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Social Psychological and Personality Science 2013 4: 685 originally published online 13 February 2013

DOI: 10.1177/1948550613476309

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Social Psychological and
Personality Science
4(6) 685-691
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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1948550613476309
spps.sagepub.com



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Abstract

Successful romantic relationship initiation often requires bold and direct action, but direct action can increase the possibility of rejection. These dual possible outcomes create interpersonal risk, which should prompt self-esteem differences in behavior. When risk is present, lower self-esteem individuals, who prefer to avoid social costs, will be less likely to use direct initiation behaviors than higher self-esteem individuals, who prefer to approach social rewards. However, eliminate social risk and these self-esteem differences in behavior will be similarly eliminated. Furthermore, reflecting gender-role prescriptions, we expected these effects to be evident among men, but not women. We test these hypotheses in a naturalistic study assessing retrospective behavioral reports and in a controlled laboratory experiment using behavioral coding to assess actual initiation behavior. Results were consistent with our hypotheses, revealing that gender moderated the links between self-esteem, risk, and initiation behavior in a manner consistent with gender roles.

Keywords

relationship initiation, self-esteem, romantic relationships, social behavior, gender

A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.

- John A. Shedd

The formation and maintenance of close social bonds is a fundamental human need (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, attempting to attain desired social bonds can be risky: Although successfully initiating relationships can be highly rewarding, failure is extremely painful (e.g., MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Because of these dual possible outcomes of relationship initiation attempts, individuals who are particularly fearful of the heartache that accompanies rejection may find themselves living on the sidelines of social life, afraid to tempt rejection. However, people, like ships, are not designed to remain in the “safe harbor” that John A. Shedd described in the quote that began this article. Social isolation is damaging to people’s mental and physical well-being (e.g., Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). To thrive and form new social bonds, people must face down the possibility of rejection and take action to initiate new relationships.

In the present research, we test the hypothesis that self-esteem predicts people’s willingness to make bold moves to initiate heterosexual romantic relationships. As we will explicate shortly, self-esteem differences in chronic social motivations push individuals with higher self-esteem (HSEs) to be direct in their initiation behaviors, but pull individuals with lower self-esteem (LSEs) to remain indirect. However, we believe that such

self-esteem differences in initiation behaviors are not immutable. Rather, we predict that when the risk of rejection is reduced, LSEs will behave as boldly as HSEs when attempting to woo the opposite sex. Furthermore, because social scripts and norms place the onus of direct relationship initiation on men (e.g., Metts & Mikucki, 2008), we also predict that the link between self-esteem and initiation behavior will be stronger for men than for women. In the present research, we examine how self-esteem, gender, and interpersonal risk interact to predict how far people are willing to venture out of their safe harbor to initiate romantic relationships.

Self-esteem is a reflection of one’s perceived value as a relational partner. LSEs believe they are less desirable social partners than do HSEs (e.g., Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) and LSEs expect less acceptance from novel interaction partners than do HSEs (e.g., Stinson, Cameron, Wood, Holmes, & Gaucher, 2009). These social expectations fuel self-esteem differences in *signature social motivations*, characteristic

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patterns of social motivation that are evident across social contexts (e.g., Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). LSEs' signature social motivation is aimed at self-protectively avoiding the pain of rejection (e.g., Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Heimpel, Elliot, & Wood, 2006). In contrast, HSEs' signature social motivation is aimed at promoting relationships and approaching connection with others. Across a broad array of social situations, LSEs focus their behavior on avoiding rejection, whereas HSEs focus on achieving or maintaining connections with others.

Signature social motivations are particularly revealed in situations of *interpersonal risk*: Situations that afford *both* the possibility of gain and the possibility of loss (e.g., Cavallo, Holmes, Fitzsimons, Murray, & Wood, 2012). Interpersonally risky situations are typically those in which the outcome of one's actions could result in acceptance (reward/gain) or rejection (cost/loss). In such risky social situations, an approach-avoid conflict is elicited, wherein people are dually motivated to pursue interpersonal rewards by seeking belonging, and to avoid interpersonal costs by protecting the self from rejection (e.g., Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008). In the face of this motivational conflict, one's signature social motivation determines one's course of action. Hence, for LSEs, the need to avoid rejection overrides belongingness needs, prompting LSEs to behave in ways that minimize the chance of rejection. For HSEs, the need for belonging overrides the need to avoid rejection, prompting HSEs to behave in ways that maximize the chance of acceptance.

Although this *risk-regulation model* of social behavior was derived from research examining established romantic relationships (Murray et al., 2006, 2008) in the present research, we extend the risk-regulation model into the domain of relationship initiation by examining people's romantic relationship initiation strategies. Signature social motivations should be evident in relationship initiation strategies: Behaviors that promote interpersonal closeness reflect high approach motivations, whereas behaviors that maintain independence reflect avoid motivations (Neumann & Strack, 2000). We examine one particular behavior that reflects social approach motivations during relationship initiation: The use of direct behaviors to initiate new romantic relationships.

We conceptualize directness and indirectness as two ends of a single behavioral continuum, with the most direct behaviors at one pole and the most indirect behaviors at the opposite pole. Direct initiation attempts make explicit one's interest (i.e., "I like you") and intent (i.e., "I want to be with you romantically"), such as asking a love interest out on a date. In contrast, indirect initiation strategies convey less interest and mask romantic intent. An example is maintaining proximity to the person of interest. Using a direct strategy increases the possibility of incurring interpersonal costs. One's interest and intentions are clearly revealed, thus forcing a decision—possibly negative—by one's potential partner. At the same time, using a direct strategy increases the possibility of incurring interpersonal rewards. Direct pick-up lines (Cunningham, 1989) and direct strategies in general (Anthony, Cameron, Wood, &

Holmes, 2004) are more likely to result in acceptance of one's overtures than are less direct ones. On the other end of the behavioral spectrum, indirect strategies protect the self from the possibility of incurring interpersonal costs. Indirect behaviors mask one's interest and intent, forestalling a definitive decision by one's love interest. Unfortunately, such caution is also unlikely to yield interpersonal rewards; indirect behaviors are likely to go unnoticed and are less likely to be reciprocated (Anthony et al., 2004).

Consistent with their risk-induced signature social motivations and reflecting the inherent risk of using direct initiation behaviors, we predict that HSEs will use more direct initiation behaviors than LSEs when social risk is high. However, when social risk is low, thus eliminating self-esteem differences in signature social motivation (e.g., see Murray et al., 2006), we propose that self-esteem differences in the use of direct initiation behavior will be similarly eliminated. However, we add another nuance to this prediction: Self-esteem and risk will interact to predict direct initiation behaviors for men, but not women.

The association between self-esteem and cognition and behavior is sensitive to social-role expectancies, including those prescribed by gender (Anthony, Holmes, & Wood, 2007a). For example, self-esteem is most strongly associated with self-views of traits socially valued in occupants of one's gender role. Similarly, self-esteem predicts women's (but not men's) ability to self-present in a communal and feminine manner, and men's (but not women's) ability to self-present in an agentic and masculine manner (Stinson, Gaucher, Wood, Reddoch, Holmes, & Little, 2012). Gender-role expectancies include scripts for relationship initiation. Although social changes since the 1970s have loosened such gender-role prescriptions (Mongeau & Corey, 1996; cited in Bredow, Cate, & Huston, 2008), modern social scripts still dictate that men take the active initiation role (Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002; Metts & Mikucki, 2008). Self-reports of initiation behavior reflect these gender roles (e.g., Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999), as do observations of opposite-sex encounters in naturalistic settings (Moore, 1985). In essence, the old adage that "men propose and women dispose" still holds true for relationship initiation. Reflecting these gender-role expectancies, we propose that men's self-esteem, but not women's self-esteem, will predict direct initiation behavior when risk is present, but not when risk is absent. To test these predictions, we assessed social risk by self-report (Study 1) and by experimentally manipulated risk (Study 2), and assessed initiation behavior with retrospective reports of a naturalistic event (Study 1) and by observing behavior in the laboratory (Study 2).

By stipulating that social risk is necessary to reveal self-esteem differences in direct initiation behavior for men, but not women, we identify, and experimentally manipulate, a key mechanism responsible for the observed correlation between self-esteem and gender-typed behavior (e.g., Stinson et al., 2012). Our research offers a similar theoretical and methodological advance over prior risk-regulation research: Whereas past relationship initiation research examined risk-motivated social

decision making (Anthony et al., 2007a; Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007b; Study 5) and risk-motivated social perception (Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, & Balchen, 2010), we examine risk-motivated social *behavior*. Taken together, our hypotheses suggest that self-esteem is remarkably sensitive to social cues, responding to both gender norms and social risk to regulate social behavior.

Study 1

In this study, we assess participants' use of specific initiation behaviors that vary in directness in the context of unsuccessful initiation attempts, a context rarely studied in relationship initiation research (Cluster, Holmberg, Blair, & Orbuch, 2008). Because we believe that LSEs are more likely to use indirect strategies than HSEs, and indirect strategies are more common during unsuccessful initiation attempts (Anthony et al., 2004), LSEs' initiation behavior may be more plentiful, and representative, during unsuccessful attempts than during successful attempts. We also test our hypothesis that among men but not women, self-esteem differences in direct behaviors will be evident when perceived risk is high, but will be eliminated when perceived risk is low.

Method

Participants. Forty-eight introductory psychology students participated in exchange for partial course credit (27 women; 21 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.7$ years, $SD = 1.01$; 54% in a current romantic relationship).

Procedure and Measures. In small groups of up to 10 people, participants completed the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem inventory ($\alpha = .90$) and demographic questions (e.g., age and sex). Participants were then asked to think back to "the most recent time when [they] were romantically attracted to someone, but did not become involved with him/her at all," and write a short open-ended description of their failed initiation attempt. Participants then answered a series of questions about this failed initiation attempt: "How risky do you think your actions were?" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *extremely*), what was the "importance of becoming romantically involved" with the target, the "importance and significance" of this event in their life, and how much did it "[bother] them that they did not become involved" with the target (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *extremely*). Participants also indicated how long they had known the target of interest prior to the initiation attempt, how long they were romantically interested (in days) before the attempt, and the nature of their relationship with the target prior to the initiation attempt (coded as friends, acquaintances, strangers and coworkers). Next, participants reported the behaviors they used in their unsuccessful initiation attempt by selecting from a checklist of 26 initiation behaviors.¹ After completing these questions, participants were debriefed as to the purposes of the study and allowed to leave.

Quantifying Directness of Initiation Behavior. At a later date, an independent sample of 32 participants (21 women; 11 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.5$ years, $SD = 1.92$) rated the directness (1 = *not at all direct*, 9 = *extremely direct*) of each of the 26 initiation behaviors included in the checklist. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of directness ratings for each behavior.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses indicated that time since the event occurred ($M = 1.95$ years, $SD = 1.46$) and participant's age at the event ($M = 16.73$ years, $SD = 1.59$) did not moderate any of the results reported below or relate to any of the key variables in our analyses.

First, we created for each participant a single score that reflected the directness of the behaviors they used in their unsuccessful initiation attempt. This score was the sum of the directness scores, as listed in Table 1, associated with each behavior that participants selected from the checklist. For example, if a participant selected "I complimented him/her" and "I held or kissed him/her," that participant's score would be 12.72. Higher scores on this variable thus represented a higher degree of *directness of initiation behavior*.

To test whether self-esteem, gender, and perceived risk predicted participants' directness of initiation behavior, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression in which self-esteem (mean centered; $M = 7.04$, $SD = 1.36$), gender (dummy coded: *female* = 0, *male* = 1), risk (the "risky" item mean centered; $M = 3.00$, $SD = 2.00$), and the interactions between the variables were used to predict the directness of the initiation behavior ($M = 49.35$, $SD = 17.60$). Results revealed only a significant three-way interaction between self-esteem, gender, and risk, $\beta = .62$, $t(40) = 2.45$, $p = .019$. Simple slopes were interpreted as recommended by Aiken and West (1991).

For women, there was no self-esteem \times risk interaction, $t < 1$. There were only main effects for self-esteem, $\beta = .42$, $t(40) = 2.87$, $p = .006$, such that high self-esteem women reported using more direct behavior than did low self-esteem women, and for risk, $\beta = .35$, $t(40) = 2.36$, $p = .02$, such that women who perceived greater risk engaged in more direct behavior than those who reported lower risk.

For men, the anticipated interaction between self-esteem and risk emerged, $\beta = .82$, $t(40) = 6.53$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 1). Unexpectedly, when risk was perceived to be low, LSEs used more direct initiation behaviors than HSEs, $\beta = -.48$, $t(40) = -3.31$, $p = .001$. When risk was perceived to be high, HSEs used more direct initiation behaviors than LSEs, $\beta = 1.51$, $t(40) = 10.33$, $p < .001$. These opposing self-esteem effects reflected risk effects for both HSEs and LSEs. For HSEs, as perceived risk increased, so too did direct initiation behaviors, $\beta = 1.34$, $t(40) = 9.33$, $p < .001$, but for LSEs, as perceived risk increased, direct initiation behaviors decreased, $\beta = -.60$, $t(40) = -4.02$, $p < .001$.

These results suggest that self-esteem and risk do interact to predict initiation behavior, but the nature of the interaction is

Table 1. Behaviors Included in the Initiation Checklist in Study 1.

Behavior	M	SD
I told him/her directly that I like him or her.	7.41	2.28
I directly asked him/her for a date.	7.31	2.68
I held or kissed him/her.	7.16	2.91
I asked for his or her phone number.	7.13	2.03
I flirted, teased or joked around with him/her.	7.03	1.64
I gave him/her my phone number or email.	6.81	1.80
I tried to make our interactions romantic.	6.50	2.02
I gave him/her gifts in person.	6.47	2.42
I went out with him/her with a group of friends.	5.97	2.36
I touched him/her on the arm, leg, or back	5.97	2.18
I tried to just be around him/her as much as possible.	5.72	2.41
I tried to act interested in him/her.	5.66	1.81
I complimented him/her.	5.56	1.88
I tried to make myself look more attractive for him/her.	5.50	2.24
I told him/her personal things about myself.	5.38	1.79
I tried to go to places that I knew he/she would be going to	5.38	2.27
I got my friend to get or try to get his/her phone number, or set up a date.	5.34	2.97
I hinted and talked about romance and dating in general to him/her.	5.31	1.60
I sent him or her gifts by mail, or through another person.	5.13	2.65
I wrote a letter or e-mail telling him/her that I liked him or her.	5.09	2.84
I laughed at his/her jokes	5.06	1.95
I smiled at him/her a lot	5.06	2.15
I got my friend to tell him/her I liked him or her.	4.78	2.64
I looked at him/her a lot (or gave him/her "the look")	4.78	2.18
I tried to show off my possessions, like my car or money.	3.44	2.23
I didn't do anything, I waited for him/her to make a move.	2.44	2.03

Note. Behaviors are ranked according to the mean directness of the behavior as indicated by the pilot sample. Standard deviations of directness scores provided by the pilot sample are also included.

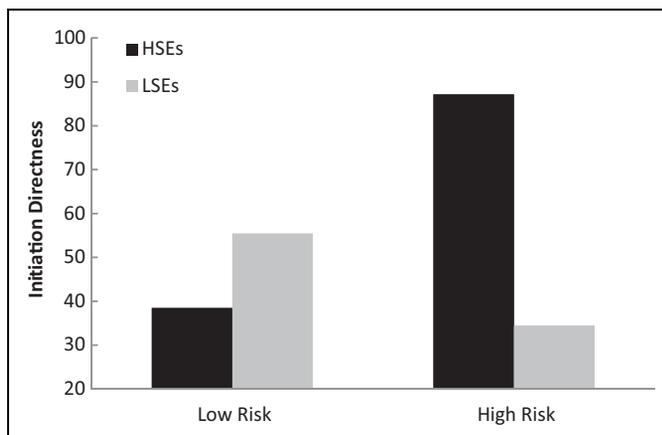


Figure 1. Directness of men's initiation behavior as a function of perceived risk and self-esteem in Study 1.

dependent on gender. Unfortunately, the correlational and retrospective nature of our method in this study makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about this pattern of results. Does perceiving greater risk cause changes in behavior or does recalling one's behaviors change one's recollections of risk? We addressed these limitations in our next study by not only

varying social risk experimentally but also by assessing real-time relationship initiation behavior in the lab.

Study 2

Once again, we predict that self-esteem differences in direct initiation behavior for men will be most pronounced when social risk is present, but this time, we experimentally manipulate social risk and use a behavioral coding method to test our hypotheses.

Method

Participants. Sixty introductory psychology students participated in exchange for partial course credit (31 women; 29 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.2$ years, $SD = 1.61$). All were single or casually dating and all reported English as their first language.²

Procedure and Measures. During individual lab sessions of a study ostensibly examining "compatibility between opposite sex strangers," participants first completed a questionnaire including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale ($\alpha = .76$), demographic questions (e.g., age), and filler items intended to disguise our focus on self-esteem. Participants believed that there was a second, opposite-sex participant in the lab room next to their own, and that they would be communicating

Table 2. Behavioral Cues Indicating Liking and Disliking in Study 2.

Liking cues	Directness	
	M	SD
Express interest in meeting	7.13	1.78
Smile	6.96	1.93
Eye contact with camera	6.82	2.00
Laugh	6.68	2.01
Flirtation glance	6.02	2.55
Fix hair	5.66	2.44
Lean	5.64	2.16
Agree with something the other said	5.45	2.11
Disliking cues		
Clear throat	3.98	2.25
Disagree with something the other said	4.02	2.15
Look upward	4.78	2.37
Look downward	4.87	2.01
Frown	6.19	3.18
Sigh	6.20	2.59
Roll eye	6.22	2.98
Express disinterest in meeting	6.66	3.24

with their interaction partner via video camera (for a detailed description of this procedure, see Cameron et al., 2010). Participants in the *risk* condition ($n = 31$) believed that there was a possibility they could meet the other participant if and only if the other participant wanted to meet them. In other words, there was the possibility that they could learn of either immediate acceptance (rewards) or rejection (costs) by the other participant. In the *no-risk* condition ($n = 29$), participants believed that due to ethical regulations, they were unable to meet their interaction partner face-to-face, even if they wanted to. In other words, there was no real consequence to the interaction—there was no possibility of acceptance or rejection. After learning about the experimental situation, participants filmed their first communication video for their interaction partner, which they believed was being sent via live feed to their interaction partner, who would watch it and then respond. The participants' behavior during their first taped communication constituted the dependent variable in this study. After participants had completed the study, they were probed for suspicion and debriefed.

Quantifying Directness of Conveyed Liking. A separate sample of 134 participants (94 women, 40 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.50$ years, $SD = 1.92$) rated how directly each of eight behavioral cues conveyed liking using a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all direct*, 9 = *extremely direct*). Using the same scale, 41 participants (19 women, 22 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.32$ years, $SD = 1.56$) rated how directly each of eight behavioral cues conveyed disliking. Behavioral cues were derived from previous research (e.g., Cameron et al., 2010; Simpson, Gangestad, & Biek, 1993). Table 2 presents the list of behavioral interest cues that were rated by participants, including the mean and standard deviations of directness ratings.

Coding Participants' Initiation Behaviors. Two independent coders watched participants' introductory videos and rated the participants' use of the behavioral cues listed in Table 2. One coder rated frequency of cues that conveyed liking and the other coder rated frequency of cues that conveyed disliking. All cues were rated on a 5-point scale (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *a few times*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *many times*, and 4 = *most of the time*).

Results and Discussion

Transforming Directness Ratings. To test our predictions, we created a single score that reflected each participant's use of direct cues conveying liking. For each participant, we multiplied coders' frequency ratings of each of the behaviors by the mean directness ratings derived from the pilot data—positive scores for liking cues and negative scores for disliking cues. For example, if the participant received a score of 3 from the coder on the variable "smiling," this rating was multiplied by 6.96 to create a transformed score of 20.88 for the participant on that behavior. These weighted scores for direct behaviors were then summed for each participant to create a score reflecting *directness of cues conveying liking*. On this variable, higher scores represented conveying greater liking whereas lower scores, in particular negative scores, represented conveying greater disliking.³

Next, we conducted a hierarchical regression in which self-esteem (mean centered; $M = 7.51$, $SD = .85$), gender (dummy coded: 0 = *female*; 1 = *male*), risk condition (dummy coded: 0 = *no risk*; 1 = *high risk*), and the subsequent two-way interactions and three-way interactions were used to predict directness of cues conveying liking ($M = 16.49$, $SD = 18.78$).

Results revealed a main effect for self-esteem, $\beta = .24$, $t(59) = 1.96$, $p = .055$, and an interaction between self-esteem and risk condition, $\beta = .42$, $t(56) = 2.38$, $p = .021$, but these effects were moderated by a three-way interaction between self-esteem, risk condition, and gender, $\beta = .47$, $t(55) = 2.48$, $p = .016$. Simple effects analyses indicated that, as in Study 1, women tended to display more direct cues conveying liking in the risky condition and less cues in the no-risk condition, $\beta = -.22$, $t(55) = 1.80$, $p = .06$. However, once again there was no interaction between self-esteem and risk condition for women. For men, as in Study 1, an interaction between self-esteem and condition emerged, $\beta = .91$, $t(55) = 5.16$, $p < .001$. This interaction is depicted in Figure 2. In the high-risk condition, HSEs displayed greater direct liking cues than LSEs, $\beta = 1.29$, $t(55) = 10.42$, $p < .001$. As expected, in the no-risk condition, self-esteem was unrelated to the directness of cues conveying liking, $t < 1$. For HSE men, when risk was high, use of direct cues conveying liking increased relative to when risk was low, $\beta = .79$, $t(55) = 6.31$, $p < .001$. However, the opposite was true for LSE men whose use of direct cues conveying liking decreased when risk was high and increased when risk was low, $\beta = -.57$, $t(55) = -4.58$, $p < .001$. These results offer a striking replication of those obtained in Study 1, using different methods.

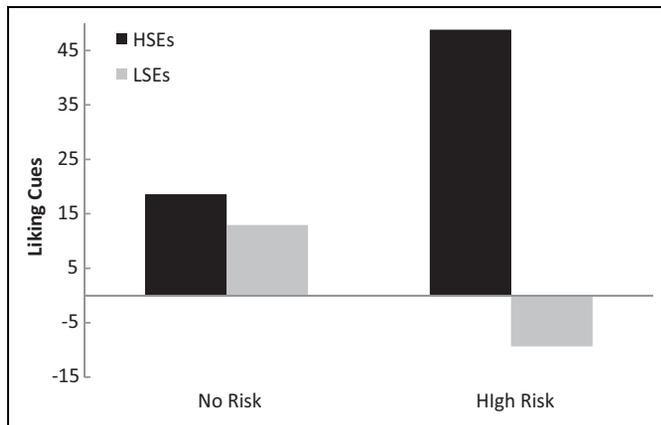


Figure 2. Men's liking cues as a function of condition and self-esteem in Study 2.

General Discussion

Across studies, results were consistent with our predictions about the roles played by social risk, self-esteem, and gender during relationship initiation. When interpersonal risk was high, low self-esteem men used less direct initiation strategies (Study 1) and exhibited less direct and more interpersonally negative behaviors, conveying less liking (Study 2) than their HSEs counterparts. Importantly, these self-esteem differences were eliminated (Study 2) or reversed (Study 1) when social risk was reduced, either in the eye of the beholder (Study 1) or experimentally (Study 2). Moreover, the interaction between self-esteem and social risk in predicting men's initiation behavior was evident across different methods: Retrospective reports (Study 1) and coding of behavior (Study 2). It was also evident across different types of relationship contexts: Past unsuccessful initiation attempts (Study 1) and novel initiation attempts (Study 2). This pattern of results for men replicates previous research on self-esteem and signature social motivation (e.g., Murray et al., 2008), but in the domain of social behavior and only for gender-consistent behavior.

Taken together, these results paint a clear picture of the different initiation methods that lower and higher self-esteem men use, and suggest some possible consequences of those differing strategies. The use of less direct strategies impedes success (Anthony et al., 2004; Cunningham, 1989) and thus, self-esteem differences in behavioral responses to risk should predict self-esteem differences in initiation success. This possibility is supported by self- and peer-reports of initiation success as a function of self-esteem (Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988), but future research should examine experimentally the role played by risk in explaining self-esteem differences in initiation success.

Our results also demonstrate that the link between self-esteem and behavior can be moderated by important social roles, like gender (Anthony et al., 2007a; Stinson et al.,

2012): Self-esteem predicted men's, but not women's, use of direct initiation strategies as a function of risk. Direct initiation behaviors are largely counternormative for women. We assessed the gender appropriateness of the behaviors examined in Studies 1 and 2 and the correlation between perceiving a behavior as more appropriate for a man than a woman to use and perceived directness of a behavior was $r = .39$ in Study 1 and $r = .51$ in Study 2. However, we suspect that if researchers examine indirect relationship initiation strategies, like beautification, or examine a facet of the initiation context in which women are ascribed responsibility, such as selecting an ideal mate (e.g., Cunningham, 1989), then self-esteem and risk will interact to predict initiation behavior for women, but not men. In contrast, if researchers evaluate approach-oriented initiation behaviors that are *not* constrained by gender norms, then self-esteem and risk will interact to predict initiation behavior for both men and women. Future research should explore these possibilities and continue to illuminate the complex relations between risk, self-esteem, gender, and social behavior.

Acknowledgments

We thank our research assistants, Rachel Bach, Jayson Bennett, Meghan Boston, Annette Gagnon, Danielle Gaucher, Tara Galaugher, Holly Haeberer, Christa Hole, Kylee Hurl, Sarah Konrath, Taryn Nepon, Bee Leng Oh, Adrienne Petit, Lisa Reddoch, Kelley Robinson, Shelby Rowlands, Jennifer Schneider, Todd Schultz, Allie Smith, Kathleen Somers, Tamara Sucharyna, and Pam Stager.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant, a University of Manitoba (UM) Research Grant Program, and a UM-SSHRC Research Grant to Jessica J. Cameron, and SSHRC grants to Joanne V. Wood and Danu Anthony Stinson.

Notes

1. Checklist items were derived by conducting a content analysis of brief open-ended descriptions provided by 90 dating couples ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.5$ years, $SD = 1.56$; $M_{\text{length}} = 12.6$ months, $SD = 8.76$) concerning the beginning of their relationship. Two coders independently read the descriptions and created lists of initiation behaviors. These lists were then summarized and combined. Additional behaviors were added based on Clark, Shaver, and Abrahams (1999). This process resulted in a list of 26 behaviors, reported in Table 1.
2. Data from participants in Study 2 were previously reported in Study 4, Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, and Balchen (2010), which examined self-esteem by risk interactions predicting goal activation. None of the results reported in the present research have been reported previously.

3. Using a rank coding system (e.g., the behavior that conveys the most interest is ranked as 8, the one that conveys the second most as 7, and so on until the one that conveys the least interest is ranked as -8) instead of the mean-based system we employed produces similar results.

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