SELF-TALK AND ITS FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE REALM OF

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION

by

Olivia K. DeAngelo

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Thesis Committee:

Dr. Thomas Brinthaupt, Chair

Dr. David Kelly, Committee Member

Dr. Xiaowei Shi, Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

The different styles of self-talk were explored in terms of aspects that make up

relationship management and satisfaction. Participants were 252 individuals who were

currently in a romantic relationship and were recruited through social media sites. They

completed a survey which contained measures on how frequently they engaged in self-

talk styles, their self-reported attachment style, aspects of personality traits, their level of

couples satisfaction, and overall relational rumination. Results provided moderate support

for most hypotheses. While there was one hypothesis that was not supported, the

remaining hypotheses ranged from indirect support to strong support. The hypothesis

looking at personality traits and self-talk was not supported in this study, but the

hypothesis looking at relational rumination and self-talk was strongly supported. Now,

future research can expand further in this field of self-talk in romantic relationships.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships have and always will be part of society's development and functioning. They are the stepping stone into many life adventures and familial growth. The ways that couples communicate within their relationships are a major factor that determines the stability and maintenance of the relationship, so it is important that researchers study how relationships function and grow over time. For example, Funk and Rogge (2007) created the Couples Satisfaction Index that is commonly used to rate a couple's level of satisfaction in regards to perceptions of how one feels in the relationship. What has yet to be explored in depth in the relationship literature is not only how one feels or perceives the relationship, but the way one self-talks about that relationship and how that can change one's perceptions.

Self-talk refers to the dialogue, either internal or external, in which one partakes when engaging in self-regulatory functions. There are at least four different functions served by self-talk, which can range from reinforcing behaviors, management behaviors, criticism behaviors, or social-assessment behaviors (Brinthaupt, Hein, & Kramer, 2009). Self-talk has been studied recently in terms of sports psychology, such as how athletes talk to themselves during competition to better or worsen their performance. For example, Carr (2006) found that athletes who engage in negative self-talk tend to cause a physical reaction, such as an increase in muscle tension, less controlled breathing, and loss of concentration. Negative self-talk by one athlete can affect the team to some degree but does not potentially change the overall functioning of the team in the long run.

Research has not studied how self-talk of one person can directly influence another in a romantic relationship.

How two people communicate with each other and function together can either make or break the relationship. There is a dearth of research in the field of self-talk in terms of relational communication. How people self-talk likely not only affects how they view events that happen in their world, but once in a relationship with another person, self-talk could positively or negatively affect the relationship as a whole. This study aims to explore how different types of self-talk positively or negatively relate to different levels of couple and relationship satisfaction.

In the following review of the literature, the research on the functions of self-talk and its correlation to romantic relationships are examined first. Next, I examine the literature on imagined interactions and relationship satisfaction. Following that, love attitudes and the different adult attachment styles are discussed in depth. Lastly, I break down how personality traits relate to multiple previous aspects discussed in the collective literature, followed by a review of relationship rumination. Finally, I will propose a project to assess the correlations between self-talk, personality traits, adult attachment styles, relational rumination, and relationship satisfaction.

Functions of Self-Talk

The concept of talking to oneself has a long history of development. Philosophers have contemplated the reasons for people to have thoughts; linguistics has studied the language of one's thoughts; and psychologists have researched the processes of inner speech (Fernyhough, 2016). More recently though, there has been a particular interest in

delving more into the subject of self-talk and how it affects our daily lives, sparking the development of self-talk measures. Brinthaupt et al. (2009) created what is known as the Self-Talk Scale (STS), which assesses four different functions served when people talk to themselves. The functions all involve self-regulation, meaning that there are multiple aspects to the inner dialogue in which people engage. Functions include: (a) social assessment, where one replays what was said to another person and imagines how others respond; (b) self-reinforcement, where one feels proud or accomplished when something positive has happened; (c) self-management, where one thinks about and gives instructions on what to do and say for future events; and (d) self-criticism, where one feels discouraged or criticizes oneself for what has been done or said.

Hardy (2006) discusses how self-talk is often seen in sports psychology, where athletes use self-talk techniques for motivation during competition. This could be seen as the self-reinforcement type of self-talk because the athlete is using positive thoughts to help keep himself or herself motivated. One study (Theodorakis, Hatzigeorgiadis, & Chroni, 2008) focused on athletes' attention, effort, confidence, cognitive and emotional control, and automatic execution during their self-talk. It was found that for athletes, self-talk helped them "regulate effort, control attention, and build confidence" (p. 25).

According to Depape, Hakim-Larson, Voelker, Page, and Jackson (2006), university students who participated in self-talk techniques tended to show high emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to recognize and regulate one's own emotions. University students higher in their education tended to report that they were more emotionally aware, which was consistent with the finding that

the STS self-reinforcement factor was positively correlated with emotional intelligence (Depape et al., 2006).

In summary, the concept of an inner dialogue has been studied for years, but recently has been of interest in regard to self-regulatory behaviors that occur in one's daily life. Recent studies have shown the different functions of self-talk from a first-person perspective. Those who have high emotional intelligence tend to have self-regulatory behaviors in self-reinforcement, where one feels proud or accomplished for himself or herself. Additionally, there is extensive research in the field of self-talk and sports psychology with how athletes use self-talk for motivation during competition. However, there is a lack in research in self-talk as a regulatory factor in romantic relationship management.

Self-Talk and Romantic Relationships

When discussing romantic relationships, a typical subject to appear in conversation is the feeling of loneliness. A recent study was conducted to look at the correlation between the frequency of self-talk and the feeling of loneliness and need to belong. The loneliness scale assessed the feeling of social isolation, while the need to belong assessed the desire to be a part of a group. Both loneliness and need to belong were positively correlated with the frequency with which one would participate in self-talk (Reichl, Schneider, & Spinath, 2013).

Burnett and McCrindle (1999) were among the first researchers to study self-talk and significant others. They created a positive and a negative self-talk scale, which was similar to Brinthaupt et al.'s (2009) self-reinforcement and self-criticism factors. In this

study, they focused on self-talk, significant others, and self-esteem in children between grades 3 to 7. It was found that students' positive self-talk was positively correlated with self-esteem in relation to statements made by parents and teachers, but not their peers. Statements made by peers did not have an effect on self-talk; those statements went directly to affect self-esteem (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999).

Burnett (1995) also studied how positive and negative statements affected how people self-talk, without the added component of self-esteem, as mentioned previously. Again, he studied elementary-aged children and the positive and negative statements made by significant others (parents, siblings, teachers, and peers). He found that when the significant others used positive statements toward the children, the children were more likely to report higher positive self-talk and lower negative self-talk than those children who received negative statements from significant others (Burnett, 1995).

In summary, self-talk has been studied in childhood in terms of a significant other, but not in regard to a significant other in a romantic sense. When self-talk was discussed, children were studied in relationship to their parents, teachers, or peers. The one aspect of a romantic relationship and self-talk that has been studied is the feeling of loneliness and a need to belong, but that did not directly study how one thinks about one's romantic relationship; loneliness and the need to belong focused solely on how people have a tendency to talk to themselves when they have those feelings.

Imagined Interactions and Relationship Satisfaction

In addition to general self-talk, there is an aspect of inner dialogue that is also heavily researched in the fields of psychology and communication – imagined

interactions. Imagined interactions (IIs) are different from self-talk in that imagined interactions are conversational; one plans out specific conversations internally before those conversations happen. Alternatively, self-talk can be viewed as non-conversational because not all internal speech is organizing conversations. Self-talk can include thoughts about oneself, motivational factors, and self-criticism outside of planning a conversation with another person. Self-talk can also be considered as rumination and not just conversation.

Honeycutt, Zagacki, and Edwards (1990) stated that IIs are used to reach a specific social goal with significant others. It was found that people more commonly have IIs with intimate relational partners than with those who are non-intimates. The conversations planned out are more often of personal matters, and the self is often the leader in the IIs.

Because IIs often involve planned conversations with intimate relational partners over personal matters, Honeycutt and Keaton (2012) conducted research on IIs and relationship satisfaction. They discovered that "having more specific, frequent, and pleasant imagined interactions positively impacts relationship satisfaction" (p. 14).

There are eight different characteristics of IIs: (a) frequency; (b) proactivity; (c) retroactivity; (d) variety; (e) discrepancy; (f) valence; (g) specificity; and (h) self-dominance (Honeycutt & Keaton, 2012; Honeycutt & Wiemann, 1999). Engaged and married couples have been studied with regard to IIs and martial satisfaction. Consistent with other literature, Honeycutt and Wiemann (1999) found that engaged couples who have pleasant IIs are more often likely to report relationship satisfaction. Married couples

are less likely to participate in IIs than engaged couples, which could be attributed to the saying that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." This is because engaged couples are more likely to be in the honeymoon phase compared to married couples, resulting in constantly thinking about and imagining interactions with their partner when they are not around, and are pleasant in nature.

On the other end of the spectrum of relationship satisfaction is relationship uncertainty. Relationship uncertainty involves three components: (a) self-uncertainty, which is one's own doubts about involvement; (b) partner uncertainty, which is where one doubts the partner's involvements; and (c) relationship uncertainty, which is overall doubts about the relationship (Van Kelegom & Wright, 2013). Van Kelegom and Wright found that those who had self-uncertainty were more likely to use IIs that involved conflict, while partner uncertainty and relationship uncertainty components were not related to conflict imagined interactions. They explain that this may be because the conversation itself was conflictual or it led to additional relationship conflict insecurities. Other research has been conducted with a form of relationship uncertainty and IIs in the family setting. It is common for therapists to see clients who have issues with one family member believing that the significant other is not as committed to the family of origin due to conflictual IIs (Rosenblatt & Meyer, 1986).

In summary, IIs are different than self-talk in that IIs tend to be a planned-out conversation in one's head that one plans on having later with a significant other. II's are not typically used for rehearsing a past conversation, whereas self-talk looks at both past and future conversations. There is extensive research on imagined interactions and

romantic relationships. Couples who tend to have more frequent and pleasant IIs tend to report a higher satisfaction level than those who have unpleasant IIs about their relationships. On the other end of the spectrum, those who have doubts about their own involvement in a relationship tended to have conflictual IIs. However, because imagined interactions are not the same as self-talk and the self-regulatory functions of self-talk, there is minimal research on how different functions of self-talk are used to measure relationship satisfaction and relationship management.

Love Attitudes

When discussing romantic relationships, one has to consider the different types of love attitudes to understand how those love attitudes affect relationship satisfaction. The Triangle Theory of Love contains three components: (a) intimacy, the feeling of closeness and connectedness; (b) passion, the feeling of physical attraction and arousal; and (c) commitment, the decision of long-term love (Sternberg, 1986). These three factors have thus been used in multitudes of research. For example, Overbeek, Ha, Scholte, De Kemp, and Engels (2007) took the Triangular Love Scale (TLS) that was created by Sternberg and tested Dutch adolescents. They found that high levels of all three factors were positively related to romantic relationship satisfaction. When both intimacy and commitment were high in the romantic relationship, the adolescent participants felt that they were able to be more open and share intimate thoughts and feelings with their significant other when problems arose.

Eros, Ludus, Storge, Mania, and Agape are additional types of love attitudes. Eros involves physical attraction and commitment; Ludus involves game-playing and a variety

of partners; Storge is known as having a strong friendship; Mania involves being obsessive emotionally intense; and Agape is known for showing selfless love and caring (Hammock & Richardson, 2011). When studying university students, Hammock and Richardson found that those who appeared more ludic in nature did not seem concerned about loyalty and commitment in a romantic relationship. Those high in Mania tended to be obsessive in the relationship, often resulting in thoughts of one partner being more involved than the other in a relationship. Lastly, they found that men who reported love attitudes such as Agape tended to be more devastated when it came to relationship dissolution.

In summary, love attitudes and the TLS all measure accurate forms of relationship satisfaction. Those who feel close to their partner, are attracted to their partner, and have a desire for long-term commitment report higher relationship satisfaction. The love attitude Mania could be viewed as attempting to combine love attitudes, relationship satisfaction, and inner thoughts, but overall, self-talk itself is not measured in terms of different types of love attitudes.

Attachment Styles and Relationship Maintenance

Attachment styles are not just present in children and their attachment to their parents; adults have different attachment styles as well. When looking at adult attachment styles, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) classified four adult styles: (a) secure attachment; (b) anxious-preoccupied attachment; (c) fearful attachment; and (d) dismissing attachment. When discussing the attachment styles, one must consider the view of the self and the view of significant others to determine an attachment style.

Secure attachment would include a positive model of the self and of others, while dismissive would include a negative model of the self and others. Anxious-preoccupied attachment has a positive model of others and a negative model of the self, while fearful is the reverse (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Gouveia, Schultz, & Costa, 2016).

There are five relationship maintenance strategies that have been used in research to compare to attachment styles, and they include: (a) positivity, which is having a positive outlook on the relationship; (b) openness, which is where both partners reciprocate back-and-forth communication and self-disclosure; (c) assurances, which involves comforting and expressions of love to the partner; (d) task sharing, where partners share in the daily tasks of living; and (e) social networks, where the partners have common social bonds outside of each other (Edenfield, Adams, & Briihl, 2012). Edenfield et al. found that those who have the dismissive attachment style are least likely to use the assurances relationship strategy, as well as those with a fearful attachment are least likely to use the positivity relationship strategy. Those with preoccupied and secure attachment styles more commonly have openness with their significant other.

The results of Edenfield et al. (2012) have been consistent across other areas of attachment styles literature. For example, Gouveia et al. (2016) found that those with the fearful attached style are commonly seen as less authentic in their relationship, which is similar to the openness relationship maintenance because they lack self-expression and choose to not self-disclose with their partner in fear of losing them. Those with the secure attachment style often show positivity and openness to their partner with trusting attitudes, and those with secure attachment styles tend to have the longest lasting

relationships, as compared with those with fearful attachment who have the least

enduring (Feeney & Noller, 1990).

In summary, adult attachment styles can correlate with one's typical behaviors

while in a romantic relationship. For example, those who have a secure attachment style,

meaning that they have a positive view of self and others, are likely to be more open with

their significant other, which is associated with a higher relationship satisfaction. Even

though attachment styles have been researched in terms of relationship satisfaction and

relationship management, research does not expand into how self-talk could correlate

with attachment styles in romantic relationships.

Personality in Romantic Relationships

In any relationship, it is likely that personality tends to play a major role not only

in the selection of a partner, but also the maintenance and success of said relationship.

Furler, Gomez, and Grob (2014) identified four types of personality perceptions that are

common in relationships: (a) the way people perceive their own personality; (b) the way

people perceive their partner's personality; (c) the way people perceive similarities in

personality between each other in the relationship (whether it is true or not); and (d) the

predictability of personality in the relationship. They found that when the partner

perceives the other as open to experiences, agreeable, extraverted, and emotionally stable,

the relationship satisfaction tends to increase. When one views oneself as similar to his or

her partner- whether it is true or not- tends to lead to better connectedness between the

partners, which can lead to higher relationship satisfaction. In terms of agreeableness,

when agreeableness is both self-perceived and partner-perceived in the relationship, it becomes a significant factor in long-term relationships.

Similar to Furler et al. (2014), Honeycutt and Keaton (2012) found that those with a more extraverted personality style tended to be viewed as more positive in relationships, resulting in higher relationship satisfaction than those who were more introverted. Demir (2007) researched personality and relationship satisfaction in terms of happiness. He discovered that those who are more extraverted and high on both agreeableness and conscientiousness showed significantly higher rates of happiness within their relationships.

Personality is also correlated with imagined interactions. Those who tend to be more open to new experiences have more frequent imagined interactions. Those who are more neurotic and less conscientious also tend to have more imagined interactions compared to those who are less neurotic and more conscientious (Eldredge, 2016).

Shaver and Brennan (1992) researched the correlation between the Big Five personality traits and the different attachment styles in romantic relationships. Secure individuals tended to be more extraverted and agreeable, as well as less neurotic, than those who were avoidant individuals in their relationships. They also found that those who are avoidant in their relationships tended to be less open to reporting feelings to their significant other, as well as less open to a difference in values.

In summary, personality has been widely studied across multiple disciplines and areas of relationship satisfaction. Those who perceive their and their partner's personalities as similar to each other tend to report greater relationship satisfaction.

Agreeableness tended to be related to relationship satisfaction as well, resulting in those who are more agreeable and welcoming tending to report having better relationships. Those who are open to more experiences tend to also have more imagined interactions. In addition to the openness trait, those who are the avoidant personality type tended to be less open to experiences, as well as less likely to discuss feelings with their significant other. However, personality traits have not been studied in conjunction with self-talk to measure if certain personality traits correlate to the different functions of self-talk in terms of relationship satisfaction and relationship management.

Relationship Rumination

To ruminate means to think deeply about something or someone. Rumination occurs commonly in romantic relationships, which led to the development of the Relational Rumination Questionnaire (Senkans, McEwan, Skues, & Ogloff, 2016). This rumination questionnaire looked at different topics that tend to occur in romantic relationships, which include loneliness, romantic preoccupation, abandonment/rejection, jealousy, and breakup. Senkans et al. found that single individuals tended to score high on the breakup factor, meaning that they either see that being single is a negative factor, or they are constantly ruminating about a previous breakup. Women also tended to score higher than men on the relationship uncertainty factor. Relationship rumination total scores were highest for those who have an anxious attachment style.

While rumination can be positive, it is commonly seen as a negative trait. Rumination can occur during relationship dissatisfaction, specifically when jealousy plays a role. Elphinston, Feeney, Noller, Connor, and Fitzgerald (2013) noted that those

who participate in partner surveillance (watching and monitoring the partner's actions), tend to ruminate more and report more relationship dissatisfaction. Though jealous partner surveillance is most commonly negative, it does not always result in relationship dissatisfaction. If the partner participates in positive self-talk to counteract the jealousy, then dissatisfaction does not directly affect the relationship (Elphinston et al., 2013).

Calmes and Roberts (2008) looked at an additional factor in relationship rumination: co-rumination with friends. There are gender differences in co-rumination, in that women participate in co-rumination within their close friendships more than men. This means that women are more likely to discuss their thoughts and concerns about a romantic relationship with their close friends. This elevated co-rumination leads to elevated levels of depression in women, but also results in greater friendship satisfaction.

In summary, rumination typically has a negative connotation due to mulling over something repeatedly to the point where it becomes something of concern. People who are single tend to score higher on the breakup factor of rumination than those who are in relationships, either because they are ruminating about a recent breakup, or they view being single as a negative factor. Rumination did focus slightly on self-talk, but only in one aspect- positive self-talk. Those who participate in positive self-talk to counteract jealous rumination tend to not show dissatisfaction within the relationship- but this does not mean they are actually satisfied. The lack of in-depth research of how the different functions of self-talk and rumination correlate with each other in regard to relationship management is another factor that has led to the current study.

Summary and Purpose of the Current Study

There is a dearth of research examining how self-talk is used for relationship management and relationship satisfaction among romantic significant others. Even though there are some studies covering broad topics that involve aspects of relationship satisfaction and internal dialogue, there are none to my knowledge that focus on how self-talk strategies specifically correlate with being able to manage one's relationship and if the different strategies are related to one's satisfaction level in a romantic relationship.

The present study aimed to further evaluate the functionality of a romantic relationship by seeing how relationship self-talk applies to relationship management and satisfaction through personality traits, attachment styles, relationship rumination, and relationship satisfaction. The following hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis 1: Those who report high levels of relationship self-criticism self-talk will have lower scores on the Couple's Satisfaction Index. There will be a negative association between levels of self-criticism and a couple's satisfaction.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that those who report high levels of self-criticism tend to focus life's problems on oneself. When something bad happens to them, they tend to feel as if they did something wrong or are overly upset or ashamed with themselves. When in a relationship, these partners may report lower couple satisfaction due to frequently criticizing themselves instead of feeling happy and satisfied in the relationship. They may internalize the problems and not discuss or communicate problems with the other partner, also resulting in a lower couple's satisfaction score.

Hypothesis 2: Those who report high levels of relationship social-assessment self-talk will have higher scores on the Relational Rumination Questionnaire.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that those with high levels of social assessment self-talk tend to analyze or over-analyze social situations in which they took a role. These people tend to think about how someone will respond or have responded to something they said, analyzing the conversation to the core. In a relationship, rumination can sometimes be seen as a negative factor. There should be a positive association between social assessment self-talk scores and relationship rumination due to both including the factor of analyzing and overly thinking about the relationship.

Hypothesis 3: Those who report having the anxious-preoccupied attachment style should report more frequent social-assessing self-talk compared to the other attachment styles as well as the other types of self-talk.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is embedded in the relationship questionnaire itself. The Relationship Questionnaire looks at different levels of attachment that people have in relationships with others by having people mark what set of descriptors best describes how they feel in a relationship. Style A correlates to those who have a secure attachment style; Style B correlates to those who have a fearful-avoidant attachment style; Style C correlates to those who have an anxious-preoccupied attachment style; and Style D correlates to those with a dismissive-avoidant attachment style. Those who report high levels of social assessment self-talk are likely to replay things they have said to others and imagine how others may respond to things they say. When someone is an anxious-preoccupied attachment style (Style C), they tend to have negative views of

themselves and positive views of others. They tend to feel unlovable and unworthy, as well as have the desire to be socially accepted. So those who have an anxious-preoccupied attachment should also report high levels of social assessment self-talk. Individuals with anxious-preoccupied attachment styles should also report more frequent social-assessment self-talk compared to the other three styles of self-talk – self-criticism, self-reinforcing, and self-managing self-talk. Those who are anxious-preoccupied value relationships but are constantly worried about that relationship. Because of this, they are more attuned to what they say and do while in a relationship with another person, causing higher social assessment self-talk frequencies.

Hypothesis 4: Those who report having the secure attachment style should report less frequent social-assessment self-talk compared to the other attachment styles as well as the other types of self-talk.

Similar to hypothesis 3, this hypothesis states that those who report low levels of social assessment self-talk are more likely to not analyze what they or their partner say or do, or replay things they have said. When someone is a secure attachment style (Style A), they tend to have a positive view of themselves and others. They tend to feel comfortable in and enjoy communicating with others. So those who have a secure attachment should also report low levels of social assessment self-talk. Those who report the secure attachment style should also have less social assessment self-talk compared to the other three self-talk types. This is because social assessment self-talk requires the person to have thoughts about how to assess a situation with the partner, such as what the partner responds to things they say or to analyze something that their partner said to them. A

person who is securely attached should not have to constantly be thinking about what their partner is thinking or how to analyze the conversations had in their relationship.

Hypothesis 5: Those who report high levels of self-reinforcement self-talk will have lower levels of Neuroticism.

The rationale for this hypothesis is that those with high self-reinforcement self-talk tend to frequently reinforce their choices and decisions with positivity. They tend to feel proud of something they have done and try to reinforce their feelings of happiness and of making a good decision for themselves. Those who are low in neuroticism tend to be more emotionally stable and rarely feel sad. They show resiliency when dealing with stressful events and tend to not be strong worriers. So those who have high self-reinforcement self-talk should have lower neuroticism due to them both producing an emotional stability towards happiness and relaxed lifestyle.

CHAPTER II: METHOD

Participants

Participants ($N = 252$) were recruited if they were in a dating, engaged, or married romantic relationship for a minimum of 3 months. The participants also had to be a minimum of 18 years old. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix A). Participants were recruited through online social media sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. All participation was anonymous, and the data collected were non-identifiable, which provided the participants with confidentiality in their answers. The number of participants who started the online survey (284) was reduced due to missing data, as well as those who did not meet the minimum criteria and yet completed the survey. Several participants were removed due to incomplete sections – potentially because they did not understand the questions or response formats. Others removed included those who were under 18 years old, those not reporting being in a romantic relationship, those who took less than five minutes to complete the survey, and those who took longer than an hour and a half to complete the survey. This provided the final sample of 252 participants.

The sample was predominantly female ($n = 214$) with a mean age of 34.62 years ($SD = 13.96$). The sample had a relationship duration average of 11.45 years ($SD = 12.59$). With respect to ethnicity, 90.5% of the sample reported being Caucasian ($n = 228$), while 2.8% reported being Hispanic ($n = 7$), 2.4% reported being Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 6$), 0.8% reported being American Indian/Alaska Native ($n = 2$), 0.4% reported being African American ($n = 1$), and 3.2% reported belonging to another racial

background other than the aforementioned groups ($n = 8$). The sample, while not being

collected from a university student body, was predominantly college educated, with

15.9% reporting having some college education ($n = 40$), 13.1% holding an associate's

degree ($n = 33$), 44.8% holding a bachelor's degree ($n = 113$), 13.5% holding a master's

degree ($n = 34$), and 2% holding a doctorate degree ($n = 5$).

Materials

      Self-Talk Scale (STS; Brinthaupt et al., 2009) The STS is a 16-item measure of

how frequently one participates in self-talk. The STS also measures different functions of

self-talk, including self-reinforcement, self-criticism, self-management, and social

assessment. Participants read each item beginning with the statement, "I talk to myself

when…" and then respond on a 5-point frequency scale ($1 = $ *Never*, $5 = $ *Very Often*).

Items for self-reinforcement include "something good has happened to me" and "I'm

proud of something I've done." Items for self-criticism include "I feel ashamed of

something I've done" and "I'm really upset with myself." Items for self-management

include "I'm mentally exploring a possible course of action" and "I'm giving myself

instructions or directions about what I should do or say." Items for social assessment

include "I'm imagining how other people respond to things I've said" and "I want to

analyze something that someone recently said to me."

      Test-retest reliability has been established by Brinthaupt et al. (2009). Over a 3-

month period, the correlation between the total STS scores was significant, $r(99) = .66$, *p*

$< .001$. The subtests (self-reinforcement, self-criticism, self-management, social

assessment) were also all significant, with the values ranging from .50 to .69. The

individual items on the STS were also all significantly correlated, with values ranging from .36 to .60.

The STS used in the current study (Relationship STS; see below) was adapted from Brinthaupt et al. (2009) and is a 16-item measure of the frequency one engages in self-talk about their current romantic relationship. Similar adaptations of the STS have been reported in the research literature (e.g., Shi, Brinthaupt, & McCree, 2015).

Relationship STS. The Relationship STS is an adapted version of the original STS (see Appendix B). Participants rated each of the 16 items on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Very Often*). The adaptation involved a slight change to the instructions as well as minor wording changes to the individual items to reflect one's current romantic relationship. The beginning of each statement began with "I talk to myself about my relationship when…" The subscales remained the same from the original STS to the Relationship STS: self-reinforcement, self-criticism, self-management, and social assessment. Sample items for self-reinforcement included "I'm proud of something I've done in the relationship" and "I want to reinforce myself for doing well in my relationship." Sample items for self-criticism included "I should have done something differently in the relationship" and "I feel ashamed of something I've done in the relationship." Sample items for self-management included "I want to remind myself of what I need to do in/for the relationship" and "I'm giving myself instructions or directions about what I should do or say in the relationship." Sample items for social assessment included "I'm imagining how my partner responds to things I've said" and "I want to analyze something that my partner recently said to me." Total and subscale

scores were calculated by adding all items or the four items associated with each subscale. Higher scores indicated more frequent total and subscale self-talk. Internal consistency values for the Relationship STS total and subscale scores were acceptable (see Table 1).

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) The CSI is originally a 32-item measure that looks at one's reports of satisfaction within a current romantic relationship. The 32-item measure has been adjusted to both a 16-item measure and a 4-item measure for shorter time needs. The current study used the 16-item measure. The first question, "please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship," is based on a 6-point rating scale (0 = *Extremely Unhappy*, 6 = *Perfect*). The following 9 statements were based on a 5-point scale (0 = *Not at all True*, 5 = *Completely True*). Sample items on this scale included "our relationship is strong," "my relationship with my partner makes me happy," and "I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner." The last 6 statements were based on a 5-point bipolar scale of items. Sample items on this scale included rating oneself on how interesting or boring, discouraging or hopeful, and enjoyable or miserable one feels about the relationship. Scoring is kept continuous across the 32-item, 16-item, and 4-item measures. For the 16-item measure, the total score ranges from 0-81 points, with scores falling below 52.5 points suggesting notable relationship dissatisfaction. The CSI scales showed excellent internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .98 (for the CSI-16), strong convergent validity, and strong construct validity (Funk & Rogge, 2007). In the current study, internal consistency was also acceptable (see Table 2).

Relational Rumination Questionnaire (RelRQ; Senkans et al., 2016) The RelRQ is a 16-item measure that studies how one participates in relationship rumination. There are 3 subscales that make up the 16-item measure: romantic preoccupation rumination (RP) with 6 items, relationship uncertainty rumination (RU) with 6 items, and break-up rumination (BU), with 4 items. Participants read statements and responded on a 5-point scale (1 = *Almost Never*, 5 = *Almost Always*) for how frequently they think about negative feelings and experiences in their relationships. Sample items from RP included "thoughts about how to find a partner plague my mind" and "I keep on wondering why my friends have romantic relationships and I don't." Sample items from RU included "nagging doubts about my partner's faithfulness pop up in my head" and "I get caught up in imagining scenarios in which my partner would cheat on me." Sample items from BU included "I go over and over the reasons why my relationship with my ex-partner ended" and "I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner." The total score possible for the RelRQ is 16-80 points, with RP ranging from 6-30 points, RU ranging from 6-30 points, and BU ranging from 4-20 points. Test-retest reliability was good for both the full scale and all subscales (Senkans et al., 2016). In the current study, internal consistency values were also acceptable (see Table 3).

The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) The four attachment styles (secure, fearful-avoidant, anxious-preoccupied, and dismissive-avoidant) were defined by how one views the internal model of oneself and others. This questionnaire consists of 4 items in which the participant chooses the item that best describes how they are or act in a relationship. Whichever item the participant marks

determined their attachment style in relationships. The secure style mentioned behaviors such as "I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me." The fearful-avoidant style mentioned behaviors such as "I sometimes worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others." The anxious-preoccupied style mentioned behaviors such as "I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like." The dismissive-avoidant style mentioned behaviors such as "I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. This measure has been used in a wide range of studies, including Yusof and Carpenter's (2013) study on family therapists' attachment styles to their clients; Monteoliva, Garcia-Martinez, and Calvo-Salguero's (2016) study on costs and benefits of relationships; and Cooley, Van Buren, and Cole's (2010) study on attachment styles and depression in college women.

Big 5 Personality Inventory (BFI-10; Rammstedt & John, 2007) The Big Five Personality Inventory is originally a 44-item instrument used to measure the five major personality traits. This instrument was then shortened to 10 items, made for use during limited participant time. Each of the five major personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) have two items. Participants were instructed to read each statement starting with "I see myself as someone who…" They then chose on a 5-point Likert scale (l = *Disagree Strongly*, 5 = *Agree Strongly*) how well each of the statements applied to them. Each of the traits has one normally scored item and one reverse-scored item. Higher scores denoted higher levels of the trait.

The 10-item measure highly correlated with the original 44-item measure, with the mean correlation being .83 (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Of the five personality traits, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism had the highest correlations (.82, .89, and .86, respectively). Openness and Agreeableness had lower correlations to the original measure, .79 and .74, respectively. Convergent validity, with an average of .09 in absolute values, remained substantial for the BFI-10. Discriminant validity remained excellent for the BFI-10, with the highest correlation being .19.

Demographic Information. Participants completed a short demographic information form (see Appendix C). Information included age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, and current relationship duration.

Procedure

Participants were recruited over a two-week period through social media sites. The original flyer for the survey was posted on the author's personal page, and through snowball effect, the participants were collected. The participants received the informed consent prior to participation in the study (see Appendix D). After giving consent, the participants received all measures in an online survey format through Qualtrics Survey Software. The order of the measures was randomized to control for order effects, with the demographic information form always presented first. After all surveys were complete, the participants received debriefing information on the final page. There survey contained a total of 67 questions.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations for the self-talk, couples satisfaction, and

relational rumination measures, including both total and subscale scores, are reported in

Tables 1, 2, and 3. As Table 1 indicates, the sample reported using social assessment self-

talk slightly more often than the other types of self-talk, but all were relatively similar.

Overall, the amount of people who reported different domains of self-talk tended to be

balanced across participants. There was not a most common type of self-talk used in a

relationship; all self-talk subscales were close to each other in terms of mean scores.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Relationship Self-Talk

	M	SD	α
Self-Critical	12.10	3.84	.838
Self-Reinforcement	11.55	3.76	.844
Self-Management	12.62	3.57	.794
Social-Assessment	12.91	3.71	.824
Relationship STS Total	49.17	11.49	.955

Note. N =252; ratings made using a 5-point (1 = Never, 5 = Very Often) frequency scale.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the total score of the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI). Scores below 52.57 points suggest notable relationship dissatisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The mean score suggested that most participants tended to be satisfied with their relationship.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Couples Satisfaction

	M	*SD*	*α*
Couples Satisfaction Total	61.98	15.16	.955

Note. N = 252; ratings made using both 7-point (0 = *Extremely Unhappy*, 6 = *Perfect*) and a 6-point (0 = *Not at All True*, 5 = *Completely True*) scales.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the total and subscale relational rumination scores. The most common type of rumination expressed by this sample was the RU. Senkans et al. (2016) found similar results, with RU being highest, followed by RP, and then BU. My results presented somewhat lower overall relationship rumination compared to the published norms.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Relational Rumination

	M	SD	α
Romantic Preoccupation (RP) Rumination	6.99	2.76	.752
Relationship Uncertainty (RU) Rumination	8.88	4.18	.899
Breakup (BU) Rumination	5.55	2.61	.807
Relational Rumination Total	25.12	8.63	.889

Note. $N = 252$; ratings made using a 5-point (1 = *Almost Never*, 5 = *Almost Always*) frequency scale.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. According to the first hypothesis, I predicted that those who reported high levels of self-criticism on the Relationship STS would have lower scores on the CSI. As Table 4 shows, correlational analyses yielded an almost significant negative relationship between engaging in self-critical self-talk and couples satisfaction level. However, there is a significant negative relationship between engaging in self-managing self-talk and couples satisfaction level.

These results do not directly support hypothesis 1, but the results were toward the direction expected, given that the data show that those who engage in high levels of self-critical self-talk tend to have an overall lower satisfaction level within their relationship. The results indicate that those who frequently engage in self-managing self-talk, such as figuring out what one should do or say and giving oneself instructions for what to do next in a relationship, also report lower overall satisfaction in their romantic relationship.

Table 4

Correlations between the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) and Self-Talk Domains

	Self-Critical Self-Talk	Self-Reinforcement Self-Talk	Self-Management Self-Talk	Social Assessment Self-Talk	Total Relationship Self-Talk
Couples Satisfaction Correlation	-.116	.072	-.191	-.080	-.100
Significance	.067	.255	.002	.206	.113

Note. N = 252.

Hypothesis 2. For the second hypothesis, I predicted that those who reported higher levels of social assessing self-talk would also have higher overall relational rumination scores. As Table 5 shows, correlational analyses yielded a strong positive relationship between social assessing self-talk and relational rumination. The table also shows that this was the case across all self-talk subscales.

These results strongly support hypothesis 2 given that the data show that those who engage in high levels of social assessing self-talk tend to have high levels of relational rumination. This is also the case for self-critical, self-managing, and self-reinforcing self-talk, where all tend to have high relational rumination.

Table 5

Correlations between the Relational Rumination and Self-Talk Domains

	Self-Criticism Self-Talk	Self-Reinforcing Self-Talk	Self-Management Self-Talk	Social Assessment Self-Talk	Total Relationship Self-Talk
Relational Rumination Correlation	.267	.131	.336	.343	.347
Significance	.000	.038	.000	.000	.000

Note. N = 252.

Hypothesis 3. A between-subjects ANOVA with a Bonferroni correction for the alpha level for the four Relationship STS subscale tests was conducted for hypothesis 3. I predicted that those who report the anxious preoccupied attachment style would report higher levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other attachment styles. I also predicted that those who report the anxious preoccupied attachment style would report higher levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other types of self-talk.

Of the 252 participants, 248 completed the survey on determining their attachment style. Among these participants, 46.4% reported being secure ($n = 115$), 24.2% reported being fearful avoidant ($n = 60$), 16.1% reported being dismissing ($n = 40$), and 13.3% reported being anxious-preoccupied ($n = 33$).

With respect to the first prediction, I found that the anxious preoccupied attachment style was the highest among all other attachment styles (see Table 6), but only significantly higher compared to the secure attachment style, $F(3, 247) = 3.46$, $p = .017$.

As seen in Table 7, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison showed that for the social-assessing self-talk, the anxious-preoccupied attachment differed from the secure attachment, resulting in partial support for hypothesis 3.

Table 6

Social Assessment Self-Talk (n = 248) across Attachment Styles

	N	M	SD
Secure	115	12.35	3.74
Fearful	60	13.47	3.74
Anxious Preoccupied	33	14.45	3.09
Dismissing	40	12.55	3.71

Table 7

Bonferroni Comparisons for Social-Assessment ST and Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment

		Mean Difference	95% CI	
(I)	(J)	(I-J)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Preoccupied	Secure	2.107*	0.19	4.03
Preoccupied	Fearful	.988	-1.12	3.10
Preoccupied	Dismissing	1.905	-0.38	4.19

Note. N = 248; * the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

With respect to the second prediction, I found that the anxious-preoccupied attachment style reported the highest level of social assessment self-talk compared to all other types of self-talk (see Table 8), and the overall effect was significant, $F(3, 96) = 7.11$, $p < .001$. The self-critical self-talk was significantly different from social assessment self-talk, $F(1, 32) = 7.09$, $p = .012$. The self-reinforcement self-talk was also significantly different from social assessment self-talk, $F(1, 32) = 14.87$, $p = .001$.

Table 8

Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment (n = 33) across Self-Talk Domains

	M	SD
Self-Critical	12.70	4.05
Self-Reinforcing	11.33	3.71
Self-Management	13.73	3.12
Social-Assessment	14.45	3.09

Hypothesis 4. A between-subjects ANOVA with a Bonferroni correction for the alpha level for the four Relationship STS subscale tests was conducted for hypothesis 4. I predicted that those who reported the secure attachment style would have lower levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other attachment styles. I also predicted that those who reported the secure attachment style would have the lowest level of social assessment self-talk compared to the other types of self-talk.

Results showed that those who report the secure attachment style reported lower levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other attachment styles (see Table 6). This was partially supported because the secure was the lowest among the other attachment styles, but only significantly lower compared to the preoccupied attachment style. As seen in Table 9, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison showed that for the social-assessing self-talk, the secure attachment differed from the anxious-preoccupied attachment, resulting in partial support for this part of hypothesis 4.

Table 9

Bonferroni Comparisons for Social Assessment ST and Secure Attachment

		Mean Difference	95% CI	
(I)	(J)	(I-J)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secure	Fearful	-1.119	-2.67	0.43
Secure	Preoccupied	-2.107*	-4.03	-0.19
Secure	Dismissing	-0.202	-1.99	1.58

Note. $N = 248$; * the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results also showed that those who report secure attachment style reported the highest level of social assessment self-talk compared to the other types of self-talk, but the overall effect was not significant, $F(3, 342) = 2.05$, $p = .107$ (see Table 10). This resulted in no support for this part of the hypothesis.

Table 10

Secure Attachment (n = 115) across Self-Talk Domains

	M	SD
Self-Critical	11.62	3.89
Self-Reinforcing	11.67	3.91
Self-Management	12.25	3.69
Social-Assessment	12.35	3.74

Hypothesis 5. For the fifth hypothesis, I predicted that those who reported high levels of self-reinforcing self-talk would have lower levels of neuroticism. As Table 11 shows, correlational analyses yielded an insignificant result for self-reinforcement and neuroticism. This hypothesis was not supported. However, the table shows that there was a significant positive relationship between self-managing and social-assessing self-talk and neuroticism. Self-criticism self-talk and overall self-talk were also significantly and positively correlated with neuroticism.

Table 11

Correlations between Neuroticism and Self-Talk Domains

	Self-Criticism Self-Talk	Self-Reinforcing Self-Talk	Self-Management Self-Talk	Social Assessment Self-Talk	Total Relationship Self-Talk
Neuroticism Correlation	.154	-.032	.171	.222	.166
Significance	.014	.617	.006	.000	.008

Note. N = 252.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how relationship-related self-talk applied to relationship management and satisfaction through personality traits, attachment styles, relationship rumination, and partner satisfaction. By looking at these aspects of a romantic relationship, I expected that certain types of self-talk would relate to different levels of couples satisfaction and rumination. It was also expected that certain types of self-talk would relate to particular aspects of personality traits and attachment styles. This study was done to help advance the field of research in self-talk. Self-talk has been explored in terms of intrapersonal communication, but this study aimed at adding to the field by including an interpersonal aspect – a romantic relationship and relationship satisfaction.

Results showed that those who reported high levels of self-critical self-talk reported somewhat lower overall couples satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 was indirectly supported due to an almost significant negative correlation. I also found that those who reported high levels of self-managing self-talk reported lower overall couples satisfaction.

It is possible that those who are frequently managing what they say and do in a relationship might lead to an overall lower satisfaction level in the romantic relationship, but it would seem more likely that it would be the opposite. Those who are unsatisfied in a romantic relationship may be more likely to use self-managing self-talk techniques since it requires that the person thinks about and gives oneself instructions for future events. There may be an extraneous variable causing such a strong correlation between

these two factors, such as a particular attachment style that leads to relationship dissatisfaction or communication infrequencies between the two partners, resulting in the need for further research in this area.

Those who reported high levels of social-assessing self-talk tended to report high levels of relational rumination. Thus, hypothesis 2 was strongly supported. It was also found that all other types of self-talk (self-critical, self-managing, and self-reinforcing) had a significant positive correlation with relational rumination.

It is possible that those who are constantly replaying conversations in their heads, as in social-assessing self-talk, report higher relational rumination because rumination is where one thinks deeply about something or someone. As the results show, it is clear that most types of self-talk and overall relational rumination are strongly correlated with each other. This is possible because self-talk is where one engages in either internal or external dialogue with the self for self-regulatory functions, and rumination has a similar function of having an internal dialogue or thought process. Besides just the relationship-related cognitions, the results suggest that rumination about relationships involves most the functions that comprise the self-talk scale. The functions on why people engage in self-talk all seem to be equally related to the rumination tendency. They ruminate over something in a relationship, which might cause them to engage in self-talk tendencies.

Results showed that those who reported having the anxious-preoccupied attachment style showed higher levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other attachment styles. Thus, the first part of hypothesis 3 had good support.

A possible explanation to this would be that social assessment self-talk embraces the idea of analyzing, assessing, and anticipating what has happened or will happen in a relationship, which encompasses the definition of anxious-preoccupied attachment. If someone had a dismissive attachment style, for example, they would be less concerned with analyzing what was said or done in the relationship due to being more secluded and not wanting to attach to others strongly.

Results also showed that those who reported having the anxious-preoccupied attachment style showed higher levels of social-assessing self-talk compared to all other self-talk scales. Thus, the second part of hypothesis 3 had partial support.

A possible explanation for this finding is that those with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style have thoughts on how others perceive them, and conversations being held or how someone may respond to something said. Those who tend to be the anxious-preoccupied attachment often have a more negative outlook of the self, while holding a more positive outlook on others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Gouveia et al., 2016). Constantly being concerned or worried about how a significant other might perceive a conversation held could result in higher social-assessing self-talk.

Social assessment self-talk is different from self-critical self-talk in that self-critical self-talk is where the person would be criticizing what one has said or down in a relationship and is concerned about it. Social assessment self-talk, on the other hand, focuses more on assessing or analyzing conversations or actions taken while in the relationship. Those who are anxious-preoccupied are not necessarily criticizing their

words or actions taken but may be more concerned with assessing a situation and anticipating what will happen next.

Social assessment self-talk is also different from self-reinforcement self-talk in that self-reinforcement self-talk is where the person would be showing more positive outlooks of the relationship and reinforcing the good things that have happened to them while in that relationship. Those who are anxious-preoccupied would not be reinforcing good times or conversations had during a relationship; rather, they would be analyzing conversations and making sure they know what steps they may need to take next.

Those who reported having the secure attachments style showed lower levels of social assessment self-talk compared to all other attachment styles as well as having higher levels of social-assessing self-talk compared to all other self-talk scales. Thus, hypothesis 4 had partial support.

A possible explanation to the first part of the hypothesis would be that the secure attachment style deals with having a positive outlook on the self as well as others. If people think positively about the self and their romantic partner, they are less likely to engage in social-assessing self-talk than other attachment styles. There would be less of a need to replay what the other partner has said or to imagine how the partner might respond to what one said if they hold a secure attachment style. Looking back at Edenfield et al.'s (2012) work, those who show secure attachment tend to have more positivity in their relationship, which is another example of how those who have secure attachment tend to have a positive outlook on self and others. Those who show positivity

and openness in their relationship, indicative of the secure attachment style, tend to have longer lasting relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990).

A possible explanation to the second part of the hypothesis is that it is not that people do not engage in self-talk when they are securely attached; it is more of a balance that is evenly distributed across different types of self-talk. They participate in all different styles of self-talk, but do not focus on one style more than the other. For those who reported the secure attachment style, they reported roughly equal numbers in regard to the style of self-talk they use most frequently. Therefore, those who are securely attached criticize themselves for things that may have gone wrong (self-criticism self-talk), reinforce themselves for things that have gone right (self-reinforcement), plan out what they should say or do (self-management), as well as analyze and anticipate what might need to be said or done next (social assessment) in their relationship.

I hypothesized that those who talk to themselves in order to reinforce feelings and thoughts in a romantic relationship may show higher levels of neuroticism, but the results showed that these measures were unrelated. Thus, hypothesis 5 was not supported. However, self-critical self-talk, self-managing self-talk, social-assessing and overall self-talk all were significantly correlated with levels of neuroticism.

Reasons why self-reinforcing self-talk appeared to be unrelated may be because self-reinforcing self-talk is based on positive regard where one feels proud or accomplished for something done, while neuroticism is based more on anxious and repetitive thoughts and depressed mood.

Self-managing self-talk and neuroticism are strongly correlated most likely due to the fact that individuals with high neuroticism are likely to worry and be anxious about their relationship, since they are generally anxious and worrisome. According to Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick (1999), neuroticism tends to reflect feelings of anxiety, depression, and personal insecurity. This same logic applies to the other types of self-talk as well.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

There were several limitations to the study. First, generalizability of the findings is limited due to the predominantly female, Caucasian population. Second, because the questionnaires were offered online only, participants did not have the opportunity to ask questions for clarification, if needed. Third, there was a mistake in the questionnaire format where there were two versions of the relational rumination questionnaire. The original form was used for this study, but the second updated form should have been used due to the changing of two of the original 16 questions (Senkans et al., 2016). Because of the incorrect form of the RelRQ being used in this survey, the results for that section might not have captured the construct as fully as the revised measure. Future research would need to use the most recent version of this measure. Fourth, because of the nature of the self-reported measures, it is difficult to know if participants answered truthfully about their relationship satisfaction and frequency of self-talk.

Future research should address the limitations of sex and race of this study by collecting a true comparison of participants that is more generalizable to the population. Also, using the correct form of the RelRQ would help to further document that self-talk and rumination are correlated. Looking at other factors of personality besides neuroticism

may also lead to other significant results. Another step to take would be to include other factors that relate to relationship satisfaction, such as age differences in couples, compatibility, communication styles, and religious or cultural factors, to see if those could be correlated with self-talk and satisfaction. Using the results from this study, as well as the addition of other factors, could help begin to create a "relationship management" theory, which would be a strong next step for future research. This could help see if there is a specific pattern of how people talk to themselves, as well as other important factors of romantic relationships, that lead them to act and think in particular ways, resulting in the overall functionality and management of their romantic relationship.

In conclusion, this study examined many different aspects that are part of relational satisfaction. Previous research has touched on aspects of relational satisfaction, but not in terms of self-talk, which is where this study attempted to add to the literature. This study has just started to fill gaps within the literature about self-talk and romantic relationships. This study showed that there is not one specific type of self-talk that predominates in relationships.

The results showed at least minimal support for three of the five hypotheses and have created a starting point for future researchers to explore this area of study. It also showed that there were significant differences in the different domains of self-talk and attachment styles, revealing that the way one develops an interpersonal attachment style could have an effect on the styles of intrapersonal self-talk in which one participates.

The study of self-talk in romantic relationships could help counselors and clinicians recognize not only the interpersonal communication between the couple, but the intrapersonal communication one has with oneself about the couple. This information might be useful for helping those with marital or relationship issues to better understand one another and potentially be a starting point for therapeutic techniques focused around thinking and perception instead of just the problems presented.

This study was the first to examine the relationships between self-talk, adult attachment styles, personality, rumination, and couple satisfaction. Now, future research can continue to expand on these new findings, as well as build in other factors and aspects related to relationship satisfaction and self-talk.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Office of Research Compliance,
010A Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY
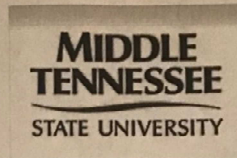
IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Monday, April 23, 2018

Investigator(s):   Olivia DeAngelo; Tom Brinthaupt
Investigator(s') Email(s): okd2e@mtmail.mtsu.edu; tom.brinthaupt@mtsu.edu
Department: Psychology

Study Title: Self-Talk and its Functions within the Realm of Relationship Management
                            and Satisfaction
Protocol ID: **18-1245**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review
Board (IRB) through the **EXEMPT** review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the
research category *(2) Educational Tests* A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in
regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	EXEMPT from furhter IRB review***		
Date of expiration	**NOT APPLICABLE**		
Participant Size	200 (two hundred)		
Participant Pool	**Adults age 18+**		
Mandatory Restrictions	1. Participants must be age 18+		
	2. Informed consent must be obtained		
	3. Identifying information may not be collected		
Additional Restrictions	**None**		
Comments	None		
Amendments	**Date**	**Post-Approval Amendments**	
		None	

***This exemption determination only allows above defined protocol from further IRB review such
as continuing review. However, the following post-approval requirements still apply:
- Addition/removal of subject population should not be implemented without IRB approval
- Change in investigators must be notified and approved
- Modifications to procedures must be clearly articulated in an addendum request and the
  proposed changes must not be incorporated without an approval
- Be advised that the proposed change must comply within the requirements for exemption
- Changes to the research location must be approved – appropriate permission letter(s)
  from external institutions must accompany the addendum request form
- Changes to funding source must be notified via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)

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- The exemption does not expire as long as the protocol is in good standing
- Project completion must be reported via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
- Research-related injuries to the participants and other events must be reported within 48 hours of such events to compliance@mtsu.edu

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to make the following types of changes to this protocol without the need to report to the Office of Compliance, as long as the proposed changes do not result in the cancellation of the protocols eligibility for exemption:
- Editorial and minor administrative revisions to the consent form or other study documents
- Increasing/decreasing the participant size

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all applicable post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website. Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, current & past investigator information, training certificates, survey instruments and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the sacure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:
        Click here for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
        More information on exmpt procedures can be found here.

APPENDIX B: RELATIONSHIP SELF-TALK SCALE

Please indicate your gender by circling one: **Female** **Male**

Researchers have determined that all people talk to themselves, at least in some situations or under some circumstances. Each of the following items concerns those times when you might "talk to yourself" or carry on an internal conversation with yourself (either silently or out loud) about your romantic relationship.

Determine how true each item is for you personally by circling the appropriate number next to each item. Assume that each item begins with the statement: "I talk to myself about my relationship when …" Be sure to rate each item. Please take your time and think carefully about each item. Use the following scale to rate each item:

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Never	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Very Often**

I TALK TO MYSELF ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WHEN…

1. I should have done something differently in
   my relationship   1 2 3 4 5

2. Something good has happened
   in my relationship   1 2 3 4 5

3. I need to figure out what I should do or say in my
   relationship   1 2 3 4 5

4. I'm imagining how my partner might respond
   to things I've said   1 2 3 4 5

5. I am really happy for myself in my relationship   1 2 3 4 5

6. I want to analyze something that my partner recently
   said to me   1 2 3 4 5

7. I feel ashamed of something I've done in the relationship 1 2 3 4 5

8. I'm proud of something I've done in the relationship   1 2 3 4 5

9. I'm mentally exploring a possible course of action   1 2 3 4 5

    in the relationship

10. I'm really upset with myself in the relationship   1 2 3 4 5

11. I try to anticipate what my partner will say and how I'll   1 2 3 4 5

    respond to him or her

12. I'm giving myself instructions or directions about what   1 2 3 4 5

    I should do or say in the relationship

13. I want to reinforce myself for doing well in my   1 2 3 4 5

    relationship

14. Something bad has happened to me in my relationship   1 2 3 4 5

15. I want to remind myself of what I need to do   1 2 3 4 5

    in/for the relationship

16. I want to replay something that I've said to my partner   1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Directions: Please answer each of the following questions:

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your sex?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other

3. What is the sex of your partner?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other

4. What is your current relationship status?
    a. Dating
    b. Engaged
    c. Married

5. If you are currently in college, what year are you?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
    e. Graduate Student
    f. I am not in college

6. What is your highest level of education completed?
    a. High School GED
    b. High School Diploma
    c. Some College
    d. Associate's Degree
    e. Bachelor's Degree
    f. Master's Degree
    g. Doctorate Degree

7. With what ethnicity do you identify?
    a. African American
    b. American Indian/Alaska Native
    c. Asian/Pacific Islander
    d. Caucasian
    e. Hispanic
    f. Middle Eastern
    g. Other: _____

8. How long have you been in a relationship with your significant other?
    _____ months and/or
    _____ years

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Project Title: How People Think about Romantic Relationships

Purpose of Project: Researchers have determined that all people talk to themselves, at least in some situations or under certain circumstances. In this study, we are interested in the times that you may "talk to yourself" while in a relationship with a significant other. The purpose of this study is to examine the times that you talk to yourself while in a romantic relationship.

Procedure: The survey consists of 67 items and will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Survey items pertain to common thoughts about oneself in regard to your romantic relationship, the frequency of engaging in behaviors that pertain to your satisfaction and management of your romantic relationship, as well as about your personality and standard demographic items. All data collected will remain anonymous and will be used to answer the research question, "how do people talk to themselves while in a romantic relationship?"

Risks/Benefits: Completion of the questionnaire should present no more than minimal risks to the participants. The benefit of participating will be its contribution to a research area that has yet to be explored.

Confidentiality: We are collecting no identifying information from you, so all of your data will remain anonymous. The information we do have will only be accessed by the researchers. Summary data from all participants in this study will be made public. No MTSU teachers or administrators will have access to any of the data which can be connected to you personally.

Principal Investigator/Contact Information: Olivia DeAngelo/okd2e@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Participating in this project is voluntary, and refusal to participate or withdrawing from participation at any time during the project will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised, for example, your information may be shared with the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, you may contact the Principal Investigator as indicated above. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a

participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

Consent

I have read the above information and my questions have been answered satisfactorily by project staff. I believe I understand the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study and give my informed and free consent to be a participant.

Note: If you are completing this survey for credit through the MTSU Research Pool, you will need to progress through the entire survey (going all the way to the end of the survey) before your credit will be processed. If you leave the survey prior to getting to the end of it, your participation credit will not be recorded.

○ I consent, begin the study

○ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate