

Chapter 8

The Self in Relationships: Whether, How, and When Close Others Put the

Self "in Its Place"

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ABSTRACT

We examined whether, how, and when relational closeness reduces self enhancement and, more specifically, the self-serving bias (SSB). Relational closeness was either measured or induced. In several experiments, either relationally close or relationally distant dyads worked on interdependent outcomes tasks. The SSB was present in members of distant dyads (i.e., participants took individual credit for the dyadic success but blamed the partner for the dyadic failure), but absent in members of close dyads (i.e., participants were equally likely to take personal responsibility for the success or the failure of the dyad). The gracious attributional pattern of close dyad members is due to: (a) forming a

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favorable impression of the partner; and (b) expecting attributional generosity from the partner. In fact, when the partner violates this expectancy (i.e., when he/she displays the SSB), members of close dyads respond by manifesting the SSB in turn. We discuss these and several other contingencies that are likely to keep an individual's self-enhancement tendencies in check.

Individuals enhance the self in diverse and remarkable ways. They consider themselves more moral, trustworthy, kind, and physically attractive than others. They rate themselves as above-average teachers, managers, and leaders. They also believe that they are happier than others, that they are likely to be healthier and live longer than others, and that they are more likely than others to experience positive life events but less likely than others to experience negative life events. They even believe they are better drivers!

Such overblown self-evaluations are well documented (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). These beliefs are maintained through several mechanisms. One mechanism is biased memorial processes, such as better memory for positive than negative self-attributes (Skowronski, Betz, Thompson, & Shannon, 1991) and for feedback pertaining to one's strengths rather than one's weaknesses (Sedikides & Green, 2000). Another mechanism is the selective reconstruction, generation, and evaluation of confirming causal theories (Kunda, 1990; Ross, 1989). A third mechanism is the idiosyncratic (i.e., favorable to the self) definition of traits and abilities (Dunning, 1993). Other mechanisms include denial (Janoff-Bulman & Timko, 1987), psychological distancing from others (Schimel, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, O'Mahen, & Arndt, 2000), affirmation of a self-domain that is unrelated to the self-domain under threat (Steele, 1988), downward social comparison (Wills, 1981), favorable self-presentation (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), and self-favoring causal attributions for success and failure - an attributional pattern known as the self-serving bias (SSB).

The SSB is the individual's propensity to make internal attributions for success, but external attributions for failure. Stated otherwise, the SSB refers to the individual's taking responsibility for successful task outcomes, but denying responsibility, or blaming other persons or circumstances, for failed task outcomes. For example, students will take credit for passing a difficult examination, but will attribute failing the same examination to its difficulty or the instructor's tough grading policy; business partners working on an account will claim disproportionate credit if the account is gained, but will avoid personal responsibility if the account is lost; and group members will overemphasize their individual contribution on a group project, but will blame other members for the group's inferior output. The SSB is pervasive, and is one of the most robust and easily replicable phenomena in social and personality psychology (for both narrative and quantitative reviews, see Arkin, Cooper, & Kolditz, 1980; Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Mullen & Riordan, 1988; Weary-Bradley, 1978; Zuckerman, 1979).

Imagine that George and Alexi, two perfect strangers, find themselves in an interesting predicament as rookie university students. In their first introductory psychology class session, the instructor invites them to complete a short assignment. She asks one of them to generate a list of as many "why" questions as possible, and asks the other student to generate a list of as many "because" answers as possible. The instructor explains that the two contestants will work independently of one another. However, the outcome of the assignment is interdependent, as the rest of the class will be given the two lists and will judge how imaginative and humorous each why-because combination is. George and Alexi work fervently for a few minutes. Then, the moment of truth arrives: the two helpless contestants learn that their joint output is poor and disappointing. How will they respond? Based on the robustness of the SSB, one would expect for them to blame (at least privately) each other for the dyadic failure. Now, consider the scenario in which the contestants are told that their collaborative exercise produced highly imaginative and humorous question-and-answer items. How will they respond in this case? Again, based on extant literature, one would expect them to claim privately disproportionate personal credit for the success of the dyad.

The situation, though, becomes less predictable if we assume that George and Alexi are high-school friends. Would the outcome of the assignment (i.e., success vs. failure feedback) determine whether each person displaced responsibility for the failure of the dyad or claimed credit for its success? Would their friendship stop George and Alexi from being selfish, how so, and when? These are the questions that sparked the present investigation.

More formally, the scope of our research is the role of close relationships in self-enhancement. The central issue with which we are concerned is whether close relationships attenuate self-enhancement tendencies. Do close relationships put the self "in its place"? How so? When does this relational function (i.e., curtailing individual self-enhancement) break down? We will focus on the SSB as a traditional and well-validated signature of self-enhancement. Rephrasing our research questions, we want to know: (a) whether relationship closeness reduces the SSB; (b) what are the mechanisms by which this reduction occurs; and (c) when relational closeness attenuates or accentuates the SSB.

THE EFFECT OF RELATIONSHIP CLOSENESS ON THE SSB: HYPOTHESES

We propose two competing hypotheses that address the role of relationship closeness in the SSB: the relationships-as-bound hypothesis and the relationships-as-enabler hypothesis.

The Relationships -as-bound Hypothesis

Several broad theoretical perspectives offer a sound rationale for the hypothesis that close relationships will reduce self-enhancement, or that closely related partners will not manifest the SSB. We labeled this hypothesis the *relationships-as-bound* hypothesis.

According to balance theory (Heider, 1958), attitudes toward the self extend to close others. Self-expansion theory (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991) posits that the self -concept expands to incorporate a close partner ("the you in me", according to Hornstein, 1976). Close others are indeed perceived as a natural category (Sedikides, Olsen, & Reis, 1993). Interdependence theory and the communal-exchange relationships literature maintain that an important goal in close relationships is the maximization of outcomes for both partners (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997), with partners being genuinely concerned for each other (Clark & MiUs, 1979), and being trustful (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999), committed (Rusbult, 1983), and even sacrificial (Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997) to each other. In a similar vein, the extended self-evaluation maintenance model (Beach & Tesser, 1995) proffers that close individuals are motivated to protect not only their own but also their partner's self-concept. Indeed, as suggested by Sedikides and Strube's (1997) self-concept enhancing tactician (SCENT) model, one important function of close relationships is to keep an individual's self-enhancing tendencies in check. Studies of self-presentational modesty among closely related partners (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995) are consistent with this suggestion. If the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), individuals will be willing to relegate self-interest in exchange for (perceived or real) relational benefits.

All of these theoretical statements converge in advocating the notion that, in close dyadic relationships, one will be as likely to protect or enhance the partner as one will be to protect or enhance the self. Close individuals will share the responsibility for a task outcome with their partner, regardless of whether the dyadic outcome is successful or unsuccessful. The SSB will be absent in close relationships.

The Relationships -as-enabler Hypothesis

As a counterpoint, an equally broad and diverse body of literature emphasizes the view that close relationships serve a self-protective or self-enhancing role. Close relationships will augment self-enhancement, or enable closely related partners to display the SSB. We labeled this hypothesis the *relationships-as-enabler* hypothesis. Individuals are rather inaccurate in how they think they are viewed by specific related others (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993), perhaps because others do

not disclose their true impression of the individual (Felson, 1993). Indeed, relationally close individuals avoid evaluating each other (Goffman, 1959). When they have no choice but to communicate information about each other, close individuals either distort the communication to make it more consistent with their partner's self-concept (Manis, Cornell, & Moore, 1974) or discuss each other's positive rather than negative traits (Blumberg, 1972). As Tesser and Rosen (1975) put it, among close individuals, good news tends to be communicated more frequently, more quickly, more fully, and more spontaneously than bad news" (the MUM effect; p. other with support, which regulates or alleviates negative affect (e.g., depression and stress; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Coyne, Burchill, & Stiles, 1991; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990) and increases positive affect, feelings of well-being, and self-esteem (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Major, Testa, & Bylsma, 1991). Indeed, friends and partners promote each other's positive identities (Schlenker & Britt, 1999)-a process that Bernard (1968) termed "stroking"-and shape identities in the direction of the ideal self (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999). It is not surprising, then, that individuals consider an elevation in their self-esteem as one of the major benefits of relationships (Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994), with relationally involved individuals reporting higher self-esteem than relationally uninvolved ones (Long, 1983).

The common thread of the above-reviewed literature is that close others are a safety cushion (even a cheerleader!) for one's self-protective or selfenhancing tactics. Close others make the person feel comfortable and relax the person's social conventions. One can be "himself" or "herself" with close others. This comfort zone ("felt security", according to Ainsworth, 1989) enables the individual to pursue somewhat more freely his/her egoistic objectives, as long as pursuit of these objectives does not seem to harm directly the partner or the relationship. The relationships-as-enabler perspective implies that the SSB will be present in close relationships. Close individuals will privately take disproportionate personal credit for the dyadic success and will privately assign the partner disproportionate blame for the dyadic failure.

THE EFFECT OF RELATIONSHIP CLOSENESS ON THE SSB: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

We wondered whether there is direct confirmatory or disconfirmatory evidence in the SSB literature for the relationships-as-bound and relationships-as-enabler hypotheses. Before engaging in such a literature review, however, we need to detour to a brief exposition of issues pertaining to research on the SSB.

As stated previously, the SSB is an empirically robust phenomenon. Participants manifest the SSB in individual (Miller, 1976) and group (Schlenker & Miller, 1977) settings. Also, participants manifest the SSB in both interpersonal influence and skills-orientated tasks (Weary-Bradley, 1978). *Interpersonal influence* tasks include two major paradigms. One is the teacher-student paradigm, in which participants assigned the role of the teacher report their influence on ostensibly successful or unsuccessful (fictitious) students (Beckman, 1970). That is, participants are asked to take responsibility for their "student's" progress, or lack of it, on an instructional assignment. The second is the therapist-patient paradigm, in which participants assigned the role of the therapist report their level of contribution to the successful or unsuccessful therapeutic course of a patient (actually, a confederate) (Arkin, Gleason, & Johnston, 1976). *Skills-orientated* tasks are classified under two categories. The first category includes independent outcomes tasks. In these settings, participants work on a task independently (Luginbuhl, Crowe, & Kahan, 1975). The second category includes dyadic interdependent outcomes tasks.

In our research, we were concerned exclusively with dyadic interdependent outcomes (or "pooled interdependence") tasks. Such tasks involve collaboration between participants. Success or failure of the dyad depends on the joint rather than unique contribution of the members. Given the dyad's common fate, several factors—such as interaction, effort coordination, and a good working relationship between partners—constitute important prerequisites for an optimal task outcome.

Explanations for the SSB have been the topic of considerable debate in social and personality psychology. One early review proposed a cognitive explanation—more specifically, differential access to information due to selective attention and information accessibility in memory (Miller & Ross, 1975). For example, individuals display the SSB because they restrict their attention to information readily available to them, failing to realize that this information is incomplete. Another explanation advocated the role of motives. Individuals manifest the SSB because they are motivated to think positively or avoid thinking negatively of the self (Weary-Bradley, 1978). Despite early pessimism about the conclusiveness of the cognition versus motivation debate (Tetiok & Levi, 1982), there is now consensus that cognitive explanations alone cannot account fully for the SSB. Instead, motivational reasons have emerged as a sufficient explanation for the SSB (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Zuckerman, 1979). In our research, we are interested in the motivational underpinning of the SSB. Indeed, as we stated previously, we regard the SSB as a valid signature of the motivation to enhance the self.

For this reason, we sought to outline clearly the features of an adequate test for the motivationally-based emergence of the SSB in dyadic interdependent tasks. This test would minimize the contributions of cognitive factors and

maximize the contributions of motivational factors. Such a test would need to satisfy the following four procedural criteria: (a) members of the dyad ought to be *separated* (i.e. seated in different rooms), so that they are unable to interact during the completion of the experimental task; (b) the dyad ought to complete a relatively *unfamiliar* task; (c) each dyad member ought to receive false and randomly determined success or failure feedback at the *dyadic* rather than individual level; and (d) each dyad member ought to attribute *privately* the task outcome to the self or the partner.

These procedural criteria arguably limit cognitive explanations for the obtained SSB. One reason for this is the timing of the attributions: the attributions of the dyad members follow the temporally immediate rather than distant completion of a task, thus effectively neutralizing memorial biases (i.e., distortions or intrusions). Another reason is that the unambiguous appraisal of the magnitude of own contribution to the task is virtually impossible, given that the task is novel and the feedback is at the dyadic level. A third and final reason is that the members of the dyad are unaware of the quality of each other's task performance.

In our literature review, then, we searched for experiments whose procedures satisfied the four criteria named above. Both in the review and our research we were concerned with relativistic attributions, that is, attributing the task outcome, on a continuum, either to the self or the partner. Our choice of relativistic attributions was theory-guided: The relationships-as-bound and relationships-as-enabler hypotheses make relativistic predictions, which would be tested best by relativistic attributions. We focused on two types of dyadic relationships: close (i.e., friends) and distant (i.e., strangers). We present the relevant research below.

The SSB in Interdependent outcomes Tasks: The Case of Close Dyads

Several studies have examined the presence of the SSB in close dyads (Christensen, Sullaway, & King, 1983; Fincham & Bradbury, 1989; Maass & Vol988; Ross & Sicoly, 1979; Thompson & Kelley, 1981). Some of these studies have obtained evidence for the SSB, others have found a reversal of the SSB (what we term the other-serving bias or OSB), and others have reported null findings.

We will not discuss the results of these studies in detail, because two of the procedural features fall short of satisfying our review criteria. These studies allowed for memorial distortions or intrusions because they tested participants' recall of past interdependent activities, immediate appraisal of their recently completed task performance. More importantly, these studies did not include a manipulation of success or failure performance feedback. Hence, prior to conducting our own research, we found no published studies that tested conclusively whether close participants

working on dyadic interdependent tasks display a motivationally-based SSB. We found no evidence in favor of or against the relationships-as-bound and the relationships-as-enabler hypotheses.

The SSB in Interdependent Outcomes Tasks: The Case of Distant Dyads

Three experiments have examined the presence of the SSB in distant dyads that are involved in interdependent outcomes tasks. These experiments were reported by Johnston (1967) and Wolosin *et al.* (1973, Experiments 1 and 2).

Participants in Johnston's (1967) experiment believed (falsely) that they worked on a tracking task with a partner who was in a neighboring room. The task required holding a moving cursor steady at zero by manipulating a control knob. Participants repeated this task in three experimental sessions, each of which consisted of 20 trials, each of 60 seconds duration. Then, participants received randomly determined and bogus success or failure feedback. The results revealed an OSB: participants who received success feedback tended to give less credit to the self than the partner, whereas those who received failure feedback accepted more responsibility for the task outcome.

Participants in Wolosin *et al.*'s (1973) research either cooperated (Experiment 1) or competed (Experiment 2) on a task. The task consisted of choosing from each of 20 geographic location pairs the location in which participants were more likely to reunite with a friend. At the conclusion of the task, participants received randomly determined success or failure feedback. Cooperative participants displayed the SSB: they accepted individual responsibility for the dyadic success, but blamed the partner for the dyadic failure. Likewise, competitive participants accepted individual responsibility for dyadic success, but blamed the self and partner to an equal extent for dyadic failure.

In all, the evidence for the presence of the SSB in dyadic interdependent outcomes tasks is weak. The SSB was present in two cases (Wolosin *et al.*, 1973, Experiment 1; Wolosin *et al.*, Experiment 2, success condition), the OSB was obtained in another case (Johnston, 1967), and null findings were reported in still another case (Wolosin *et al.*, 1973, failure condition of Experiment 2). How can this inconsistency be accounted for? We maintain that a reason for the weak evidence for the SSB is task importance. The SSB intensifies as task importance and a looming threat to the self increase (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). We contend that Johnston's (1967) tracking task—a task that produced an OSB—was probably perceived by participants as a low-importance task.

Our research controlled for differential task importance by standardizing it. We used a task that was a face valid measure of creativity, an attribute that university students, our targeted population, consider important (Amabile, 1983). We believed that the introduction of an important task, coupled with

the adoption of the four critical procedural features outlined above, would allow us to demonstrate a motivationally-based SSB in dyads consisting of distant partners.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

We conducted several experiments in an effort to test the viability of the relationships-as-bound and relationships-as-enabler hypotheses. We began by asking the question of whether relationship closeness reduces the SSB. We proceeded by addressing the issue of how relationship closeness might reduce the SSB. We concluded by examining when relationship closeness reduces or augments the **SSB**.

Does Relationship Closeness Reduce the SSB?

We attempted to address the question of whether relationship closeness reduces the SSB in an experiment conducted by Campbell, Sedikides, Reeder, and Elliot (2000). One objective of this experiment was to test whether the SSB emerges in distant dyads. In the absence of a relational bond and in light of the robustness of the SSB, we expected such dyads to display the SSB. We predicted that participants whose dyad received success feedback would regard the self as more responsible for the task outcome than the partner, whereas participants whose dyad received failure feedback would blame the partner more than the self for the task outcome.

The primary objective of this experiment, though, was to find out whether the SSB emerges in close dyads. We were interested in comparing the attributional pattern of close dyads with that of distant dyads. Suppose that close participants were equally likely to assume personal responsibility for the dyadic success and its failure (compared to distant dyads). This pattern would be consistent with the relationships-as-bound hypothesis. Such a finding would demonstrate that relationship closeness poses limits on selfenhancement. On the other hand, suppose that close participants outdid each other in taking responsibility for the dyadic success rather than its failure (compared to distant dyads). This pattern would be in line with the relationships-as-enabler hypothesis. Such a finding would show that relationship closeness creates self-enhancement tendencies.

We began by examining the presence of the SSB among strangers and among friends. Half of the participants reported to the laboratory with a friend, whereas the other half reported with a stranger. The experimenter placed each dyad member in a separate room, in which he/she stayed for the rest of the experiment. Not surprisingly, a manipulation check indicated that friends reported a higher degree of closeness than strangers.

For exploratory purposes, we asked participants to record their mood state. Next, participants learned that they would take the "Lange-Elliot Creativity Test", which was described as a well-validated test. Participants were instructed that the purpose of the experiment was to study how brainstorming affects dyadic creativity. Brainstorming was defined ("coming up with creative ideas in a group setting") and operationalized for the purposes of the experiment ("coming up with as many uses for an object as you can"). Participants were informed further that they had been assigned to the control group and, as such, they would not interact with their partner.

Specific instructions regarding the completion of the Lange-Elliot Creativity Test followed. Participants were told that they and their partner would be presented with the names of two objects, one at a time. The objects were "brick" and "candle". Participants would have 5 minutes to generate individually as many functionally distinct uses as possible for each object. They were to write each object use on a slip of paper, fold the paper in half, and drop it in the box next to them. In the end, the experimenter would place the slips in another box. Then, the experimenter would sum up the total number of functionally distinct and non-common uses that the two participants had generated. This sum would constitute the overall creativity score for the dyad. The experimenter could only know the dyadic, not the individual, creativity score. After rating the importance of creativity to them (creativity was equally important to friends and strangers), participants completed the test.

Subsequently, participants received bogus and randomly determined success or failure feedback at the dyadic level. The feedback was administered both graphically and verbally. The graphic form included a bell-shaped histogram, in which the vertical axis was labeled "count" (representing the combined total number of object uses) and the horizontal axis was labeled "Z-score". Each participant in the success feedback condition was shown a mark at the 93rd percentile, was told "You did well", and was further informed, "Your and the other participant's combined score on the Lange-Elliot Creativity Test was at the 93rd percentile. You scored better than 93% of the individuals used in our normative reference sample". In contrast, each participant in the failure feedback condition was shown a mark at the 31st percentile, was told "You did poorly", and was further informed that, "Your and the other participant's combined score on the Lange-Elliot Creativity Test was at the 31st percentile. You scored worse than 69% of the individuals used in our normative reference sample". Participants were also asked to initial the feedback as evidence that they understood it.

The completion of the dependent measures followed. Participants were assured that their responses to the scales would be anonymous and confidential, and that they would not interact with their partner at the end of the experiment. The two key dependent measures were preceded by a statement

that the experimenters were "unable to determine which of you was more responsible for the overall positive or negative results obtained by the pair". The two measures were as follows: "Who was more responsible for the outcome of this test?" and "Who made the greater positive contribution to this test?". Finally, participants filled out a success and failure feedback manipulation check, composed of two questions: "How well do you think that both of the other participant did on this test?", and "How important was the you an outcome of this test to you?".

The feedback manipulation was effective. Dyads who received success feedback reported having performed better than dyads who received failure feedback. Additionally, participants considered the creativity test more important after receiving success than failure feedback; that is, participants compensated for their failure by downgrading the importance of the test (Wyer & Frey, 1983).

We display the results in Table 8.1. Participants in distant relationships displayed the SSB: they assumed greater personal responsibility for the success of the dyad than its failure. This pattern is consistent with our prediction and demonstrates the motivational significance of the SSB. Interestingly, however, participants in close relationships did *not* manifest the SSB: they assumed equivalent levels of personal responsibility for the dyad's success and failure. As a conceptual replication of the above findings, close participants claimed a *less* positive contribution to the test outcome than distant participants. Thus, close participants refrained from the SSB. These findings render support to the relationships-as-bound hypothesis at the expense of, the relationships-as-enabler hypothesis.

As a reminder, we had assessed participants' mood states upon arrival at the laboratory. Friends were in a happier mood than strangers. However,

Table 8.1 Attributions as a function of feedback and relationship closeness in Campbell, Sedikides, Reeder, and Elliot (2000)

1. Task outcome question		
	Failure feedback	Success feedback
Distant dyads	5.01 ^a	6.22 ^b
Close dyads	5.45 ^a	5.73 ^a
II. Positive contribution question		
	Distant dyads	Close dyads
	6.16 ^a	5.52 ^b

Note 1: Responses to the task outcome question were made on a 1 (the other participant was more responsible) to 10 (I was more responsible) scale; responses to the positive contribution question were made on a 1 (the other participant made the greater positive contribution) to 10 (I made the greater positive contribution) scale.

Note 2.- Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

these mood differences did not qualify the findings. Additionally, the findings generalized over participant gender.

How Does Relationship Closeness Reduce the SSB? In Search of Mechanisms

What are the mechanisms by which relationship closeness reduces the SSB? We addressed this issue in two experiments reported by Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (1998).

Participant Selection and Anticipated Interaction as Explanations for the Relationship-as-bound Hypothesis

The Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment showed that close partners keep selfenhancement beliefs (i.e., the SSB) in check. However, this study can be criticized on the grounds of a critical confounding, participant selection. It is likely that participants who agreed to come to the laboratory with a friend were particularly gregarious and sharing. The results, then, may be due to personality differences rather than relational closeness. An important objective of our next experiment (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998, Experiment 1) was to control for this potential confounding.

We also intended to address another, more critical issue: what is the mechanism that is responsible for the elimination of the SSB in close dyads? One such mechanism may be the anticipation of future interactions. Friends anticipate seeing each other outside the context of the experiment and sharing their experiences. Thus, friends may have acted generously in the Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment in order to avoid the possibility of having to provide their friend with an account for selfish attributions. In this way, close partners might have refrained from the SSB for the sake of relationship maintenance. In fact, an influential literature on communal-exchange relationships (Clark, 1984; Mills & Clark, 1982) suggests that anticipation of future and rewarding interaction with a partner can lead to a less selfish (i.e., more communal) orientation in outcome distribution. We addressed this possibility in our next experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 1) by using unacquainted participants exclusively. Given that they were unacquainted, participants were unlikely to expect future interactions, let alone rewarding interactions. In fact, care was taken so that no participant (a) anticipated interacting with his/her partner following the experiment, or (b) intended to discuss the experiment with the partner in incidental encounters outside the laboratory.

The crucial manipulation in this experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 1) was aimed at inducing closeness in half of the participants. Reciprocal and escalating self-disclosure is a vital feature in the development of a close relationship (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). We devised a task

to simulate such self-disclosure between unacquainted participants, which we named the Relationship Closeness Induction Task (RCIT; Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1999).

Will members of close dyads, who do not anticipate interacting with one another in the future, still refrain from the SSB? Stated otherwise, is anticipated interaction a necessary condition for the elimination of the SSB in close dyads? If anticipated interaction is not a necessary condition, the results of the Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment will be replicated (i.e., the SSB will be absent in close dyads). On the other hand, if anticipated interaction is indeed a necessary condition, close partners will display the SSB.

Four unacquainted participants arrived at the laboratory for each experimental session and were split into two separate dyads by the experimenter. Participants in each dyad were seated across from each other, were informed that they would not interact with each other at the end of the experiment, and were asked not to talk about the experiment if they encountered each other on campus. Participants also learned that they would engage in two short and ostensibly unrelated studies. The first study would involve a communication task. This study actually was the RCIT, a structured self-disclosure task. The RCIT consists of three lists of questions and instructs participants to self-disclose mutually for 9 minutes while engaging in as natural a conversation as possible. Participants spend 1 minute on List I (7 questions, e.g., "Where are you from?", "What year are you at this university?"), 3 minutes on List II (12 questions, e.g., "What are your hobbies?", "What would you like to do after graduating from this university?"), and 5 minutes on List III (10 questions, e.g., "Describe the last time you felt lonely", "Tell me one thing about yourself that most individuals who already know you don't know"). The three lists of questions become progressively personal. While participants take turns answering the questions, the experimenter waits outside the room and acts as a time keeper, intervening only for the purpose of instructing participants to proceed to the next list.

The majority of dyads managed to respond to almost all questions within each list. They also reported that they had adequate privacy, felt comfortable, considered conversation a valid way to become familiar with a stranger, and had experienced conversations of this sort in the past with strangers. Most importantly, participants in the close relationship condition reported feeling closer to their partner than participants in the distant relationship condition. The results of this manipulation check attest to the effectiveness of the RCIT in inducing relationship closeness.

Then, participants were told that it was time to proceed with Study 2, in which they would take a creativity test. Participants in the close condition stayed with the same partner, but participants in the distant condition were switched to a new partner, who had just completed the RCIT with another participant. This practice ensured that participants in the close and distant conditions went through an

identical relationship induction procedure. From this point on, the experiment followed the same procedure and used the same manipulation checks and dependent measures as the Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment.

Close and distant participants reported equivalent mood levels. Also, creativity was equally important to the two types of participants. Finally, the feedback manipulation was effective: participants in the success feedback condition reported that both they and their partner performed better compared to reports of participants in the failure feedback condition. Also, participants who received success feedback ended up regarding the creativity test as more important than participants who received failure feedback.

As shown in Table 8.2, this experiment replicated the results of the Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment. Distant participants assumed greater personal responsibility for the dyad's success than its failure. However, close participants assumed equivalent levels of responsibility for the dyad's success and failure. Furthermore, close participants reported making a less positive contribution to the test outcome relative to distant participants. In all, the SSB emerged in distant but not close dyads. The absence of the SSB in relationally close dyads is consistent with the relationships-as-bound hypothesis. (Note that, in contrast to the Campbell *et al.* experiment, men displayed the SSB to a greater degree than women.)

Table 8.2 Attributions as a function of feedback and relationship closeness in Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (1998, Experiment 1)

I. Task outcome question		
	Failure feedback	Success feedback
Distant dyads	5.23 ^a	6.20 ^b
Close dyads	5.60 ^a	5.30 ^a
II. Positive contribution question		
	Distant dyads	Close dyads
	5.9 ^a	5.27 ^b

Note 1: Responses to the task outcome question were made on a 1 (the other participant was more responsible) to 10 (I was more responsible) scale; responses to the positive contribution question were made on a 1 (the other participant made the greater positive contribution) to 10 (I made the greater positive contribution) scale.

Note 2: Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

This experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 1) ruled out participant selection as an explanation for the relationships-as-bound hypothesis and increases our confidence in the relationships-as-bound hypothesis. The experiment also demonstrated that the anticipation of future rewarding interactions is not a necessary condition for the absence of the SSB in close dyads.

Partner Impression as an Explanation for the Relationships-as-bound Hypothesis

Our next investigation examined partner impression as an explanation for why close relationships curtail the SSB. Impressions of close others are more favorable than impressions of distant others. For example, individuals consider friends more sincere, dependable, and considerate, and less spiteful, rude, and superficial than strangers (Brown, 1986, Experiments 2 and 3; Hall & Taylor, 1976). Impressions, in turn, can affect attributions and even the distribution of behavioral outcomes (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994).

Based on this logic, our next experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 2) tested the notion that closely-related individuals refrain from the SSB, in part because they form a relatively favorable impression of their partner.

The first part of this experiment was identical to Experiment 1 of Sedikides *et al.* (1998). Specifically, participants went through the RCIT and took the creativity test. Before receiving test feedback, however, participants completed, in private, a modified version of the Interpersonal Judgment Scale (IJS; Byrne, 1971). Participants recorded their impression of their partner in terms of his/her intelligence, morality, knowledge of current events, creativity, psychological adjustment, fairness, and desirability as a co-worker. Next, participants received success or failure feedback and filled out the dependent measures.

As in the preceding experiment, the RCIT was successful in inducing relationship closeness. As in the Campbell *et al.* (2000) experiment, close participants were in a better mood than distant participants, but this difference did not qualify the findings. Although close participants regarded creativity as more important than distant participants (in contrast to previous experiments), this difference also did not qualify the findings. Finally, the success and failure feedback manipulation was effective.

We assessed partner impressions on a 1-8 scale, with high numbers reflecting positive impressions. As expected, close participants formed a more favorable impression of their partner ($M = 5.13$) than distant participants did of their own ($M = 4.04$). Stated somewhat differently, distant partners formed a neutral impression of each other, whereas close partners formed a mildly Positive impression of each other.

In replication of our previous work, the relationships-as-bound hypothesis was supported (Table 8.3). Distant participants assumed more personal responsibility for the success than the failure of the dyad, but close participants were equally likely to take responsibility for the dyadic success or failure. Likewise, close participants thought that they made a less positive contribution to the task outcome than distant participants. (In addition, men were more likely to display the SSB than women.)

Table 8.3 Attributions as a function of feedback and relationship closeness in Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (1998, Experiment 2)

I. Task outcome question		Failure feedback	Success feedback
Distant dyads		4.77 ^a	5.88 ^b
Close dyads		5.92 ^a	5.75 ^a
II. Positive contribution question			
	Distant dyads	Close dyads	
	6.03 ^a	5.31 ^b	

Note 1: Responses to the task outcome question were made on a 1 (the other participant was more responsible) to 10 (I was more responsible) scale; responses to the positive contribution question were made on a 1 (the other participant made the greater positive contribution) to 10 (I made the greater positive contribution) scale.

Note 2: Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

Our next objective was to test whether partner impressions mediated the SSB. Before we proceed with a description of the relevant analyses, however, we wish to clarify how we intended our experimental results to map onto the actual conceptual explanation that we evoke. Conceptually, we propose that a reason for the non-manifestation of the SSB in closely-related participants is that they view their partner in relatively favorable terms. Empirically, we manipulated closeness of relationship and, therefore, labeled the mediator as *the formation* of a favorable impression. That is, we hypothesized and demonstrated empirically that relational closeness leads to the formation of a favorable impression. We now want to know whether these impressions are partially responsible for keeping the SSB in check.

We proceeded with a two-step, interactional mediation analysis (see Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, p. 384, for more details). In the first step, we established that partner impression predicts attributions of responsibility for the task outcome and for positive contribution to the task. In the second and critical step, we established that the relatively favorable partner impressions among close participants (relative to distant participants) accounted for close partners refraining from the SSB.

In summary, the interactional mediation analyses revealed that partner impression mediated the association between relationship type and the SSB. The favorable impressions that close dyad members formed of each other accounted for the non-manifestation of the SSB. Stated otherwise, a reason that close participants (a) were equally likely to take responsibility for the success and failure of the dyad and (b) claimed a lesser positive contribution to the test outcome was that they formed a more favorable impression of each other.

When Does Relational Closeness Reduce or Augment the SSB?

Our research so far succeeded in establishing the viability of the relationships-as-bound hypothesis: relational closeness curtails self-enhancement. Our research also identified a critical psychological mechanism for this effect. Closely related partners are attributionally generous to each other, because they form a positive impression of each other. However, are close partners *always* generous to each other? (Alternatively, are distant partners *always* selfish in their attributional patterns?) In our final round of work (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 2001), we considered some of the circumstances under which relationship closeness is likely to reduce or augment the SSB.

Attributional Expectancies

We reasoned that distant and close partners probably have different expectancies about each other's behavior in interdependent outcomes tasks. Perhaps because they have a neutral impression of each other (as shown in Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 2), distant partners have competition expectancies. On the other hand, perhaps because they have a positive impression of each other (also as shown in Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 2), close partners have cooperation expectancies (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Clark, 1984; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996).

We conducted an experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 2001, Experiment 1) to test directly the above derivations. Do distant and close partners have different expectancies about each other's behavior in an interdependent outcomes task, such as the one used in the present program of research? More specifically, do close partners have mutual expectations for refraining from the SSB? Do distant partners hold mutual expectations for displaying the SSB?

Participants imagined a scenario. They and a same-gender other (friend or stranger) reported to the laboratory for a psychology experiment. Each member of the dyad was seated in a separate room. They imagined completing the Lange-Elliot Creativity Test jointly with their partner and receiving either success or failure feedback. In order to increase the realism of the procedure, the instructions that accompanied the visualizations pertaining to the creativity test and the performance feedback were taken verbatim from the previously described experiments. In the end, participants indicated how they expected their *partner* to fill out the dependent measures. The wording of the dependent measures was identical to that used in our previous experiments.

Close and distant participants indeed harbored different expectancies about their partner's attributions for task performance (Table 8.4). Distant participants expected a selfish response (i.e., the display of the SSB) from their partner. That is, they expected their partner to assume more personal responsibility for, and claim a greater positive contribution to, the dyadic

Table 8.4 Partner attributional expectancies as a function of (imagined) feedback type and relationship type in Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (2001, Experiment 1)

1. Expected partner attributions: responsibility for task outcome		
	Failure feedback	Success feedback
Distant dyads	4.67 ^a	6.53 ^b
Close dyads	4.93 ^a	5.27 ^a

11. Expected partner attributions: positive contribution to task outcome

Distant dyads 6.37^a Close dyads 5.53^b

Note 1: Responses to the task outcome question were made on a 1 (the other participant would claim that I was responsible) to 10 (the other participant would claim that he/she was responsible) scale; responses to the positive contribution question were made on a 1 (the other participant would claim that I made the greater positive contribution) to 10 (the other participant would claim that he/she made the greater positive contribution) scale.

Note 2: Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

success than the dyadic failure. To the contrary, close participants expected a gracious response (i.e., the absence of the SSB) from their partner. That is, they expected their partner to take equivalent responsibility for, and claim an equally positive contribution to, the success and failure of the dyad.

Expectancy Violation and Attributional Reciprocity

How do distant and close participants respond when their dyadic partner reinforces or violates their expectancies? How would distant participants respond upon learning that their partner behaved either competitively (thus *confirming* their expectancies) or cooperatively (thus *violating* their expectancies)? How would close participants respond upon learning that their partner behaved either competitively (thus *violating* their expectancies) or cooperatively (thus *confirming* their expectancies)?

We derived predictions based on our attributional expectancies experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 2001, Experiment 1) and on relevant literature (Gouldner, 1960; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Wieselquist *et al.*, 1999). We made differing predictions for distant and close participants. We predicted that distant participants, upon learning that their partner had behaved selfishly (i.e., he/she had taken most of the credit for the success of the dyad or had displaced most of the blame for its failure), would regard their expectations as confirmed. Hence, they would behave equally selfishly, as they would have behaved anyway (i.e., regardless of whether their partner's attributional pattern were known to them). However, upon learning that their partner behaved graciously (i.e., he/she had not endorsed the credit for the success of the dyad and had not displaced the blame for its failure), distant

participants would have their expectancies disconfirmed. Hence, they would reciprocate in a gracious attributional manner-by refraining from the SSB.

We predicted a different pattern for close participants. Upon learning that their partner behaved selfishly, close participants would have their expectancies disconfirmed. Hence, they would behave in an attributionally retaliatory manner, i.e., by assuming credit and displacing blame. However, upon learning that their partner behaved graciously, close participants would have their expectancies confirmed and would behave as they would have behaved anyway, that is by refraining from the SSB.

We tested these predictions empirically (Sedikides *et al.*, 2001, Experiment 2). As in previous experiments, we induced relationship closeness in the laboratory via the RCIT. After completing the Lange-Elliot Creativity Test, participants received either success or failure performance feedback. However, prior to the completion of the dependent measures, we introduced another manipulation. Two-thirds of the participants were told that they were selected randomly to preview their partner's responses, although their partner would not be granted the same privilege. In actuality, the partner's responses were fabricated by the experimenter. The partner responses fell into two categories: constructive and destructive. The remaining one-third of participants were unaware of their partner's response.

Specifically, some participants (*constructive partner response condition*), previewed a generous partner response (i.e., an OSB). They learned that their partner attributed the success of the dyad to them, whereas the partner took personal responsibility for the failure of the dyad. However, other participants (*destructive partner response condition*) previewed a selfish partner response (i.e., an SSB). They learned that their partner blamed them for the dyadic failure, but took credit for the dyadic success. As stated above, the other one-third of participants comprised the *no partner response (or control) condition*.

The RCIT was successful in inducing relationship closeness. Additionally, close and distant participants did not differ in their mood states at the start of the testing session. Moreover, close and distant participants regarded creativity as equally important. Finally, the success and failure feedback manipulations were effective.

We will examine distant and close dyads separately (Tables 8.5 and 8.6). Let us first consider the attributions of distant dyad members. In the *no partner response condition*, distant participants manifested the SSB: they took disproportionate responsibility for the success than the failure of the dyad, and they also claimed a more positive contribution for the success of the dyad. This finding replicates our past research. Interestingly, the SSB of distant dyad members was magnified in the *destructive partner response condition*. On being informed of their partner's selfish claim, distant members reacted in kind by taking the lion's share of the responsibility for the dyadic success and

assigning the partner much of the blame for the dyadic failure. In contrast, distant participants were disarmed by their partner's gracious response. When the partner inflated the participant's contribution (*constructive partner response condition*), participants refrained from the SSB: they were equally likely to take responsibility for the dyadic success or failure, and they also claimed an equally positive contribution for the outcome of the test.

Table 8.5 Responsibility for task outcome attributions as a function of feedback type, relationship type, and partner response type in Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (2001, Experiment 2)

1. Distant dyads		
	Failure feedback	Success feedback
No partner response	5.35 ^a	6.88 ^b
Destructive partner response	4.25 ^a	7.20 ^b
Constructive partner response	5.55 ^a	5.80 ^a
11. Close dyads		
	Failure feedback	Success feedback
No partner response	5.45 ^a	6.00 ^a
Destructive partner response	5.20 ^a	6.90 ^b
Constructive partner response	6.13 ^a	5.85 ^a

Note 1: Responses to the task outcome question were made on a 1 (the other participant was more responsible) to 10 (I was more responsible) scale.

Note 2: Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

Table 8.6 Positive contribution to task outcome attributions as a function of relationship type and partner response type in Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, and Elliot (2001, Experiment 2)

1. Distant dyads			
	No partner response	Destructive partner response	Constructive partner response
	6.34 ^a	5.30 ^b	6.92 ^a
11. Close dyads			
	No partner response	Destructive partner response	Constructive partner response
	5.60 ^a	6.62 ^b	5.62 ^a

Note 1: Responses to the positive contribution question were made on a 1 (the other participant made the greater positive contribution) to 10 (I made the greater positive contribution) scale. Note 2: Within a row, means with different superscripts are significantly different.

Let us now describe the reactions of the close dyad members. In the *no partner response condition*, participants refrained from the SSB. This pattern replicates our previous research. Interestingly, a similar pattern was obtained in the *constructive partner response condition*. When given credit for the dyadic success and denied blame for the dyadic failure, participants not only

suppressed the SSB, but they also manifested a non-significant trend toward exhibiting the OSB. In contrast, participants turned to an egoistic response mode when they were informed of their partner's selfish response: in the *destructive partner response condition*, close participants displayed the SSB, thus reversing the findings of our previous experiments. (Note that men tended to be more self-serving than women.)

In summary, this experiment (Sedikides *et al.*, 2001, Experiment 2) capitalized on the differing expectancies that distant and close participants have of their dyadic partner. In so doing, the experiment highlighted some circumstances under which the SSB is or is not displayed in close (as well as distant) dyads. The modal response of close participants working together on an interdependent outcomes task is to refrain from the SSB. This response is somewhat accentuated when the partner is gracious in his/her attributions for the task outcome. However, the response reverses when the partner's attributional pattern is destructive. Close partners do display the SSB in reaction to a selfish partner claim. In contrast, the modal response of distant participants who work together on an interdependent outcomes task is the display of the SSB. This response is magnified considerably as a function of a selfish attributional pattern on the part of a partner. In contrast, the response dissipates (i.e., no SSB is displayed) when the partner is gracious.

Nevertheless, we would like to draw caution in interpreting the results of Sedikides *et al.*'s (2001) Experiment 2. Based on our previous work (Sedikides *et al.*, 2001, Experiment 1) and on relevant literature (Axelrod, 1984; Gouldner, 1960; Rusbult *et al.*, 1991), we surmised a pivotal role for expectancies in our research paradigm. However, we did not measure expectancies directly. Unless expectancies are either assessed (and their role through mediational analyses is affirmed) or manipulated, we cannot be certain that they are necessary for the augmentation or reversal of the SSB.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research that we have described in this chapter is rooted in an intellectual tradition within social and personality psychology of viewing the self in a relational context (Aron & Aron, 1997; Borden & Levinger, 1991; Murray, 1999; Reis & Patrick, 1996; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). We built on this tradition in addressing the question of how close relationships influence individuals' tendency for self-enhancement, operationalized as the SSB.

We began by outlining two broad and incompatible theoretical perspectives, the relationships-as-bound and the relationships-as-enabler hypotheses. We tested these hypotheses in the context of a dyadic, interdependent outcomes task (i.e., a creativity test). Members of either close or distant dyads worked together on the creativity test, received at the dyadic level either success or

failure feedback that was bogus and randomly determined, and attributed the dyad's performance relativistically to the self or the partner. According to the relationships-as-bound hypothesis, relational closeness inhibits self-enhancement. Closely related individuals refrain from the SSB. However, according to the relationships-as-enabler hypothesis, relational closeness promotes self-enhancement. Closely related individuals display the SSB.

The results of several experiments provided unequivocal support for the relationships-as-bound hypothesis. In contrast to distant dyad members, close members refrained from the SSB. Relational closeness practically eliminates perhaps the most robust of self-enhancement tendencies, the SSB. Relational closeness puts the self "in its place".

How do relationships keep self-enhancement tendencies in check? What is the mechanism through which the SSB is eliminated in close relationships? Furthermore, what are the circumstances under which relational closeness augments the SSB? We tested several explanations for the gracious attributional pattern of close others. One explanation was based on participant selection-that the disappearance of the SSB in close relationships was due to close partners having different personality characteristics than distant partners. Another explanation was based on the anticipation of future interactions-that close participants expect to have future truthful and rewarding interactions, and they cannot manifest the SSB in the laboratory without taking into account the dilemma of possibly having to lie to their partner when the topic is discussed after the experiment. The third explanation was based on mood-that close participants refrain from the SSB because they are in a happier mood than distant participants. The fourth explanation was based on the differential importance of the creativity test for close and distant participants-that close partners regard the test as more important than distant partners. None of these explanations received empirical support.

However, two other explanations based on favorable partner impressions (Sedikides *et al.*, 1998, Experiment 2) and expectancies of a cooperative partner response (Sedikides *et al.*, 2000, Experiments 1 and 2) did receive empirical support. The absence of the SSB in close (compared to distant) relationships is due, in part, to close participants forming a favorable impression of each other and expecting each other to perform well on the interdependent outcomes task. Furthermore, the absence of the SSB is probably due, in part, to the expectancies that close participants have of each other. That is, close participants expect their partner to refrain from the SSB. In fact, when they are informed that the partner's attributions for the task outcome have been self-serving, close participants retaliate with an equally self-serving attributional response.

An obvious implication of the attributional reciprocity findings is that relationship closeness *per se* is not sufficient for the attenuation of self-

enhancement. The relationship needs to be both close and positive. In fact, self-enhancement is augmented when the close relationship goes awry, as when the partners observe each other to behave selfishly. These laboratory findings complement nicely field research with married or dating couples. Such research (Fincham & Bradbury, 1989; Fletcher, Fincham, Cramer, & Herson, 1987) has documented an association between relationship satisfaction and the SSB: the lower relationship satisfaction is, the higher is the magnitude of the SSB.

We wish to urge circumspection in not generalizing the findings of our research beyond their intended domain of applicability. For theory-testing purposes, we used exclusively relativistic measures of attributions. That is, participants were asked to allocate responsibility on a continuum-with one end of the continuum being the self and another being the partner. However, in many situations, individuals are not forced into making zero-sum attributions about responsibility for a joint outcome. An individual can attribute the outcome to the self, the partner, or external circumstances. Alternatively, an individual can maximize positive outcomes by crediting them equally to the two close partners, but minimize negative outcomes by attributing them to external forces. To return to our opening example, George and Alexi, the two high-school friends, may each make a gracious attributional response in the case of dyadic success, but blame task unfamiliarity, stress or harsh classmates in the case of dyadic failure. We believe that the external validity of our research will benefit by future studies that include additional measurement strategies, besides relativistic attributions. In fact, the internal validity of our research may also benefit, as the relationships-as-enabler hypothesis may enjoy a measure of empirical support when non-relativistic attributional measures are used.

Men displayed the SSB to a greater degree than women. The literature on the SSB in independent outcomes tasks also reports a similar gender difference in the manifestation of the SSB (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Several explanations for this gender difference have been offered. One explanation for this finding is that the typical laboratory task is male- rather than female-orientated (Deaux & Farris, 1977); however, this criticism is not applicable to our research, given that women and men regarded creativity as an equally important trait. Another explanation states that men have higher success expectancies than women-especially when it comes to maleorientated tasks (Rosenfield & Stephan, 1978). Finally, a third explanation is based on men having higher global self-esteem than women (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999). Given that high self-esteem individuals display a stronger SSB than low self-esteem individuals (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999), we favor this third explanation, although we have not tested it directly.

Besides self-esteem, we would expect at least two additional and conceptually similar individual difference variables to affect attributions in interde-

pendent outcomes tasks: social value orientation and communal orientation. Research by Van Lange and his colleagues (Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997; Van Lange & Liebrand, 1991; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997; Van Lange & Semin-Goossens, 1998; see also Kuhlman, Camac, & Cunha, 1986) has compared the responses of three classes of individuals: prosocials (those who are predisposed to distribute outcomes so as to maximize joint gains or minimize reciprocal losses), individualists (those who are predisposed to maximize own gains in an absolute sense), and competitors (those who are predisposed to maximize own outcomes relative to others' outcomes). In comparison to individualists and competitors, prosocials are more likely to respond cooperatively, regardless of their partner's response. In the context of our research, prosocials in closely related dyads may be least likely to display the SSB, regardless of whether their partner initiates a selfish or gracious attributional pattern.

The role of communal orientation is also relevant. Individuals with a communal orientation are concerned with other persons' welfare, feel responsible for them, are more likely to help them (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark, Quелlette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987), and are more likely to allocate resources equally in a dyadic setting (Thompson & DeHarpport, 1998). Like prosocials, individuals high in communal orientation may be less likely to manifest the SSB. More interestingly, both prosocials and communally-orientated persons may be even less likely to display the SSB in the context of a close, dyadic relationship. Indeed, recent research by McCall, Reno, Jalbert, and West (2000) has documented that communal orientation, along with the perception of the partner as community-orientated, reduces the SSB.

Although our research has made substantive forays into the ways in which relational closeness affects self-enhancement, additional important issues remain. What are some other mechanisms, besides impression favorability and differential expectancies of partner responses, that reduce self-enhancement? What is the role of normative concerns (e.g., the norm to be loyal to the partner) in the attenuation of self-enhancement? How far beyond the immediate relational setting does a gracious attributional pattern last? At what point is this unselfish response internalized to become a permanent fixture of the relationship? Does relational closeness affect other forms of self-enhancement, besides the SSB? Can high levels of self-threat lead the individual to behave selfishly rather than graciously toward a close partner? We hope that our research will stimulate progress toward empirical resolution of these and other issues.

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