A REVIEW OF RELATIONAL SACRIFICES IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE THERAPEUTIC SETTING

By

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Abstract

Relational sacrifices, arising across many relationships, have important associations with relationship quality. This critical review provides an overview of relevant literature, mainly from Western and heterosexual samples, on relational sacrifices and their associations to different aspect of relationship quality. The purpose of the critical review is to deliver a holistic understanding of the nuances of relational sacrifice and relationship quality and how this information can be utilized in a therapeutic setting. In this critical review, I first discuss main effects of relational sacrifice on relationship quality, followed by several moderators that help to further contextualize associations between relational sacrifices and relationship quality. Some findings from the review are that greater relationship quality is generally experienced for individuals given frequent easy sacrifices, lower attachment anxiety, higher approach motives, days of lower hassles, greater perceived partner appreciation of sacrifices, greater willingness to sacrifice, lower relationship uncertainty, higher spirituality, more sexual transformations, and more positive feelings about sacrificing. Following the review, the cognitive behavioral therapy model is used to provide an example of how the findings from the review could be applied to the therapy setting to help couples improve their relationship quality. An implication of the findings from this review is that understanding the effects of an individual's behavior and cognitive processes on their relationship provides an opportunity for them to make choices that benefit relationship quality. Finally, I end by sharing a personal reflection on how I noticed the findings of the studies supported in my own romantic relationship.

Keywords: Relational sacrifice, Interdependence theory, relationship quality, frequency of sacrifice, ease of sacrifice, attachment anxiety, cognitive behavioral therapy
A Review of Relational Sacrifices in Romantic Relationships, Relationship Quality, and its Application to the Therapeutic Setting.

What are Relational Sacrifices?

In every relationship, people are faced with choices about how to coexist with their partner. Relational sacrifice is choosing to forgo personal desires to pursue a goal for the benefit of the relationship or one’s partner (Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020). These sacrifices can be active (actively forgoing a personal desire for the desire of one’s partner) or passive (passively accommodating one’s partner) (Visserman, 2019). The goal of relational sacrifice is to maximize well-being by focusing on gains rather than losses and having the willingness to do so (Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020).

Relational sacrifices are motivated and affected by numerous factors and facets. For example, approach motives are generally seen be more beneficial than avoidance motives (Righetti & Impett, 2017). The situation in which relational sacrifices are enacted matter. Finkel and Rusbult (2008) conceptualized behavior as a function of person’s characteristics and the social environment and that social interaction is a function of the actor, integration partner, and the situation. Depending on the context and factors, relational sacrifices can have beneficial or detrimental effects on relationship and individual well-being.

Why do Relational Sacrifices Matter?

The study of relational sacrifices helps us to understand how romantic relationship satisfaction and stability are maintained or degraded. An ideal relationship is often both satisfying and stable (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). It is important for each partner in the romantic relationship, or the relational partners, to know how and when to enact relational sacrifices to
develop and maintain an ideal relationship and maximize relationship well-being and longevity.

**Theories and Approaches Related to Relational Sacrifice**

Relational sacrifices can be examined through the lenses of several theories, models, hypotheses, and approaches. Interdependence is the principal theory in which relational sacrifice is studied. In my review for this thesis, I read about multiple theories and models in articles specific to relational sacrifice including interdependence theory, the theory of planned behavior, the theory of reasoned action, transactive goal-dynamics theory, approach-avoidance motivational theory, attachment theories, and commitment theory. Models in articles specific to relational sacrifice included: the investment model, the mutual growth cycle model, and dual effects model of social control. Hypotheses referenced in the articles about relational sacrifice included: the beneficial effect hypothesis, the detrimental effect hypothesis, the commitment bolstering hypothesis, the commitment buffering hypothesis, the benefit hypothesis, and the burden hypothesis. Other concepts that help define the scope of investigation are the dyadic effect, communal orientation, pro-relationship motivations, situational structure, relationship transformations, conservation of resources, attribution bias, transformation of motivation, and the Commitment Inventory (CI). Reference Table 1 in the appendix for a complete list of approaches in each included article.

**Interdependence Theory**

Across my review for the thesis, the theory that was most often used and the one for which relational sacrifices seemed most applicable is interdependence theory (Kelley, 1979). Interdependence theory posits that relationships are inherently interdependent, meaning the individuals in the relationship are unavoidably intertwined (Curran, Burke, Young, Totenhagen,
RELATIONAL SACRIFICES AND THERAPY APPLICATION

Individuals in romantic or dyadic relationships will experience disagreements and conflicts of interest with one another.

Interdependence theory outlines the process in which couples coordinate relationship interactions while considering their own and their partners needs and desires (Young & Curran, 2016, with citations to Kelley, 1979). The “interdependence process of behavior coordination” provides a framework in which to understand the motives and outcomes of relational sacrifices (Young & Curran, 2016, with citations to Kelley, 1979).

For example, previous research suggests that willingness and a positive attitude about making relational sacrifices is generally positively associated with relationship quality (Young & Curran, 2016). However, higher frequency of sacrifice, or chronically subverting one’s own desires for their partner can be detrimental to the individuals and the relationship (e.g., Burke & Young, Ruppel & Curran, 2012; Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997).

This paper will further examine the different factors contributing to the outcome of interdependent interactions among romantic couples.

Further, using a dyadic approach – or including data from both individuals and their partners – provides additional context in which to understand relational sacrifices. The dyadic effect is the link between one’s partner’s behaviors and their individual outcomes (Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020).

Different Ways to Measure Relational Sacrifices

Several patterns have emerged in the present literature on relation sacrifice. These
patterns are evident through studies involving the following facets of sacrifice: frequency of sacrifice, ease of sacrifice, partner awareness and appreciation of sacrifice, motives for sacrifice, satisfaction with sacrifice, and willingness to sacrifice. The following sections will present findings for each of these areas in association to relationship quality as an encompassing term of measuring relational outcomes.

**Frequency of Sacrifice**

Frequency of sacrifice in relationships may be beneficial or detrimental for relationship quality depending on several factors (or moderators). These factors (or moderators) include attachment styles (i.e., attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance), level of daily hassles, relational uncertainty, and partner appreciation (included in more detail in the moderators sections).

Main effects of frequency of sacrifice and relationship quality include:

1. Individuals’ daily sacrifices were positively linked with their own daily commitment but not with daily satisfaction or daily closeness (Totenhagen, Curran, Serido, & Butler, 2013).

2. Higher sacrifice frequency (specific to intimacy behaviors) was associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Young & Curran, 2016).

3. Partners’ frequent sacrifices (specific to sexual transformations) were associated with higher relationship satisfaction (Burke & Young, 2012).

4. The degree of working to change a relationship (conceptualized here as similar to frequency of sacrifice) was positively associated with relationship quality (Young, Curran, & Totenhagen, 2012).
(5) Sacrifice was associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Whitton et al., 2017).

**Difficulty vs. Ease of Sacrifice**

Difficulty vs. ease of sacrifice has been studied in a number of ways: Ease of sacrifice as the study construct (Young & Curran, 2016), difficulty of sacrifice (in which ease of sacrifice is included in the measurement (Ruppel & Curran, 2012)), and harmfulness of sacrifices to the self (in which ease or lack of harm was not included (Whitton et al., 2007)). Ease of sacrifice and relationship quality and is moderated by attachment orientation, spirituality, and a transformative process mindset (included in more detail in the moderators sections).

Main effects of ease of sacrifice and relationship quality include:

(1) Daily sacrifice difficulty was negatively associated with daily satisfaction of the actor and partner (Ruppel & Curran, 2012).

(2) Daily perceived sacrifice harmfulness (conceptualized here as similar to difficulty of sacrifices) was negatively associated with relationship commitment and couple functioning (Whitton et al., 2007).

(3) Sacrifices (specific to intimacy behaviors) that are perceived as harmful were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment (Young & Curran, 2016).

**Partner Awareness and Appreciation of Sacrifice**

In this section, two related concepts are examined: Perceived partner *awareness* of sacrifices and perceived partner *appreciation* of sacrifices. Partner awareness is when the actor of the sacrifice perceives that their partner is aware of their sacrifice. For partner appreciation, this has been described as an individuals’ perception that their partner was appreciative that
the sacrifice was made for him or her (Young & Curran, 2016). Here would be an item specific to partner appreciation: “How appreciative was your partner that you made this sacrifice for him or her?” on a 1 (not at all appreciative) to 7 (very appreciative) point scale (Young & Curran, 2016). Even if only one person is included in the study, partner awareness and/or partner appreciation can still be main study constructs as they are individuals’ perceptions about their partner specific to awareness or appreciation that are measured (hereafter referred to as partner awareness and appreciation).

Main effects of partner awareness of sacrifice and relationship quality include:

1. For expectant cohabitating couples, when the individual perceived their partner to have awareness of their intimate sacrifice, individuals experienced greater commitment, satisfaction, love, and maintenance, and lower ambivalence and conflict (Curran, Burke, Young, & Totenhagen, 2016).

2. In a study by Akçabozan, McDaniel, Corkery, and Curran (2016) examining frequency, ease, and awareness of sacrifice in pregnant heterosexual cohabitating couples, both men and women experienced lower commitment variability when they perceived their partner was more aware of their sacrifices.

Main effects of partner appreciation of sacrifice and relationship quality include:

1. Higher awareness of and appreciation for the actor’s sacrifices are associated with higher relationship quality (Young & Curran, 2016).

From this study by Young and Curran (2016), the authors reasoned that, when individuals perceive that the partner shows care, concern, and responsiveness, and prompts
their partner to feel valuable and worthy, individuals are more likely to have a high level of relationship satisfaction.

**Motives for Sacrifice**

The reasons for enacting a sacrifice are associated with the outcome of satisfaction and relationship quality. Approach and avoidance motives are mainly examined (for reviews, see Righetti & Impett, 2017; Visserman, 2019). Higher use of approach motives have been found to be associated with more positive relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction), whereas more avoidance motives have been found to be associated with less positive relationship quality (Righetti & Impett, 2017). Why these differing patterns? One explanation is that individuals are more likely to feel gratitude when they perceive a sacrifice is made genuinely and with altruistic motives by their partner (i.e., approach motives), especially when the sacrifice was made for them (Righetti & Impett, 2017; Visserman, 2019).

Moderators that further explain the motives for sacrifice and relationship quality relationship include attachment orientation and gender (included in more detail in the moderators sections).

Beyond what is already summarized about motives and relationship quality above, main effects of motive for sacrifice and relationship quality (or other constructs) are described below:

(1) In addition to the focus on relationship quality as an outcome, avoidance motives are associated with more negative emotions for both individuals in the couple as well as with higher conflict (Visserman, 2019).
Thus far, most studies of relationship quality are specific to *levels* of fixed effects of relationship quality. Studies have also studied motives in associations with *volatility* of relationship quality (Akçabozan, Kayabol, Gonzalez, Gamble, Totenhagen, & Curran, 2020). Volatility is defined as change in relationship quality over time. More specifically, Akçabozan et al. (2020) describes volatility in relationship quality as within-person variability across 14 days, as they assessed in their study. They also review research (page 2971 of their article) in which daily volatility in relationship quality has predicted greater reports of distress and destructive couple interactions, weekly volatility predicts eventual relationship dissolution and greater depressive symptoms, and volatility over a more extended amount of time (i.e., every 4 months for 2 years) predicts diminished life satisfaction (Whitton et al., 2014).

Akçabozan et al. (2020) found that sacrificing with approach motives were beneficial for individuals in terms of lower volatility in day-to-day relationship quality. In contrast, sacrificing with avoidance motives were detrimental to oneself in terms of higher variability in day-to-day relationship. In other words, approach motives rather than avoidance motives, were generally associated with more positive relationship quality for both individuals and their partners making the sacrifice. Overall, the main effect of approach motives being associated with greater relationship quality and avoidance motives being associated with decreased relationship quality – both in studies for levels or fixed effects (most of the studies that are in this review) and at least one study specific to volatility in relationship quality – seems to be consistent in multiple studies.
Satisfaction with Sacrifice

An individual’s satisfaction with their sacrifice has associations with their own relationship quality. Moderators for the relationship between satisfaction with sacrifice and relationship quality include motives for being in a relationship (included in more detail in the moderators section).

Main effects of motive for sacrifice and relationship quality include:

(1) Satisfaction with sacrifice was positively associated with three types of commitment (see Stanley & Markman, 1992, Table 3, p. 601).

(2) Satisfaction with sacrifice was also positively associated with relational satisfaction (see Stanley & Markman, 1992, table 4, p. 602).

(3) Greater satisfaction with sacrifice was generally positively associated with relationship quality (Tang, Curran, & Arroyo, 2014).

(4) Higher satisfaction with sacrifice was associated with marital adjustment maintenance (conceptualized as a type of relationship quality) over the time frame of 3 years (taken from a larger longitudinal study of about 11 years) (Stanley, Whitton, Sadberry, Clements, & Markman, 2006). The authors suspected that positive attitudes about sacrificing helped to communicate the degree individuals can trust their partner to be there for them (Stanley et al., 2006).

(5) Sacrifice satisfaction and relationship dedication were directly related and predict each other. In other words, there was a bidirectional relationship between satisfaction with sacrifice and commitment/dedication to one’s partner (Monk, Vennum, Ogolsky, & Fincham, 2014).
a. The researchers’ findings were supported by theories from the mutual growth cycle, also termed reciprocal relationships. For relationships that operate within the mutual growth cycle, commitment and willingness to sacrifice positively influence each other and enhance a positive cycle of relationship growth (Monk, Vennum, Ogolsky, Fincham, 2014).

**Willingness to Sacrifice**

Willingness to sacrifice is associated with relationship quality. Willingness to sacrifice is suspected to contribute to the growth of the relationship and reinforces safety and security (Stanley, Whitton, Sadberry, Clements, & Markman, 2006). Moderators that further explain willingness to sacrifice and relationship quality include perceived partner gratitude and low interdependent self-construal (included in more detail in the moderators sections).

Main effects of motive for sacrifice and relationship include:

1. Willingness to sacrifice is beneficial for relationship and personal well-being.

In general, and following from interdependence theory as described by the authors of this study, positive effects emerge when a partner *willingly* transforms their motivations for the good of their relationship (Day & Impett, 2017; Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020; VanderDrift, Ioerger, Mitzel, & Vanable, 2017).

VanderDrift, Ioerger, Mitzel, and Vanable (2017) found that individuals who take HIV medication have lower self-efficacy when they perceive that their partner was unwilling to make sacrifices for the relationship. This finding demonstrates one example of how willingness to sacrifice for the relationship can be associated with a variety of relationship aspects.
Moderators

As several main effects have been described above, I will now provide an overview of some of the moderators for relational sacrifice and relationship quality that were present in the current literature. These include the following: attachment orientations, daily hassles, partner appreciation, relational uncertainty, spirituality, and interdependent self-construal. Other moderators not discussed here include: approach and avoidance motives, communal orientation, emotion regulation, gender, sexual orientation, relationship cycling, and relationship length.

Interdependent Self-Construal as a Moderator for Cost of Sacrifice and Willingness, Authenticity, and Satisfaction with Sacrifice.

A study by Day and Impett (2017) found that the level of interdependent self-construal is a moderator between cost of sacrifice (independent variable) and willingness to sacrifice, authenticity, and satisfaction with sacrifice (dependent variables).

At low reported cost of sacrifice, individuals with either low or high interdependence have the same willingness to sacrifice. However, when the perceived cost of sacrifice is higher, those with high interdependence have the same level of willingness whereas those with low interdependence have decreased willingness to sacrifice.

In regard to authenticity, those with lower interdependence report lower authenticity than those with higher interdependence in both low and high-cost conditions. However, at high costs, the individuals with lower interdependence report significantly decreased levels of
authenticity. Those with higher interdependence report similar levels of authenticity at both high- and low-cost conditions.

The significant findings regarding interdependence as a moderator between cost and satisfaction is that those with higher interdependence have higher satisfaction then those with lower interdependence when making a high-cost sacrifice.

These findings suggest that having a higher interdependence self-construal helps to buffer the otherwise negative effects of sacrifices that have higher costs.

**Attachment Orientations**

**Attachment Styles as a Moderator for Frequency of Sacrifice and Relationship Satisfaction**

**Satisfaction.** As specific to attachment orientations (i.e., attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance) as the moderators: Per Ruppel and Curran (2012), daily number of sacrifices by the actor was generally negatively associated with daily satisfaction for the individual.

In this study by Ruppel and Curran (2012), attachment orientation was examined as a moderator between frequency of sacrifice and relationship satisfaction and as a moderator between sacrifice difficulty and relationship satisfaction. In this section, I will focus on attachment orientation as a moderator between frequency of sacrifice and relationship satisfaction, while attachment orientation as a moderator between sacrifice difficulty and relationship satisfaction will be discussed in the following section.

The results showed that one’s own daily number of sacrifices was positively associated to relationship satisfaction for individuals with low attachment anxiety. All other relevant relationships were not significant. These results suggest that having lower attachment anxiety
can improve one’s chances of having increased relationship satisfaction when enacting more frequent sacrifices.

**Attachment Styles as a Moderator for Daily Sacrifice Difficulty and Relationship Satisfaction**

**Satisfaction.** Following from the previous section discussing a study by Ruppel and Curran (2012), I will now discuss attachment orientation as a moderator between daily sacrifice difficulty by the actor and partner and daily relationship satisfaction.

In all conditions, there is a negative association between sacrifice difficulty (for the individual and the partner) (independent variables) and daily satisfaction for the individual (dependent variable). In particular, for individuals with lower attachment anxiety, their daily sacrifice difficulty was more strongly related to daily relationship satisfaction than it was for individuals who were higher in attachment anxiety (see Figure 2 on page 520).

Considered together, Ruppel and Curran (2012) conclude that associations between relational sacrifice and relationship satisfaction depend on attachment orientations and that frequent, easy sacrifices seem the most beneficial to relationships. Other researchers have also studied sacrifices and attachment orientations or attachment styles and found that both constructs – sacrifices and attachment – should be studied to better understand relationship quality constructs such as satisfaction (e.g., Cooper, Totenhagen, Curran, Randall, & Smith, 2017; Impett & Gordon, 2010; Mattingly & Clark, 2012).

In sum, relationship satisfaction benefits when individuals enact frequent and easy sacrifices, especially for individuals with lower (versus) higher attachment anxiety.

**Attachment Orientation as a Moderator for Motives for Sacrifice and Relationship Quality.** Cooper, Curran, Totenhagen, Randall, and Smith (2017) examined the relationship
between sacrifice motives and relationship quality under conditions of high and low attachment anxiety and avoidance for both men and women in *same sex relationship*. As mentioned previously, approach motives are generally found to have a positive association to relationship quality. Attachment insecurity is often associated with fewer benefits that both men and women experience from sacrifice motives.

From Cooper et al. (2017): Trends of *increased relationship quality* were found under two conditions: (1) women low in attachment anxiety who sacrificed with approach motives and (2) men high in attachment anxiety and sacrifice with approach motives.

Also from Cooper et al. (2017): Trends for *decreased relationship quality* were found for two conditions: (1) women low in attachment avoidance when they sacrifice with avoidance motives and (2) men high in attachment anxiety when they sacrifice with avoidance motives.

**Daily Hassles**

**Daily Hassles as a Moderator for Frequency of Sacrifice and Relationship Quality.** In addition to attachment styles and frequency of sacrifice, another construct – *daily hassles* – has been considered along with frequency of sacrifice. In this section, I consider two studies that included daily hassles and frequency of sacrifice to explain relationship quality for individuals in romantic relationships.

In the first study (Totenhagen, Curran, Serido, & Butler, 2013), the authors first examined a daily diary study in which they examined daily sacrifices, daily hassles, and daily relationship quality (i.e., commitment, closeness, satisfaction). As a note, of the three relational
constructs that were studied – commitment, satisfaction, and closeness – the findings were only specific to commitment.

As I presented as a main effect in the frequency of sacrifice section, the authors examined associations between sacrifice and relationship quality (without yet considering daily hassles; this is a conditional effect) and found the following: Individuals’ daily sacrifices were positively linked with their own daily commitment but not with daily satisfaction or daily closeness.

Next, the authors added daily hassles, so now they considered associations between daily sacrifice and daily relationship quality, under conditions of low vs. high daily hassles. This is a test of moderation (Daily Sacrifices X Daily Hassles in understanding relationship quality).

Results showed that sacrifices remained beneficial for one’s own commitment, but only when increased sacrifices occurred on days with low (versus high) hassles. Said another way, if individuals are experiencing low hassles on a certain day, they are also recommended to engage in increased sacrifices for their partner to experience benefits of relational commitment on that day. In contrast, if individuals are instead experiencing higher hassles, they are recommended to not engage in increased sacrifices for their relational partner as there is no benefit to commitment on these days.

Now transitioning to the second study on daily hassles: In one daily diary study of pregnant women and their male partners who are cohabitating together during the transition to parenthood (Totenhagen & Curran, 2011), two major patterns were found. (1) For men: Men’s increased daily sacrifices is associated with their own decreased satisfaction; this was opposite of the authors’ predictions. (2) For women: On days when women reported more
hassles than usual, their increased daily sacrifices were associated with declines in relationship quality for their male partners, but not for themselves. This is where hassles (as well as gender) come in as a moderator in understanding associations between sacrifice frequency and relationship quality.

Another consideration from this study is that the sample was that of pregnant women and their male partners cohabiting during the transition to parenthood, as drawn from the community (vs. a university sample). This consideration will be further addressed in a later section. Here, I’ll state that the authors (Totenhagen & Curran, 2011) reflect on the sample when discussing their findings. For example, the authors discuss the potential instability and ambiguity involved in cohabiting unions to further explain their findings for women. For example, the authors discuss the possibility that unmarried pregnant women may retain positive illusions of their relationships given the potential costs of breaking up.

**Partner Appreciation**

**Partner Appreciation of Sacrifice as a Moderator for Frequency of Sacrifice and Relationship Quality.** Starting with one facet of sacrifice – perceived partner appreciation of sacrifices: Here, the authors (Young & Curran, 2016) studied how frequency of intimate sacrifice (independent variable) was associated with relationship satisfaction (dependent variable) under conditions of perceived partner appreciation of sacrifices (moderator) in a sample of cohabitors. The authors found that higher frequency of intimate sacrifices (independent variable) and lower perceived partner appreciation of sacrifices (moderator) was associated with lower satisfaction (dependent variable). In other words, individuals who perceived that
their partners had low appreciation for them (the individuals), reported lower satisfaction when they (individuals) sacrificed more frequently for their partner. Furthermore, it appears that while low partner appreciation decreases relationship satisfaction, high partner appreciation serves as a preventative measure for decreases in satisfaction as frequency of sacrifices increase.

An implication here by the authors is that when making frequent, but less appreciated, intimacy sacrifices for their partner, cohabitors may struggle with intimacy behaviors that are partner oriented.

As mentioned earlier, frequency of sacrifice was generally negatively associated with relationship quality. So why are these associations more positive when partner appreciation of sacrifice is a variable influencing relationship quality? This association might be explained by the tendency for individuals to overestimate how much they do for their partners and underestimate how much their partners do for them (Curran, Burke, Young, & Totenhagen, 2016). Thus, extrapolating from the study by Curran, Burke, Young, and Totenhagen (2016) and in terms of implications, when partners display appreciation, individuals may feel their contributions are more balanced or worthwhile.

**Perceived Gratitude as a Moderators for Willingness to Sacrifice and Relationship Quality.** Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, and Impett (2020) further contextualized the main effect of willingness to sacrifice as beneficial for relationship quality through the scope of the dyadic effect (defined as the link between a partner’s behaviors and the individual’s outcome). Gratitude served as a moderator between the relationship between willingness to sacrifice (independent variable) and relationship quality (dependent variable).
When the actor perceived gratitude from their partner, this perception of gratitude encouraged the individual to continue to willingly make sacrifice for their partner. Thus, it appears that if and when individuals are willing to make sacrifices, this will be beneficial for relationship quality, but only when individuals perceive gratitude from their partner.

**Relational Uncertainty**

**Daily Relationship Uncertainty as a Moderator for Frequency of Sacrifice/Working to Change the Relationship and Relationship Quality.** As mentioned previously, the main finding by Young, Curran and Totenhagen was that the degree of working to change the relationship (a form of relational sacrifice) was positively associated with relationship quality (2012).

There is an additional moderator to consider along with working to change the relationship and that is of daily relationship uncertainty. Further context emerges when both daily working to change the relationship and daily uncertainty are considered together in explaining daily relationship quality. The authors found that associations (between working to change the relationship and relationship quality) were stronger on days in which individuals experienced lowered relational uncertainty, but significantly weaker on days in which individuals experienced higher relational uncertainty (Young, Curran, & Totenhagen, 2012). In other words, higher relationship uncertainty does not make working to change the relationship have a negative outcome, but lower relationship uncertainty significantly increases the relationship quality when working to change the relationship. In short, having low relationship uncertainty will improve your relationship quality when working to change the relationship.
**Spirituality as a Moderator for Ease of Sacrifice and Relationship Quality Measures.**

Specific to spirituality as the moderator: In an article by Corkery, Curran, and Parkman (2011), they found that greater ease of relational sacrifice (independent variable) and higher spirituality (moderator) were associated with greater commitment and satisfaction and lower ambivalence and conflict (dependent variables). Said another way, couples who are highly spiritual and also report making easier sacrifices reported higher levels of commitment and satisfaction and lower ambivalence and conflict than those who are not or are less spiritual.

**Measuring Sacrifices Specifically**

This section is similar to the section regarding how sacrifice is measured but focuses on more specific ways and includes any nuances/moderators in this section along with the main findings.

**Intimate Sacrifices**

Intimate sacrifice is a more specific categorization of relational sacrifices. Intimacy is a source of conflict in which sacrifices may be enacted (Young & Curran, 2016). Intimate behaviors refer to actions such as hugging, kissing, holding hands, and sexual relations (Burke & Young, 2012). Intimacy behaviors are inherently dyadic as both partners need to be coordinated in their actions (Burke & Young, 2012). In general, intimacy seems to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Burke & Young, 2012; Young & Curran, 2016).

In a study by Burke and Young (2012), heterosexual couples of various relationship lengths and types were the sample in evaluating intimate behaviors and sexual transformations. The results demonstrated several main findings:
(1) When partners made more sexual transformations, individuals reported greater relationship satisfaction.

(2) Individuals who reported more positive feelings about their sexual transformation had greater relationship satisfaction. Additionally, for individuals whose partner had more positive feelings associated with making sexual transformation, these individuals had marginally higher relationship satisfaction.

(3) More intimate behaviors from the individual’s partner were associated with greater relationship satisfaction for the individual.

The study also examined data regarding the moderating effect of the level sexual transformations on the relationship between intimate behaviors and relationship satisfaction. (1) The main effect was that higher intimate behaviors from the partner were positively associated with relationship satisfaction for the individual. (2) In the case of less intimate behavior from the partner (independent variable), more frequent sexual transformations from the partner (moderator) were positively associated with individuals’ relationship satisfaction (dependent variable). The moderating effect was not as important for couples who reported higher levels of intimate behavior as their relationship satisfaction remained relatively stable.

Young and Curran (2016) conducted a study investigating intimacy behaviors and relationship quality amongst cohabitating couples. This study was referred to earlier regarding partner appreciation and frequency of sacrifice, but I will reiterate the findings now with a greater focus on intimate behaviors. The main effect was that higher frequency of intimate sacrifice was associated with lower relationship satisfaction. However, the moderating variable of higher partner appreciation buffered this main effect of decreased satisfaction. Thus,
partners’ higher appreciation for individuals’ intimate sacrifice was highly beneficial in preventing individuals’ lower relationship satisfaction.

Overall, making efforts toward finding sexual experiences that both partners appreciate is beneficial (i.e., making sexual transformations). Appreciation for relational/sexual/intimate sacrifices is important (or could even be considered necessary) to maintain relationship satisfaction.

*Health Transformation*

Young, Burke, and Curran (2019) conducted a study examining health transformations by a partner made for the individual (considered a form of relational sacrifice) in the context of positive or negative social control from the individual. This study is unique from the others I have discussed as it involves the individual influencing their partner to make a relational sacrifice (i.e., social control). Influence here is defined in terms of self-reports by individuals and their partners. Positive social control is when an individual influences their partner with praise, positive emotions, encouragement, reminders and suggestions. Negative social control includes communication of guilt, anger, withdrawal, or negative emotions.

Main associations (based on self-report measures) were investigated between low and high positive social control (independent variable) and relationship satisfaction (dependent variable) and between low and high negative social control (independent variable) and healthy transformations (dependent variable) and with relationship satisfaction (dependent variable).

(1) An individual’s use of positive social control was positively associated with their partner’s healthy behavior transformations and fewer unhealthy transformations.
(2) Individuals negative social control was associated with their own and their partner’s unhealthy transformations and lower relationship satisfaction.

a. The authors found evidence of backfire behavior in which partners had a higher frequency of unhealthy transformations.

(3) For individuals, more frequent negative control was associated with their own increased unhealthy transformations.

These associations were moderated by individuals’ breadth of influence, meaning how many healthy behaviors they are aiming to influence, as presented below:

(1) Individuals’ high influence breadth was associated with partner health transformations and their own relationship satisfaction the most, when using high negative social control.

(2) Individuals’ low influence breadth was associated with their relationship satisfaction when using low negative social control.

This study makes apparent that positive social control has a more beneficial effect on relationship health and satisfaction than negative social control. These results suggest that positively perceived messages can increase partner transformations and satisfaction of their partner.

In Considering Main, Conditional, and Moderator Effects, What are the Important Take Away Points From These Studies of Relational Sacrifice?

In this section, I will present a summary of the complex findings discussed above, keeping in mind that the majority of the samples from the studies covered in the review are
likely not generalizable outside the heterosexual, Western couple. Italicized words and phrases indicate context for improved relationship quality.

(1) In general, when enacting more frequent sacrifices, having lower attachment anxiety can improve one’s chances of having increased relationship satisfaction (Ruppel & Curran, 2012).

   a. When individuals enact frequent easy sacrifices on a daily basis, daily relationship satisfaction is usually higher (Ruppel & Curran, 2012). This pattern of high relationship satisfaction is most often evidenced when individuals enact frequent and easy sacrifices, especially for individuals with lower (versus) higher attachment anxiety.

(2) Those with higher interdependence have higher satisfaction then those with lower interdependence when making a high-cost sacrifice.

(3) Approach motives are generally found to have a positive association to relationship quality (Righetti & Impett, 2017) including same sex couples (Cooper et. al., 2017).

(4) Sacrificing is more beneficial for individuals’ own commitment when enacted on days of lower (versus higher) hassles (Totenhagen, Curran, Serido, & Butler, 2013).

   a. Some sex differences were noted: On days of more sacrifices and higher hassle for the woman, the male partner reported lower relationship quality (Totenhagen & Curran, 2011).

(5) When cohabitors frequently made intimate sacrifices, and their partners were less appreciative of these sacrifices, individuals experienced lower satisfaction.
(6) Relationship quality is benefited if and when individuals are *willing to make sacrifices*, but only when individuals perceive gratitude from their partner (Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020).

(7) *Working to change the relationship (a form of sacrifice)* may improve your relationship quality, but only when individuals have *low relationship uncertainty* (Young, Curran, & Totenhagen, 2012).

(8) *Greater ease of relational sacrifice and higher spirituality* were associated with greater commitment and satisfaction and lower ambivalence and conflict (Corkery, Curran, & Parkman, 2011).

(9) *More sexual transformations* from the partner were positively associated with higher relationship satisfaction, especially when the individual and partner had *more positive feelings* about these sacrifices (Burke & Young, 2012).

**Who is Most Often Included in Relational Sacrifice Studies?**

The majority of the samples tend to fall in the WEIRD category (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). A more complete overview of the samples from the literature included in the review can be referenced in Table 1 of the appendix. Briefly, for some studies that would not be considered WEIRD, the following would apply: (1) Studies that are done in the eastern part of the world, such as China (e.g., Cao, Fang, Fine, Ju, Lan, & Zhou, 2016; Lan, Li, Cao, Zhou, Lin, Deng, & Fang, 2017) and Taiwan (e.g., Lin, Li, & Chen, 2017); (2) samples collected from community members such as pregnant cohabiters (e.g., Akçabožan et al., 2017; Totenhagen & Curran, 2011; Corkery, Curran, &
Parkman, 2011), people living with HIV/AIDS who self-identified as being in close, sexual relationships (VanderDrift et al., 2017), and same-sex couples (Cooper, Totenhagen, Curran, Randall, & Smith, 2017).

**Application to the Therapy Setting**

Up to this point, I have presented findings from relevant literature regarding relational sacrifices and relationship quality. Many of the general findings have moderators that specify the context of relational sacrifices. These findings provide a basis to inform therapists and counselors on additional nuances of relationship interaction and quality and works toward contributing to evidence-based practices. With these findings in mind, I will present several applications of the findings to the therapy setting. For the sake of this paper, I will consider the therapy setting applied to a heterosexual western couple as this is where most of the literature stems from.

Therapy includes therapists working with clients to first become aware of potentially problematic thinking and behaviors. Understanding the dynamics of a relationship and how sacrificing is involved can open an avenue for growth. Guiding each member of the couple to understand these dynamics and that sacrificing is an inevitable part of relationships would be an important first step. The therapist could educate the clients that relational sacrifices can have very positive or detrimental effects depending on certain contexts. It is also important that the therapists works to help the couple develop or strengthen their dedication, as it should allow the couple to have the motivation to examine patterns and try new skills in therapy (Beach & Boderick, 1983 as cited in Stanley & Markman, 1992).
The couple may also benefit from filling out measures of sacrifice – such as the satisfaction with sacrifice subscale from the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) or the sacrifice motives scales (Righetti & Impett, 2017). Such self-assessments on sacrifice measures for both members of the couple can help the therapist and the clients form a clearer picture of where each member of the couple stands initially in different areas of their relationship.

As both members of the couple engages in sessions with the therapist, they can come to realize how these findings from this review apply to them. Topics of discussion may include:

(1) Examining how often and when individuals make sacrifices (i.e., frequency, hassles).
(2) What type of sacrifices they make (i.e., easy, difficult, intimate).
(3) How partners respond to sacrifices (i.e., with awareness, appreciation, gratitude?).
(4) The mindset or perception of the individual’s own sacrifices (i.e., cognitive appraisals).
(5) The balance of sacrifices between partners.
(6) The concept of the mutual growth cycle and interdependence theory.
(7) Attachment orientations.
(8) Dedication and working to change the relationship.

Many approaches and model to therapy exists. Some of these (to name a few) include existential therapy, person-centered therapy, Gestalt therapy, reality therapy, and family systems therapy (Corey, 2017). Since it would be impractical to address all of them, I will focus briefly one that is of most interest to me: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.
Improving Relational Sacrifice Outcome with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

As the literature has revealed, sacrificing is not always beneficial, but it can be in certain contexts. In therapy, the goal would be to target some of these factors to construct contexts in which sacrificing is beneficial. If the therapist is using the cognitive behavioral therapy model, the therapist could help the clients examine and change their cognitive processes, use educational treatment to help the clients understand the processes occurring within them and their partner (Corey, 2017), and thus produce more effective and productive behavior.

In the context of relational sacrifices, the therapist could work with the individual on their cognitive appraisals of their own sacrifices and with the partner on how they respond to the individual’s sacrifices. Curran, Burke, Young, and Totenhagen (2016) extrapolated that when partners display appreciation, individuals may feel their contributions are more balanced or worthwhile. Several studies support similar ideas and include positive attitudes (Stanley et al., 2006), cognitive appraisal of the positives and negatives of sacrifice (Righetti, Sakaluk, Faure, & Impett, 2020), and willingness to sacrifice (Monk, Vennum, Ogolsky, Fincham, 2014) as important aspect of having positive outcomes for relational sacrifice.

I will use the A-B-C framework (based in rational emotive behavioral therapy) to describe how partner appreciation can change the outcome of an individual’s sacrifice. The “A” is for Activating event, which in this case is an individual performing a sacrifice. The “B” is for Belief, which in this case is that their sacrifice is not worthwhile. The “C” is for Consequence, which reinforces the negative belief that their sacrifice is not worthwhile, which would be reduced relationship quality. However, if the partner changes this normal pattern and shows appreciation for the individual’s sacrifice, this would be “D,” Disrupting belief. The individual
would now have a new belief that their partner appreciated their sacrifice and would, “E,” form an Effective philosophy, which would lead to “F,” a new Feeling.

(Clarke, 2021).

In addition to understanding how behaviors and cognitive processes are linked as described above, there are several other techniques a CBT therapist could use. The therapist could assign behavioral experiments to help the couple critically examine, gather evidence, and empirically test automatic core beliefs (Corey, 2017). In application to relational sacrifices, couples could experiment with some of the suggestions provided in earlier sections of this manuscript. For example, if an individual is not convinced relational sacrifices could be beneficial to them and their partner, they could spend the next week or so deliberately deciding to make frequent easy sacrifices (Ruppel & Curran, 2012) and noting their satisfaction each day. If the individual takes time to be curious about their behavior and experiences, they may be better prepared to learn about helpful discoveries that may benefit or improve their relationship.

Cognitive distortions, or errors in interpretation (Corey, 2017), may also be beneficial to examine in the therapy setting. These errors in interpretation (Corey, 2017) can be associated with negative effects for the individual and the partner. Through a process of evaluation and modification, the couple can learn to identify these disruptive thinking patterns and work
toward making lasting change in emotions and behaviors (Corey, 2017). Some cognitive distortions include: arbitrary inferences, selective abstraction, overgeneralization, magnification and minimization, personalization, labeling and mislabeling, and dichotomous thinking (Corey, 2017).

While the literature I reviewed does not discuss cognitive distortions, the literature focuses on subjective measures of self-evaluation of individuals and their partners. Thus, I believe it reasonable to conclude some of these couples may engage in some cognitive distortions. I will provide a hypothetical example of a how cognitive distortion may be applicable to relational sacrifices. In the article by Curran, Burke, Young, and Totenhagen (2016), it was discussed that individuals tend to overestimate how much they do for their partners and underestimate how much their partners do for them. Thus, if an individual enacts a sacrifice they perceive as meaningful and their partner does not respond with awareness of appreciation, the individual may engage in arbitrary inferences by thinking their partner does not love them and will soon break up with them or overgeneralization in which they may think none of their sacrifices are meaningful and in future non-related settings, may apply this inappropriate belief (Corey, 2017).

The therapist could encourage the couple in cognitive restructuring activities in which the individual and/or partner can gather evidence for their beliefs and assess the outcomes (Corey, 2017). The individual and their partner can learn to base their beliefs on evidence they gather from being curious and begin to explore healthier and more accurate alternative interpretations (Corey, 2017). By helping couples learn to be curious and retrain their mind to be less reactive, CBT therapists will be able to help couples identify problematic thinking in
regard to how the individuals sacrifice and how the partner responds, ultimately, improving relationship quality.

**Personal Experience and Reflection on Sacrificing in my Own Romantic Relationship**

Through my experience constructing this thesis, I have been in a romantic relationship. As I have learned about the findings from the reviewed literature, I have reflected on how I can apply these to my own relationship. The findings that have persisted in my mind are that appreciation of sacrifices, frequent easy sacrifices, and sacrificing on days of lower hassle are more beneficial to the relationship.

My boyfriend and I have made an effort to show and share more appreciation of each other’s sacrifices. We will sometimes verbalize when we have made or are making a sacrifice for the other, thus providing the partner (me or him) with greater opportunity to show appreciation for that sacrifice. This increase in communication has contributed to increased relationship quality and feelings of greater commitment and dedication. For example, when my boyfriend is feeling stressed and I choose to help with the dishes (most of which are his roommates), he provides verbal (i.e., “thank you” and “I appreciate this”) and physical (i.e., hugs and kisses) which help me to feel as if my sacrifice was worth it.

I have also noticed that frequent *easy* sacrifices do indeed tend to be more beneficial for my relationship with my partner. It feels good knowing I am able to do something to help my partner with little (but still some) cost to myself. The small amount of “cost” makes it so that awareness of the transformation is able to occur and that appreciation given for this transformation cancels out the cost plus some. For example, my boyfriend has expressed that
he does not appreciate me pushing him back by opening cabinets and drawers in the kitchen rather than verbally asking him to move, which I very much understand. In the kitchen now, I decide to enact this simple frequent and easy sacrifice to use my words and ask him to please move (or say excuse me) before opening a drawer. This easy sacrifice visibly pleases my boyfriend and we both feel a greater relationship quality.

This example can also be applied to the working to change the relationship finding presented earlier. Young, Curran, and Totenhagen (2012) found that working to change the relationship (a form of sacrifice) may improve your relationship quality when individuals have low relationship uncertainty. Because my boyfriend and I perceive ourselves to have higher certainty, working to change our relationship (as I do when I practice breaking my bad habit of pushing people back by just opening drawers) has helped improve our relationship quality.

To provide one more example, my boyfriend will sometimes ask for backrubs. As I do not often enjoy giving back rubs, I usually consider this a sacrifice. I have noticed that on days when I am more stressed and have more to get done (higher hassle), declining his request for a backrub is better for our relationship quality. If I say yes, I may provide a very weak back rub that he does not enjoy and is only disappointed when I give up trying and I feel guilty for not wanting to give him a good backrub, thus reducing our relationship quality on that day.

The examples I have provided are an illustration of how I have been able to apply these findings to my own life. I would like to acknowledge that I fit well into the typical sample used in most of these studies (i.e., WEIRD samples) and I am looking for ways in which to validate these findings. Nonetheless, these findings provide opportunity (in therapy or on their own) for individuals and their partners to learn about, experiment within their own relationship, and
reflect upon what habits and patterns most help improve their relationship quality with their partner.
References


Clark, A. (2021; March 8). Lecture and PowerPoint presentation on cognitive behavioral therapy. FSHD 405 Theories of Counseling, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.


Young, V., Burke, T., & Curran, M. A. (2019). Interpersonal effects of health-related social control: An examination of dyadic influence, partner behavior change, and relationship
## Appendix

### Table 1. Description of studies reviewed in the critical review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Participants (n=)</th>
<th>Participant Demographics</th>
<th>Measures in Study</th>
<th>Models, Theories, or Main Ideas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akçabozan, N. B., McDaniel, B. T., Corkery, S. A., &amp; Curran, M. A. (2017). Gender, sacrifices, and variability in commitment: A daily diary study of pregnant unmarried cohabiters and their male partners. <em>Sex Roles, 77</em>, 194-208.</td>
<td>Daily Diary Week Multilevel modeling (MLM): 3 models (frequency, ease, awareness)</td>
<td>Model 1: 43 couples Model 2: 33 couples (responses recorded when reported sacrifice was made that day) Model 3: 31 couples</td>
<td>-primarily Caucasian -variety of education -live together: 90.7% (the rest live together &gt;/=1day per week) -length: 1.5-84 months</td>
<td>Measures: Daily relational sacrifice: - Frequency of sacrifice - Ease of sacrifice - Awareness of sacrifice Commitment - Variability in daily relationship commitment For both actor and partner Gender as a moderator</td>
<td>Interdependence theory Actor Partner Interdependence Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burke, T. J. &amp; Young, V. J. (2012). Sexual transformations and intimate behaviors in romantic relationships. <em>Journal of Sex Research, 49</em>:5, 454-463.</td>
<td>Questionnaire -online</td>
<td>N= 96 couples</td>
<td>-Southwestern university -undergrad comm class -45% students -age: 19-68 -married (34%) -cohabiting couples (11%) -couples who do not live together but stay overnight together several times per week (25%) -couples who do not live together but stay overnight together occasionally (13%) -couples who do not live together but live in</td>
<td>Measure: Sexual transformation Intimate behaviors Relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>Actor-Partner Interdependence Models (used in analyses to account for interpersonal effects) Interdependence Theory</td>
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<td>Reference</td>
<td>Study Design</td>
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<td><strong>Cooper, A., Totenhagen, C. J., Curran, M. A., Randall, A. K., &amp; Smith, N. E. (2017).</strong> Daily relationship quality in same-sex couples: Attachment and sacrifice motives. <em>Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences, 11, 146-160.</em></td>
<td>Daily diary 14 day</td>
<td>N= 81 couples</td>
<td>- Same-sex couples&lt;br&gt;- AZ and AL&lt;br&gt;- 58 female couples&lt;br&gt;- 23 male couples&lt;br&gt;- Length avg= 5.4 y&lt;br&gt;- Age avg= 33.71 y&lt;br&gt;- 74.07% Caucasian&lt;br&gt;- 10.49% Hispanic&lt;br&gt;- Most had at least some college education&lt;br&gt;- 6.5% had children at home</td>
<td>Measures: Sacrifice Motives Relationship Quality Attachment Gender Controls</td>
<td>Motives&lt;br&gt;Attachment insecurity&lt;br&gt;Interdependence Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corkery, S. A., Curran, M. A., &amp; Parkman, A. (2011).</strong> Spirituality, sacrifice, and relationship quality for expectant cohabitor. <em>Marriage and Family Review, 47:46, 345-362.</em></td>
<td>Survey and home visit</td>
<td>N= 46 individuals (22 couples and 2 other women)&lt;br&gt;- 45.7% White&lt;br&gt;- 30.4% Hispanic&lt;br&gt;- 41.3% some college&lt;br&gt;- &lt;$5,000 a year: -&lt;br&gt;- 28.3% &gt;$50,000 a year (4.3%)&lt;br&gt;- Age: mdn =13.3% had child(ren) from previous relationships&lt;br&gt;- Length: mdn= 2y&lt;br&gt;- 74% plans to marry&lt;br&gt;- 62.5% Unplanned pregnancy</td>
<td>Southwestern US</td>
<td>Relationship Quality: - Commitment - Satisfaction - Ambivalence - Conflict Relational Sacrifice: - Frequency - Ease (perceptions) Spirituality (Scale from: Reed, 1987)</td>
<td>Interdependence Theory&lt;br&gt;- Egocentric and motivated by self interest&lt;br&gt;Spirituality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curran, M. A., &amp; Burke, T., Young, V., &amp; Totenhagen, C. T. (2016). Relational sacrifices about intimate behavior and relationship quality for expectant cohabitators. <em>Marriage and Family Review, 52</em>, 552-460.</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>N = 69 individuals (33 couples)</td>
<td>Southwest US Pregnant or expectant with 1st child Unmarried Cohabitating Ethnicities: 47.8% White, 37.7% Hispanic EDU: 44.9% had associates degree Income: ($5000 (23.2%)) to ($50,000 (26.8%)) Median age = 25y 75.4% plans to marry partner Length: Mdn = 23 months</td>
<td>Relationship quality: - Commitment - Satisfaction - Love - Maintenance - Ambivalence - Conflict Intimate relationship sacrifice - Frequency - Awareness Controls</td>
<td>Interdependence Theory Actor-partner independence models Attribution bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, L. C., &amp; Impett, E. A. (2017). Giving when it costs: How interdependent self-construal shapes willingness to sacrifice and satisfaction with sacrifice in romantic relationships. <em>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 35</em>, 722–742.</td>
<td>Study 1: One time self-report study Study 2: In lab followed by 14 consecutive days of nightly daily diaries.</td>
<td>Study 1: N = 307 individuals living with their romantic partner Study 2: N = 164</td>
<td>Study 1: Recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. 51% Male 43.8% European 37.3% Asian 4.5% Native American 3.3% African 1.8% Latino 9.2% “other” 49.1% were married Study 2: Undergrad psychology students</td>
<td>- Self-construal - Relationship Satisfaction - Commitment - Cost of sacrifice - What it means to sacrifice - Willingness to sacrifice - Satisfaction with sacrifice - Satisfaction with decision - Feelings of authenticity - Emotional suppression</td>
<td>Interdependent self-construal Authenticity</td>
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<td>Reference</td>
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</table>
- What is prorelationship motivation?  
- Forgiveness as an example  
- Sources  
- Situation Structure  
- The Power of a Situation  
- Why study situational structure?  
- How interactions influence one another’s outcomes  
- Four properties of situational structure  
- Temporal processes and prorelationship motivations  
- Making the transition from one situation to the next  
- The Transformation process  
- Predictors of Prorelationship transformation of motivation | Prorelationship motivations  
Social interactions  
Interdependence theory  
Situational Structures  
Transformation of motivation |
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<th>Measures in Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impett, E. A., &amp; Gordon, A. M. (2010). Why do people sacrifice to approach rewards versus to avoid costs? Insights from attachment theory. <em>Personal Relationships, 17</em>(2), 299–315.</td>
<td>Study 1: Cross-sectional Study 2: 14-day daily experience study</td>
<td>Study 1: N = 122 individuals Study 2: N= 107 cross sectional data of their romantic partners</td>
<td>Both Studies: College psychology students at UCLA in dating relationships Heterosexual Study 1: 45 men and 77 female 18-37 years old 39% Asian 34% white 13% multiethnic/other 10% Hispanic 4% African American Study 2: 17-18 years old 45% Asian 35% white 6% multiethnic/other 14% Hispanic 1% African American</td>
<td>Study 1: - Attachment - Frequency of Sacrifice - Sacrifice goals Study 2: - Person-level measures of attachment - Daily sacrifice goals: - 4 goals: approach or avoidance and self- or partner-focused goals - Frequency of sacrifice</td>
<td>Attachment theory Romantic love consists of attachment, caregiving, and sex.</td>
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<td>Reference</td>
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<td><strong>Mattingly</strong>, B. A., &amp; Clark, E. M. (2012). Weakening relationships we try to preserve: Motivated sacrifice, attachment, and relationship quality. <em>Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42</em>(2), 373–386.</td>
<td>One time completion of measures</td>
<td>N = 78 individuals</td>
<td>Undergrad students in romantic relationship &gt;1 month Average age: 19.5y 56 females 22 males 78.2% Caucasian 77.9% exclusively dating 82.1% in love 89.7% not cohabitating with partner</td>
<td>Attachment Relationship satisfaction Motives for sacrifice Overall sacrifice (frequency)</td>
<td>Approach and avoidance motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Righetti</strong>, F. &amp; Impett, E. (2017). Sacrifice in close relationships: Motives, emotions, and relationship outcomes. <em>Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 11</em>(10).</td>
<td>Literature analysis</td>
<td>(Relevant literature)</td>
<td>Scope unclear given that this is a review article</td>
<td>Sections: • When will people be willing to sacrifice? • Commitment • Power • Self-control • Why do people sacrifice? • Approach-avoidance motives • Self-, partner-, and relationship-focused motives • When is sacrifice beneficial or detrimental to personal and relational well-being? • Communal orientation • Emotional suppression • Potential costs and benefits of giving and receiving sacrifices • Future Directions</td>
<td>Approach-avoidance motivational theory Communal orientation Attachment theory</td>
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</table>
| Righetti, F., Sakaluk, J. K., Faure, R., & Impett, E. A. (2020). The link between sacrifice and relational and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. Psychological Bulletin. Advance online publication. | Meta-analysis       | 82 data sets 9,547 effect sizes (N = 32,053) (86.51% unpublished), and 32,053 unique participants | 28 different labs 9 countries: United States 66.6%, Netherlands 18.5%, Canada 5.3%, China 2.5%, Germany 1.2%, Korea 1.2%, India 1.2%, Italy 1.2%, Switzerland 1.2% | • Sacrifice and Personal and Relationship Well-Being: Two Different Perspectives:  
  • The Benefit Hypothesis  
  • The Burden Hypothesis  
  • Dyadic Effects  
  • Sacrifice Facets:  
    • Willingness to sacrifice  
    • Behavioral sacrifice  
    • Satisfaction with sacrifice  
    • Cost of sacrifice  
  • Additional Moderators:  
    • Personal Well-Being  
    • Relationship Well-Being  
    • Gender  
    • Frequency of Sacrifice  
    • Type of Assessment  
    • Publication, Relationship Length, Age, Lab, and Small Study Effects | Prosocial behavior  
  Dyadic effect  
  The benefit hypothesis  
  The burden hypothesis  
  Interdependence Theory  
  Theory of planned behavior  
  Theory of reasoned action  
  Transactive goal-dynamics theory |
  7 days  
  3 matching  
  Initial day of baseline measures | N= 166 couples | 63% college students*  
**“typically, studies of sacrifice are comprised of college students (e.g., Impett et al., 2005; Wieselquist et al., 1999)”**  
Average age: 25.76y  
Avg relationship length: 5.9y  
Casually dating: 6.6% | Measures:  
- Daily relationship satisfaction  
- Daily number of sacrifices  
- Daily sacrifice difficulty  
- Attachment orientations (baseline measure)  
- Overall relationship satisfaction (baseline measure) | Interdependence theories  
Attachment theories |
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<tr>
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</table>
- **Study 1:**  
  - Scale development procedures  
  - Survey  
- **Study 2:**  
  - Analyses relevant to validity of CI Survey (same procedure) | **Study 1:** n=141  
- **Study 1:**  
  - Demographics  
  - Relationship satisfaction  
  - Commitment question  
  - 10 subscales:  
    - Morality of divorce  
    - Availability of partners  
    - Social pressure  
    - Structural investment  
    - Unattractiveness of alternatives  
    - Termination procedures  
    - Relationship agenda  
    - Meta-commitment  
    - Couple identity  
    - Primacy of relationship  
- **Study 2:** n=279  
- **Study 2:**  
  - Religious groups: n=137  
  - Undergrad: n=118  
  - Ongoing marital research project: n=24  
  - 96% white  
  - Avg education: 14.8 y  
  - Avg income: $30,700  
  - Married:60%  
  - Exclusive dating: 23.5%  
  - Catholic: 23%  
  - Protestant:56% |  
- **Study 1 Measures:**  
  - Demographics  
  - Commitment  
  - Relationship satisfaction  
  - Commitment question  
  - 10 subscales:  
    - Morality of divorce  
    - Availability of partners  
    - Social pressure  
    - Structural investment  
    - Unattractiveness of alternatives  
    - Termination procedures  
    - Relationship agenda  
    - Meta-commitment  
    - Couple identity  
    - Primacy of relationship  
- **Study 2 Measures:**  
  - Demographic form  
  - CI (60 items)  
  - Termination Procedures  
  - Unattractiveness of alternatives  
  - Marital Adjustment Test  
  - The Relationship Problem Inventory  
  - Johnsons’ Personal Commitment Measure |  
- Commitment Inventory (CI)  
- Scales of Interest:  
  - Personal dedication  
  - Relationship agenda  
  - Primacy of relationship  
  - Couple identity  
  - Satisfaction with sacrifice  
  - Alternative monitoring  
  - Meta-commitment  
- Constraint commitment  
- Social pressure  
- Termination procedures  
- Unattractiveness of alternatives  
- Morality of divorce  
- Availability of partners |
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<th>Measures in Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanley, S. M.,</strong></td>
<td>Longitudinal assessments -3 time points</td>
<td>N = 38 married couples</td>
<td>- Jewish: 4%</td>
<td>Johnson’s Social Pressure Measure&lt;br&gt;Beach and Broderick’s Commitment Measure&lt;br&gt;Udry’s Marital Alternative Scale&lt;br&gt;Rusbult’s Commitment Measure&lt;br&gt;Disclosure Scale</td>
<td>Interdependence Theory&lt;br&gt;Transformation of Motivation&lt;br&gt;Meditated model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitton, S. W.,</td>
<td>From Denver Family Development Project (larger longitudinal design)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Edu: all completed HS and most had a bachelors&lt;br&gt;Median income: $30-39,000</td>
<td>Measures: Marital Adjustment Test Personal History Form&lt;br&gt;The Satisfaction with Sacrifice Scale&lt;br&gt;Commitment Commitment Inventory</td>
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<td>Sadberry, S. L.,</td>
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<td>Clements, M. L.,</td>
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<td>&amp; Markman, H. J.</td>
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<td><strong>Tang, C., Curran, M. A.,</strong></td>
<td>Questionnaire -secure online</td>
<td>N= 280 cohabitators (84% paired couples)</td>
<td>-Heterosexual&lt;br&gt;-54% women&lt;br&gt;-75% university students&lt;br&gt;-71.8% White&lt;br&gt;12.9% Hispanic&lt;br&gt;5.7% mixed&lt;br&gt;-5% Asian&lt;br&gt;-3.6% African American&lt;br&gt;-1% native American&lt;br&gt;-Age 18-58&lt;br&gt;-relationship length mean: 2y5m&lt;br&gt;Cohabitation time mean: 1y1m</td>
<td>Measures: Reasons for cohabitation Satisfaction with Sacrifice Commitment Satisfaction Ambivalence and Conflict</td>
<td>Interdependence&lt;br&gt;Commitment Theory</td>
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<td>Marriage and Family Review, 50, 598-620.</td>
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<td>Daily hassles,</td>
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<td>Participant Demographics</td>
<td>Measures in Study</td>
<td>Models, Theories, or Main Ideas</td>
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<td>sacrifices, and relationship quality for pregnant cohabiters. <em>Family Science</em>, 2:1, 68-72.</td>
<td>Online 7 day</td>
<td>N= 164 couples heterosexual</td>
<td>Median education: some college or associates degree Income: largest category (&lt;$5000/year (21%)</td>
<td>schedule, household tasks, intimate behaviors... Hassles (Hassles and Uplifts Scale) Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>Interdependence theory</td>
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<td>Whitton, S. W., Stanley, S. M., &amp; Markman, H. J. (2007). If I help my partner, will it hurt me? Perceptions of sacrifice in romantic</td>
<td>Longitudinal assessments -3 time points From Denver Family Development Project</td>
<td>N = 38 married couples -Edu: all completed HS and most had a bachelor’s degree Median income: $30-39,000</td>
<td>Measures:  Marital Adjustment Test Personal History Form The Satisfaction with Sacrifice Scale Commitment- Commitment Inventory</td>
<td>Interdependence Theory Transformation of Motivation Mediated model</td>
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<td>relationships. <em>Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology</em>, 26, 64–91.</td>
<td>(larger longitudinal design)</td>
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<td>Young, V., Burke, T., &amp; Curran, M. A. (2019). Interpersonal effects of health-related social control: An examination of dyadic influence, partner behavior change, and relationship quality. <em>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</em>, 36, 3986-4004.</td>
<td>Cross-sectional dyadic survey Actor-partner independence models used in analyses</td>
<td>N= 243-416 couples</td>
<td>Heterosexual -18-71 y/o -4m-44.5y length -62.66% lived w/ partner -41.88% had 1 or more children with partner -47.3% employed full time -24.48% students Range of edu -range of income -77.45% European American -11.9% Hispanic 4.18% AA</td>
<td>Measures: Health-related social control Breadth of health influence Healthy and unhealthy transformations Relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>Interdependence Theory Actor-partner independence models used in analyses Dual effect model of social control</td>
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<td>Young, V., Curran, M., &amp; Totenhagen, C. (2012). A daily diary study: Working to change the relationship and relational uncertainty in understanding positive relationship quality. <em>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</em>, 30(1), 132-148.</td>
<td>Daily diary – 7 days 3 matching days</td>
<td>165 couples (N = 330)</td>
<td>Sample: • 62.4% University students • Ethnicity: 66.9% Caucasian • 26.1 % married • Of those not married, 21.6% reported living with their partner. • 22.7% reported having at least one child. • Length of relationship ranged from 2 months to 44 years</td>
<td>Measures: • Working to change relationship - 13 item composite score • Relational uncertainty Daily positive relationship quality</td>
<td>Investment Model</td>
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<td><strong>China Specific Studies</strong></td>
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<td>(Mdn = 2 yrs and 2 months).</td>
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<td><strong>Lan, J., Li, X., Cao, H., Zhou, N., Lin, X, Deng, L., &amp; Fang, X. (2017).</strong> Inequities of sacrifice and marital satisfaction in Chinese young couples. <em>Journal of Family Therapy.</em> 39, 169-192.</td>
<td>One time self-report measures in the lab, office, or in home.</td>
<td>N = 115 couples -“Young Chinese couples” -From Beijing and Taiyuan -In first 4 years of marriage with no children (n = 55) -And first marriage with first child under 6 (n = 60) -Average marriage length of 40.27 months -Average age: 30.4 years -Average education:</td>
<td>Measure originally developed for American couples: -Marital Satisfaction -Frequency of sacrifice behavior -Inequity of sacrifice (both spouses perceived inequity and actual amount and actual inequity)</td>
<td>Social exchange theory Equity Theory</td>
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<td>Lin, W-F., Li, T-S., &amp; Chen, L. H. (2017). Sacrifice in a supportive marriage: Social support as a moderator buffers the negative effects of sacrifice in marriage. Journal of Happiness Studies, 18(2), 575-589.</td>
<td>Part of a 5-year longitudinal study on work and family issues. Data used from 2013 and 2014 (wave4 and wave5) not yet published. - Two time (T1 and T2) follow up questionnaire</td>
<td>N = 141 couples</td>
<td>bachelor's degree (higher than wider population of China) - Couples living in metropolitan area of Taiwan - Lived with children and no other relatives - Average age: 41.4 years - 78.7% had at least 2 children</td>
<td>- Sacrifice in Marriage - Social Support provision - Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale - 10-item center for epidemiological studies-depression measure</td>
<td>Conservation of Resources theory - Paradox of sacrificing Social support</td>
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