In one study, Lackenbauer and Campbell (2012) tested the hypothesis that viewing oneself as the source of the ideal-discrepancy, known as PD-self (Perceived Discrepancy-self; e.g., think about an aspect of yourself that does not match the qualities your partner is looking for in an ideal partner) would predict agitation-related emotions, whereas viewing the partner as the source of the ideal-discrepancy, known as PD-partner (Perceived Discrepancy-partner; e.g., think about an aspect of your current partner that does not match your ideal partner) would predict dejection-related emotions.

Lackenbauer and Campbell (2012) recruited primarily undergraduate students who have been dating for at least three months. Participants completed the Ideal Partner Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999) to measure both partner discrepancies, emotions, Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS), and commitment. Their hypothesis was supported. People reported experiencing more dejection-related emotions when they perceived that their partner did not closely match their ideal across each dimension. People reported experiencing more agitation-related emotions when

they felt that they fell short of their partner's ideal across the warmth/trustworthiness and vitality/attractiveness dimensions, but not for the status/resources dimension. Lackenbauer and Campbell also found that both types of discrepancies were positively correlated with self-other overlap and commitment. However, they suggest that IOS and commitment are not the driving forces of partner discrepancies because each type of discrepancy uniquely predicted either dejection- or agitation-related emotions even when controlling for IOS and commitment.

It is also the case that there are emotional and regulatory consequences of perceiving partner discrepancies in a romantic relationship context. Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) sample consisted of primarily undergraduate students who have been dating for at least one month. Only one pair member was recruited. Participants were either primed to think that their partner was the source of the discrepancy (e.g., think about an aspect of your current partner that does not match your ideal partner) or that they were the cause of the discrepancy (e.g., think about an aspect of yourself that does not match the qualities your partner is looking for in an ideal partner). When participants were primed to think that their partner was the source of the discrepancy, they adopted a promotion-focused regulatory orientation. That is, by helping the partner to become the ideal by approaching positive events in the relationship. These participants reported experiencing more dejection-related emotions. On the other hand, participants adopted a prevention-focused regulatory orientation when they were primed to believe themselves to be the cause of this discrepancy. Participants tried to work towards the ideal by avoiding negative events in the relationship. These participants reported experiencing agitation-related emotions. Lackenbauer and Campbell suggest that individuals feel disappointed when they perceive the partner as not meeting their ideal standards, and become anxious to the extent that they think their partner might leave them when they believe they are the source of the discrepancy.

Not only do ideal-perception discrepancies predict an individuals' affect, but they also have a significant impact on predicting the likelihood of divorce. Eastwick and Neff (2012) conducted a 3.5-year longitudinal study with newlyweds to examine whether a match in level or a match in pattern predicts divorce. A match in level is when a romantic partner possesses traits that the individual deems highly important, whereas a match in pattern is whether people place more importance on certain ideal partner traits than others within the same person (e.g., valuing a partner who is more trustworthy than outgoing). Within the first six months of marriage, participants completed measures to assess their ideal partner preferences and perceived partner characteristics. Couples were contacted 3.5 years later to determine whether they were still married. Eastwick and Neff found that a match in level was unrelated to divorce in newlyweds, but a match in pattern was found to significantly negatively predict divorce.

Ideal Standards Model and Flexibility Beliefs

Self-perceptions, ideal-standards, and flexibility beliefs (how closely individuals expect the partners to meet their ideal standards) also center on the WT, VA, and SR dimensions (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001). Generally, individuals who hold more positive self-ratings across the dimensions tend to set higher ideal standards, and thus display lower flexibility beliefs as compared to those who hold less positive self-ratings (Campbell et al., 2001). For example, Mary would display low flexibility beliefs if she considers herself to be high in warmth, attractiveness, and status, and then sets high ideal standards across these dimensions for John to meet. Individuals who hold more positive self-ratings as compared to those with more negative self-ratings tend to be more satisfied with their current relationship when there is less of a discrepancy between their ideal standards for their partner and their actual partner's characteristics (Campbell et al., 2001).

Self-Esteem, Relationship Satisfaction, and Commitment

Factors other than perceiving a match between one's ideals and one's current partner also predict relationship satisfaction. For example, self-esteem has been found to be a predictor of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Fincham & Bradbury, 1993; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). Self-esteem is an individual's evaluation of his or her self-worth. Individuals are often referred to as having either high self-esteem (HSE) or low self-esteem (LSE). Numerous studies have documented many behavioural and cognitive distinctions between HSE and LSE individuals. LSEs are typically less satisfied in both dating and marital relationships than HSEs (Hendrick et al., 1988), and they tend to underestimate how much they are loved by their partners, but this underestimation is not confirmed in reality (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). In addition, LSEs are more sensitive to rejection (perceived or actual) by their partner and are more likely to push their partner away than HSEs (Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, & Garrett-Kusche, 2002). Similarly, LSEs also tend to believe that their partner is less satisfied and committed to the relationship than they really are, whereas HSEs tend to be more accurate in their perceptions (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In general, LSEs tend to doubt their partner's acceptance and commitment as a result of projecting their self-doubts onto their partner. In comparison, HSEs may not have these doubts and even over predict how accepting and committed their partner is (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998).

Results from research regarding commitment has shown that people tend to be more committed to their relationship the more that they are satisfied in their relationship (Le & Agnew, 2003). Additionally, the less committed an individual is to the relationship the more they will be attracted to alternative partners (Miller, 1997). Alternative partners are considered to be attractive to the extent they are believed to provide more satisfying relationship outcomes than

the current partner. Participants in highly committed dating relationships rate attractive alternatives lower than unattractive alternatives, perhaps because the former was seen as more threatening to the relationship (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989). However, LSEs have been found to perceive themselves as having fewer attractive alternatives as compared to HSEs (Anthony, Holmes, & Wood, 2007). In other research, both dating and single HSEs accepted positive feedback in the form of flattery from a confederate, but only the individual in the dating relationship dismissed the feedback by deprecating the attractiveness of the confederate (Gagne, Khan, Lydon, & To, 2008). The latter finding demonstrates that an individual may be both highly committed to his or her partner as well as highly attracted to alternatives, but because of their commitment they diffuse the attractiveness of the alternative.

Yet another distinction between individuals higher in self-esteem and those lower in self-esteem is that HSEs tend to believe that they will likely succeed on a task as a result of having previously succeeding often, whereas the opposite is true for LSEs (McFarlin & Blascovich, 1981). People with HSE also engage in self-enhancement strategies. That is, they seek ways of making themselves appear positively to others. Indeed, individuals higher in self-esteem reported feeling that they more closely matched their partner's ideal as compared to individuals lower in self-esteem (Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012). When HSEs fail to achieve a goal, they tend to engage in compensatory self-enhancement, a motivating mechanism to help people feel good about themselves by inflating their self-image; Baumeister, 1982; Baumeister & Jones, 1978). On the other hand, LSEs tend to engage in self-protection strategies (placing more emphasis on avoiding failure; Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). After LSEs receive failure feedback on a single task as well as on subsequent occasions, LSEs tend to engage in more negative self-evaluations than do HSEs (Di Paula & Campbell, 2002). In the event where HSEs fail to achieve

their goal they may find it best to cease trying and to seek alternative goals (Baumeister, 1982; Baumeister & Jones, 1978).

Self-Expansion

Individuals are motivated to expand their sense of self, or one's *self-concept* (Aron & Aron, 1997). Specifically, individuals engage in approach- but not avoidant motives- to expand their sense of self (Mattingly, McIntyre, & Lewandowski Jr., 2012). Individuals will engage in greater self-expansion when one is particularly close to their romantic partner (Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004). Engaging in self-expansion leaves individuals with a sense that they are interconnected (that their self and their partner overlap) with their partner, which is done by perceiving that the self includes resources, perspectives, and characteristics of a close other (Aron & Aron, 1986). Some researchers contend that individuals' self-concepts (one's beliefs about attributes one currently possesses) are more affected by ones' interpersonal relationships than ones' inner-directed self-processes (Tice & Baumeister, 2001). The self-other overlap can be seen as an overlap of both relationship partners' self-schema (the beliefs and ideas people have about themselves) because of the influence each individual has on the other. As a result, there is an increased similarity of traits between partners (Deutsch & Mackesy, 1985).

In general, self-expansion within a relationship leads to enhanced relationship quality (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000). On the other hand, reporting lower self-expansion within a relationship has been found to predict seeking alternative partners (VanderDrift, Lewandowski Jr., & Agnew, 2010). Additionally, there are individual differences in terms of who is more likely to benefit from the process of self-expansion. Individuals higher in self-esteem are more likely than those lower in self-esteem to benefit from the process of including the other in the self (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). Individuals higher in self-esteem

experience an increase in self-efficacy when perceiving a greater self-other overlap. Thus, HSEs tend to prosper, becoming more self-assured, which then affirms their feelings of increased self-worth (Aron et al., 1995). On the other hand, the negative self-views commonly held by LSEs continue to prevent them from being aware of positive feedback from their partner (Murray et al., 2000). It is not because of the LSEs' negative self-views that make them less likely to benefit from self-expansion, but rather that LSEs are more self-protective and only self-enhance when they see it is a low risk situation (e.g., when success is guaranteed; Wood, Giordano-Beech, Taylor, Michela, & Gaus, 1994).

Perceived Meta-Ideals in Romantic Relationships

Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) study provided good support for the ability to experimentally manipulate the extent to which one sees oneself (PD-self) versus the partner (PD-partner) as responsible for partner discrepancies. However, Lackenbauer and Campbell did not account for individual differences in self-esteem. As seen from previous research, HSEs and LSEs tend to view themselves and their relationships much differently from one another. For example, LSEs' self-protective behaviours likely make it difficult for them to receive feedback from their partner that they are close to their partners' ideal. Thus, it is important to account for possible individual differences in perceived ideal partner discrepancies. The present study examined *Perceived Meta-Ideals* (PMI). PMIs describe people's conceptions of who they think their partners want them to be. The formation of a PMI is thought to be largely unconscious. People may amend their PMI by integrating knowledge from their partner over time. PMIs are measured with an adapted version of the Ideal Partner Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999). The PMI scale is described below. The present study also uses the term, *Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity* (PMIS). PMIS is the term used to describe how similar individuals believe their actual self to be

to their perceptions of their partner's ideal image of them. That is, how close individuals feel they are to their PMI. The current study uses the *Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy* (AMID) index. The AMID provides a way in which to calculate the overall difference in average importance of individuals' ideal partner traits. This index is calculated by subtracting the partner's ideal partner ratings from the individual's PMI ratings.

Overview of the Present Study

Guided by the Ideal Standards Model (Simpson et al., 2001), the present study sheds light on individual differences in participants' ratings of how important they think certain traits are in describing their partners' ideal partner (i.e., individual differences in PMIs). In particular, the primary aim of the study was to see whether individuals higher in self-esteem believe themselves to be closer to their Perceived Meta-Ideal, and to examine any effects that this perceived similarity (or dissimilarity) might have on relationship outcomes. The present study contributes to ideal partner perception research in a number of ways. It includes a novel empirical manipulation of one's Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity; the primed dissimilar condition most closely resembles Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) PD-self prime. However, the present study also includes two other conditions: primed similar to the PMI and a no prime control.

Previous research in ideal partner perceptions has not yet measured one's desire to become one's partner's ideal (i.e., one's PMI). Thus, the present study includes a measure to assess one's desire to become the PMI. Previous research has also not measured how well peoples' perceptions of their PMI match their partners' actual Ideal Partner ratings. Lackenbauer and Campbell computed ideal partner discrepancies differently than the present study. Specifically, they calculated self-partner correlations, such that John's ratings of how closely he felt that he matched Mary's image of her ideal partner was correlated with Mary's perceptions of

how closely she thought John matched her image of her ideal partner. In the present study, the Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy index was calculated to create a difference score in order to measure the extent to which people place importance on certain ideal partner traits. The AMID index most closely resembles Eastwick and Neff's (2012) *match in level*.

The present study assesses peoples' Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. PMIS is measured in a similar way as Overall and Fletcher's (2010) inferred ideal consistency, with a Likert scale. In this study, PMIS is measured with a single-item rather than across specific attributes. Finally, previous research has failed to determine what guides peoples' thoughts of who they think their partners wants them to be. Therefore, another aim of the present study was to provide a possible answer to this question. One's own ideal may have impact the formation of one's PMI. Specifically, people may believe that their partners want them to possess certain traits that are in line with their own ideal.

Hypothesis 1. *Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to meet the PMI.* If HSEs indicate lower PMIS, this discrepancy will act to motivate them more to become the PMI by using compensatory self-enhancement (e.g., Baumeister, 1982) in attempts to become the PMI. In contrast, if LSEs indicate higher PMIS they will be more motivated to strive towards becoming the PMI because they feel it is attainable.

Hypothesis 2. *Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the AMID.* This is hypothesized because HSEs have been shown to be more accurate in their perceptions of their partner's thoughts (Downey & Feldman, 1996). When heightened understanding of the other is coupled with their own feelings of self-worth, feelings of similarity will likely ensue. If HSEs are likely to be more accurate in their perceptions of their partner's thoughts, and when HSEs indicate higher PMIS there will be a smaller AMID (i.e., their average conceptions of their PMI

will more be more highly associated with their partner's average actual ideal). In contrast, because LSEs tend to be less accurate in their perceptions of their partner's thoughts, when those individuals indicate higher PMIS there will be a greater AMID (i.e., their average conceptions of their PMI will not be highly associated their partner's average actual ideal).

Hypothesis 3. *Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict attention to alternatives, and this will be mediated by level of commitment.* Mediation analyses seek to identify the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable through the inclusion of a third explanatory variable (the mediator variable). Preacher and Hayes (2008) hypothesize that the independent variable causes the mediator variable, which then causes the dependent variable. Individuals higher in self-esteem were hypothesized to be more attracted to alternatives when they felt lower PMIS. The interaction indicates that this difference would be larger for HSEs than for LSEs. This interaction was predicted to be mediated by level of commitment. How attentive individuals are to alternative partners will depend on the level of commitment to the current partner (Gagne, Khan, Lydon, & To, 2008). Specifically, the more committed one is to their partner, the less one will be attracted to alternatives and the more similar one will feel similar to their PMI.

Hypothesis 4. *It was hypothesized that self-esteem and PMIS would interact to predict relationship satisfaction.* Due to HSEs' positive self-views, when they indicate higher PMIS, this will result in more relationship satisfaction for the individual. In contrast, consistent with their negative-self views, LSEs who indicate lower PMIS will be more satisfied in the relationship.

Hypothesis 5. *Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to meet the PMI, and this will be mediated by self-other overlap.* Feeling closer to the PMI will result in a high degree of self-other overlap in self-schemas as well as resources, perspectives, and

characteristics. Although HSEs were predicted to feel more PMIS and have more desire to meet the PMI than LSEs, how much individuals desire to become the PMI will depend on the degree of self-other overlap.

Analysis plan. For Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 I used a multiple regression analysis, and for Hypotheses 3 and 5 I used a bootstrapping procedure to test for mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Calculation of the AMID. The AMID index was calculated by subtracting partners' ratings on each Ideal Partner Scale item from actors' ratings on the Perceived Meta-Ideal items (i.e., corresponding items were subtracted from each other). This yielded a difference score. Then, all difference scores were averaged to create the average AMID. All items were positive in nature (e.g., considerate, attractive, romantic). This difference score represents, on average, how closely actors' PMI ratings match their partners' ratings of their ideal partner traits.

For example, if Mary's responses on the PMI scale averaged to a value of 60 and if John's responses on the Ideal Partner Scale averaged to 55, the AMID score would be +5. In this example, Mary overestimates the amount of positive qualities that she thinks John actually wants for his ideal partner. As another example, Mary's responses on the PMI scale may average to a value of 45 and John's responses on the Ideal Partner Scale average to 65, the AMID score would be -20. A negative discrepancy score can be interpreted as Mary underestimating the amount of positive qualities that John actually wants for his ideal partner. A discrepancy of 0 would indicate that participants agree (they neither overestimate nor underestimate) on the importance of positive qualities that they think their partner wants them to have.

Calculation of the AMID profile correlations. All multiple regression analyses for the average AMID and its subscales were re-conducted using profile correlations. Profile

correlations were used as an alternative way to calculating actor-partner differences. In the profile correlations, self-esteem (centered) and PMIS (centered) were the independent variables, and the AMID (or AMID subscales) as the dependent variable. Profile correlations examine whether individuals know which traits are more or less important to their partner. In comparison, the AMID index above provides average ratings for the difference between actors' PMI ratings and partners' Ideal Partner Scale ratings across all traits. Profile correlations were computed by calculating Pearson correlations between actors' ratings on the PMI scale and partners' ratings on the Ideal Partner Scale. This results in an average correlation between the two components of the difference score for each dyad.

Method

Participants

One hundred and forty three couples participated in the experiment. At least one partner was an undergraduate student at the University of Manitoba (males $N = 30$, females $N = 113$). Participants from introductory psychology (*actors*) were asked to bring their dating partner (*partners*) to do the study with them. Participants in introductory psychology received experimental credit for participating. As an incentive, if participants were no longer in need of experimental credit, they received a chocolate bar or were entered in to win one of three $30 gift cards to the movies. The mean age for participants was 21.10 years ($SD = 5.21$; range 17-48 years) and the average relationship length was 32.32 months ($SD = 37.96$; range 1-240 months). 78% of couples indicated that they were exclusively dating. 14% of couples were common law/married, 4% were casually dating, and 3% were engaged. 70% of participants were Caucasian/European, 6% were North American Aboriginal, 6% indicated multiple ethnicities, 6% were Asian, 5% were African, 4% were of another decent, 2% were East Indian, and 1%

were of Middle Eastern decent. The sample consisted of 139 heterosexual dyads. Four dyads indicated that they were in a homosexual relationship. Ninety-five percent of couples reported English as being their first language. Five percent of participants who reported English as a second language rated their English skills as being strong to very strong.

Procedure

Recruitment. Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses at the University of Manitoba, either from the psychology sign-up system or via in-class recruitment. The study description informed the students that they must email the researcher with their partner's email address. Then, the researcher e-mailed the partner the study description including the date and time of the study session. There were two inclusion characteristics. Namely, that participants have to have been in a dating relationship for six months or more – this is a timeframe that is typically used in relationship research and will allow individuals to form Perceived Meta-Ideals –, and English needed to be their first language. Participants were informed that they could be in either a heterosexual or homosexual relationship. Couples were instructed to arrive together for the study and then were placed in separate rooms for the remainder of the study. A research assistant or myself explained to each dyad member that they would be asked to fill out an online questionnaire about themselves and their relationship with their dating partner in terms of perceptions, traits, and relationship quality. The questionnaire took no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Participants were reassured that they would never have access to each other's responses. At the end of the study, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Materials

Four questionnaires were created in Qualtrics, an online survey and questionnaire tool. Actors received one of the three metaperception-versions, and their partners always received the

self-version. Some measures were completed by the actor only or by the partner only, whereas others were completed by both dating partners. These distinctions are made below for each measure. Alphas for each scale are listed for both actors and partners. All scales have high internal consistency.

Metaperception-Version

In the metaperception-version, actors completed the following measures in order: Self-Esteem Scale, demographic information, Ten-Item Personality scale (TIPI), Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal (RISC) measure, and the priming manipulation. Actors were randomly assigned to complete the similar prime, dissimilar prime, or the no-prime control condition. The manipulation task was adapted from Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel (2009) and is described below. Measures were randomized after the manipulation. The remaining measures were: Own Ideal scale, Perceived Meta-Ideal scale, Desire to Become the PMI scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Multiple Affect Adjective Check List, Commitment Scale, Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS), and Three Facets of Attention to Alternatives Index.

Self-Version

In the self-version, partners completed the following measures in order: Self-Esteem Scale, demographic information, TIPI, and RISC. Partners were not assigned to the manipulation, but instead were asked to respond to a single item about how close they feel to the Perceived Meta-Ideal, and where this item is identical to that in the control condition. Measures were randomized after the single item. The remaining measures were: Ideal Partner Scale, Partner Discrepancy Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Multiple Affect Adjective Check List, Commitment scale, Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS), and Three Facets of Attention to Alternatives Index.

Self-esteem. Both dating partners completed Rosenberg's (1965) ten-item Self-Esteem Scale to provide a measure of their global evaluations (e.g., "I feel that I am a person of worth"). Participants responded to such items on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). Items were averaged to obtain a mean rating of global self-esteem. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 were reverse scored such that higher ratings indicated more positive self-views (actor $\alpha = .82$, partner $\alpha = .83$; Appendix A).

Demographic information. Both dating partners provided demographic information regarding age, sex, ethnicity, and language. Participants were asked if English was their first language and, if it was not, then to rate their English language skills on a 5-point scale (1 = *very weak* and 5 = *very strong*; Appendix B).

Personality. This was a filler scale and was included to reduce participants' focus on self-esteem. Both dating partners completed the TIPI scale (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), which consisted of ten items. TIPI measures five personality dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experiences. Participants rated the extent to which each pair of traits applies to them on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). Each dimension consists of two items and where one of the items is reverse coded for a total of five reversed items (items 2, 4, 6, and 10) with higher scores representing more of that dimension. Example items include: "I see myself as extraverted, enthusiastic" (Extraversion) and "I see myself as critical, quarrelsome" (Agreeableness; reverse coded). The average of the two items from each dimension (the standard item and the reverse coded item) composed a total rating of how much of a particular trait an individual possesses (actor $\alpha = .60$, partner $\alpha = .59$; Appendix C).

Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal. This was a filler scale and was included to reduce participants focus on self-esteem. Both partners completed the RISC scale (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000), which consisted of 11 items. The RISC scale measures the general orientation toward representing oneself in terms of close relationships. Example items include: "My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am," and "If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well." Participants rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). A RISC index was calculated by averaging the responses across items, and where a lower overall rating indicates a lower RISC. Items 8 and 9 were reverse scored such that a higher score indicates a higher RISC (actor $\alpha = .84$, partner $\alpha = .81$; Appendix D).

Desire. Actors completed the Desire to Become the Perceived Meta-Ideal scale (Sucharyna, unpublished), which consisted of two items. Actors responded to items on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). An example item is: "It is important for me to work towards becoming my partner's image of h is or her ideal partner." Items were averaged to obtain a mean rating of one's desire to become the PMI (actor $\alpha = .71$; Appendix E).

Priming Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. Actors in the metaperception condition completed an adapted version of the ideal-similarity prime (Rusbult et al., 2009). Participants were randomly assigned to be primed to believe that they either meet their partner's ideal (similar prime) or do not meet their partner's ideal (dissimilar prime). Participants in the control group did not receive the prime, but instead respond to a single item to see what people normally feel like in their relationship with respect to their PMI.

Primed Similar to the Perceived Meta-Ideal. "Think of the qualities that you believe your partner would ideally like you to possess. Now, please list the qualities that you currently

possess that are *in line with or close to* the qualities you think your partner would ideally like you to have." Participants were instructed to respond either in point-form or in full sentences on the space provided in the questionnaire (Appendix F).

Primed Dissimilar to the Perceived Meta-Ideal. "Think of the qualities that you believe your partner would ideally like you to possess. Now, please list the qualities that you currently possess that are *not in line with or far away from* the qualities you think your partner would ideally like you to have (Appendix G)." Participants were instructed to respond either in point-form or in full sentences on the space provided in the questionnaire. This item was reverse scored such that higher responses indicated feeling more similar to the PMI. Once the dissimilar prime item was reverse scored, an average PMIS was created by summing responses from all conditions.

No prime Control. Both dating partners were asked to respond to a single item on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely far from the ideal* and 7 = *extremely close to the ideal*): "In general, how much do you feel like you possess the qualities that your partner would ideally like his or her ideal partner to possess?" There was no space provided for participants to provide their response to this item. This item was also used as a manipulation check to see if HSEs tend to perceive greater similarity after the similar prime than the dissimilar prime (Appendix H).

After participants responded to their randomly assigned priming condition, they were asked to respond to a corresponding single item on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*): "In general, I possess the qualities that my partner would ideally like me to possess" (similar prime), or "In general, I do not possess the qualities that my partner would ideally like me to possess" (dissimilar prime).

Ideal Partner Scale. Partners completed an adapted version of the Ideal Partner Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999), which consisted of 36 items. Participants rated their conceptions of their ideal partner on three dimensions: warmth/trustworthiness (WT; 17 items; e.g., understanding, kind), vitality/attractiveness (VA; 11 items; e.g., outgoing, sexy), and status/resources (SR; 8 items; e.g., successful, financially secure). Participants rated how important each trait is in describing their ideal partner on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all important* and 7 = *extremely important*). Items within each dimension were averaged, with higher scores representing more positive images of one's ideal partner (partner $\alpha = .92$, WT $\alpha = .88$, VA $\alpha = .76$, SR $\alpha = .82$; Appendix I).

Own Ideal Scale. Actors completed an adapted version of the Own Ideal Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999), which consisted of 36 items. Participants rated their conceptions of their ideal-self on three dimensions: WT (17 items), VA (11 items), SR (8 items). Participants rated how important each trait is in describing their ideal-self on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all important* and 7 = *extremely important*).). Items within each dimension were averaged, with higher scores representing more positive images of one's ideal self (actor $\alpha = .90$, WT $\alpha = .89$, VA $\alpha = .79$, SR $\alpha = .75$; Appendix J).

Perceived Meta-Ideal Scale. Actors completed an adapted version of the Perceived Meta-Ideal Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999), which consisted of 36 items. Participants rated their conceptions of their PMI on three dimensions: WT (17 items), VA (11 items), SR (8 items). Participants rated how important each trait is in describing what they think is their partner wants in an ideal partner on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all important* and 7 = *extremely important*). Items within each dimension were averaged, with higher scores representing more positive images of one's PMI (actor $\alpha = .91$, WT $\alpha = .89$, VA $\alpha = .83$, SR $\alpha = .80$; Appendix K).

Partner Discrepancy Scale. Partners completed an adapted version of the Partner Discrepancy Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999), which consisted of 36 items. Participants were asked to compare their current partner to their ideal partner on the three dimensions: WT (17 items), VA (11 items), SR (8 items). Participants rated each trait in terms of how accurately each trait describes their actual partner in their current relationship as compared to their ideal partner on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all like my ideal partner* and 7 = *extremely like my ideal partner*). Items were averaged within each dimension, such that higher scores indicate that the partner perceives that their current dating partner closely matches their ideal on a given dimension, and lower scores indicate that the match was insufficient (partner $\alpha = .94$, WT $\alpha = .91$, VA $\alpha = .85$, SR $\alpha = .79$; Appendix L).

Relationship satisfaction. Both dating partners completed the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick et al., 1988), which consisted of seven items. An example item includes: "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *never, not well* and 5 = *always, very well, a lot*). Items were averaged to index amount of relationship satisfaction. Items 4 and 7 were reverse scored, such that higher scores indicated higher relationship satisfaction (actor $\alpha = .86$; partner $\alpha = .85$; Appendix M).

Emotions. Both dating partners completed an adapted version of the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965), which consisted of 37 items. Participants responded to the question: "In the past month, how often did you feel…" The measure includes 11 dejection-related emotions (e.g., discouraged, rejected), 14 agitation-related emotions (e.g., upset, afraid), and 12 anger-related emotions (e.g., angry, furious). The names of each facet were adapted from Higgins, Klein, and Strauman's (1985) Emotions questionnaire. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *never* and 5 = *always*). Fifteen positive emotions were reverse scored,

such that lower scores represent more negative feelings. Items were averaged within each dimension, such that higher scores indicate more of its respective emotion. (actor α = .88, dejection: .38, agitation α = .74, anger α = .77; partner α = .88, dejection α = .48, agitation α = .73, anger α = .81; Appendix N).

Commitment. Both dating partners completed the Commitment Scale (Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose, 2001), which consisted of two items. Example items include: "I am very committed to maintaining my relationship," and "I have made a firm promise to myself to do everything in my power to make my relationship work." Items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). Level of commitment to the current relationship was assessed by averaging the responses across the two items, and where higher scores represent higher levels of commitment (actor α = .74, partner α = .79; Appendix O).

Self-other overlap. Both dating partners completed the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), which consisted of a single item. This scale contains seven Venn diagrams representing varying degrees of self–other overlap (the more the diagrams overlap, the greater the self-other overlap). Participants were asked to choose the diagram that best describes their relationship with their partner. Each Venn diagram was labeled with a number so as to calculate an average self-other overlap (Appendix P).

Attention to alternatives. Both dating partners completed the Three Facets of Attentiveness to Alternatives Index (Miller, 2010), which is composed of 29 items across three facets. The three facets are active prowling, passive awareness, and willful disinterest. Participants were asked to list how seldom or how often each of these statements applies to them on a 5-point scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). Exam items include: "When I go out without my partner, I usually pretend that I am single (active prowling; actor α = .89, partner α = .91); I

believe it's okay to look as long as I don't touch (passive awareness; actor α = .92, partner α = .96); My partner has my undivided attention (willful disinterest, actor α= .89, partner α = .91)." An attention to alternatives score was calculated for each facet by averaging the responses across items within a facet. Higher ratings within each facet indicate a greater degree of attention to alternatives, except for willful disinterest, which indicates less attention to alternatives (Appendix Q).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Of the 143 dyads, 10 dyads were not included in the analyses. Five actors did not complete the manipulation, one actor only completed ten out of 36 items on the PMI scale (a scale critical for calculating the AMID index), and data from four dyads were missing due to unknown errors, which may be attributed to a faulty internet connection or research assistant error. All scores on the PMIS item were within 3 *SDs* of the mean.

Correlations. Pearson correlations among all theoretically important variables are presented in Table 1. As expected based on past research, self-esteem was significantly positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, the IOS, and feeling close to partner's ideal (PMIS). In addition, PMIS was significantly positively correlated with PMI.

Manipulation checks. Before the main analyses were conducted, I conducted a one-way ANOVA (primed similar $N = 49$, primed dissimilar $N = 47$, no-prime control $N = 47$) to test if there was a significant difference of the means between the similar and dissimilar conditions. I centered all of the responses from the Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity item score ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.31$), regardless of condition, around a single mean. Dissimilar condition responses were reverse coded such that higher scores indicate feeling closer to the PMI. There was a significant

effect for the priming task, $F(2, 140) = 3.70$, $p = .027$, $\eta^2_p = .05$, which indicates a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). A post-hoc Bonferonni test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the similar and dissimilar groups, $p = .047$, which confirms that the manipulation successfully influenced people to feel close to or far away from their PMI. More specifically, those in the similar condition ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 0.90$) reported feeling more similar to their PMI as compared to those in the dissimilar condition ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.65$). However, there was not a significant difference between the similar and control groups, ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.21$), $p = .087$, or between the dissimilar and control groups, $p = 1.00$.

Next, I conducted a regression analysis in which self-esteem (centered) was the continuous variable and the primed similar, primed dissimilar, control condition were the categorical variables. This regression was conducted to test whether self-esteem interacts with condition to predict PMIS. That is, to test if HSEs perceive greater similarity after the similar prime than the dissimilar prime, and whether this similar-dissimilar difference is larger for LSEs than for HSEs. Based on Aiken and West (1991), with a three level categorical variable, I had to create two sets of dummy codes (C1 and C2). C1 was coded with 1 (similar), 0 (dissimilar), and 0 (control) and used as coefficients to contrast the similar condition to the dissimilar and control conditions. C2 was coded with 0 (similar), 1 (dissimilar), and 0 (control) and used as coefficients to contrast the dissimilar condition to the similar and control conditions. Then, I created two interactions terms, one for each direction of comparison (C1 and C2) by self-esteem. I entered C1, C2, and self-esteem into Block 1 and their interactions in Block 2. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant main effect for self-esteem, on PMIS. Although only marginally significant (see Table 2), people in the similar group reported higher PMIS scores than people in

the dissimilar or control groups (C1). However, neither of the self-esteem by condition interactions predicted PMIS.

Hypothesis Testing

I did not make any predictions with regards to the control group, but included it in this study to examine how individuals normally think, feel, or behave. Even though the first manipulation check confirmed that there were no significant differences between the two experimental conditions and the control condition, all analyses were conducted with the inclusion of the control condition. Due to the uneven number of males ($N = 30$) and females ($N = 113$) I was unable to calculate any gender differences and thus, they will not be discussed further.

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 indicated that self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to meet the PMI. This prediction was tested with a multiple regression analysis. In this regression, self-esteem and PMIS were first centered. Then, self-esteem and PMIS were entered into Block 1 and their interaction was entered into Block 2 as a predictor for the desire to meet the PMI. There were no significant main effects for self-esteem or PMIS, nor was the interaction between self-esteem and PMIS significant as a predictor of the desire to become the PMI, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 indicated that self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the AMID. I first ran these analyses with the average AMID index and then its three subscales. Next, I repeated these analyses using the profile correlation. Finally, I repeated the analyses with the average AMID index and then its three subscales while controlling for one's own ideals. The AMID index was calculated prior to the regression analysis. Positive and negative betas show the direction of the discrepancy. Positive betas indicate actors overestimating the amount of positive qualities that they think their partners want them to have, whereas negative betas indicate actors underestimating the amount of qualities that they think their partners want them to have. The

average discrepancy between actors' mean PMI ratings and partners' mean ideal partner ratings was -.11 (*SD* = .66), with scores ranging from -2.36 to 1.59. A one-sample *t*-test indicated that actors' PMI ratings and partners' Ideal Partner ratings were significantly different from one another, PMI, $t(142) = 124.17$, $p = .000$, and Ideal Partner $t(142) = 129.63$, $p = .000$. On average, people tend to underestimate the amount of positive qualities that they think their partner wants them to have.

Self-esteem (centered) and PMIS (centered) were entered into Block 1 and their interaction was entered into Block 2 as a predictor for the AMID. In Block 1, PMIS predicted the average AMID (Table 3). Hypothesis 2 was partially supported: on average, people who report higher PMIS tend to think that they possess more positive qualities than what the partner is actually looking for, whereas people who report lower PMIS tend to underestimate these qualities. Thus, people who report higher PMIS have a greater AMID than was predicted because of their overestimation of these qualities. Self-esteem and the self-esteem by PMIS interaction did not predict the average AMID, $p > .05$. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the way that high and low self-esteem actors across conditions perceive how their partner wants them to be and the partner's actual ideal.

Next, I conducted a multiple regression analysis to test whether self-esteem and PMIS interact to predict each of the three AMID subscales: warmth/trustworthiness, vitality/attractiveness, and status/resources. The subscales were created by subtracting partners' ratings on the Ideal Partner Scale from actors' ratings on the PMI scale within each subscale. Then, the items within each subscale were averaged. As a result, there were three averaged discrepancy scores, one for each subscale. For both WT and SR, there was a significant main effect for PMIS, $p < .05$. There were no significant main effects or interaction for VA, $p > .05$.

AMID profile correlations. Six dyads were excluded when calculating the profile correlations for the average AMID, 16 for WT, 8 for SR, and 11 for VA because at least one partner did not respond to an item on either scale. Results from a multiple regression analysis indicated that there were no significant effects, $p > .05$. Null effects indicate that across conditions, self-esteem and PMIS do not influence whether individuals know the pattern of traits that are important to his or her partner. The average correlations between the two components of the AMID indices were (*SD* in brackets): AMID = .44(*.23*), WT = .28(*.27*), SR = .32(*.39*), and VA = .28(*.33*). These correlations suggest moderate to large correlations (Cohen, 1988).

PMIS, AMID, and own ideals. I conducted a multiple regression analysis using actors' own ideal ratings to remove the effect of their own ideal on PMIS to predict the AMID. As shown in Table 4, one's own ideal significantly predicted the AMID in Block 1, and PMIS marginally predicted the AMID in Block 2. There were no other significant effects, $p > .05$. These results indicate that for people who rate their own ideal as consisting of highly positive traits tend to overestimate the amount of positive qualities that they think their partner wants them to have. Even when controlling for one's own ideal, PMIS still marginally predicted the AMID, $p = .059$. In particular, people who indicate higher PMIS tend to have more of an AMID as compared to people who perceive lower PMIS. On average, they tend overestimate the number of positive qualities that they have that are in line with their partner's ideal.

Next, I conducted a multiple regression analysis using actors' own ideal ratings to remove the effect of their own ideal on PMIS to predict each of the AMID subscales. There were significant main effects for actors' own ideal and PMIS to predict both WT and SR, $p = .000$ (see Table 4). For VA, only actor's own ideal yielded a significant main effect, $p = .000$. There were no other significant effects across subscales, $p > .05$. People who report higher PMIS

overestimate their felt similarity to the PMI (i.e., greater AMID) in terms of WT traits and SR traits independent of their own ideal. One's own ideal VA traits are related to how similar people feel to the PMI.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 indicated that self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict each of the three attention to alternatives facets: active prowling, passive awareness, and willful disinterest and this will be mediated by level of commitment. First, I centered self-esteem and PMIS and then tested whether they predicted attention to alternatives with a multiple regression analysis (see above). There were no significant main effects or interactions, $p > .05$ (Table 5). Although results from a multiple regression analysis indicated that there were no significant effects, I proceeded to test for direct effects with a mediation analysis.

I conducted a bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine whether commitment mediates the relationship between the self-esteem and PMIS interaction to predict each of attention to alternatives facet. First, I tested whether the self-esteem by PMIS interaction predicts each of the three attention to alternative facets as mediated by commitment. For active prowling, the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals included 0, 95% CI [-.06, .02], which suggests that commitment does not mediate the relationship between the self-esteem by PMIS interaction to predict active prowling (Figure 1). However, actors' level of commitment significantly predicted active prowling. The more committed people are in their relationship the less people will actively seek attractive others.

For passive awareness, the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals included 0, 95% CI [-.09, .02], which suggests that commitment does not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and PMIS to predict passive awareness (Figure 2). For willful disinterest, the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals included 0, 95% CI [-.07, .18], which

suggests that commitment does not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and PMIS to predict willful disinterest (Figure 3). However, actors' level of commitment significantly predicted willful disinterest. The more committed people are in their relationship, the more disinterested they will be in attractive others.

Next, I tested whether self-esteem predicted each of the attention to alternatives facets as mediated by commitment while controlling for PMIS. Self-esteem did not predict any of the facets as mediated by commitment: 95% CI [-.04, .03] for active prowling, 95% CI [-.06, .03] for passive awareness, and 95% CI [-.13, .12] for willful disinterest. However, commitment significantly predicted active prowling (Figure 4) and willful disinterest (Figure 5). Then, I tested whether PMIS predicted each of the facets as mediated by commitment while controlling for self-esteem. PMIS also did not predict any of the facets as mediated by commitment: 95% CI [-.03, 01] for active prowling, 95% CI [-.04, .01] for passive awareness, and 95% CI [-.03, .11] for willful disinterest. However, commitment did predict active prowling (Figure 6) and willful disinterest (Figure 7).

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 indicated that self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was tested with a multiple regression analysis (see above). There was a significant main effect for both self-esteem, $\beta = .33$, $p = .000$, and for PMIS, $\beta = .11$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .18$, $F(2, 140) = 15.18$, $p = .000$, to predict relationship satisfaction. However, the interaction was not a significant predictor, $\beta = -.08$, $p = .201$, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F(3, 139) = 10.72$, $p = .000$. Although the interaction was not a significant predictor, the results indicate individual differences in relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 indicated that self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to meet the PMI and this will be mediated by self-other overlap. As found in

Hypothesis 1, neither the main effects nor the interaction of self-esteem and PMIS predicted the desire to meet the perceived meta-ideal. Although results from a multiple regression analysis indicated that there were no significant effects, I proceeded to test for direct effects with a mediation analysis. I conducted a bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine whether self-other overlap mediates the self-esteem by PMIS interaction to predict desire to meet the PMI. The bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals included 0, 95% CI [-.10, .06], which suggests that self-other overlap did not mediate the relationship between Self-esteem and PMIS to predict desire to meet the PMI.

I also tested whether self-esteem predicted desire to meet the PMI as mediated by self-other overlap while controlling for PMIS. The bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals included 0, 95% CI [.00, .26], which suggests that self-other overlap did not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and desire while controlling for PMIS. However, self-esteem did predict self-other overlap (Figure 8). Then, I tested whether PMIS predicted desire as mediated by self-other overlap while controlling for self-esteem. PMIS did not predict desire as mediated by self-other overlap while controlling for self-esteem, 95% CI [-.04, .11]. However, PMIS did marginally predict self-other overlap. In addition, self-other overlap marginally predicted desire to become the PMI (Figure 9). People who indicated higher PMIS reported having a greater self-other overlap with their partner.

Supplemental Analyses

None of the present hypotheses tested for the interaction between self-esteem and the AMID to predict relationship satisfaction. Further analyses were conducted to examine this potential effect. The same three subscales from Hypothesis 2 were used in this analysis. I centered the subscales for the PMI scale and the Ideal Partner Scale and created the self-esteem

by the average AMID interaction term for each subscale. Next, I conducted a multiple regression analysis to see if there was an interaction between self-esteem and the average AMID to predict relationship satisfaction. Recall that positive betas indicate the actor perceiving that their partner wants them to possess more traits than the partner is looking for, whereas a negative beta indicates the actor perceiving that their partner wants them to possess fewer traits than the partner is actually looking for.

I controlled for the two centered components of the AMID index as the independent variable (PMI and Ideal Partner ratings) in Block 1 (Tisak & Smith, 1994). Self-esteem and the average AMID were entered in Block 2 and their interaction in Block 3 (Table 6). There were significant main effects for PMI, $p = .028$, in the first block. However, the effect for PMI was no longer significant when self-esteem, $p = .000$, was added in the second block to predict relationship satisfaction. All other effects were not significant, $p > .05$. This suggests that while PMI predicts relationship satisfaction, self-esteem is the better predictor.

Next, I conducted a multiple regression analysis for each of the three AMID subscales to determine if they predicted relationship satisfaction. In Block 1, I controlled for the main effects of the centered components of the average AMID, but this time for each of the three subscales: WT, VA, and SR. In Block 2, I entered self-esteem and the corresponding average AMID subscale that was entered in Block 1 (e.g., average AMID_WT). In Block 3, I entered the self-esteem by average AMID interaction (Table 6). There was a significant main effect for self-esteem for each of the subscales, in addition to a main effect for PMI_WT. All other effects were not significant, $p > .05$.

Results from the Partner Discrepancy Scale indicated that, on average ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .63$) and across the WT ($M = 6.06$, $SD = .68$), SR ($M = 5.69$, $M = .79$), and VA ($M = 5.78$, $SD =$

.76) subscales, people reported that their current partner is very much like their ideal partner. Another additional finding was that one's emotional state correlated with one's feelings of PMIS. Emotions such as anger, agitation, and dejection, all significantly negatively correlated with PMIS, $p < .05$ (Table 7). In particular, the more people felt these emotions, the less PMIS they reported.

I re-analyzed all data to test the effects of the manipulated condition rather than the average PMIS. I created two new sets of dummy codes (NewC1 and NewC2). NewC1 was coded with 1 (similar), and 0 (dissimilar) and used as coefficients to contrast the similar condition to the dissimilar condition. NewC2 was coded with 1 (dissimilar), and 0 (control) and used as coefficients to contrast the dissimilar condition to the control condition. Then, I created two interactions terms, one for each direction of comparison (NewC1 and NewC2) by self-esteem. All results indicated that there were no new significant effects.

Discussion

According to the Ideal Standards Model, people hold ideal images of themselves, their ideal partner, and their ideal relationship (Simpson et al., 2001). The present study extends the Ideal Standards Model because it investigated individual differences in peoples' conceptions of who they think their partners would ideally like them to be. Specifically, one's self-worth and one's perception of similarity to the PMI affect conceptions of Perceived Meta-Ideals. These findings are discussed, as well as implications and future directions for this body of research.

Manipulation checks

The first manipulation check indicated that the similar and dissimilar groups did not differ from the control group in terms of PMIS. They may not have differed from the control groups because the control question was worded differently than in the other two conditions.

Perhaps if the wording were more similar, participants would have responded differently across all conditions. The control condition also represents how people normally feel in regard to their PMI. It is likely that, on average, there are people who already feel as though they meet/do not meet their PMI. This variability may have contributed to there being no significant difference between the control and the experimental conditions. The second manipulation check indicated that, regardless of condition, HSEs tend to feel more similar to their PMI than do LSEs. This finding is consistent with prior research (Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012) in that HSEs tend to feel more similar to their partners' ideal than do LSEs.

Hypothesis 1: Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to meet the PMI.

There may be a few possibilities as to why there were no effects. First, the Desire to Become the PMI scale only consists of two items ($r = .56$, $p = .01$, $\alpha = .925$). While each item did measure people's desire to become the PMI, it may be that the scale merely needed more items to sufficiently measure desire. Additionally, people may find it difficult to consciously think about wanting to become their PMI. Thinking about wanting to become the PMI would involve a high degree of self-awareness. People would first have to judge whether they think that they meet the PMI or not, and then determine how much they value becoming the PMI.

Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the AMID.

Although this hypothesis was not supported, there was a main effect for PMIS. More specifically, it is the extent to which people feel similar to their PMI (i.e., higher PMIS) that determines the AMID. On average, people who report higher PMIS tend to think that they possess more positive traits than what their partner is actually looking for (i.e., a greater AMID). Regardless of peoples' self-worth, people tend to self-enhance (overestimate) by thinking that they are a better mate than what their partner is actually looking for. I did not find either a main

effect for self-esteem or the self-esteem by PMIS interaction. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the way that high and low self-esteem individuals across conditions perceived how the partner wants them to be and the partners' actual ideal. In other words, self-esteem does not have an effect on the AMID. Individuals higher in self-esteem placed no more importance on certain traits than those lower in self-esteem when it comes to predicting who they think their partner wants them to be. This result is promising in that it minimizes individual differences in self-esteem when it comes to ideal partner perceptions. Individuals lower in self-esteem are not as bad off as they were hypothesized to be in terms of predicting their PMI.

When the three AMID subscales were examined, people who perceive higher PMIS reported feeling that they possessed more warmth/trustworthiness traits and more status/resources traits than their partner is actually looking for, but not vitality/attractiveness traits. It may be the case that WT and SR items are more salient. People are often reminded by their partners of how understanding and affectionate they are, and status and resources such as one's income, their level of education, are easily quantified. Indeed, prior research has found that romantic partners place a greater importance on WT traits (Fletcher et al., 1999). On the other hand, people may not be accurate judges of their vitality and attractiveness, such as how sexy or how interesting they are.

AMID profile correlations. I ran a multiple regression analysis using profile correlations of the AMID and its subscales to examine the average AMID correlation between the PMI ratings and the Ideal Partner ratings from each dyad. Results indicated that self-esteem and PMIS do not influence whether individuals know the pattern of traits that are important to his or her partner. However, people are fairly accurate in their perceptions of which traits (WT, VA, SR) are important to their partners' conception of an ideal partner.

PMIS, AMID, and own ideals. I conducted a multiple regression analysis using actors' own ideal ratings to remove the effect of their own ideal on PMIS to predict the AMID. Results indicated that PMIs are at least in part the result of peoples' own ideal perceptions for themselves, and these ideals then predict a greater overestimation of the qualities that they think their partner wants them to ideally possess. Put simply, people's ambitions to reach their own ideals help guide the formation of their PMIs. People who set high ideal standards for themselves also think that their partners expect the same high standards from them. As an extension of the concept of flexibility beliefs (Fletcher et al., 1999), it may be the case that when people have high ideal standards for themselves that they expect more from their partners, but also it is likely that they believe that their partners expect the same high ideal standards from them.

Although, even when controlling for one's own ideal, one's PMIS still predicted an overestimation of the qualities that they thought their partner wanted them to have, but to a lesser degree (both in predictive power and extent of overestimation). This suggests that people think that they possess traits similar to their PMI that are in line with their own ideal image, but also that they think that their partner wants them to possess traits that are independent of their own ideal. Specifically, one's own ideal affects one's perception of who they think their partner wants them to be in terms of VA traits, namely, that people tend to want to be high in vitality and attractiveness traits, and as a result, believe that their partner also wants this of them. On the other hand, peoples' own ideal in conjunction with their PMIS, both predict an overestimation of the WT and SR qualities that they think their partner wants them to have. Thus, this overestimation is not solely the result of one hoping to attain WT and SR traits that are in line with their own ideal. With this, it can be determined that the mechanism at least partially responsible for the creation of Perceived Meta-Ideals is one's own ideal.

Hypothesis 3: Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict attention to alternatives, and this will be mediated by level of commitment.

Regression analyses indicated no significant main effects or interactions for any of the three attention to alternatives facets. In addition, mediation analysis indicated that commitment did not mediate the relation between the interaction term and the three attention to alternatives facets. To date, there have been few studies exploring attention to alternatives and none that have examined its relationship with self-esteem and PMIS. The present null results may be because something more specific than self-esteem and PMIS, such as self-perceived mate value (the extent to which people think they possess traits that others find attractive) relative to one's partner's mate value would be a better predict of the three facets. However, self-perceived mate value was not measured in the present study and provides direction for future research. Although commitment did not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and PMIS to predict attention to alternatives, commitment did significantly predict willful disinterest and active prowling. Consistent with prior research (Gagne et al., 2008), how attentive individuals are to alternative partners depends on the level of commitment to the current partner. This finding suggests that commitment may be a more important predictor of active types of attention to alternatives as opposed to passive types.

Hypothesis 4: Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict relationship satisfaction.

Although there was no significant interaction, there were main effects for both self-esteem and PMIS. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Hendrick et al., 1988), individuals higher in self-esteem are more satisfied in their relationship. As shown in the first manipulation check, the higher one's self-esteem the higher one's PMIS. Across conditions, people higher in self-esteem overestimate the amount of WT, VA, and SR traits they possess as compared to how

much they think their partners want them to have. People's perceptions of how warm and trustworthy they think their partner wants them to be might have the most impact on relationship satisfaction because they are more highly valued traits and come to mind more easily than do VA and SR traits. Indeed, prior research has found that discrepancies in this domain as compared to other domains are most strongly associated with relationship satisfaction (Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 1999; Overall et al., 2006). Regardless of self-esteem, people who think that their partners wants them to ideally possess many positive traits, and the higher their PMIS, the more satisfied they report being in their relationship. Indeed, other researchers have also found that people are more satisfied in their romantic relationships when they believe they are close to their partner's ideals (Campbell et al., 2001; Overall et al., 2006). I propose that this increased satisfaction is at least partially the result of one's own ideal influencing the PMI. By extension, one may report being satisfied in the relationship because feeling close to their PMI is in some ways feeling similar to one's own ideal image.

Hypothesis 5: Self-esteem and PMIS will interact to predict the desire to become the PMI, and this will be mediated by self-other overlap.

Although self-other overlap was not found to be a mediator of the self-esteem by PMIS interaction on the desire to become the PMI, direct effects suggest that there are individual differences in self-other overlap. Mediation analyses indicated that both self-esteem and PMIS individually predicted self-other overlap, and self-other overlap marginally predicted desire to become the PMI. Consistent with prior research (Aron et al., 1995), individuals higher in self-esteem engage in a greater degree of self-expansion. It may be the case that HSEs engage in a greater degree of self-expansion because previous research has found that they tend to benefit more from greater self-other overlap than do LSEs (Aron et al., 1995). In addition, people

indicated higher PMIS reported having a greater degree of self-other overlap (although, marginal) with their partner. When people report a high degree of PMIS, they are also stating that they are confident that their perceptions of their PMI are accurate. Thus, feeling as though one is accurate in their beliefs about what their partner is looking for in an ideal mate predicts feelings of greater self-other overlap with the partner. Although Lackenbauer and Campbell (2012) suggest that self-other overlap is not a driving force of ideal partner discrepancies, the present study did not evaluate the same types of perceived partner discrepancies, nor did it include the same measures.

In addition to PMIS being marginally associated with self-other overlap, greater self-other overlap was also marginally associated with an increased desire to become the PMI. Some may wonder why people who already have a high degree of self-other overlap with their partner would still desire to become the PMI. The answer may have to do with the items that comprise the Desire to Become the PMI scale. One item asked people to rate how *important* it is for them to work towards becoming their partner's image of his or her ideal partner. The other item asked people to rate whether both partners would be more satisfied in the relationship if the actor became the PMI, thus asking people if they *value* becoming their PMI. Therefore, people who have a greater self-other overlap with their partner are likely the ones who think it is beneficial to be who they think their partner wants them to be. The present results indicate that desiring to become the PMI does not necessarily only apply to people who are not similar to their PMI (i.e., low PMIS), but also to people who value becoming their PMI. Furthermore, this desire may also represent someone partly consciously wanting to try and maintain the current positive qualities that they have because doing so leads to a more satisfying relationship.

Supplemental Analyses

Supplemental analyses were conducted to test for the interaction between self-esteem and the AMID to predict relationship satisfaction. When a difference score is used as an independent variable, it becomes impossible to accurately interpret the meaning of a difference score. The difference may largely reflect the component with the greater variance. Some researchers provide a solution to using a difference score as an independent variable (Tisak & Smith, 1994). Tisak and Smith propose that a solution would be to conduct a regression analysis, which includes the components of the difference score (the items that were subtracted from one another) and the actual difference between the measures. This allows the researcher to analyze the effect that the predictor has on the dependent variable, independent of the other component. . The current findings indicate that HSEs tend to be more satisfied in their relationship when they believe that their partner wants them to be high in WT, VA, and SR traits. Regardless of self-esteem, people tend to be more satisfied in their relationship when they believe that their partner wants them to be high in warmth and trustworthiness traits. My findings for the WT subscale are consistent with prior research (Fletcher et al., 1999) in that romantic partners place a greater importance on WT traits. Specifically, when people believe that their partner wants them to possess more warmth/trustworthiness traits they report being more satisfied in their relationship. This effect did not occur for status/resources or vitality/attractiveness traits.

Partners reported that their current partner is very much like their ideal partner. It is promising to know that people view their partners in a positive light. One's emotional state was correlated with PMIS. People reported experiencing negative emotions when they felt lower PMIS. Emotions such as anger, agitation, and dejection all significantly negatively correlated with PMIS. Similarly, other researchers have found that people who perceive that they were

discrepant from their partner's ideal standards experienced more agitation-related emotions (Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012). Due to the fact that PMIs are proposed to be in part shaped by one's own ideal, $r = .77$, $p = .01$, this may be why people reported feeling more negative emotions than just agitation-related emotions. It should be noted that Lackenbauer and Campbell (2012) did not assess anger-related emotions. When individuals feel that they are failing to meet their PMI, it is possible that negative relationship consequences become more salient (e.g., conflict, relationship dissolution). Also consistent with prior research (Campbell et al., 2001; Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012), experiencing these negative emotions was highly predictive of decreased relationship satisfaction.

General Discussion and Conclusion

The question to be answered is: are people who they think their partners want them to be? In general, people tend to overestimate the amount of positive traits that their partner wants them to have. There are individual differences in this overestimation. This overestimation is greater for individuals higher in self-esteem and for those who report a higher PMIS. In particular, HSEs especially tend to overestimate how similar they are to their PMI in terms of WT. On a positive note, regardless of one's self-worth, this overestimation tends to predict greater relationship satisfaction. People who feel more similar to their PMI report having a greater overlap in resources, perspectives, and characteristics with their partner. Consistent with prior research (Aron et al., 2000), an increased self-other overlap may lead to heightened relationship quality. In addition, individuals who reported a greater degree of self-other overlap also indicated (marginally) a desire to become the PMI. The present study found evidence to suggest that Perceived Meta-Ideals are at least in part formed by people's own ideal in conjunction with their thoughts of how similar they are to the PMI. Taken together, these results suggest that peoples'

conceptions of their PMI are predictive of relationship well-being.

Implications. A practical implication of this research is its usefulness in everyday romantic relationships. People recognize that both themselves and their partners bring with them their own ideal partner perceptions to the relationship. It is promising that one's self-esteem does not have an effect on one's conceptions of their PMI. Thus, neither HSEs nor LSEs are better or worse off at predicting who they think their partners want them to be. However, HSEs do tend to overestimate PMIS. Instead, it is largely the extent to which that people feel similar to their PMI (i.e., PMIS) that guides the conceptions of their PMIs. In general, and aside from one's self-esteem, those who perceived higher PMIS overestimated their conceptions of their PMIs. Taken together, this suggests that, regardless of one's self-worth, people feel as though they are a worthy mate because they see themselves as possessing even more positive traits than what their partner is looking for. People who reported higher PMIS also reported being more satisfied in their relationship.

Steps can be taken in order to improve the relationship cognitions of individuals who report lower PMIS. It may be possible that individuals who report lower PMIS do not have a clear idea of who their partners wants them to be. Partners can openly communicate to one another the traits that they deem important in a partner. Furthermore, partners can inform one another about whether the partner possesses a certain trait or traits and if they possess enough of the trait(s). For example, partners may need to be reminded that they do indeed possess warmth and trustworthiness traits such as being understanding and supportive, but that their partner would like more support when it comes to making career decisions. Indeed, previous research found that positive partner regulation strategies, such as communicating to the partner that they are falling short on certain traits can lead to the partner feeling a greater inferred ideal consistency

(Overall & Fletcher, 2010).

Strengths. One strength of this study is that it goes beyond prior research in some novel ways. First, the extent to which people felt close to versus far away from their PMI was experimentally manipulated with three conditions: primed similar, primed dissimilar, and control. The primed dissimilar condition closely resembles Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) primed PD-self condition. Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) article was not yet published when the present study was being conducted. Although their PD-self resembles the primed dissimilar condition, it was not identical. The primed dissimilar condition in the present study required individuals to think of (and write down) the qualities that they possess that are not in line with the qualities that they think their partner would ideally like them to possess. Lackenbauer and Campbell also did not include a control condition to assess how people normally feel with respect to their partner's ideal partner perceptions. The present study also included yet another item to prime people to feel close to or far away from the PMI. This PMIS prime enabled me to quantify people's felt similarity or dissimilarity to their PMI with a single item rather than a battery of items (see Overall & Fletcher's, 2010 inferred ideal consistency).

A second strength is that this study also offers a novel way of computing the AMID, the discrepancy between one's ratings of who they think their partner wants them to be, subtracted by the partner's ratings of their ideal partner. The AMID differs from Lackenbauer and Campbell's (2012) partner discrepancy measure in that, they calculated self-partner correlations (see above). In terms of discrepancies, the AMID index provides a different answer than do self-partner correlations. Specifically, the AMID index is meant to measure an overall difference in average importance of peoples' conceptions of who they think their partner wants them to be. On the other hand, Lackenbauer and Campbell's self-partner correlations measure whether people

actually meet their partner's ideal.

A third strength is that, whereas prior research has mainly focused on how discrepant individuals are (or believe they are) from one's own ideal or one's partner's ideal, the present study included a Desire to Become the PMI scale. The Desire to Become the PMI scale is used to measure the importance one associates with becoming the PMI. An objective measurement of the desire to become the PMI allows for conclusions to be made as to whether there are individual differences in wanting to become the PMI. As found in the present study, people who report a greater self-other overlap possess a greater desire to become the PMI.

Limitations and future directions. Although the present study used an experimental manipulation, causal conclusions cannot be made from either regression or mediation analyses - causal conclusions can only be made from the manipulation checks. The PMIS prime influenced people in the primed similar condition to feel higher PMIS and where the primed similar condition significantly differed from the primed dissimilar condition. Additionally, across conditions, the PMIS prime influenced HSEs to report higher PMIS. All analyses that followed were based on regression analyses and thus only statements based on trends can be made.

Results from the second manipulation check indicated that the primed similar and primed dissimilar conditions significantly differed from one another. However, neither the similar nor the dissimilar conditions differed from the control condition. This suggests that a definitive conclusion cannot be made as to whether the manipulation successfully primed participant to feel close to or far away from their PMIs.

In terms of the AMID index, there are a number of limitations associated with using difference scores. Actor-partner differences are lost when summing the average differences between actors' PMI ratings and partners' Ideal Partner ratings. Specifically, a large amount of

variance between couples' responses is removed. A difference score assumes equal weighting of traits that comprise the PMI. Therefore, it is not possible to know which traits partners value most.

The present study also included response biases. The completion of the measures required a degree of self-awareness. People may find it difficult to consciously think about their PMI and the desire association with wanting to become their PMI. There may have also been social desirability biases. Specifically, people may want to rate themselves as being more similar to their PMI than they really are.

Another limitation of the current study is that the sample primarily consisted of university students who were currently in a dating relationship for approximately 2.5 years. Thus, the findings may or may not generalize to older dating populations or among married couples. I also did not investigate the difference in one's conceptions of their PMI over time. It may be the case that the traits that people think their partners want them to have change over time. The AMID was also not measured over time. Future research should investigate whether peoples' PMIs and the AMID change over time and across different relationship stages: newly married and long-term married.

The present study found that a greater self-other overlap marginally predicted desire to become the PMI. Future research should examine whether self-other overlap continues to predict desire to become the PMI across different relationship stages. Consistent with prior research, (Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012), people were found to experience more agitation-related emotions when they felt that they did not meet their partner's ideal. Future research should examine whether people continue to feel anxious when they perceive themselves as failing to meet their partner's ideal across different relationship stages.

References

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Anthony, D. B., Holmes, J. G., & Wood, J. V. (2007). Social acceptance and self- esteem: Tuning the sociometer to interpersonal value. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*, 1024–1039.

Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1986). *Love as the expansion of self: Understanding attraction and satisfaction.* New York: Hemisphere.

Aron, A., Aron, E. N. (1997). *Self-expansion motivation and including the other in the self. In S. Dueck (Ed.), Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions* (2nd ed., pp. 251-270). London: Wiley.

Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63,* 596-612.

Aron, A., Mashek, D., Aron, E., N. (2004). *Closeness as including other in the self. In D. Mashek & A. Aron (Eds.), Handbook of closeness and intimacy* (pp. 27-41). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E. (2000). Couples' shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relationship quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 273-284.

Aron, A., Paris, M., & Aron, E. N. (1995). Falling in love: Prospective studies of self-concept change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69,* 1102–1112.

Baumeister, R. F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena.

Psychological Bulletin, 91, 3-26.

Baumeister, R. F., & Jones, E. E. (1978). Self-presentation is constrained by the target's knowledge: Consistency and compensation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36,* 608-618.

Baumeister, R. F., Tice, D. M., & Hutton, D. G. (1989). Self-presentational motivations and personality differences in self-esteem. *Journal of Personality, 57,* 547–579.

Campbell, L., Simpson, J. A., Kashy, D. A., & Fletcher, G. J. O. (2001). Ideal standards, the self, and flexibility of ideals in close relationships*, Personality Social Psychology Bulletin, 27,* 447-462.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences (2nd ed.)* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cross, S. E., Bacon, P. L., & Morris, M. L. (2000). The relational-interdependent self-construal and relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78,* 791-808.

Deutsch, F. M., & Mackesy, M. E. (1985). Friendship and the development of self-schemas: The effects of talking about others. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 11*, 399-408.

Di Paula, A., & Campbell, J. D. (2002). Self-esteem and persistence in the face of failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 711-724.

Downey, G., & Feldman, S. I. (1996). Implications of rejection sensitivity for intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70,* 1327-1343.

Eastwick, P. E., & Neff, L. A. (2012). Do ideal partner preferences predict divorce? A

tale of two metrics. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1-8.

Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1993). Marital satisfaction, depression, and attributions: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64,* 442-452.

Fletcher, G. J. O., & Simpson, J. A. (2000). Ideal standards in close relationships: Their structure and functions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9,* 102-105.

Fletcher, G. J. O., Simpson, J. A., Thomas, G., & Giles, L. (1999). Ideals in Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76,* 72-89.

Fletcher, G. J. O., Simpson, J. A., & Thomas, G. (2000). Ideals, perceptions, and evaluations in early relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(6), 933-940.

Gagne, F. M., Khan, A., Lydon, J. E., & To, M. (2008). When flattery gets you nowhere: Discounting positive feedback as a relationship maintenance strategy. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 40,* 59-68.

Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, W. B. Jr., (2003). A very brief measure of the big-5 personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality, 37,* 504-528.

Hendrick, S. S., Hendrick, C., & Adler, N. L. (1988). Romantic relationships: Love, satisfaction, and staying together. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54,* 980-988.

Higgins, E. T., Klein, R., & Strauman, T. (1985). Self-concept discrepancy theory: A psychological model for distinguishing among different aspects of depression and anxiety. *Social Cognition, 3,* 51-76.

Johnson, D. J., & Rusbult, C. E. (1989). Resisting temptation: Devaluation of alternative partners as a means of maintaining commitment in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57,* 967-980.

Lackenbauer, S. D., & Campbell, L. (2012). Measuring Up: The unique emotional and regulatory outcomes of different perceived partner-ideal discrepancies in romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*(3), 472-488.

Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the investment model. *Personal Relationships, 10*, 37–57.

Mattingly, B. A., McIntyre, K. P., & Lewandowski Jr., G. W. (2012). Approach motivation and the expansion of self in close relationships. *Personal Relationships, 19*, 113-127.

McFarlin, D. B., & Blascovich, J. (1981). Effects of self-esteem and performance feedback on future affective preferences and cognitive expectations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40,* 521-531.

Miller, R. S. (1997). Inattentive and contended: Relationship commitment and attention to alternatives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73,* 758-766.

Miller, R. S. (2010). *Attention to relationship alternatives has (at least) three facets*. Poster presented at the 2010 Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., Griffin, D. W., Bellavia, G., & Rose, P. (2001). The mismeasure of love: How self-doubt contaminates relationship beliefs. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27,* 423-436.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1996). The benefits of positive illusions. Idealization and the construction of satisfaction in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70,* 79-98.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (2000). Self-esteem and the quest for felt-security: How perceived regard regulates attachment processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78,* 478-498.

Murray, S. L., Rose, P., Bellavia, G. K., Holmes, J. G., Garrett-Kusche, A. (2002). When rejection stings. How self-esteem constrains relationship-enhancement processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 556-573.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., MacDonald, G., & Ellsworth, P. C. (1998). Through the looking glass darkly?: When self-doubts turn into relationship insecurities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75,* 1459-1480.

Overall, N. C., Fletcher, G. J. O., & Simpson, J. A. (2006). Regulation processes in intimate relationships: The role of ideal standards. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *91*, 662–685.

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods, 40,* 879-891.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., Kubacka, K. E., & Finkel, E. J. (2009). The part of me that you bring out: Ideal similarity and the michelangelo phenomenon. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96,* 61-82.

Simpson, J. A., Fletcher, G. J. O., & Campbell, L. (2001). The structure and function of ideal standards in close relationships. *In G. J. O Fletcher & M. Clark (Eds.), Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Interpersonal Processes* (pp. 86-106). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Tice, D. M., & Baumeister, R. F. (2001). *The primacy of the interpersonal self. In C. Sedikides & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), Individual self, relational self, collective self* (pp. 71-88). Philadelphia: Psychology Press/Taylor & Francis.

Tisak, J., & Smith, C. S. (1994). Defending and extending difference scores. *Journal of Management*, 20, 675-682.

VanderDrift, L. E., Lewandowski Jr., G. W., & Agnew, C. R. (2010). Reduced self-expansion in current romance and interest in relationship alternatives. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *28*(3), 356-373.

Wood, J. V., Giordano-Beech, M., Taylor, K. L., Michela, J. L., & Gaus, V. (1994). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*(4), 713-731.

Zuckerman, M., & Lubin, B. (1965). *Manual for the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List.* San Diego, CA: Educational and Industrial Testing Service.

Table 1

Correlations among Variables of Theoretical Interest

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. SE	.21*	-.09	.17*	.10	.19*	.13	.12	.19	.06	.04	.34**	.22**	.11	.14	.02	.1
2. PMIS		-.09	.18*	.16	.17*	.10	.24**	.24**	.15	.18*	.32**	.20*	-.02	-.02	.07	-.09
3. Desire			.22**	.09	.15	.34**	.31**	.22**	.18*	.38**	-.09	.12	.35**	.27**	.2*	.41**
4. Own Ideal				.82**	.85**	.74**	.77**	.73**	.63**	.52**	.11	.27**	.24**	.26**	.24**	.13
5. Own WT					.55**	.33**	.65**	.74**	.49**	.34**	.20*	.31**	.12	.18*	.16	-.02
6. Own VA						.55**	.64**	.55**	.62**	.41**	.07	.17*	.22**	.2*	.22**	.14
7. Own SR							.55**	.41**	.41**	.54*	-.05	.12	.29**	.26**	.22**	.26**
8. PMI								.84**	.85**	.79**	.17*	.29**	.24**	.25**	.19*	.16
9. PMI WT									.56**	.44**	.33**	.40**	.16	.25**	.12	.04
10. PMI VA										.56**	.06	.14	.19*	.13	.24**	.13
11. PMI SR											-.01	.17*	.21*	.21*	.09	.23**
12. Rel. Sat.												.60**	-.05	.01	-.08	-.08
13. IOS													.06	.14	.03	-.02
14. Ideal Part.														.86**	.83**	.87**
15. IP WT															.58**	.59**
16. IP VA																.62**
17. IP SR																

Note. SE = self-esteem, PMIS = Perceived-Meta-Ideal-Similarity, Desire = Desire to Become the Perceived-Meta-Ideal, Own WT = Own Ideal warmth/attractiveness, Own VA = Own Ideal vitality/attractiveness, Own SR = Own Ideal status/resources, PMI = Perceived-Meta-Ideal, PMI WT = Perceived-Meta-Ideal warmth/trustworthiness, PMI VA = Perceived-Meta-Ideal vitality/attractiveness, PMI SR = Perceived-Meta-Ideal status/resources, Rel. Sat. = relationship satisfaction, IOS = Self-Other Overlap, Ideal Part. = Ideal Partner, IP WT = Ideal Partner warmth/trustworthiness, IP VA = Ideal Partner vitality/attractiveness, IP SR = Ideal Partner status/resources.

Table 2

Manipulation Check: Hierarchical Regressions on PMIS

		Block 1		Block 2	
		R^2	β	ΔR^2	β
PMIS		.09**		.01**	
	Self-Esteem		.54*		.87**
	C1		.48[a]		.44
	C2		-.20		-.22
	SE X C1				-.54
	SE X C2				-.65

Note. C1 and C2 are dummy codes for the three comparison directions (Aiken & West, 1991). C1 was coded as 1 (similar), 0 (dissimilar), and 0 (control) to contrast the similar condition to the dissimilar and control conditions. C2 was coded as 0 (similar), 1 (dissimilar), and 0 (control) to contrast the dissimilar condition to the similar and control conditions. SE X C1 and SE X C2 represent the two interactions terms, one for each direction of comparison.

PMIS = Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. SE= Self-Esteem. [a]$p = .068$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table 3

H2: Hierarchical Regressions on the AMID and Its Subscales

		Block 1		Block 2	
		R^2	β	ΔR^2	β
AMID		.04*		.00	
	Self-Esteem		-.05		-.05
	PMIS		1.08*		.11*
	SE X PMIS				-.02
WT		.05*		.01*	
	Self-Esteem		.00		-.03
	PMIS		.10*		.11*
	SE X PMIS				-.08
VA		.01		.00	
	Self-Esteem		.03		.04
	PMIS		.04		.04
	SE X PMIS				.03
SR		.05*		.00	
	Self-Esteem		-.24		-.23
	PMIS		.22*		.21*
	SE X PMIS				.06

Note. AMID = Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. WT = warmth/trustworthiness. SR = status/resources. VA = vitality/attractiveness. *$p < .05$.

Table 4

H2: Hierarchical Regressions Controlling Own Ideals on the AMID and Its Subscales

		Block 1		Block 2		Block 3	
		R^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
AMID		.43**		.03**		.00**	
	Own Ideal		.62**		.61**		.61**
	Self-Esteem				-.12		-.12
	PMIS				.08[a]		.08
	SE X PMIS						.00
WT		.17**		.19**		.20**	
	Own Ideal		.55**		.53**		.52**
	Self-Esteem				-.07		-.09
	PMIS				.07*		.08*
	SE X PMIS						-.07
SR		.08**		.12**		.13**	
	Own Ideal		.79**		.77**		.77**
	Self-Esteem				-.34		-.32
	PMIS				.17*		.16*
	SE X PMIS						.07
VA		.14**		.00**		.00**	
	Own Ideal		.62**		.63**		.63**
	Self-Esteem				-.05		-.03
	PMIS				.86		.00
	SE X PMIS						.04

Note. AMID = Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. WT = warmth/trustworthiness. SR = status/resources. VA = vitality/attractiveness. [a]$p = .059$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$.

Table 5

H3: Hierarchical Regressions on Attention to Alternatives

		Block 1		Block 2	
		R^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Active Prowling		.00		.02	
	Self-Esteem		-.04		-.06
	PMIS		-.04		-.04
	SE X PMIS				-.07
Passive Awareness		.00		.00	
	Self-Esteem		-.10		-.09
	PMIS		.00		-.01
	SE X PMIS				.01
Willful Disinterest		.01		.00	
	Self-Esteem		.15		.17
	PMIS		.00		-.01
	SE X PMIS				.06

Note. AMID = Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

Table 6

Hierarchical Regressions for the AMID and Self-Esteem on Relationship Satisfaction

	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3	
	R^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Rel. Sat.	.04		.11**		.00**	
PMI		.21*		.96		.75
Ideal Partner		-.11		-.93		-.71
Self-Esteem				.38**		.37**
Avg. AMID				-.79		-.56
SE X Avg. AMID						-.13
Rel. Sat.	.11**		.10**		.01**	
PMI		.39**		3.74		3.69
Ideal Partner		-.09		-3.54		-3.50
Self-Esteem				.34**		.32**
Avg. AMID_WT				-3.41		-3.41
SE X Avg. AMID_WT						-.15
Rel. Sat.	.01		.13**		.00**	
PMI		.00		.06		.07
Ideal Partner		-.05		-.13		-.13
Self-Esteem				.41**		.40**
Avg. AMID_SR				-.06		-.06
SE X Avg. AMID_SR						-.06
Rel. Sat.	.01		.12**		.01**	
PMI		.07		-1.96		-1.77
Ideal Partner		-.10		1.91		1.71
Self-Esteem				.39**		.42**
Avg. AMID_VA				2.01		1.81
SE X Avg. AMID_VA						.14

Note. Rel. Sat. = Relationship Satisfaction. AMID = Actual Meta-Ideal Discrepancy. WT = warmth/trustworthiness. SR = status/resources. VA = vitality/attractiveness. *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$.

Table 7

Correlations between Emotions and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity

	Agitation	Dejection	Anger
PMIS	-.31**	-.32**	-.20*
Agitation	-	.74**	.60**
Dejection	-	-	.56**
Anger	-	-	-

PMIS = Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. *p <.05, **p < .01.

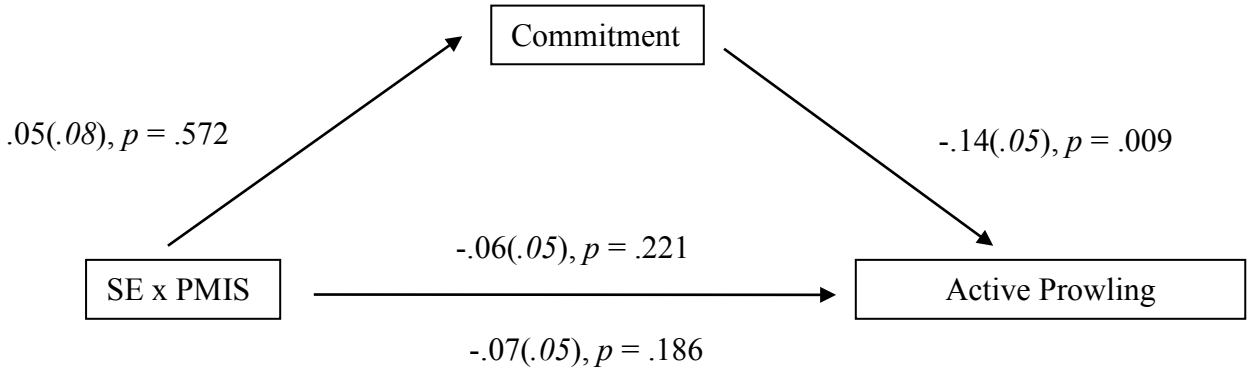


Figure 1. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting active prowling. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

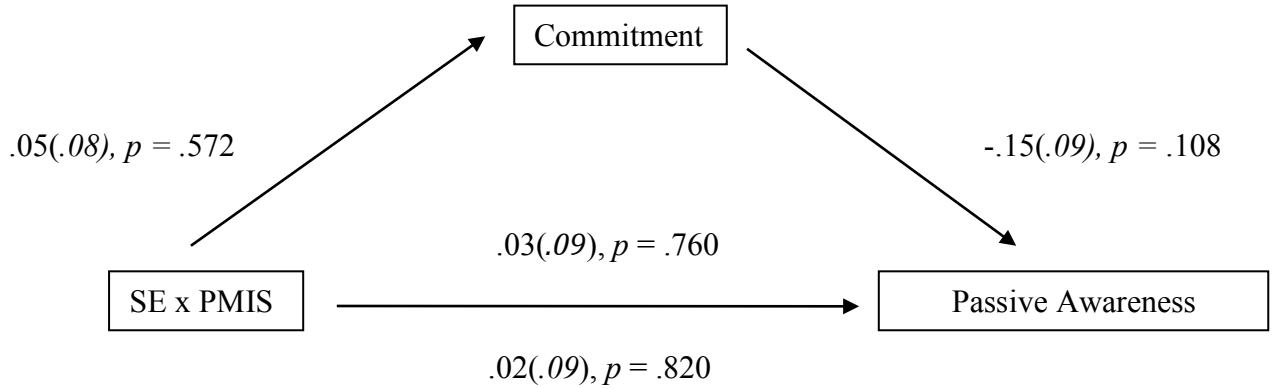


Figure 2. Non-significant mediation path analysis diagram for self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity interacting to predict attention to alternatives as mediated by level of commitment. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

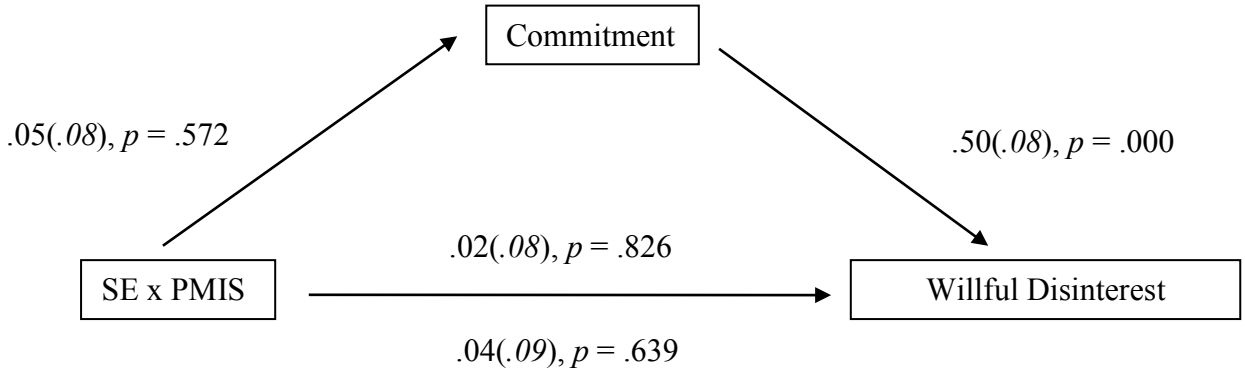


Figure 3. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting willful disinterest. SE X PMIS represents the interaction between self-esteem and Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

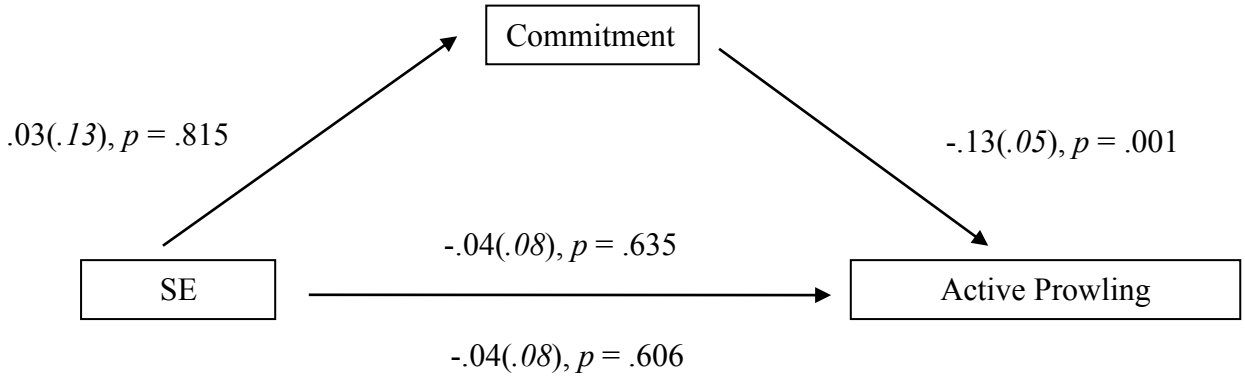


Figure 4. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting active prowling, while controlling for Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. SE = Self-esteem.

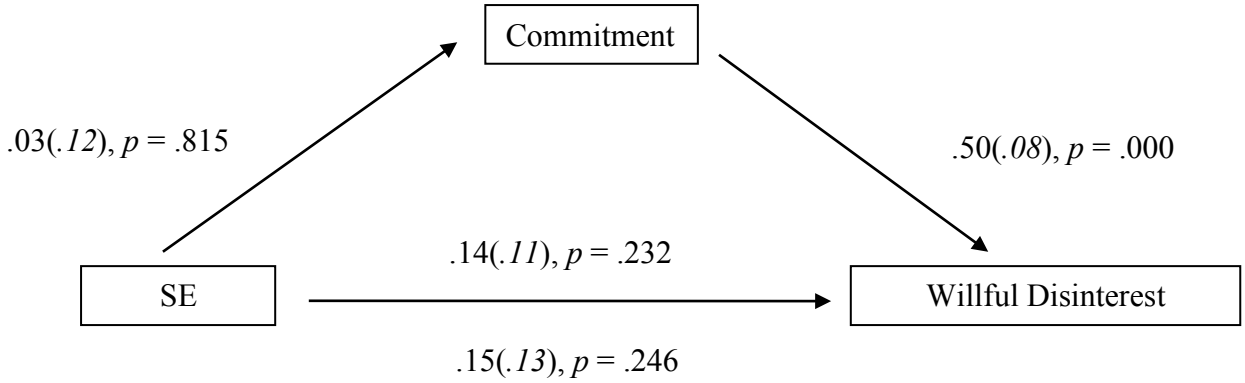


Figure 5. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting willful disinterest, while controlling for Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. SE = Self-esteem.

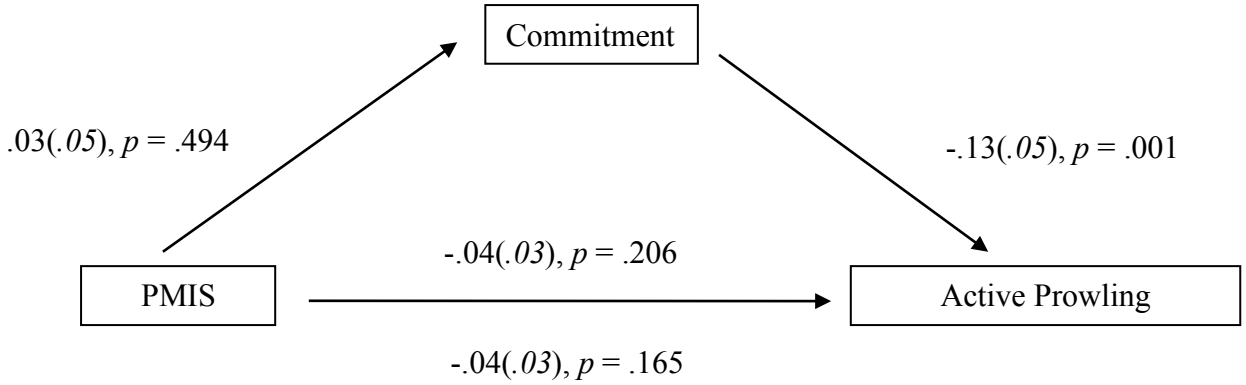


Figure 6. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting active prowling, while controlling for self-esteem. PMIS = Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

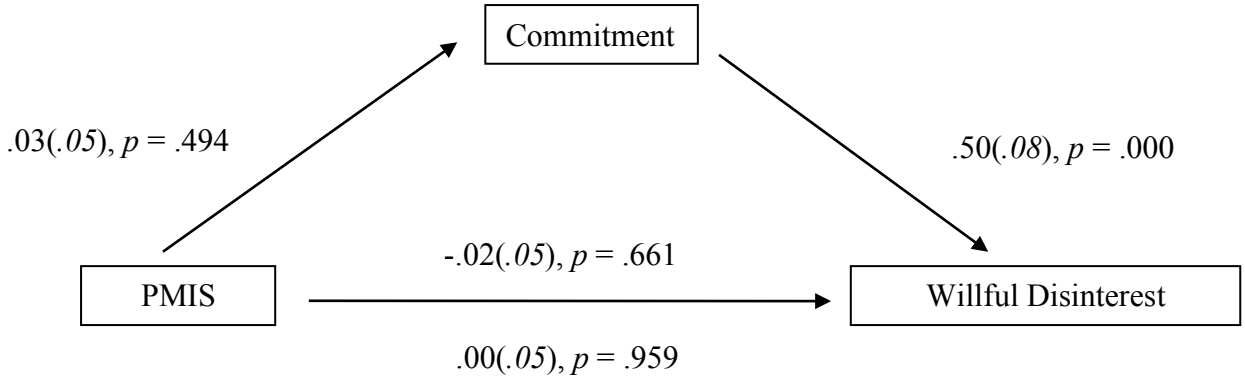


Figure 7. Mediation path analysis diagram for commitment predicting willful disinterest, while controlling for self-esteem. PMIS = Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

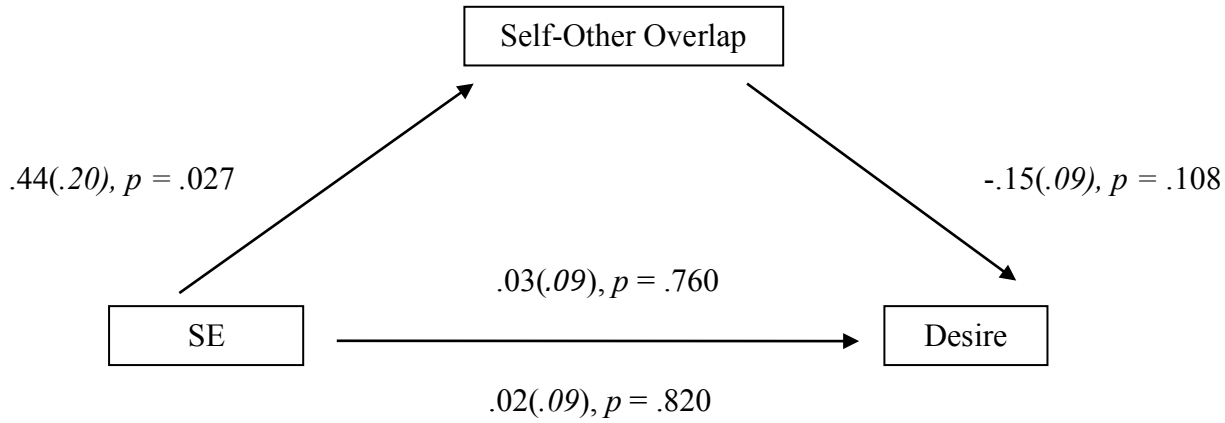


Figure 8. Mediation path analysis diagram for self-esteem predicting self-other overlap, while controlling for Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity. SE = Self-esteem.

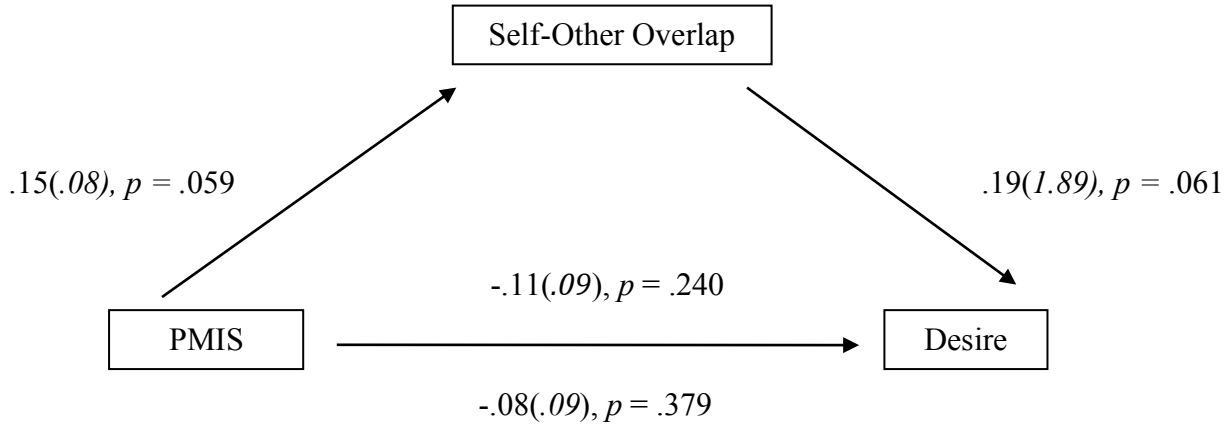


Figure 9. Mediation path analysis diagram for Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity predicting self-other overlap, and for self-other overlap predicting desire to become the Perceived Meta-Ideal, while controlling for self-esteem. PMIS = Perceived Meta-Ideal Similarity.

Appendix A

Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following items.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

_____ 2. At times I think I am no good at all. (R)

_____ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

_____ 4. I can do things as well as most other people.

_____ 5. I do not have much to be proud of. (R)

_____ 6. I certainly feel useless at times. (R)

_____ 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth.

_____ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R)

_____ 9. All in all, I think I am a failure. (R)

_____ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

R = Reversed scored items.

Appendix B

Demographics

Please provide the following background information about yourself.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Which ethnic background do you identify with most?

____ African ____ Asian

____ Caucasian/European ____ East Indian

____ Middle Eastern ____ North American Aboriginal

____ Multiple Ethnicities

Were you born in Canada? YES NO

If you were not born in Canada, how long have you lived in Canada (in years)?_____

Is English your first language? YES NO

If English is not your first language, how would you rate your English language skills?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Weak	Weak	Fair	Strong	Very Strong

Please provide the following information about your current romantic partner:

How long (in months) have you been in this relationship? _____ months.

How long (in months) have you known this person? _____ months.

How would you classify your relationship?

_____Casually Dating _____ Engaged

_____ Exclusively Dating _____Common Law/Married

Appendix C

Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome. (R)
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset. (R)
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet. (R)
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless. (R)
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative. (R)

R = Reversed scored items.

Appendix D

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (Cross et al., 2000)

Please indicate how much each of the following statements describes your relationship with your partner:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. _____ My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am.
2. _____ When I feel very close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.
3. _____ I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.
4. _____ I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are.
5. _____ When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.
6. _____ If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.
7. _____ In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.
8. _____ Overall, my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself. (R)
9. _____ My close relationships are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am. (R)
10. _____ My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.
11. _____ When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.

R = Reversed scored items.

Appendix E

Primed Similar to the Perceived Meta-Ideal (adapted from Rusbult et al., 2009)

Think of the qualities that you believe your partner would ideally like you to possess. Now, please list the qualities that you currently possess that are *in line with or close to* the qualities you think your partner would ideally like you to have:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In general, I possess the qualities that my partner would ideally like me to possess.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appendix F

Primed Dissimilar to the Perceived Meta-Ideal (adapted from Rusbult et al., 2009)

Think of the qualities that you believe your partner would ideally like you to possess. Now, please list the qualities that you currently possess that are *not in line with or are far away from* the qualities you think your partner would ideally like you to have: (R)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In general, I do not possess the qualities that my partner would ideally like me to possess.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

R = Reverse scored items.

Appendix G

No-Prime Control

In general, how much do you feel like you possess the qualities that your partner would ideally like his or her ideal partner to possess?

I feel like I am:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Far from the Ideal	Very Far from the Ideal	Far from the Ideal	Neither Far nor Close the Ideal	Close the Ideal	Very Close to the Ideal	Extremely Close to the Ideal

Appendix H

Desire to Become the Perceived Meta-Ideal

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. ____ It is important for me to work towards becoming my partner's image of his or her ideal partner.
2. ____ Both me and my partner would be more satisfied in our relationship if I became more like my partner's image of his or her ideal partner.

Appendix I

Ideal Partner Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999)

Please rate how important each trait is in describing your ideal partner:							
	1 = Not at all Important	2 = Very Unimportant	3 = Somewhat Unimportant	4 = Neither Important nor Unimportant	5 = Somewhat Important	6 = Very Important	7 = Extremely Important
Understanding (WT)							
Affectionate (WT)							
Adventurous (VA)							
Financially secure (SR)							
Supportive (WT)							
Considerate (WT)							
Nice body (VA)							
Appropriate age (SR)							
Sensitive (WT)							
Communicative (WT)							
Attractive (VA)							
Reliable (WT)							
Spontaneous (VA)							
Dresses well (SR)							
Successful (SR)							
Self-aware (WT)							
Sexy (VA)							
Friendly (WT)							
Active (VA)							
Warm (WT)							

Trustworthy (WT)							
Appropriate ethnicity (SR)							
Kind (WT)							
Assertive (VA)							
Honest (WT)							
Confident (VA)							
Educated (SR)							
Romantic (WT)							
Nice house or apartment (SR)							
Good job (SR)							
Easy-going (WT)							
Interesting (VA)							
Ambitious (VA)							
Stable (WT)							
Mature (WT)							
Independent (VA)							

WT = Warmth/Trustworthiness items, VA = Vitality/Attractiveness items, and SR = Status/Resources items.

Appendix J

Own Ideal Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999)

Please rate how important each trait is in describing your ideal self:							
	1 = Not at all Important	2 = Very Unimportant	3 = Somewhat Unimportant	4 = Neither Important nor Unimportant	5 = Somewhat Important	6 = Very Important	7 = Extremely Important
Understanding (WT)							
Affectionate (WT)							
Adventurous (VA)							
Financially secure (SR)							
Supportive (WT)							
Considerate (WT)							
Nice body (VA)							
Appropriate age (SR)							
Sensitive (WT)							
Communicative (WT)							
Attractive (VA)							
Reliable (WT)							
Spontaneous (VA)							
Dresses well (SR)							
Successful (SR)							
Self-aware (WT)							
Sexy (VA)							
Friendly (WT)							
Active (VA)							
Warm (WT)							

Trustworthy (WT)							
Appropriate ethnicity (SR)							
Kind (WT)							
Assertive (VA)							
Honest (WT)							
Confident (VA)							
Educated (SR)							
Romantic (WT)							
Nice house or apartment (SR)							
Good job (SR)							
Easy-going (WT)							
Interesting (VA)							
Ambitious (VA)							
Stable (WT)							
Mature (WT)							
Independent (VA)							

WT = Warmth/Trustworthiness items, VA = Vitality/Attractiveness items, and SR = Status/Resources items.

Appendix K

Perceived Meta-Ideal Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999)

Please rate how important each trait is in describing what you think is your partner's ideal partner (i.e., their Mr. or Mrs. Right):							
	1 = Not at all Important	2 = Very Unimportant	3 = Somewhat Unimportant	4 = Neither Important nor Unimportant	5 = Somewhat Important	6 = Very Important	7 = Extremely Important
Understanding (WT)							
Affectionate (WT)							
Adventurous (VA)							
Financially secure (SR)							
Supportive (WT)							
Considerate (WT)							
Nice body (VA)							
Appropriate age (SR)							
Sensitive (WT)							
Communicative (WT)							
Attractive (VA)							
Reliable (WT)							
Spontaneous (VA)							
Dresses well (SR)							
Successful (SR)							
Self-aware (WT)							
Sexy (VA)							
Friendly (WT)							
Active (VA)							
Warm (WT)							

Trustworthy (WT)							
Appropriate ethnicity (SR)							
Kind (WT)							
Assertive (VA)							
Honest (WT)							
Confident (VA)							
Educated (SR)							
Romantic (WT)							
Nice house or apartment (SR)							
Good job (SR)							
Easy-going (WT)							
Interesting (VA)							
Ambitious (VA)							
Stable (WT)							
Mature (WT)							
Independent (VA)							

WT = Warmth/Trustworthiness items, VA = Vitality/Attractiveness items, and SR = Status/Resources items.

Appendix L

Partner Discrepancy Scale (Fletcher et al., 1999)

Please rate how accurately each trait describes your actual partner in your current relationship as compared to your ideal partner:							
	1 = Not at all Like my Ideal Partner	2 = Very Unlike my Ideal Partner	3 = Somewhat Unlike my Ideal Partner	4 = Neither Like nor Unlike my Ideal Partner	5 = Somewhat Like my Ideal Partner	6 = Very Much Like my Ideal Partner	7 = Extremely Like my Ideal Partner
Understanding (WT)							
Affectionate (WT)							
Adventurous (VA)							
Financially secure (SR)							
Supportive (WT)							
Considerate (WT)							
Nice body (VA)							
Appropriate age (SR)							
Sensitive (WT)							
Communicative (WT)							
Attractive (VA)							
Reliable (WT)							
Spontaneous (VA)							
Dresses well (SR)							
Successful (SR)							
Self-aware (WT)							
Sexy (VA)							
Friendly (WT)							
Active (VA)							

Warm (WT)							
Trustworthy (WT)							
Appropriate ethnicity (SR)							
Kind (WT)							
Assertive (VA)							
Honest (WT)							
Confident (VA)							
Educated (SR)							
Romantic (WT)							
Nice house or apartment (SR)							
Good job (SR)							
Easy-going (WT)							
Interesting (VA)							
Ambitious (VA)							
Stable (WT)							
Mature (WT)							
Independent (VA)							

WT = Warmth/Trustworthiness items, VA = Vitality/Attractiveness items, and SR = Status/Resources items.

Appendix M

Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick et al., 1988)

Please rate the extent to which you feel each statement applies to your current relationship:

1	2	3	4	5
Never, not well	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always, very well, a lot

1. _____ How well does your partner meet your needs?
2. _____ In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
3. _____ How good is your relationship compared to most?
4. _____ How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
5. _____ To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
6. _____ How much do you love your partner?
7. _____ How many problems are there in your relationship?

Appendix N

Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965)

In the past month, how often did you feel:					
	1 = Never	2 = Rarely	3 = Sometimes	4 = Often	5 = Always
Happy (A; R)					
Angry (H)					
Blue (D)					
Agreeable (H; R)					
Fearful (A)					
Miserable (D)					
Joyful (A; R)					
Furious (H)					
Merry (D; R)					
Sad (D)					
Kind (H; R)					
Free (D; R)					
Outraged (H)					
Pleasant (A; R)					
Stormy (H)					
Unhappy (D)					
Loving (A; R)					
Enraged (H)					
Discouraged (D)					
Upset (A)					
Frightened (A)					
Cooperative (H; R)					
Cheerful (A; R)					
Enthusiastic (D; R)					
Friendly (H; R)					
Glad (D; R)					
Mad					
Afraid (A)					
Desperate (A)					
Good-natured (H; R)					
Shaky (A)					
Rejected (D)					
Nervous (A)					

Secure (A; R)					
Understanding (H; R)					
Contended (A; R)					
Suffering (D)					

A = Agitation-related emotions, D = Dejection-related emotions, H = Anger-related emotions,

R = Reverse scored items.

Appendix O

Commitment Scale (Murray et al., 2001)

Please rate the extent to which you feel each statement applies to your current relationship:

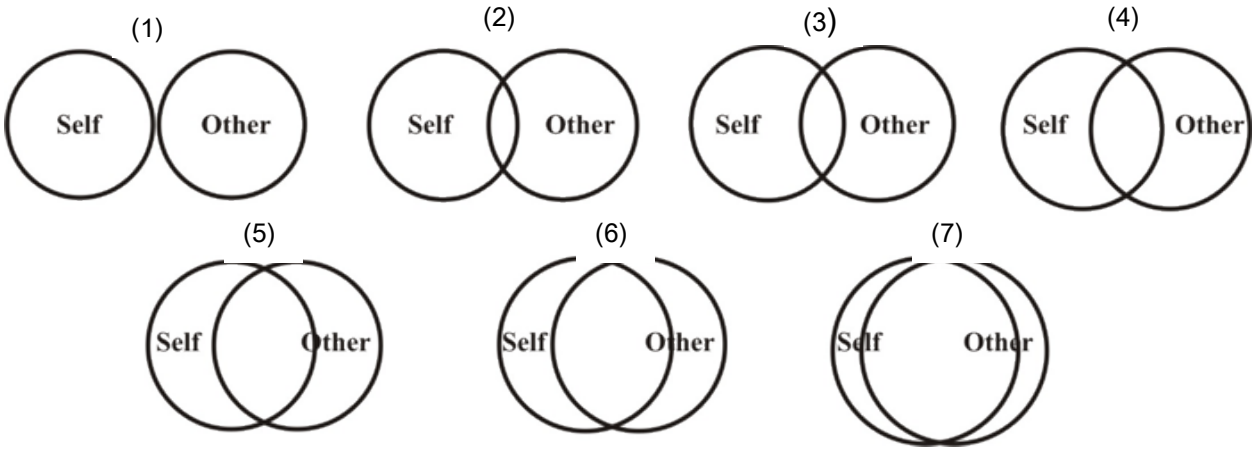
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. _____ I am very committed to maintaining my relationship.
2. _____ I have made a firm promise to myself to do everything in my power to make my relationship work.

Appendix P

Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron et al., 1992)

In the pictures below, the "Self" circle represents you, and the "Other" circle represents your current dating partner. More overlap of the circles indicates more closeness in the relationship. Please select the bubble next to the picture that best describes your relationship with your current partner.



Appendix Q

Attentiveness to Alternatives Index (Miller, 2010)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Factor 1: Active prowling

____ 1. I'm always looking for new romantic partners even when I'm already in a relationship.

_____ 2. When I go out without my partner, I usually pretend that I am single.

_____ 3. I visit singles websites without my partner's knowledge.

_____ 4. I sometimes pretend to be single when I'm already dating someone.

_____ 5. I'm always on the prowl for an exciting new relationship.

_____ 6. I often have lunch or coffee with someone else without telling my current partner.

_____ 7. I sometimes browse the ads on Internet dating sites even when I'm already in a relationship.

_____ 8. If my relationship were to end, I know who my next partner would be.

_____ 9. I never pass up a chance to meet attractive new partners.

_____ 10. Even when I have a partner, I like to keep my options open.

_____ 11. I like to be aware of whom I could date other than my current partner.

_____ 12. I always like to have a backup partner available.

Factor 2: Passive awareness

_____ 1.There is no harm in looking at hot people of the opposite (or same) sex when they walk by.

_____ 2. I always notice attractive people of the opposite (or same) sex at social gatherings.

_____ 3. I see no harm in appreciating good looks in members of the opposite (or same) sex.

_____ 4. I can't help but notice when attractive members of the opposite (or same) sex are around.

_____ 5. When attractive people of the opposite (or same) sex walk by, they grab my attention.

_____ 6. I believe it's okay to look as long as I don't touch.

_____ 7. I do not think it is wrong to notice attractive members of the opposite (or same) sex.

_____ 8. It is human to notice attractive members of the opposite (or same) sex.

_____ 9. Good-looking people of the opposite (or same) sex always catch my attention.

Factor 3: Willful disinterest

_____ 1. I cannot imagine myself with anyone other than my current partner.

_____ 2. Even when my partner and I disagree, I still cannot imagine being with anyone else.

_____ 3. There's no point in looking around because I will never find someone better than my current partner.

_____ 4. I try not to think of anyone but my partner in a romantic way.

_____ 5. When I'm in a relationship, other possible partners do not interest me.

_____ 6. My partner has my undivided attention.

_____ 7. I think about my partner too much to notice other members of the opposite (or same) sex.

_____ 8. When I'm dating someone, I don't check out other people.