FAT TALK IS PERCEIVED AS MORE DETRIMENTAL TO ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS THAN OTHER FORMS OF SELF-BERATING DIALOG

A Thesis
by
SIDNEY MURRAY

FAT TALK IS PERCEIVED AS MORE DETRIMENTAL TO ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS THAN OTHER FORMS OF SELF-BERATING DIALOG

A Thesis
by
SIDNEY MURRAY
May 2020

APPROVED BY:

_____

Doris Bazzini, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

_____

Denise Martz, Ph.D.
Member, Thesis Committee

_____

Christopher Holden, Ph.D.
Member, Thesis Committee

_____

Rose Mary Webb, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Psychology

Mike McKenzie, Ph.D.
Dean, Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies

Abstract

FAT TALK IS PERCEIVED AS MORE DETRIMENTAL TO ROMANTIC

RELATIONSHIPS THAN OTHER FORMS OF SELF-BERATING DIALOG

Sidney Murray

B.A., Wake Forest University

M.A.. Appalachian State University

Chairperson: Doris Bazzini, Ph.D.

Fat talk (FT), the verbal expression of body dissatisfaction, is linked to numerous detrimental outcomes for the speaker and for listeners including self-objectification, eating pathology, and sexual avoidance. FT has been studied among groups of female friends, however research on FT within romantic relationships is in its infancy. The little research that has been conducted on FT in romantic relationships suggests its detriment to such relationships. FT has not been compared to other forms of negative talk, and thus, its unique liability in degree and form have not been established. Therefore, it is unknown whether FT is more harmful to romantic relationships than are other forms of self-degradation. The current study is the first effort in this direction, comparing the effects of FT to those of "dumb talk" (DT), a newly termed phenomenon for berating one's own intelligence, in the context of a heterosexual romantic relationship. It was hypothesized that FT would be more harmful to romantic relationships than DT, because of its probable detriment to sexual satisfaction, partner idealization, and self-esteem. The current study involved an MTurk sample of men (age 21 to 64) who had been or were involved in a romantic relationship of at least one year in length. It used a video manipulation of an interview with a couple, Michael and Jessica, in which the type of dialog spoken by the female partner, Jessica, varies across each video. Jessica either berated

her body, her intelligence, or neither. Self-report measures targeting heterosexual male

participants' perceptions of Michael's relationship and sexual satisfaction with Jessica, Jessica's

interpersonal qualities, self-esteem, and body image were administered. Results showed that

men perceived worse interpersonal qualities for Jessica when she engaged in FT and greater

sexual satisfaction for Michael when she engaged in DT. The former finding suggests

detrimental social impressions for women who FT in the eyes of men. The latter may suggest

men's adherence to traditional gender roles.

Keywords: fat talk, dumb talk, self-berating dialogs, romantic relationships

Acknowledgements

First, I am grateful to God for leading me to Appalachian State University, where I have been able to study what I am passionate about with incredible mentorship. I am most thankful to Dr. Doris Bazzini, my primary mentor, for her academic, professional, and personal guidance throughout my master's experience and in the making of this thesis. She is a light in this world and has shaped me for the better, because she has shown me who I can be. I would like to thank Dr. Denise Martz for her mentorship throughout this project and her inspiring work on fat talk that has, and will continue to, improve the lives of women. I would like to thank Dr. Chris Holden for his invaluable contributions to the self-esteem and romantic relationship aspects of this study, and his constant helping hand and encouragement. I would like to thank the Office of Research for lending me maximum funding, without which the project could not have occurred. I would like to thank Dr. Rose Mary Webb and the Department of Psychology for providing the remaining funding; it has been a blessing to be a part of this department. I would like to thank my parents, Wendy and Elwyn Murray, for every version of support they have given me and the values of excellence and passion they have instilled in me to bring to my work. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends who, like me, have struggled with body image and eating disorders. Your stories fuel my pursuit of this subject for all of us.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Wendy Murray.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

It is well-documented that fat talk (FT), negative speech about one's weight or shape, is detrimental in a number of ways (Martz, Curtin, & Bazzini, 2012). FT has been linked to body dissatisfaction (Arroyo & Harwood, 2012), eating pathology (Clarke, Murnen, & Smolak, 2010), hindered sexual functioning (Erbil, 2013; La Rocque & Cioe, 2011; Seal, Bradford, & Meston, 2009), and poor quality friendships (Bodell, Smith, Holm-Denoma, Gordon, & Joiner, 2011). It was first documented among adolescent girls via ethnographic interviews (Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994), and subsequently has been found to occur mostly in Caucasian female circles (Nichter, 2000; Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994; Tzoneva, Forney, & Keel, 2015). However, body talk, including FT and muscle talk -- negative body talk focusing on concern with muscle and the desire to build muscle (Velkoff, Gibler, Forrest, & Smith, 2018) -- has also been documented among men (Engeln, Sladek, & Waldron, 2013; Jankowski, Diedrichs, & Halliwell, 2014; Sladek, Engeln, & Miller, 2014).

The function of FT may vary across settings and its initiators. Martz (2018) outlines six functions of FT (originally identified by Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994), including eliciting reassurance from others that one's self-insults are unwarranted and incorrect (e.g., Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2016); hinting at, but without directly stating, other negative feelings; temporary guilt-relief from engaging in "fattening" behavior such as eating dessert; expressing in-group appearance values and creating an in-group bond (albeit unhealthy); engaging in impression management and conformity within a social group; and finally, reinforcing reciprocated FT. Additionally, Gapinski, Brownell, and LaFrance (2003) suggested that FT functions to preclude criticism from others who may be judging one's appearance.

Men's Perceptions of Women's Fat Talk

The preponderance of FT research has focused on the weight conversations among women to other women (e.g., Barwick, Bazzini, Martz, Rocheleau, & Curtin, 2012; Cruwys, Leverington, & Sheldon, 2015; Nichter, 2000; Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994), although a few have examined how male listeners react to FT from a female peer (e.g., Britton, Martz, Curtin, Bazzini, & LeaShomb, 2006; Mikell & Martz, 2016; Morsch, 2018). In an effort to uncover males' views of FT, Britton et al. (2006) presented a vignette describing FT among female college peers studying together. Participants were then asked to select the most likely response a target female, *Jenny*, would make from among three options: a statement affirming that the target was accepting of her body, one that involved criticism of her body (FT comment), or an indication that the target would remain silent. Participants were then asked which response would be most attractive to a male or female audience. Results showed that both male and female participants *expected* that Jenny would respond with the FT statement and that this statement would be most attractive to women. However, both genders of participants expected the self-accepting statement to be most attractive to men.

Britton et al.'s (2006) findings were elaborated upon by Mikell and Martz (2016), who presented college male participants with a vignette in which they were to imagine that they were interested in courting the target woman in the story. Via the vignette, men were led to believe that they overheard the target speaking with friends in a derogating or accepting manner about her body. Results showed that men who read the vignette in which the target woman berated her body perceived her to have poorer mental health than men who read the vignette in which she expressed self-acceptance. However, the type of body dialog did not affect participants' desire to get to know the target female or how likely they would be to ask her out.

Both of the aforementioned studies (Britton et al., 2006; Mikell & Martz, 2016) used written vignettes as the FT manipulation, leaving the appearance of the characters up to the participants' imagination. Mikell and Martz (2016) manipulated the description of the target woman's appearance (e.g., lean, average, larger). However, the way in which participants chose to imagine the target was subjective. Morsch (2018) confirmed the potential methodological issues with this approach by examining the effects of FT level (excessive, minimal, self-accepting) on perceptions of that target's body size. Results showed that as FT level of the target increased, perceived body size of the speaker also increased, suggesting that FT might lead a listener to infer that a woman's body size correlates with whether she engages in self-berating body dialog. Including *visual* information about the speaker engaging in FT might help to reduce ambiguity about how actual weight and FT correlate in terms of interpersonal judgment. Although, Barwick, Bazzini, Martz, Rocheleau, & Curtin (2012) found that the described body size (average or overweight) of a target woman in a vignette did not differentially affect how likely participants believed she would be to engage in FT. Thus, it is unclear how men might perceive women's fat talk when explicit visual information is provided regarding the target woman.

Concurrently, FT has been studied predominantly in the context of person-perception, with most of the literature focused on same-sex peer interactions. Even those that have included opposite-sex elements have evaluated interpersonal judgment/attraction (e.g., Mikell & Martz, 2016), but less have examined implications that FT might have for romantic relationship functioning and quality. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding specific functions and detriments of FT within romantic relationships.

An important caveat to the discussion of FT's possible role in relationship functioning is that, to my knowledge, no efforts have been made to parse out the effects of FT from other forms of self-derogation or negativity. A wide range of evidence suggests that FT may be harmful to romantic relationships because it hinders sexual satisfaction (e.g., Van den Brink, Vollman, Smeets, Hessen, & Woertman, 2018), may undermine idealized schemas of one's relationship partner as it defies positive views one's partner may hold of her appearance (see Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1997), and may have a disproportionately large damaging effect on self-esteem (e.g., Harter as cited in Markey & Markey, 2006). These three reasons will serve as the pillars of our rationale for this particular study.

However, research also shows that FT adversely affects *the listener* by increasing body dissatisfaction (e.g., Stice, Maxfield, & Wells, 2003; Tucker, Martz, Curtin, & Bazzini, 2007). This has been tested experimentally for women by Salk and Engeln-Maddox (2012) and for men by Engeln, Sladek, and Waldron (2012). In each of these studies, confederates engaged in negatively valenced body talk or neutral talk in the presence of participants. Results showed increased body dissatisfaction for participants after exposure to negative body talk. Perhaps less apparent in its connection to relationship quality is FT's potential to covertly communicate the speaker's opinions of *their partner's* body, though explicitly, FT is *self*-degradation (Hart, Chow, & Tan, 2017). Hart et al. had adults in romantic relationships complete online surveys that gauged body image, eating patterns, and body talk occurring within their romantic relationships. Participants also kept a diary for three days regarding their opinions of their own body. Results showed that negative body talk with one's partner was associated with pathological outcomes including drive for thinness, bulimic symptoms, and dieting. The authors suggested that negative body talk could be attempts to regulate a partner's eating and exercise

behaviors, potentially due to dissatisfaction with the partner's physical appearance. Markey and

Markey (2007) demonstrated that partners can influence each other's health in ways including

physical activity levels and self-esteem. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that body talk

among partners could influence each other for better or for worse depending on the valence of

talk. Additionally, FT is a form of self-criticism, which is known to be toxic to romantic

satisfaction (e.g., Lassri, Cohen, Luyten, & Shahar, 2016).

These perspectives do not preclude the idea that any form of self-devaluation might

thwart healthy relationship functioning for some of the same reasons. To this point, we

examined the self-devaluation of intelligence, coined "dumb talk" (DT), in comparison to FT.

DT will be discussed later in the paper. First, I will address why FT may be especially

detrimental to romantic relationships.

FT and Romantic Relationship Quality

   Sexual satisfaction. FT has been argued to relate to sexual inhibition and relationship

insecurity. That is, FT as a symptom of poor body image (Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994) might

indicate that partners are sexually inhibited and uncomfortable displaying their body during

intimacy (Wiederman & Hurts, 1997). The connection between body image and sexual behavior

may have an early developmental onset. Seiffge-Krenke, Persike, and Shulman (2015)

conducted a longitudinal study assessing participants' body image in adolescence and their later

romantic relationship outcomes in emerging adulthood. They found that better body image in

adolescence was related to better relationship outcomes in emerging adulthood, while poor body

image was related to intimacy avoidance.

Among committed heterosexual couples, poor body image was associated with both

decreased sexual satisfaction and decreased overall, relationship satisfaction (Van den Brink et

al., 2018). Van den Brink et al. had committed heterosexual couples fill out self-report measures of their own body image, their own sexual satisfaction with their current partner, and their own relationship satisfaction with their current partner. They found that poor body image was associated with decreased sexual satisfaction and decreased overall relationship satisfaction. Further, sexual satisfaction mediated the relationship between body image and perceived relationship quality (Van den Brink et al., 2018).

Positive body image appears to relate to physical proclivity to sexual responsiveness. Seal, Bradford, and Meston (2009) found that college women with higher body esteem had higher sexual desire in response to an erotic story regardless of actual body size. Erbil (2013) showed a positive correlation between body esteem and desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction and overall score on the FSFI (Female Sexual Function Index; Rosen et al., 2000) among a sample of married women. Conversely, poor body image was negatively correlated with these factors.

In one of the few experimental studies on FT's role in perceived relationship satisfaction, Miles (2018) examined participant evaluations of a fictional couple in a vignette, *Michael* and *Jessica*. FT levels (none, minimal, excessive) exhibited by the female partner were experimentally manipulated via a written vignette describing a conversation between the two partners. Results showed that both male and female participants perceived lower sexual satisfaction and lower overall relationship satisfaction for the couple when Jessica *excessively fat talked* than when her FT levels were minimal or non-existent.

Because sexual intimacy occurs uniquely in the context of romantic relationships, body image of one of the parties might affect relationship satisfaction in a more specific way relative to other types of relationships (i.e., platonic relationships). If FT is mediated by body image

concerns, it is reasonable to expect that FT has an impact on romantic relationships overall (see

Van den Brink et al., 2018). It is also reasonable to expect, because of the uniqueness and

importance of sex in these types of relationships (see Montesi, Fauber, Gordon, & Heimberg,

2010), that FT influences romantic relationships more than other forms of self-derogation and

self-criticism.

       Partner-held idealized physical appearance schemas. It has been shown that partners

who have idealized schemas of each other have happier relationships than couples who have

realistic schemas of each other (Murray et al., 1997). Idealization results in partners viewing

each other through a "rosy lens," such that faults are overlooked or even are perceived as

stemming from more desirable traits (e.g., controlling tendencies stem from protective

tendencies).

       Murray et al. found that it is harder for individuals (referred to as "actors") to retain

idealized schemas of partners whose actions and words defy the actors' ideal views of them.

Self-criticism directly points out undesirable traits, which could make idealized schemas hard to

uphold. In other words, drawing attention to one's own flaws may essentially be self-sabotage.

In line with this, Murray et al. also found that people with poorer self-concepts are harder to

idealize than partners with more positive self-concepts. Additionally, actors with lower self-

esteem (as could be indicated by FT) see *their* partners in a less idealized light. Therefore, FT

could undermine the actor's schema of the self-derogating partner as well as indicate that the

self-derogating partner views the actor in a less idealized way.

       Physical attractiveness is ranked highly as an attribute in a potential mate, following just

after traits like kindness and honesty (Lippa, 2007). An important component to physical

attraction and willingness to commit to an exclusive relationship for men is women's thinness

(Mikell & Martz, 2016; Paxton, Norris, Wertheim, Durkin, & Anderson, 2005), but this is less influential for women deciding to commit to relationships with men (Furnham, Dias, & McClelland, 1998). In fact, Garcia and Khersonsky (1996) found that participant perceptions of couple attractiveness and satisfaction were more influenced by the woman's level of attractiveness than the man's, with the least satisfied perceptions being for couples in which the woman was unattractive and the man was attractive. Additionally, the potential effects of FT may be compounded since men tend to be more satisfied with their female partners' bodies than those women are with their own bodies, and more than the women perceive the men to be with their bodies (Markey & Markey, 2006). Therefore, women's negative body dialog may draw attention to "flaws" that men might not have noticed independent of those conversations. A woman who engages in FT within the context of a heterosexual relationship may undermine her male partner's idealized schema of her physical attractiveness. Having a less idealized schema is associated with more relationship conflict and less relationship satisfaction (Murray et al., 1997).

Implications for Self-esteem of Women who FT.

FT may also serve as a proxy for women's general perception of their global self-worth (Martz, 2019). This may be, in large part, due to women's awareness of societal emphasis on female physical attractiveness as being integral to the self-concept (Gapinski et al., 2003). For example, Grover, Keel, and Mitchell (2003) demonstrated through a weight identity implicit association task that overweight women internalized their overweight status as part of their identity, while overweight men do not. Specifically, overweight women showed implicit bias for associating words like "heavy" with "self," while overweight men associated words like "light" with "self." Additionally, implicit overweight identity in women significantly related to

lower self-esteem, while this was not the case for men. Further, if women showed an implicit

belief that being heavy was bad and an implicit belief that they were heavy, they tended to

associate "self" with "bad" more quickly. The evidence suggests that weight is a more

prominent part of women's self-concept and self-perceived value than it is for men.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) provide a theoretical framework in their objectification

theory into which these previous findings fit. Objectification theory states that the extensive

monitoring, evaluation, and gazing at women's bodies by other people lead women to view

themselves as objects to be looked at by others. This makes women especially body-vigilant,

attentive to how they measure up to beauty standards, and can lead to anxiety. In the context of

relationships, it may not be surprising that unfavorable self-appraisals negatively correlate with

longitudinal evaluations of relationship satisfaction (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993), particularly

feelings of closeness and security in the relationship (Neyer & Asendorpf, 2001).

Reassurance-seeking has been proposed as a function of FT (Nichter & Vuckovic as

cited in Martz, 2019) *and* as a possible mediator between self-esteem and relationship

satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2016). Excessive reassurance-seeking (ERS), has been linked to

interpersonal rejection due to the actor's persistent pursuit of validating statements from his or

her partner (Starr & Davila, 2008). These statements typically seek affirmation that the actor has

and is worthy of the partner's love and acceptance. This ultimately leads to the partner's

resentment of these repeated demands (see Coyne's interactional theory of depression as cited in

Starr & Davila, 2008), and results in rejection.

Recall that Miles (2018) varied FT levels spoken by a woman to her male romantic

partner, and had respondents assess the couple's relationship. Miles proposed that participants'

perceptions of lower satisfaction between partners could have been partially explained by a

belief in the woman's need to seek reassurance from her partner. Indeed, Nichter and Vuckovic posed reassurance seeking as a function of FT (as cited in Martz, 2019), and it is possible that in a romantic context such a pattern of dialog could burden a relationship. Salk and Engeln-Maddox (2011) found that when college women chose between eight possible attitudes towards FT (feeling less alone in body insecurities; annoyance over friends' need for reassurance; annoyance with the widespread female preoccupation with body image; feeling worse about their bodies; emotional support; reassurance that one is not fat; facilitating group closeness/bonding; N/A - friend group doesn't FT), the second and third most typical attitudes were: *It makes me annoyed because girls/women shouldn't be so caught up with their body image*; *It makes me annoyed because I feel like my friends just want me to tell them they're not fat*. It is unclear whether perceptions of a woman who FTs would be similar in the context of heterosexual relationships, and whether such dialog would be perceived similarly if the female engaged in other self-defaming talk.

Given that self-esteem is likely implicated by FT, this could result in poor relationship outcomes. There have been a number of studies which indicate that high self-esteem is beneficial for relationship satisfaction and longevity while low self-esteem is harmful to relationships (e.g., Fincham & Bradbury, 1993; Johnson & Galambos, 2014; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1997). Fincham and Bradbury (1993) conducted a longitudinal study assessing self-esteem and marital satisfaction via self-report measures. Results showed that self-esteem of couple members at Time 1 was positively correlated with marital satisfaction at Time 2, one year later. Johnson and Galambos looked at young adult dating couples and found that self-esteem correlated with intimate relationship quality, which was assessed six years after the self-esteem measure was administered.

Fat Talk versus Other Forms of Self-Derogation

In review, FT may be harmful to romantic relationships because it may demark reduced sexual satisfaction or avoidance (may indicate inhibition, partner body judgment, lowered sexual responsiveness), may undermine partners' idealized schemas (self-sabotage; draws attention to "flaws"), and may indicate low self-esteem (proxy for global self-worth; can take the form of reassurance-seeking). All three of these potential consequences of FT have been shown to negatively correlate with and/or directly lower relationship satisfaction.

The discussion up to this point has argued that FT is potentially detrimental to relationships via the three realms previously mentioned. Note, however, that with the exception of the sexual element of these tenets, any form of self-derogation could undermine the quality of a romantic relationship. That is, criticism of the self -- whether it be comments made about one's body, or comments made about other characteristics -- should be potentially disruptive to a partners' romanticized schemas, and perceptions of their partner's self-esteem. By contrast, self-compassion, marked by kindness and acceptance towards oneself, has been shown to be related to healthy romantic relationships (Neff & Beretvas, 2012).

Despite a large body of experimental research that has focused on how women are perceived when they engage in FT, no studies to my knowledge have manipulated whether self-derogating one's body is perceived differently than self-derogating some other self-domain. This creates a rather large gap in understanding whether some of the observed harmful effects of FT have satisfactorily ruled out confounding variables such as negative valence in the talk itself.

Self-criticism has been found to be quite common for women in social situations due to the female social norm of modesty (Berger, 1998). Potentially, self-berating expressions, including FT, could be the product of this social norm. The cultural expectation of female

modesty in addition to the cultural female thin ideal, may contribute to FT being more common among women than men (Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2016; Tzoneva, Forney, & Keel, 2015).

Studies on the normative nature of FT have shown that women expect other women to respond with FT if they employ it first (Britton et al., 2006; Martz, 2019; Warren, Martz, Curtin, Bazzini, and Gagnon, 2013). Additionally, women believe they are expected to engage in FT to fit in socially (Britton et al., 2006; Cruwys, Leverington, & Sheldon, 2016; Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994). So, it seems apparent that women are expected to downplay their attributes in dialog, or, at the very least, behave modestly in social settings.

In addition to self-presentational modesty in social contexts, women's downplaying of self-attributes may be due to relational motives in these contexts. For example, in study one of Heatherington et al. (1993), women were more likely than men were to downplay their own grade point average (GPA) when in the presence of a gender-matched confederate who expressed having a low GPA. Men did not compensate their estimated GPA to be more modest when the confederate they were with admitted his low GPA. This is in line with the cultural expectation for women to act more modestly than men. However, there is more to the story than just gender roles of self-presentation. In study two of Heatherington et al. (1993), women's self-predicted GPAs significantly differed from men's only when confederates disclosed having a low GPA themselves and allegedly would be able to see participants' self-predicted GPAs. There were no gender differences on GPA estimation when the confederate did not disclose her/his own low GPA or in the private condition where the confederate supposedly would not see the participant's GPA. This evidence suggests that concern for the feelings of others was a motive for women's underestimations rather than just modesty. Therefore, concern for others may underlie the reciprocation pattern in FT in addition to modesty expectations (see Salk &

Engeln-Maddox, 2012). In other words, women may want to make the speaker feel better, by displaying insecurities themselves, whether they privately believe them or not. What has not been empirically evaluated is whether some of the FT outcomes discussed in previous research are artifacts of this modesty expectation and/or relational motives.

Relatedly, women have been shown to engage in self-derogation of their intelligence in context of the workplace (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007) and might even underperform when thinking about securing a mate (Park, Young, Eastwick, Troisi, & Streamer, 2016). Park et al. found that the relationship of romantic goal priming with math performance and STEM career identification was moderated by whether women endorsed wanting a male partner who was *smarter than themselves*. That is, women who were primed to think about romantic goals with an essay prompt, and who indicated wanting an intellectually superior male partner, performed worse on a subsequent math test and identified with STEM careers less than women who did not have a preference for a more intelligent male partner, or were not primed with romantic goals.

Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) illustrates the female gender norms for modesty and comradery. This role is fulfilled in professional settings through impression management tactics including modesty, opinion conformity, ingratiation, excuses, hedging, apologies, and most interestingly to me, supplication (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Supplication is defined by Guadagno and Cialdini as "playing dumb."

Evidence suggests that mate selection strategies may play a reciprocal function for men's reluctance to seek a partner who is more intelligent than themselves. Park, Young, and Eastwick (2015) also found that men valued intelligence in potential female partners only when they were thinking of their ideal partner in abstract, trait-based terms (e.g., *I want a romantic*

partner who is intelligent). This is consistent with the idea that, at least in theory, individuals

overtly state that they desire partners of higher mate value than themselves (Figueredo, Sefcek,

& Jones, 2006). However, when male participants were presented face-to-face with a female

confederate who "outperformed" them on a math test (tests were graded in predetermined

ways), Park et al. (2015) found that men were less attracted to her as indicated by the distance

each male participant set his chair from the woman, and his self-reported interest in a future

date.

Additionally, Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, and Simonson (2006) conducted a speed

dating study in which graduate and professional students engaged in four-minute long

conversations with different partners who were other participants. Participants rated partners on

traits including intelligence, ambition, and attractiveness, and indicated whether they wanted to

see their partner again. Results showed that men were less interested in women who were

smarter and more ambitious than themselves. Once women's intelligence surpassed men's, men

tended to lose interest. Conversely, women placed more importance on intelligence in male

partners than on appearance. It has been proposed that men's self-evaluations suffer in the

immediate presence of an outperforming woman, resulting in less intent to pursue her (Park et

al., 2015). This threat to men's self-concept may be based on the stereotype that analytical

ability is a key component of masculinity (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Park et al., 2015). Further,

feelings of masculinity predict romantic interest (Park et al., 2015). In turn, such components of

the masculine self-concept may be reinforced by female preference for dominance and

intelligence (Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer, and Kenrick, 2002).

Based on the preceding literature, it is possible that women want to preserve men's

feelings of masculinity in face-to-face interactions so that men are more likely to pursue them.

Potentially, women's berating their own intelligence is a verbalization of this motivation. In the current study, I will refer to the beration of one's own intelligence as "dumb talk" (DT; e.g., "I just took a wrong turn - I'm such an idiot;" "I forgot my wallet - I'm such a ditz"). DT could be an interpersonal tactic that a woman uses to convey to a man in the immediate reality that he is smarter than she is, even when this is not the case.

On the other hand, DT is still a form of self-criticism and complaining. Therefore, it might share with FT the undermining of partner-held idealized schemas, especially for men who do value intelligence in a partner (e.g., Murray et al., 1997). However, considering the evidence provided by Park et al. (2015), men's preference for intelligence can have differing effects depending on the context in which a woman is presented, whereas FT's influence would likely be less susceptible to context. Since FT is less context-specific, it is likely more globally detrimental to a relationship.

Additionally, DT could be indicative of a woman's low self-esteem, much like FT, potentially impacting relationship satisfaction due to a partner's reassurance seeking. Unlike FT, however, DT on the part of a woman may have positive implications for the relationship if it bolsters the self-esteem of the male partner (e.g., Park et al., 2015). Additionally, appearance esteem may be most integral to women's perceptions of her standing in a relationship due to the social value set on that domain for women (Gapinski et al., 2003; Harter as cited in Markey & Markey, 2006), which may make appearance-derogation (FT) more influential over relationship quality judgments than intelligence-derogation (DT).

The Current Study

There is a paucity of research examining (1) how FT is perceived to influence heterosexual romantic relationships, (2) how relationships are perceived in which women FT

with explicit visual information provided, and (3) how FT is distinguished from other types of

derogatory self-talk within romantic relationships. The purpose of the present study was to

assess the influence of FT spoken by the female partner on perceptions of romantic relationship

satisfaction for the male partner with the body size of the female target controlled, while

concurrently addressing whether and how it is discriminant from other forms of negative talk,

specifically DT.

In the current study, videos depicting an interview with a heterosexual couple, *Michael*

and *Jessica*, were used to examine whether adult heterosexual male participants perceived FT to

be more detrimental to the overall satisfaction and sexual satisfaction within a romantic

relationship than was DT or neutral talk. The type of talk in which Jessica engages was different

in each video. In one video, she berated her body, illustrating the FT condition. In another

version, she berated her intelligence, illustrating the DT condition. In the third version, she did

not berate herself at all. This last condition was the neutral-talk condition and served as a

control. In addition to Michael's sexual satisfaction and overall relationship satisfaction,

participant perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities, body image and self-esteem were

measured to examine how these factors might relate to judgements of the couple's satisfaction.

For these latter measures, participants were explicitly asked to answer from Michael's

perspective. The hypotheses were as follows:

H1. The FT condition was expected to yield the lowest perceived relationship satisfaction

scores and the lowest perceived sexual satisfaction scores, given the link between body image

and sexual function (Erbil, 2013; Seal et al., 2009), and the unique component sexuality plays

in romantic relationships relative to other types of relationships. Furthermore, a partner's FT

may undermine partner-held idealized schemas (Murray et al., 1997) and reflect reassurance-

seeking (Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2011). The DT condition was expected to yield the next

lowest relationship satisfaction scores, as it could shatter a partner's idealized persona and

could share FT's reassurance-seeking function. Finally, the non-berating condition, neutral

talk, was expected to yield the highest relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction scores

as I did not expect it to carry any of the previously mentioned liabilities.

H2. The FT condition was expected to yield the lowest scores for Jessica's body image and

self-esteem given that FT is a verbal expression of body dissatisfaction (Nichter & Vuckovic,

1994) and that it is correlated with low self-esteem (Arroyo & Harwood, 2012). I expected the

DT scores to yield the next lowest scores for Jessica's self-esteem, because intelligence is part

of one's self-concept, but likely not as important as body size is to many women, given the

disproportionate emphasis on appearance for women's self and social worth (Frederickson &

Roberts, 1997; Grover, Keel, & Mitchell, 2003). DT was not expected to have an effect on

body image scores. Finally, I expected the neutral talk condition to yield the highest scores of

self-esteem and higher body image scores than those of FT (though similar to levels expected

for DT), given that it lacks the liabilities of self-beration.

H3. The FT condition was expected to yield the most negative interpersonal qualities

evaluations of Jessica as reported by participants from Michael's perspective. DT was

predicted to yield intermediate scores of Jessica's interpersonal qualities. I expected neutral

talk to yield the highest scores of Jessica's interpersonal qualities. This hypothesis is based on

Murray et al.'s (1997) idealized schema theory, which states that actions or speech that defy

an actor's idealized schema of their partner make the schema harder to uphold. FT was

expected to have the most severe effects on interpersonal qualities judgments because

appearance values seem to be consistently important across situations for men when

considering mates (Lippa, 2007; Mikell & Martz, 2016; Paxton, Norris, Wertheim, Durkin, &

Anderson, 2005), while intelligence values may be inconsistent based on context (e.g.,

psychological distance; Park et al., 2015)

Methods

Participants

A power analysis revealed that for 80% power, $\alpha = .05$, and $d = .56$, 146 participants

were needed. I recruited a total of 257 participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk to buffer

for unusable data. The effect size $d = .56$ was chosen based on findings by Miles (2018).

Despite the specified criterion that participants be heterosexual, male, and have been in a

romantic relationship with a woman for at least one year at some point in their life, 106

participants were removed for either (1) failing to comply with study-specified criteria

including, being female, and/or failing to complete the survey or (2) survey error (the condition

to which they had been assigned could not be identified). Finally, 13 participants were

eliminated due to indicating suspicion that the couple in the video was scripted or *fake*.

Therefore, a total of 119 cases were eliminated. There were no significant differences across

conditions for the number of eliminated cases, $\chi^2(2) = 1.83$, $p = .401$. From the FT condition, 32

cases were eliminated. From the DT condition, 23 cases were eliminated. From the NT

condition, 29 cases were eliminated. The remaining 35 that were eliminated had not been

assigned to a condition. Thus, the final sample were 138 heterosexual male adults. IRB approval

was received on September 19, 2019. All methods were in compliance with APA ethical

standards (American Psychological Association, 2017).

The average age of participants was 33 ($M = 33.30$, $SD = 8.57$), with a large range of 21-64. Age was successfully randomized across conditions, $F(2, 135) = .221$, $p = .802$. The average relationship length for participants who were currently in a relationship was seven years ($M = 7.01$, $SD = 6.89$). Relationship length was successfully randomized across conditions, $F(2, 114) = 1.228$, $p = .297$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .021$. The sample was 56.2% white ($n = 79$), 21.7 % Asian ($n = 30$), 17.4% Black or African American ($n = 24$) , 1.4% American Indian or Alaska Native ($n = 2$), 0.7% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ($n = 1$), and 1.4% other ($n = 2$). Participants who were married at the time of the study made up 53.6% of the sample ($n = 74$). Non-married participants made up 45.5% ($n = 63$) of the sample, and one participant did not indicate his relationship status.

Materials

      Video Conditions. Three videos about a fictional couple, *Jessica* and *Michael*, were created to depict varying types of dialogue spoken by Jessica. Each video either depicts FT, DT, or no self-beration (neutral talk). The characters of Michael and Jessica were played by undergraduate RAs, and were recorded on an iPad. The videos were created to be identical to each other in every way (same actors, clothing, setting, length of script, etc.) other than Jessica's talk type. The couple is purportedly being interviewed for a master's thesis project on communication in romantic relationships. In each condition, there is a bowl of *M&Ms* set in front of the couple, supposedly leftover from the interviewer's office party, with which they are told to "help themselves." Throughout the interview, Michael and Jessica eat *M&Ms* while answering questions about how they met, what they like to do together, and their upcoming spring break trip. The *M&Ms* were utilized as a stimulus that could elicit both FT and DT in a reasonable fashion. Video scripts are in Appendices A, B, and C.

Participant Demographic Information. Participants were asked to indicate the following about themselves: race, age, gender, relationship status, and length of current relationship, if applicable.

Participant Self-Esteem. Participants were asked to respond to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), which is a global self-esteem measure. This was to gauge participants' own self-esteem as a purely exploratory measure. The scale consists of 10 items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself."), and the reliability among this sample was $\alpha = .87$.

Jessica's Self-Esteem. Participant perceptions of Jessica's self-esteem were measured with an adapted version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES_J; Rosenberg, 1965). It was shortened to five items in the interest of minimizing the length of the questionnaire to avoid respondent fatigue and adapted to be answered from the perspective of her boyfriend, Michael (e.g., "Answer as if you were Michael"). These perspective-taking instructions were included for all measures in efforts to reduce the distance between third party perceptions and actual relationship variables. Our shortened measure had a reliability of $\alpha = .75$.

Jessica's Body Image. Participant perceptions of Jessica's body image were assessed using a modified version of the Body Image Concern Inventory (Littleton, 2005). Participants were instructed to respond to the measure as if they were Michael. This measure consists of 19 items assessing dysmorphic concern with one's appearance on a five point Likert scale indicating how often one has a described feeling (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). An example item is "Jessica is dissatisfied with some aspect of her appearance." The reliability of this measure among our sample was $\alpha = .97$.

Sexual Satisfaction. Michael's perceived sexual satisfaction was obtained through a modified version of Theiss's Sexual Satisfaction Scale (2011), which was made to gauge sexual satisfaction for spouses from a first-person perspective. Theiss's scale was adapted for the current study to be answerable by participants who are taking the perspective of Michael. It consists of six items answerable along a six point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree*). This sample had an internal reliability of $\alpha = .73$. An example item is, *I find the sexual contact I have with my partner to be satisfying.*

Relationship Satisfaction. The Short Form of Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7; Sharpley & Rogers, 1984a) was used to assess overall relationship satisfaction. It consists of seven items answered along a six point Likert scale (0 = always disagree, 5 = always agree). The reliability of this measure for our sample was $\alpha = .71$. Instructions indicate to answer as if participants were Michael.

Interpersonal Qualities. Perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities were measured using an adapted version of the 22-item Interpersonal Qualities Scale (Murray, Holmes, Dolderman & Griffin, 2000). Participants were asked to respond to the items about Jessica's characteristics as if they were Michael. This measure assesses attributes such as moodiness, affection, and kindness. The original test had three sections (self-views, views of partner, and friends' views of both couple members) and had reliability ranging from .76 to .89. For the current study, there was one section, which gauged participant's perceptions of Jessica's qualities from Michael's point of view. The scales were Likert style (1 = *not at all characteristic*, 9 = *completely characteristic*). The reliability of this section for this sample was $\alpha = .90$.

Stimulus Manipulation Check. Manipulation checks across conditions gauged the degree of Jessica's global or general self-berating (*Self-Berating*), the berating of her body (*Physical Self-Berating*), and the berating of her intellect (*Intelligence Self-Berating*) using 5-degree Likert-type scales (1 = *Not at all*, 5 = *Very Much*). Items included: *To what degree did Jessica berate herself in the conversation you watched?*; *To what degree did Jessica berate her physical appearance in the conversation you watched?*; *To what degree did Jessica berate her intelligence in the conversation you watched?*

Five open-ended questions regarding video content included prompts to describe the couple, their relationship, anything that stands out about them, and to identify what elements one remembers most about the video. These were used to assess whether participants recollected differing elements of the dialog types or were suspicious of the manipulation.

Open-ended responses were coded by two trained research assistants, one female and one male. Responses to the item asking participants to describe the couple and to describe the relationship were rated by both coders along a 5-point scale of negative to positive valence. Responses to the item asking what stood out to participants were binarily coded for whether these comments mentioned Jessica or not, and if so, the valence of the comment was rated along the 5-point scale from negative to positive. These same responses were also binarily rated for whether the relationship was mentioned in the comments, and if so, with what valence along the 5-point scale. Finally, the item regarding elements remembered from the interview was coded nominally for whether the comment included mention of FT, DT, NT, or generic detail. Twenty cases were coded as a research team that included the two research assistants, the primary author, and the faculty mentor. Another set of 20 cases were then rated by the research assistants, individually, and interrater reliability was checked. The initial internal reliabilities

ranged from 42.9% to 100% for percentage of agreement between the two raters, and $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = 1.00$, for intercorrelations between scale ratings. Final training clarifications were made before the research assistants coded the remaining cases. For the remaining cases, there was a range of 60% to 100% of agreement, and intercorrelations for scale ratings ranged from $\alpha = .83$ to $\alpha = 1.00$. For the final sample, the percentage of agreement between the two raters ranged from 54.5% to 100%, and $\alpha = .73$ to $\alpha = 1.00$ for the intercorrelations between scale ratings.

Procedure

The study was presented as "Social implications of communication in committed relationships." This title was located at the top of the informed consent page (See Appendix J). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three video conditions (FT, DT, NT/Control). Then, they were presented with questionnaires asking them to answer from Michael's perspective about his relationship satisfaction with Jessica, his sexual satisfaction in his relationship with Jessica, and his perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities. These questionnaires were followed by questionnaires regarding Jessica's self-esteem and body image. Following the completion of the self-report measures, participants were asked to fill out demographic information including race, age, gender, relationship status, and if applicable, the length of their current relationship. Then, participants filled out open-ended questions asking them to describe the couple, describe the relationship, indicate anything that stood out to them about the couple, and indicate what elements of the interview they remembered most. Participants were asked to estimate how long Michael and Jessica's relationship will last from a list of options. The last items assessed the degree to which participants noticed that Jessica berated herself, her physical appearance, and her intellect. Finally, participants were presented with a page debriefing them on the purpose of the study.

Design

Two sets of dependent variables were used in the study, with type of talk used as the independent variable. The first set included assessments of the couple's relationship/traits of Jessica that would affect the relationship -- relationship satisfaction of the male partner (DAS), sexual satisfaction of the male partner (SSS), and Jessica's interpersonal qualities from the perspective of the male partner (IQS). These variables were analyzed using a one-way MANOVA. The second set of measures served as a manipulation check of the dialogs, as well as indices of whether the two main experimental videos (FT vs. DT) shared elements of perceived self-criticism -- male partner's perceptions of the Jessica's's body image (BICI) and self-esteem (RSES_J). These latter two measures were included in a separate MANOVA with type of body talk as the independent variable. Additionally, exploratory correlational analyses were conducted for all five dependent measures, including Michael's overall relationship satisfaction (DAS), Michael's sexual satisfaction (SSS), Jessica's interpersonal qualities (IQS), Jessica's self-esteem (RSES_J), and Jessica's body image (BICI). Participant self-esteem (RSES) was also included in the correlational analyses for exploratory purposes.

<center>**Results**</center>

Stimulus Manipulation Check

Stimulus believability was gauged via open-ended questions in order to check whether participants were suspicious that the couple was scripted. Participants were asked four individual free-response items including: *How would you describe this couple?*; *How would you describe their relationship?; What, if anything, stands out most to you about them?*; and *What elements of the interview do you remember most?* If participants indicated that they believed the

couple was acting or scripted, they were marked "suspicious," and were removed from the

analyses. Only unsuspicious cases were included in the analyses.

Manipulation checks across conditions gauged the degree of Jessica's global or general

self-berating (*Self-Berating*), the berating of her body (*Physical Self-Berating*), and the berating

of her intellect (*Intelligence Self-Berating*). Results showed a significant effect of type of talk

on Self-Berating, $F(2, 135) = 4.24$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .06$. A follow-up LSD post-hoc test

revealed that FT ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.13$) led to higher assessments of the degree to which Jessica

berated herself, generally, compared to DT ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.78$), $p = .034$, and to NT ($M =$

2.59, $SD = 1.50$), $p = .006$. DT and NT were not significantly different from each other.

Assessments of the degree to which Jessica engaged in Physical Self-Berating across

conditions showed a marginally significant effect, $F(2, 135) = 3.00$, $p = .05$. LSD post-hoc

analyses showed that FT ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.21$) yielded significantly higher Physical Self-

Berating than did DT ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.45$), $p = .016$. There was no difference between FT and

NT or between DT and NT on Physical Self-Berating.

Surprisingly, there was no effect of type of talk on Intelligence Self-Berating, $F(2, 135)$

$= .947$, $p = .390$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .014$. Thus, further analyses were not run.

Open-ended content showed a significant effect for type of talk on elements remembered

about the interview, $X^2(6, N = 136) = 23.29$, $p = .001$. Participants in the FT condition were

more likely to recall Jessica's body comments than in the other two conditions. FT mentions

(e.g., "Her not wanting to eat too many *M&Ms* because she's afraid of getting fat.") within the

FT condition, made up 2.2% of the total comments, and 7.1% of elements remembered for those

in the FT condition. The remaining 92.9% of the comments in the FT condition were recounts

of generic detail. FT comments across conditions made up 2.9% of the total elements

remembered, as one mention of FT was made by someone outside of the FT condition

(discussed below). Participants in the DT condition were more likely to recall Jessica's

intelligence-berating comments in the DT condition than either of the other two conditions.

Mentions of DT (e.g., "Jessica's comments regarding her lack of math skills") made up 2.9% of

the total elements remembered, and 8.3% of the elements remembered within the DT condition.

DT mentions did not occur in either of the other two conditions. The remaining 91.7% of

elements remembered within the DT condition were generic details. Participants were more

likely to recall NT-related comments in the NT condition than the other two conditions.

Mentions of NT made up 4.4% of the total elements remembered across conditions. Within the

NT condition, mentions of NT (e.g., "That she had a quirk about eating red m&ms and that they

watch honey boo boo") made up 13% of the elements remembered. Surprisingly, there was one

mention of FT in the NT condition. This may be because in all of the scripts, Jessica was

attending to the *M&Ms* in some unique way. Even though she was not making body comments

in the NT condition, potentially someone interpreted her sorting the *M&Ms* by color, as she did

in this condition, as being worried about gaining weight based on what she was eating.

Regardless, this mention of FT only made up 2.2% of the elements remembered in the NT

condition, and only 0.7% of the total elements remembered. This was the only comment that

was inconsistent with its condition. Eighty-four percent of elements remembered within NT

were generic detail. Across conditions, generic details made up 89.7% of elements remembered.

This analysis shows that some participants were conscious of the varying kinds of dialog. There

were no effects found for the other open-ended items.

Tests of Main Hypotheses

As predicted, the MANOVA examining the effect of type of talk on relationship variables including Michael's relationship happiness, his perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities, and his sexual satisfaction was significant, $F(6, 244) = 2.77$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .06$. Follow-up univariate effects showed that perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities, $F(2, 124) = 4.79$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .07$, and Michael's sexual satisfaction, $F(2, 124) = 4.45$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .07$, were significantly affected by Type of Talk. For perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal qualities, FT yielded the poorest evaluations ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.12$) compared to DT ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 1.45$), $p = .005$, and NT ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 1.54$), $p = .014$. No difference emerged between DT and NT for interpersonal quality evaluations. This partially supported my hypothesis, in that I expected FT to yield the poorest interpersonal quality evaluations. However, I also expected that DT would yield poorer evaluations than would NT, which was not the case.

Surprisingly, DT yielded significantly higher perceived sexual satisfaction ratings ($M = 4.67$, $SD = .85$) than both FT ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .80$), $p = .006$ and NT ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .98$), $p = .024$. No difference was found between FT and NT for Michael's sexual satisfaction. This finding was contrary to my hypothesis that FT would yield the lowest sexual satisfaction ratings, and that no difference would occur between DT and NT on sexual satisfaction. Contrary to predictions, there was also no effect of Type of Talk on Michael's perceived relationship happiness.

A second MANOVA considered the effects of Type of Talk on variables regarding Michael's perceptions of Jessica's self-esteem and body image. The prediction that FT would yield lower perceptions of Jessica's body image and self-esteem relative to the other two

conditions was not supported, such that no differences emerged across the three conditions, $F(4,$

$252) = 1.82$, $p = .126$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .028$. Thus, no univariate follow-up tests were conducted.

Exploratory Hypotheses

Pearson correlation analyses with all dependent variables are presented in Table 1.

Results showed that perceptions that Jessica had more severe body image disturbance (BICI)

were negatively correlated with all other outcome measures, including Michael's overall

relationship happiness (DAS), $r = -.236$, $p = .007$, perceived interpersonal qualities of Jessica

(IQS), $r = -.645$, $p = .000$, Michael's perceived sexual satisfaction in his relationship with

Jessica (SSS), $r = -.547$, $p = .000$, and perceptions of Jessica's self-esteem (RSES_J), $r = -.687$,

$p = .000$.

Higher perceptions of Jessica's self-esteem were positively correlated with perceptions

of Michael's overall relationship happiness, $r = .424$, $p = .000$, and perceptions of Jessica's

interpersonal qualities, $r = .619$, $p = .000$, and perceptions of Michael's sexual satisfaction, $r =$

$.563$, $p = .000$.

Participants own self-esteem was correlated with more favorable impressions of

Jessica's interpersonal qualities, $r = .551$, $p = .000$ and Michael's sexual satisfaction, $r = .431$, p

$= .000$. Participant self-esteem was also positively correlated with perceptions of Jessica's self

esteem, $r = .478$, $p = .000$, and negatively correlated with perceptions of Jessica's body image

disturbance, $r = -.583$, $p = .000$.

Supplemental exploratory analyses were also conducted on comparisons of marital

status (single vs. married) and type of talk on all dependent measures. No significant main

effects emerged for either factor for any of the outcome variables, all Fs < 2.93, all ps > .05.

Discussion

The current study assessed whether a woman's engagement in FT dialog, more so than other negative or neutral self-talk, would have presumed negative implications for the sexual and relational satisfaction of her male partner, and his beliefs about her interpersonal qualities. The mechanisms through which this was believed to occur were assumptions about her self-esteem and body image, which were predicted to be impacted more when the protagonist, Jessica, disparaged her body relative to her intellect (or did neither).

Interpersonal Qualities, Relational and Sexual Satisfaction

Consistent with predictions, male participants who viewed the video interview in which Jessica engaged in physically self-berating dialog (FT), did rate her as having the least desirable interpersonal qualities compared to participants who viewed Jessica engaging in intellectual self-criticism (DT) or no self-criticism (NT). These findings converge with those of Britton et al. (2006), who found that male participants viewed self-accepting dialog from a target woman in a female peer-group vignette as more attractive than both a fat talk response or non-response. My findings also converge with those of Mikell and Martz (2016), who showed that male participants who read a vignette involving a target woman fat talking perceived her to have poorer mental health than male participants who read about a woman who engaged in self-accepting dialog. These two studies are some of the only attempts to examine social impressions of women who fat talk from the perspective of male participants. The current study and one by Miles (2018) are the only ones to examine social impressions of women's FT from male participants' perspectives in the context of committed romantic relationships. Miles found poorer impressions of relational satisfaction and sexual satisfaction for a couple when the female partner excessively fat talked compared to minimal or no fat talking. The current study

found that FT led to poorer interpersonal quality evaluations of the speaker. Thus, both suggest

that FT is perceived negatively in various social outcomes.

By contrast, DT did not share the liability of FT for perceptions of the female target as a

partner. This was not anticipated given that DT could, like FT, be perceived as a form of

reassurance-seeking, which can demark low self-esteem and lead to interpersonal rejection

(Starr & Davila, 2008). Additionally, partner-held idealized schemas could be sabotaged

through the verbal undermining of one's own intelligence, as intelligence is listed as an

important trait in mate choice for both genders (Lippa, 2007). However, based on findings by

Fisman et al. (2006) and Park et al. (2015), these trait preferences among men may only apply

to their abstract desires when considering female partners. Thus, the downplaying of

intelligence by the female partner may not undermine the male partner's idealized schema, and

potentially, even boost it in the positive direction. Further, if the female partner's intellectual

minimization is increasing the male partner's self-esteem, as would be consistent with Self-

Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) Model's downward comparison process (Tesser, 1988), his

self-esteem boost may somewhat buffer his impressions that his partner has low self-esteem.

That is, individuals with higher self-esteem tend to view their romantic partners as having better

interpersonal characteristics than do individuals with lower self-esteem (Murray et al., 1997).

Male partners with relatively high self-esteem, a desirable relational characteristic, may be less

likely to see low self-esteem, an undesirable relational characteristic, in their partner. Even in

this study, albeit exploratory, male participants who had higher self-esteem tended to rate

Jessica's self-esteem, as well as other interpersonal characteristics, more favorably.

By utilizing a video of the target female, this study eliminated the possibility that

participants believed that when Jessica engaged in FT, she was heavier than we she did not.

Recall that Morsch (2018) found that *without* explicit visual information, there was a correlation

between the amount of FT in which a vignette character engaged and her presumed body size.

Males' reported reduced evaluation of her qualities as a partner in this study was not due to

stereotypes about weight (see Puhl & Brownell, 2012). Observers could evaluate the objectively

inaccurate self-perception of the woman's weight. However, this was not the case with DT, in

that participants had no objective criterion against which to evaluate how smart Jessica was.

This may be a problem given that the perceived inaccuracy of her statements may influence how

detrimental participants deem the statements to be, with clearly incorrect statements demarking

poor self-esteem. On the other hand, potentially accurate statements may convey honesty or

self-awareness. Thus, statements that are possibly reflective may not be perceived as harmful.

We expected neutral talk to yield the most positive perceptions of Jessica's interpersonal

qualities, given that it would not carry self-esteem or idealized schema liabilities, like we

expected FT and DT would share. However, this was not the case, as there was no difference

between DT and NT for interpersonal quality evaluations of Jessica.

Despite FT's negative influence on Jessica's personal attributes, the men in this study

did not perceive Michael as less sexually satisfied or happy in his relationship when she berated

her body than when she did not self-criticize. These findings contradict Miles (2018), who

found that participants rated a married couple in a vignette as having lower sexual and, overall,

relationship satisfaction, when the female partner excessively fat talked versus engaging in

minimal or no fat talk. With regards to sexual satisfaction, past research has shown that poor

body image has been found to be related to poorer sexual functioning (Erbil, 2013; Seal et al.,

2009) and increased sexual avoidance (La Rocque & Cioe, 2011). Given that FT is the verbal

expression of body dissatisfaction (Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994), I expected FT to carry liabilities

for sexual satisfaction. Further, Van Den Brink et al. (2018) found that sexual satisfaction is a

mediator for relationship satisfaction. Thus, if a given behavior (e.g., type of dialog) is

undermining sexual satisfaction, it could undermine overall relationship satisfaction as well. In

efforts to improve the methodology of testing perceived sexual satisfaction, as stated earlier,

this was the first study to provide visual (rather than written) information about the couple (e.g.,

Miles, 2018). Unlike Miles's (2018) study, results could not be due to assumptions that Jessica

was of larger body frame than in the other two scenarios. The perceived body size of the target

woman is important, as Mikell and Martz (2016) found that body size does affect men's

willingness to commit to a woman romantically, such that men rated themselves as more likely

to commit to a target woman described as having a lean or average body size than to a larger

target woman. The female confederate in the current study was of lean-to-average body size,

and was moderately-to-highly attractive, as indicated in the open-ended responses of male

respondents, which could have also prompted differential outcomes between studies.

Additionally, former studies (e.g., Britton et al., 2006, Mikell & Martz, 2016) included

college-aged men, who may have lacked relationship experience (Martz, 2019). This study's

sample was more age representative. I found that type of talk did not affect my sample's overall

relationship ratings, unlike Miles (2018), who, using a college sample, found that when the

woman in a married relationship excessively fat talked, men (and women) perceived the couple

as having lower relationship satisfaction. It is possible that older men, who presumably have

more relationship experience than younger men, can see a more holistic picture of between-

partner dynamics. Thus, post-college men may not view one detrimental behavior, like FT, to

drive down global relationship impressions to the degree that younger men do.

Instead, I found that participants who viewed the video interview in which Jessica engaged in self-berating dialog with regard to her intelligence (DT condition), perceived that Michael, the male partner, was more sexually satisfied in his relationship with Jessica, than did participants in either the FT or NT conditions. This finding may speak to the complex relationship between female intelligence and male attraction. Fisman et al. (2006) demonstrated that in the immediate presence of a potential female romantic partner (as opposed to imagining her in the abstract; see Park et al., 2015), men have been found to value female intelligence only up to the point that it matches their own. When a potential female partner's perceived intelligence surpasses that of the pursuing male, he is less attracted to her (Fisman et al., 2006). This finding is consistent with the SEM (Tesser, 1988), which posits that when in the presence of an outperforming other, especially in a domain important to the self, individuals feel worse about themselves and attempt to distance themselves from the other person. Masculine gender schemas have traditionally emphasized intelligence, especially analytical intelligence, as integral to the masculine self-concept (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). Further, when men feel reduced feelings of masculinity, they are less likely to romantically pursue a woman (Park et al., 2015). Therefore, it is possible that when Jessica is expressing a lack of intelligence, male participants, responding from the perspective of her boyfriend, Michael, anticipate more sexual satisfaction as he is believed to feel smarter or more dominant than his partner, potentially spurring romantic feelings in men (Finkel & Eastwick, 2009; Kuntsman & Maner, 2011). It is also possible that relative to negative remarks about her body, discourse about her intellect was less relevant to males, with fewer ramifications for perceptions of her attractiveness. As I did not include an item specifically addressing how attractive men perceived Jessica to be, this remains empirically untested.

One unexpected outcome of the manipulation checks of the dialog, was that men did not "see" Jessica as berating her intelligence when she engaged in DT relative to the other two dialogs when asked directly if she did so. Only in the open-ended data about remembered elements of the interview did men recall specific DT information relative to the other conditions, and even then the numbers were low. It is unclear why Jessica's statements about her intellect (e.g., "I'm afraid, I'll be too dumb to understand what they're talking about") did not translate to imply she was berating how smart she was. One possibility is that DT was interpreted in a more humor-based way (Jessica was "poking fun" at herself) relative to FT. Perhaps men tend to interpret intelligence-berating as less serious than physical self-berating, which may connect back to the importance that is placed on female appearance and the relatively lower importance that it placed on female intelligence (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Fisman et al., 2006). It is also possible that my manipulation, that is, the actual script of DT, may not have matched that of FT in severity. However, given that dialog was scripted line for line across conditions, it is hard to know whether any lack of seriousness perceived in the DT video was due to the methods employed in the study or to actual social perceptions about female's intellectual versus appearance self-criticisms. These experimental comparisons are in their infancy, as this was the inaugural investigation of comparing these types of dialogs. As such, video creations of these conversations may have been stilted and ambiguous, as demonstrated by the 9% who were suspicious. It is possible that my line-for-line efforts to maintain internal validity were at the cost of truly, *socially*, equating the acerbity of the DT and FT conditions (external validity).

Perceptions of Jessica's Body Image and Self-Esteem

In considering Jessica's perceived self-views, I expected that FT would render both the poorest perceived body image and the poorest perceived self-esteem compared to DT and NT. These predictions were based on past findings that appearance takes up a larger proportion of people's self-concept than any other domain (Harter as cited in Markey & Markey, 2006), and that this proportion may be even larger for women than men (e.g., Grover, Keel, & Mitchell, 2003). Thus, poor appearance self-esteem would provide a larger vessel through which global self-esteem would be suppressed than would other self-conceptual domains (e.g., intelligence). We expected that body image would be perceived as poorest in the FT condition, as FT is the direct verbal self-criticism of one's own body.

However, these predictions were not supported. Perceptions of Jessica's self-esteem and body image did not vary by her dialog content. Yet, albeit exploratory, I did find, across all conditions, that disturbed body image perceptions for Jessica were negatively related to her perceived self-esteem and interpersonal qualities, as well as Michael's perceived relationship and sexual satisfaction. These findings are consistent with past literature demonstrating that positive body image is related to better sexual and relationship phenomena, while poorer body image is related to worse sexual and relationship outcomes (e.g., La Rocque & Cioe, 2011; Seal et al., 2009; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2015; Van den Brink et al., 2018).

Additionally, all three relationship variables of Jessica's interpersonal qualities and Michael's sexual and relationship satisfaction moved together in the same direction. The mutual directionality between these variables is consistent with past literature, which proposes positive relationships between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Erol & Orth, 2016), and sexual and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Van den Brink et al., 2018). The fact that men in the

current study did not perceive Jessica's body esteem and self-esteem discrepantly across

conditions may rest in our confederate actors' success in systematically delivering their scripts,

or in the scripts themselves. On the other hand, it may be that because variables such as delivery

and affect were to be kept constant across conditions, differential cues that someone lacks self-

worth that would be present in naturalistic FT vs. DT were not. For example, I made sure that

Michael did not react directly to Jessica's self-insults. This was an effort to avoid relationship

perception effects based on *his* reactions (which could have been any kind of concern, denial,

agreement, further criticism), as I wanted outcomes to be based on Jessica's dialog. It could be

that if Michael, who presumably knows Jessica better than the participants do, had reacted in a

concerned manner, participants would view her self-berating statements as a problem. Given

that he did not show concern, maybe this was a proxy for viewers that her statements were not

to be worried about. In sum, at the gain of internal validity, I forwent external validity.

However, the overall findings imply that for participants who *did* view Jessica as having

low self-esteem and body image, conditions aside, also viewed the relationship, Michael's

sexual satisfaction, and Jessica as a partner, in a poorer light. And, consistent with findings by

Murray et al. (1997) that individuals with higher self-esteem view their partner in a more

idealized light, men whose *own* self-esteem was higher viewed Jessica as having higher self-

esteem, better body image, and more favorable interpersonal qualities. Men with higher self

esteem also perceived greater sexual satisfaction for Michael. Therefore, while my

manipulations may not have been strong enough to convey differing levels of body image or

self-esteem, the well-established self-esteem, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction

impacts on romantic relationships (see Martz, 2019; Miles, 2018; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin,

1996, 1997; Van den Brink, et al., 2018) are reflected in the sample's assessments. FT occurring

in a real-life context, is likely harmful to a romantic relationship. That leaves the biggest

question surfacing from my findings as to whether real-life DT would result in the outcomes it

did in this study, given that none of its impacts are established by past literature.

Strengths and Limitations

Despite an abundance of literature on the phenomenon of FT, no studies to date have

evaluated whether its outcomes for perceptions of women are qualitatively different than other

forms of negative talk. To my knowledge, this is the first study to compare FT to another form

of self-critical dialog -- in this case, DT. Concurrently, it is the first study to utilize a video

manipulation, which by its visual nature kept the appearance of the female speaker constant.

Both of these are improvements over past literature, which only investigated levels of fat talk or

included self-accepting talk still within the physical domain, and utilized written vignettes,

leaving the appearance of the speaker up to the readers' imaginations (e.g., Mikell & Martz,

2016; Miles, 2018). What's more, is that the amount of FT spoken by a character in a vignette

has been shown to correlate with perceived body size of the speaker (Morsch, 2018). Therefore,

providing a visual index of the speaker's appearance likely eliminated this confound. The

videos also appear to have successfully depicted a reasonably realistic couple, whose credibility

did not differ across conditions of dialog.

Limitations of this study include that it does compare FT to only one other kind of self-

berating dialog. Thus, unique liabilities may lie within other domains of verbal self-criticism

that are not addressed here. Further, in making this study experimental, I was forced to forgo

relational immediacy. That is, I asked participants to put themselves in the shoes of the male

partner, Michael, and respond to measures about Jessica. A naturalistic study investigating these

variables for real-life boyfriends and husbands about their girlfriends and wives would provide

increased proximity to such effects compared to participants' considering these effects from a

third party perspective. In other words, this study largely assesses what men *think* affects

relationships rather than what *does* affect relationships. Lastly, given that the actress portraying

Jessica was objectively not fat, there is a criterion present that reveals the falsifiability of her

size-disparaging dialog. However, the participants do not know the character, Jessica, to know

whether she is truly intelligent or not, rendering an inability to evaluate the truthfulness of the

DT statements. In other words, unwarranted criticism may seem more indicative of poor self-

esteem than would self-criticism that, while still negative, is accurate. Self-criticism grounded

in objective evidence may be perceived as self-awareness or observation rather than some form

of disordered thinking.

Statistically, this study was liberal in its level of familywise error. I ran two MANOVAs

without applying a Bonferroni correction, given that the study was already slightly

underpowered with the large amount of data elimination, and that Bonferroni corrections are too

stringent even for adequately powered studies (see Perneger, 1998 for a discussion of problems

with Bonferroni corrections). Therefore, I calculated my familywise error rate (FWER) in

efforts to be transparent about the chances of Type I error occurring in this study. I used the

equation, $\text{FWER} \leq 1 - (1 - .05)^2$, given that each MANOVA had an α-level of .05, and there

were two tests, which generated a FWER of $\alpha = .0975$. Therefore, results should be interpreted

with some caution.

Future Directions

The unanticipated benefit of DT for men's perceptions of Michael's sexual satisfaction

warrants additional investigation. Since men did not report that Jessica berated her intelligence

more so in that dialog relative to the others, it is unclear whether this outcome is due to some

other factor. It is possible that her intellectual self-criticisms bolstered perceptions of sexual

satisfaction somewhat unconsciously, given that these statements were not even noticed

according to the manipulation check that specifically inquired about intellect. It is also possible

that the sample that viewed the DT condition found Jessica more attractive than the men in the

other two conditions. We did not test for how attractive participants found her to be. However,

future research should include an attractiveness rating in each condition.

Secondly, non-self-directed complaining should be compared to verbal self-criticism on

relationship effects. What are the similar and different detriments general negativity versus self-

directed negativity bring to a relationship? According to Lassri et al. (2016), self-critical

expressions and attitudes are negatively related to romantic relationship satisfaction. Likewise,

Kowalski (1996) states that (non-self-directed) complaints can increase dissatisfaction and

worsen the moods of those who hear them. It is unknown whether self-directed disparagement

or all forms of disparagement is worse for a romantic relationship, and which commonalities

and differences these broad categories of dialog share. This is an area ripe for further

investigation.

Implications

These results imply that women are viewed less favorably by men when engaging in

self-berating body talk in a romantic context than when engaging in self-critical talk with

regards to intelligence or when engaged in non-disparaging dialog. This is consistent with past

research suggesting that FT is not looked upon positively by prospective male suitors (see

Mikell & Martz, 2016). Additionally, women who engage in self-disparaging dialog with regard

to their intelligence are viewed as creating a more sexually satisfying relationship for the male

partner.

Ttraditional gender norms may still be influential in framing men's perspective of what is typical and satisfying in a committed heterosexual relationship. That is, a woman's positive (or, at least a non-negative) presentation of her attractiveness is valued, while a modest portrayal of her intelligence is valued. These differential valuations reinforce the ideas that men's views of women's worth is based largely on women's appearance and that men may prefer to feel intellectually superior to their female partners.

References

American Psychological Association. (2017). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of

conduct. Washington, DC. Author.

Arroyo, A., & Harwood, J. (2012). Exploring the causes and consequences of engaging in fat

talk. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 40,* 167–187.

doi: 10.1080/00909882.2012.654500

Barwick, A., Bazzini, D., Martz, D., Rocheleau, C, & Curtin, L. (2012). Testing the norm to fat

talk for women of varying size: What's weight got to do with it? *Body Image, 9,* 176-

179. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2011.08.003

Berger, A. (1998). *Self-promotion: Investigating gender differences.* (Unpublished Master's

Thesis). University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA.

Bodell, L. P., Smith, A. R., Holm-Denoma, J., Gordon, K. H., & Joiner, T. E. (2011). The

impact of perceived social support and negative life events on bulimic symptoms. *Eating

Behaviors, 12,* 44–48. doi:10.1016/j.eatbeh.2010.11.002

Britton, L. E., Martz, D. M., Bazzini, D. G., Curtin, L. A., & Leashomb, A. (2006). Fat talk and

self-presentation of body image: Is there a social norm for women to self-degrade?

Body Image, 3, 247–254. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.05.006

Buunk, B. P., Dijkstra, P., Fetchenhauer, D., & Kenrick, D. T. (2002). Age and gender

differences in mate selection criteria for various involvement levels. *Personal

Relationships*, *9*(3), 271–278. doi: 10.1111/1475-6811.00018

Clarke, P. M., Murnen, S. K., & Smolak, L. (2010). Development and psychometric evaluation

of a quantitative measure of "fat talk." *Body Image, 7,* 1–7. doi:

10.1016/j.bodyim.2009.09.006

Cruwys, T., Leverington, C. T., & Sheldon, A. M. (2016). An experimental investigation of the

  consequences and social functions of fat talk in friendship groups. *International Journal*

  of Eating Disorders, 49, 84 –91. doi: 10.1002/eat.22446

Diekman, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2000). Stereotypes as dynamic constructs: Women and men of

  the past, present, and future. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26, 1171-1188.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation. England:

  Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Engeln, R., Sladek, M.R., & Waldron, H. (2013). Body talk among college men: Content,

  correlates, and effects. *Body Image, 10*(3), 300-308. doi: 10.1016/j/bodyim.2013.02.001

Erbil, N. (2013). The relationships between sexual function, body image, and body mass index

  among women. *Sexuality and Disability, 31,* 63–70. doi: 10.1007/s11195-012-9258-4

Erol, R. Y., & Orth, U. (2016). Self-esteem and the quality of romantic relationships. *European*

  Psychologist, 21, 274-283. doi: 10.1027/1016-9040/a000259

Figueredo, A. J., Sefcek, J. A., & Jones, D. N. (2006). The ideal romantic partner personality.

  Personality and Individual Differences, *41*, 431-441. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2006.02.004

Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1993). Marital satisfaction, depression, and attributions: A

  longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64,* 442-452.

Finkel, E. J., & Eastwick, P. W. (2009). Arbitrary social norms influence sex differences in

  romantic selectivity. *Psychological Science*, *20*, 1290-1295. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-

  9280.2009.02439.x

Fisman, R., Iyengar, S., Kamenica, E., & Simonson, I. (2006). Gender differences in mate

  selection: Evidence from a speed dating experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics,*

  121, 673-697. doi: 10.1162/qjec.2006.121.2.673

Fredrickson, B. L. & Roberts, T. (1997). Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21,* 173-206. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Furnham, A., Dias, M., & McClelland, A. (1998). The role of body weight, waist-to-hip ratio, and breast size in judgments of female attractiveness. *Sex Roles, 39,* 311-326. doi: 10.1023/A:1018810723493

Gapinski, K. D., Brownell, K. D., & LaFrance, M. (2003). Body objectification and "fat talk": Effects on emotion, motivation, and cognitive performance. *Sex Roles, 48,* 377-388. doi: 10.1023/A:1023516209973

Garcia, S. D. & Khersonsky, D. (1996). "They make a lovely couple": Perceptions of couple attractiveness. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 11,* 667-682.

Grover, V. P., Keel, P. K., & Mitchell, J. P. (2003). Gender differences in implicit weight identity. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *34*(1), 125–135. doi: 10.1002/eat.10167

Guadagno, R. E., & Cialdini, R. B. (2007). Gender Differences in Impression Management in Organizations: A Qualitative Review. *Sex Roles, 56*(7-8), 483-494. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9187-3

Hart, E., Chow, C. M., & Tan, C. C. (2017). Body talk, weight status, and pathological eating behavior in romantic relationships. *Appetite*, *117*, 135–142. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2017.06.012

Heatherington, L., Daubman, K. A., Bates, C, Ahn, A., Brown, H., & Preston, C. (1993). Two investigations of 'female modesty" in achievement situations. *Sex Roles, 29,* 739-754. doi: 10.1007/BF00289215

Jankowski, G., Diedrichs, P., Halliwell, E. (2014). Can appearance conversations explain

      differences between gay and heterosexual men's body dissatisfaction? *Psychology of*

      Men and Masculinity, 15, 68-77. doi: 10.1037/a0031796

Johnson, M. D. & Galambos, N. L. (2014). Paths to intimate relationship quality from

      parent-adolescent relations and mental health. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 76,*

      145-160. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12074

Kowalski, R. M. (1996). Complaints and Complaining: Functions, Antecedents, and

      Consequences. *Psychological Bulletin*, *119*(2), 179-196. doi: 10.1037/0033-

      2909.119.2.179

Kuntsman, J. W., & Maner, J. K. (2011). Sexual overperception: Power, mating motives, and

      biases in social judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *100*, 282-294.

      doi: 10.1037/a0021135

Lassri, D., Cohen, G., Luyten, P., & Shahar, G. (2016). The effect of childhood maltreatment on

      romantic relationships in young adulthood: A double mediation model involving self-

      criticism and attachment. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practicing and*

      Policy, 8, 504-511. doi: 10.1037/tra0000134

Lippa, R. A. (2007). The preferred traits of mates in a cross-national study of heterosexual and

      homosexual men and women: An examination of biological and cultural influences.

      Archives of Sexual Behavior, 36, 193-208. doi: 10.1007/s10508-006-9151-2

La Rocque, C. L., & Cioe, J. (2011). An evaluation of the relationship between body image

      and sexual avoidance. *Journal of Sex Research, 48,* 397–408. doi:

      10.1080/00224499.2010.499522

Littleton, H. (2005). Body Image Concern Inventory. *PsycTESTS*. https://doi-

org.proxy006.nclive.org/http://supp.apa.org/psyctests/supporting/999900353/aaaabxtvie
wo.html

Markey, C. & Markey, P. (2006). Romantic relationships and body satisfaction among young
women. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35,* 271-279. doi:
10.1007/s10964-005-9013-6

Markey, C. N., Markey, P. M., & Gray, H. F. (2007). Romantic Relationships and Health: An
Examination of Individuals' Perceptions of their Romantic Partners' Influences on their
Health. *Sex Roles, 57,* 435–445. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9266-5

Martz, D. (2019). *Fat Talk: A Feminist Perspective*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Martz, D. M., Curtin, L., & Bazzini, D. G. (2012). Fat talk and body image. In T. Cash (Ed.),
Encyclopedia of body image and human appearance. Elsevier, Academic Press.

Mikell, C. & Martz, D. (2016). Women's fat talk can "kill the mood" for men. *Eating
Behaviors, 21,* 211-213. Doi: 10.1016/j.eatbeh.2016.03.007

Miles, C. J. (2018). *Fat talk and romantic relationships: Does fat talk affect relationship
satisfaction and sexual satisfaction?* (Unpublished master's thesis). Appalachian State
University, Boone, NC.

Mills, J., & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M. (2016). Fat talk and its relationship with body image
disturbance. *Body Image, 18,* 61-64. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2016.05.001.

Montesi, J., Fauber, R., Gordon, E., & Heimberg, R. (2010). The importance of communicating
about sex to couples' sexual and overall satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal
Relationships, 28,* 591-609. doi: 10.1177/0265407510386833

Morsch, M. M. (2018). *What did she say?: Development of vignettes that effectively manipulate women's fat talk in the context of heterosexual relationships* (Unpublished master's thesis). Appalachian State University, Boone, NC.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., Dolderman, D., & Griffin, D. W. (2000). Interpersonal Qualities Scale. *PsycTESTS*. https://doi.org/Partial; Full text; 999917807pass:[_]partial_001.pdf

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

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1997). The self-fulfilling nature of positive illusions in romantic relationships: Love is not blind, but prescient. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71,* 1155-1180.

Neff, K. D. & Beretvas, S. N. (2012). The role of self-compassion in romantic relationships. *Self and Identity,* 1-21. doi: 10.1080/15298868.2011.639548

Neyer, F. & Asendorpf, J. (2001). Personality-relationship transaction in young adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81,* 1190-1204. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.81.6.1190

Nichter, M. (2000). Fat talk: What girls and their parents say about dieting. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nichter, M., & Vuckovic, N. (1994). Fat talk: Body image among adolescent girls. In N. Sault (Ed.), Many mirrors (pp. 109 – 131). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Park, L. E., Young, A. F., & Eastwick, P. W. (2015). (Psychological) Distance Makes the Heart Grow Fonder. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41*(11), 1459-1473. doi:10.1177/0146167215599749

Park, L. E., Young, A. F., Eastwick, P. W., Troisi, J. D., & Streamer, L. (2016). Desirable but

    not smart: Preference for smarter romantic partners impairs women's STEM outcomes.

    Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 46(3), 158-179. doi:10.1111/jasp.12354

Paxton, S. J., Norris, M., Wertheim, E. H., Durkin, S. J., & Anderson, J. (2005). Body

    dissatisfaction, dating, and importance of thinness to attractiveness in adolescent girls.

    Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, *53*(9–10), 663–675. Doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-7732-5

Perneger, T. (1998). What's wrong with Bonferroni adjustments. *British Medical Journal*, *316*,

    1236-1238.

Puhl, R. M., & Brownell, K. D. (2012). Confronting and Coping with Weight Stigma: An

    Investigation of Overweight and Obese Adults. *Obesity*, *14*(10), 1802-1815. doi:

    10.1038/oby.2006.208

Rosen, R., Brown, C., Heiman, J., Leiblum, S., Meston, C., Shabsigh, R., … D'Agostino, R., Jr.

    (2000). Female Sexual Function Index. *PsycTESTS*. https://doi-

    org.proxy006.nclive.org/Full; Full text; 999928568pass:[_]full_001.pdf

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

    University Press.

Salk, R. H. & Engeln-Maddox, R. (2011). "If you're fat, then I'm humongous!": Frequency,

    content, and impact of fat talk among college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly,*

    35, 18-28. doi:10.1177/0361684310384107.

Salk, R. H. & Engeln-Maddox, R. (2012). Fat talk among college women is both contagious and

    harmful. *Sex Roles*, *66*, 636-645. doi: 10.1007/s11199=011-0050-1

Seal, B. N., Bradford, A., & Meston, C. M. (2009). The association between body esteem and

sexual desire among college women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38,* 866–872. doi: 10.1007/s10508-008-9467-1

Seiffge-Krenke, I., Persike, M., & Shulman, S. (2015). Gendered pathways to romantic attachment in emerging adults: The role of body image and parental support. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 12,* 533-548. doi: 10.1080/17405629.2015.1044963

Sladek, M. R., Engeln, R., & Miller, S. A. (2014). Development and validation of the Male Body Talk Scale: A psychoanalytic investigation. *Body Image, 11,* 233-244. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2014.02.005

Sharpley, C. F., & Rogers, H. J. (1984). Short Form of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. *PsycTESTS*. https://doi.org/10.1037/t06319-000

Starr, L. R., & Davila, J. (2008). Excessive reassurance seeking, depression, and interpersonal rejection: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 117*(4), 762-775. doi:10.1037/a0013866

Stice, E., Maxfield, J., & Wells, T. (2003). Adverse effects of social pressure to be thin on young women: An experimental investigation of the effects of "fat talk." *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 34,* 108-117. doi: 10.1002/eat.10171

Tesser, A. (1988). Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 181-227). New York: Academic Press.

Theiss, Jennifer A. (2011). Modeling dyadic effects in the associations between relational uncertainty, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for husbands and wives. *Communication Research*, *38*(4), 565-584. doi: 10.1177/0093650211402186

Tucker, K. L., Martz, D. M., Curtin, L. A., & Bazzini, D. G. (2007). Examining "fat talk"

    experimentally in a female dyad: How are women influenced by another woman's body

    presentation style? *Body Image: An International Journal of Research, 4,* 157–164. doi:

    10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.12.005

Tzoneva, M., Forney, J., & Keel, P. (2015). The influence of gender and age on the association

    between "fat talk" and disordered eating: An examination in men and women from their

    20s to their 50s. *Eating Disorders, 23,* 439-454. doi: 10.1080/10640266.2015.1013396

Van den Brink, F., Vollman, M., Smeets, M. A. M., Hessen, D. J., & Woertman, L. (2018).

    Relationships between body image, sexual satisfaction, and quality in romantic couples.

    Journal of Family Psychology, 32, 466-474. doi: 10.1037/fam0000407

Velkoff, E., Gibler, R., Forrest, L., & Smith, A. (2018). Indirect effects of negative body talk on

    eating, exercise, and expectations about steroids in a sample of at-risk adult men.

    Psychology of Men and Masculinity, 1-9. doi: 10.1037/men0000189

Warren, A., Martz, D.M., Curtin, L.A., Bazzini, D., & Gagnon, S. (2013). *Understanding*

    gender patterns in fat talk: A qualitative approach to a gender neutral body talk scale.

    Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association.

    Honolulu, Hawaii.

Wiederman, M. & Hurts, S. (1997). Physical attractiveness, body image, and women's sexual

    self-schema. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21,* 567-580. doi: 10.1111/j.147-

    6402.1997.tb00131.x

Table 1

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on the BICI (Body Image Concern Inventory), RSES_J (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale applied to Jessica), DAS (Dynamic Adjustment Scale), IQS (Interpersonal Qualities Scale), SSS (Sexual Satisfaction Scale), and RSES (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale for Participants)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. BICI	1	-.687**	-.236*	-.645**	-.547**	-.583**
2. RSES_J	-.687**	1	.424**	.619**	.563**	.478**
3. DAS	-.236*	.424**	1	.396**	.468**	.132
4. IQS	-.645**	.619**	.396**	1	.633**	.551**
5. SSS	-.547**	.563**	.468**	.633**	1	.431**
6. RSES	-.583**	.478**	.132	.551**	.431**	1

*p < .01

**p < .001

Table 2.

MANOVA and Follow-Up Univariate Analyses for Perceived Sexual Satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction, and Partner Interpersonal Qualities for Michael

		M	*SD*	*F*	*df*	*p*	$\eta^2_{partial}$
Omnibus Test				2.77	6, 244	.013	.06
Univariate Effect for Michael's Sexual Satisfaction				4.45	2, 124	.014	.07
	FT	4.14	.80				
	DT	4.67	.85				
	NT	4.24	.98				
Univariate Effect for Jessica's Interpersonal Qualities				4.79	2, 124	.01	.07
	FT	5.54	1.12				
	DT	6.41	1.45				
	NT	6.30	1.54				

Figure 1

Interpersonal Quality Evaluations of Jessica as a Function of Type of Talk

Simple Bar Mean of IQS_Composite by Type of Talk
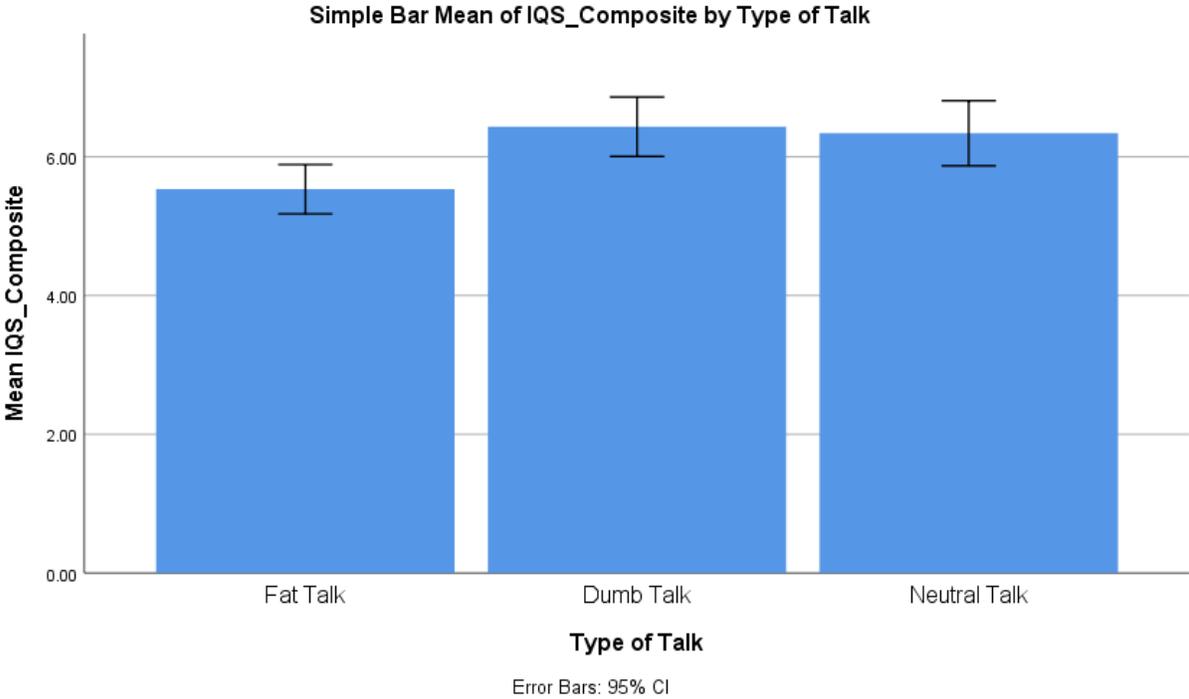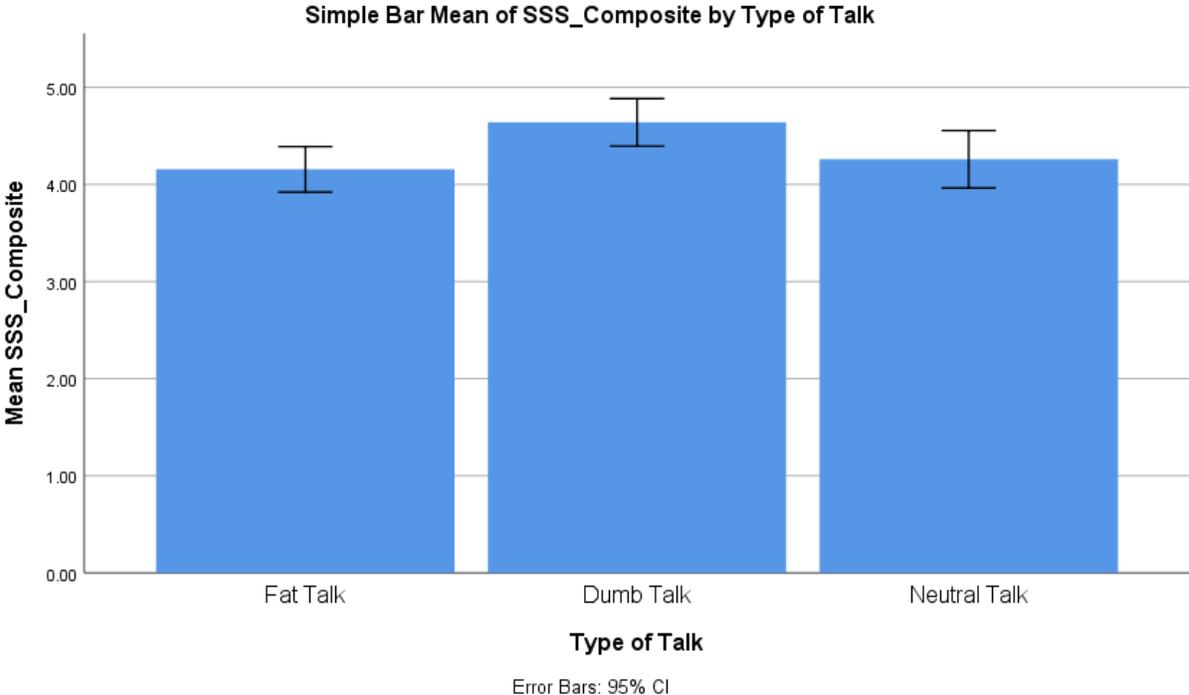
Error Bars: 95% CI

Figure 2

Sexual Satisfaction Ratings for Michael as a Function of Type of Talk

Error Bars: 95% CI

Appendix A

Fat Talk Condition

Interviewer: Welcome and thank you for coming today. As you know, we are bringing couples in for a master's thesis project on conversations in committed relationships. During the interview, I'm going to ask you some questions, and want you to know that there is no particular format we have to follow. Either of you can answer as we go along... I know you said before that you're OK with being videotaped, but just wanted to make sure that you are still fine with that. **(Both say yes)**

And I know that these things can be sort of awkward (*laughs*), so today, we have a treat to make it better! (*set out M&Ms)* We just finished an office party upstairs, and there were some leftover M & Ms. Please help yourselves as we go (*gets notes ready)*....So, would you introduce yourselves? What are your names, and how long have you been together? **(Jessica and Michael both grab a handful of M&Ms)**

Michael: Well, I'll go first. My name is Michael, and this is my girlfriend, Jessica.
Jessica: Hi!. Oh, she said to say how long we've been together……..Almost two years.

Interviewer: It's very nice to meet you both. So, how did you two meet?

Jessica: Thanks for the M&Ms! (*eats M&M*) We lived on the same floor our first year of college. At the time we were actually dating other people. Looking back, it's a little funny how we got together.

Michael: (*eats M&M*). I started realizing once I got to College that I just wasn't happy in the relationship I was in -- I was getting restless. The same thing was happening in Jess' relationship. Over time both of our relationships ended, and we'd often hang out together, and vent to each other about our newly single status.

Jessica: We didn't date anyone for several months (*eats M&Ms*). We just started hanging out together, but then Michael asked me out on a date right before Spring break…(*looks at Michael*)...Is that right? Sorry, I was distracted trying to figure out how many M&Ms I had eaten, you know how *easy* it is for me to gain weight.

Interviewer: So, what was the first date like?

Michael: We actually just ordered pizza and sat on my floor and watched a whole season of Friends.

Jessica: Yeah, that's where I started putting on the Freshman 15 because I had no willpower to stop eating.

Michael: *(somewhat playfully)* I literally have the delivery guy on speed dial, and he throws in free garlic knots from time to time.

Interviewer: Perks of being regulars! So, you guys like TV -- tell me about a typical night watching TV for the two of you.

Jessica: Well we joke around a lot together -- and this sounds bad -- but sometimes we make fun of the people we see on TV.

Michael: Yeah, we like some of the reality shows where we see (*shrug funnily or use hand gesture*) that we're not doing so bad -- that we are actually a lot smarter than other people out there.

Jessica: I force him to watch the Bachelor.

Michael: She does. It's actually pretty good. But we *both love* watching old episodes of Honey Boo Boo. *(eats M & M, laughs and turns to Jessica)* - Do you remember Mama June last night, "I don't know, maybe this is a bad **ideal**" (*Michael and Jessica laugh*)

Jessica: *(laughing)* I could listen to you say that all day**...** Do you think that was real? What if I get that big? And, I'm still eating these M&Ms…

Interviewer: And, who's Mama June?

Jessica: You know, the mom on Honey Boo Boo, who's not so smart... and kinda big?

Michael: (*To interviewer*) Sorry, we have a lot of inside jokes about Mama June. (*Starts laughing to self and looks at Jessica*) We hate to be mean, but obviously they must know that they're on TV. Remember when they went to Panama Beach? (*LAUGH together*)

Interviewer: *(laughing)* Sounds like *I* need to watch this! Speaking of traveling, do you guys ever travel together?

Michael: Well, we want to go to on a Spring Break trip together this year, but can't decide on where to go. We were thinking about Cocoa Beach in Florida, because there's Cape Canaveral Space Center...I'm a science nerd. *(Smile, small laugh, or shrug)*

Jessica: And, you know, ***the beach***. But I'm afraid I'll be too fat to fit into my swimsuit.

Michael: (*laughs*) Jess, you know that's not possible ---- *nobody's* Mama June.

Interviewer: Well, I've asked all of my questions. Is there anything else y'all would like to add?

Jessica: (*look at Michael for confirmation*) I think we're good!

Interviewer: Great! Thank you both for your time. The project should be finished within a couple weeks and we'll let you know the results.

Appendix B

<u>Dumb Talk Condition</u>

Interviewer: Welcome and thank you for coming today. As you know, we are bringing couples in for a master's thesis project on conversations in committed relationships. During the interview, I'm going to ask you some questions, and want you to know that there is no particular format we have to follow. Either of you can answer as we go along...I know that you said before that you are OK with being videotaped, but just wanted to make sure that you are still fine with that. **(Both say yes)**

I know that these things can be sort of awkward (*laughs*), so today, we have a treat to make it better! (*set out M&Ms*) We just finished an office party upstairs, and there were some leftover M & Ms. Please help yourselves as we go (*gets notes ready*)...So, would you introduce yourselves? What are your names, and how long have you been together? **(Jessica and Michael both grab a handful of M&Ms)**

Michael: Well, I'll go first. My name is Michael, and this is my girlfriend, Jessica.
Jessica: Hi!. Oh, she said to say how long we've been together……..Almost two years.

Interviewer: It's very nice to meet you both. So, how did you two meet?

Jessica: Thanks for the M&Ms. (*eats M&M*) We lived on the same floor our first year at college. At the time we were actually dating other people. Looking back, it's a little funny how we got together.

Michael: (*eats M&M*). I started realizing once I got to College that I just wasn't happy in the relationship I was in -- I was getting restless. The same thing was happening in Jess' relationship. Over time both of our relationships ended, and we'd often hang out together, and vent to each other about our newly single status.

Jessica: We didn't date anyone for several months (*eats M&Ms*). We just started hanging out together, but then Michael asked me out on a date right before Spring break...Is that right? Sorry, I was distracted trying to figure out how many M&Ms I had eaten, you know how hard math is for me.

Interviewer: So, what was the first date like?

Michael: We actually just ordered pizza and sat on my floor watching a whole season of Friends.

Jessica: Yes, that's when my already low GPA plummeted, because I had no willpower to study.

Michael: (*somewhat playfully*) I literally have the delivery guy on speed dial, and he throws in free garlic knots from time to time.

Interviewer: Perks of being regulars! So, you guys like TV -- tell me about a typical night watching TV for the two of you.

Jessica: Well we joke around a lot together -- and this sounds bad -- but sometimes we make fun of the people we see on TV.

Michael: Yeah, we like some of the reality shows where you see that we're not doing so bad -- that we are actually a lot smarter than other people out there. (*Eats M&Ms*).

Jessica: I force him to watch the bachelor.

Michael: She does. It's actually pretty good. But we *both love* watching old episodes of Honey Boo Boo. *(eats M & M, laughs and turns to Jessica)* - Do you remember Mama June last night, "I don't know, maybe this is a bad **ideal**" (*Michael and Jessica laugh*)

Jessica: (*laughing*) I could listen to you say that all day...Do you think that was real? (*Laughing/showing incredulousness/skepticism*) What if I get that dumb? I still can't remember how many M&Ms I've eaten...

Interviewer: And, who's Mama June?

Jessica: You know, the mom on Honey Boo Boo, who's not so smart...and kinda big?

Michael: (*To interviewer*) Sorry, we have a lot of inside jokes about Mama June. (*Starts laughing to self and looks at Jessica*) We hate to be mean, but obviously they must know that they're on TV. Remember when they went to Panama Beach? (*LAUGH together*)

Interviewer: (*laughing*) Sounds like *I* need to watch this! Speaking of traveling, do you guys ever travel together?

Michael: Well, we want to go to on a Spring Break trip together this year, but can't decide on where to go. We were thinking about Cocoa Beach in Florida

Jessica: Because, you know, *the beach*

Michael: -- and there's Cape Canaveral Space Center...I'm a science nerd.

Jessica: But, I'm afraid, I'll be too dumb to understand what they're talking about.

Michael: (*laughs*) Jess, you know that's not possible **----** *nobody's* Mama June.

Interviewer: Well, I've asked all of my questions. Is there anything else y'all would like to add?

Jessica: (*look at Michael for confirmation*) I think we're good!

Interviewer: Great! Thank you both for your time. The project should be finished within a couple weeks and we'll let you know the results.

Appendix C

<u>Neutral Talk Condition</u>

Interviewer: Welcome and thank you for coming today. As you know, we are bringing couples in for a master's thesis project on conversations in committed relationships. During the interview, I'm going to ask you some questions, and want you to know that there is no particular format we have to follow. Either of you can answer as we go along... I know that you said that you're OK with being videotaped, but just wanted to make sure that you are still fine with that. **(Both say yes)**

I know that these things can be sort of awkward (*laughs*), so today, we have a treat to make it better! (*set out M&Ms*) We just finished an office party upstairs, and there were some leftover M & Ms. Please help yourselves as we go (*gets notes ready*)...So, would you introduce yourselves? What are your names, and how long have you been together? **(Jessica and Michael both grab a handful of M&Ms)**

Michael: Well, I'll go first. My name is Michael, and this is my girlfriend, Jessica.
Jessica: Hi!. Oh, she said to say how long we've been together……..Almost two years.

Interviewer: It's very nice to meet you both.. So tell me, how did you two meet?

Jessica: Thanks for the M&Ms. (*eats M&M)* We lived on the same floor our first year at college. At the time we were actually dating other people. Looking back, it's a little funny how we got together.

Michael: (*eats M&M*). I started realizing once I got to College that I just wasn't happy in the relationship I was in -- I was getting restless. The same thing was happening in Jess' relationship. Over time both of our relationships ended, and we'd often hang out together, and vent to each other about our newly single status.

Jessica: We didn't date anyone for several months (*eats M&Ms*). We just started hanging out together, but then Michael asked me out on a date right before Spring break...Is that right? Sorry, I was distracted sorting through these M&Ms, you know I only like the red ones.

Interviewer: So, what was the first date like?

Michael: We actually just ordered pizza and sat on my floor watching a whole season of Friends.

Jessica: Yes, that's when the delivery guy started remembering our order. *(laugh)*

Michael: I literally have him on speed dial, and he throws in free garlic knots from time to time.

Interviewer: Perks of being regulars! So, you guys like TV -- tell me about a typical night watching TV for the two of you.

Jessica: Well we joke around a lot together -- and this sounds bad -- but sometimes we make fun of the people we see on TV.

Michael: Yeah, we like some of the reality shows where we see that we're not doing so bad -- that we're actually smarter than a lot of other people out there. (*Eats M&Ms*).

Jessica: I force him to watch the bachelor.

Michael: She does. But it's actually pretty good. But we *both love* watching old episodes of Honey Boo Boo. *(eats M & M, laughs and turns to Jessica)* - Do you remember Mama June last night, "I don't know, maybe this is a bad **ideal**" (*Michael and Jessica laugh*)

Jessica: *(laughing)* I could listen to you say that all day**...**Do you think that was real? (*Laughing/showing incredulousness/skepticism*)

Interviewer: And, who's Mama June?

Jessica: You know, the mom on Honey Boo Boo, who's not so smart...and kinda big?

Michael: (*To interviewer*) Sorry, we have a lot of inside jokes about Mama June. (*Starts laughing to self and looks at Jessica*) We hate to be mean, but obviously they must know that they're on TV. Remember when they went to Panama Beach? (*LAUGH together*)

Interviewer: *(laughing)* Sounds like *I* need to watch this! Speaking of traveling, do you guys ever travel together?

Michael: Well, we want to go to on a Spring Break trip together this year, but can't decide on where to go. We were thinking about Cocoa Beach in Florida

Jessica: Because, you know, *the beach*

Michael: -- and there's Cape Canaveral Space Center...I'm a science nerd.

Jessica: But, I'm afraid I'll fall asleep from boredom - I'm an english nerd.

Michael: Haha just like June, remember when she made her new year's **"revolution?"**

Both laugh.

Interviewer: Well, I've asked all of my questions. Is there anything else y'all would like to add?

Jessica: (*look at Michael for confirmation*) I think we're good!

Interviewer: Thank you both for your time. The project should be finished within a couple weeks and we'll let you know the results.

Appendix D

Body Image Concern Inventory

Answer as if you were Michael. Please respond to each item by choosing how often you think
Jessica experiences the described feelings or performs the described behaviors.

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	She is dissatisfied with some aspect of her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
2.	She spends a significant amount of time checking her	1	2	3	4	5

appearance in the mirror

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
3.	She feels others are speaking negatively of her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
4.	She is reluctant to engage in social activities when her	1	2	3	4	5

appearance does not meet her satisfaction

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
5.	She feels there are certain aspects of her appearance that are	1	2	3	4	5

extremely unattractive

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
6.	She buys cosmetic products to try to improve her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
7.	She seeks reassurance from others about her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
8.	She feels there are certain aspects of her appearance she would	1	2	3	4	5

like to change

9.	She is ashamed of some part of her body	1	2	3	4	5
10.	She compares her appearance to that of fashion models or	1	2	3	4	5

others

11.	She tries to camouflage certain flaws in her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
12.	She examines flaws in her appearance	1	2	3	4	5
13.	She has bought clothing to hide a certain aspect of her	1	2	3	4	5

appearance

14.	She feels others are more physically attractive than her	1	2	3	4	5
15.	She has considered consulting/consulted some sort of	1	2	3	4	5

medical expert regarding flaws in her appearance

16.	She has been embarrassed to leave the house because of	1	2	3	4	5

her appearance

17.	She fears that others will discover her flaws in appearance	1	2	3	4	5
18.	She has missed social activities because of her	1	2	3	4	5

appearance

19.	She has avoided looking at her appearance in the mirror	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

Sexual Satisfaction Scale

Answer as if you were Michael. Please complete the questions by choosing how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements about your sexual relationship with Jessica.

Sexual Satisfaction Scale

Items

     (1)   My partner and I have a fulfilling sexual relationship.

     (2)   I find the sexual contact that I have with my partner to be satisfying.

     (3)   My partner always makes sure that I achieve orgasm.

     (4)   I am content with the sexual aspect of our relationship.

     (5)   There are parts of our sexual relationship that need improvement (reverse coded).

     (6)   I am generally dissatisfied with our sexual relationship (reverse coded).

Note . Measure utilizes a 6---point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

Appendix F

Shortened Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7)

Given the video you just watched, answer the following questions as if you were Michael. Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Answer the following questions about the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement that you experience in your relationship in your relationship with Jessica.

1. Philosophy of life ___
2. Aims, goals, and things believed important ___
3. Amount of time spent together ___

5	4	3	2	1	0
Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

4. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas ___
5. Calmly discuss something together ___
6. Work together on a project ___

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often

7. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

Note: The total score for the DAS-7 is the sum of the responses to the seven Items.

Appendix G

Interpersonal Qualities Scale

Answer as if you were Michael. Please rate these attributes based on how characteristic they are about your girlfriend, Jessica, as a relationship partner.

Interpersonal Qualities Scale

IQS

Items

kind and affectionate

open and disclosing

responsive to my needs

tolerant and accepting

understanding

patient

warm

sociable

critical and judgmental

controlling and dominant

thoughtless

distant

complaining

moody

irrational

Note. Ratings were made on 9-point scales (1 = *not at all characteristic;* 9 = *completely characteristic*).

Appendix H
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate
how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.					
At times I think I am no good at all.					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.					
I am able to do things as well as most other people.					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.					
I certainly feel useless at times.					
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.					

I wish I could have more respect for myself.					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.					
I take a positive attitude toward myself.					

Appendix I
Modified Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (as if Jessica)

Answer as if you were Michael. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement about Jessica.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
On the whole, Jessica is satisfied with herself.					
At times, Jessica thinks she is no good at all.					
Jessica feels that she has a number of good qualities.					
Jessica is able to do things as well as most other people.					
Jessica feels she does not have much to be proud of.					

Appendix J
Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider About this Research

Social Implications of Communication in Committed Relationships

Principal Investigators: Doris Bazzini & Sidney Murray
Department: Psychology
Contact Information:
Doris Bazzini, PhD.
PO Box 32109 Joyce Lawrence Lane Boone, NC 28608
828-262-2272 ext. 402
bazzinidg@appstate.edu

You are being invited to take part in a research study concerning communication in committed relationships. If you take part in this study, you will be one of about 250 people to do so. By doing this study we hope to learn what influences the social perceptions of those in relationships.

The research procedures will be conducted on Amazon Mechanical Turk using a link to a Qualtrics survey.

You will be asked to watch a video of a couple who have been dating for two years.

You cannot volunteer for this study if are under 18 years of age.

What are possible harms or discomforts that I might experience during the research?

To the best of our knowledge, the risk of harm for participating in this research study is no more than you would experience in everyday life.

What are the possible benefits of this research?

There may be no personal benefit from your participation but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future by helping researchers understand the factors that influence social perceptions of conversations in committed relationships.

Will I be paid for taking part in the research?

We will pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. You will be paid $3 for your participation. The payment will be made in whole at the conclusion of the study.

How will you keep my private information confidential?

Your survey information on MTurk has been collected by us through Qualtrics in a manner that will keep your identity anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you. Please be aware that any work performed on Amazon MTurk can potentially be linked to information about you on your Amazon public profile page, depending on the settings you have for your Amazon profile. We will not be accessing any personally identifiable information about you that you may have put on your Amazon public profile page. We will store your MTurk worker ID separately from the other information you provide to us.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact Dr. Doris Bazzini, one of the Principal Investigators, at bazzinidg@appstate.edu.

Do I have to participate? What else should I know?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and will be indicated by choosing to proceed and to complete the study questionnaires and watch the video. If you choose not to volunteer, there will be no penalty and you will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have. If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. There will be no penalty and no loss of benefits or rights if you decide at any time to stop participating in the study. If you choose to participate in the study you will be asked demographics such as: race, age, height, weight, gender, relationship status, and relationship length.

Vita

Sidney Murray was born in Salisbury, NC to Elwyn and Wendy Murray. She graduated from Middleburg Academy in Middleburg, VA in May of 2014. The following fall, she entered Wake Forest University, where she graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a minor in Studio Art. She entered the Experimental Psychology Master of Arts program at Appalachian State University the next fall where she studied Body Image with Dr. Doris Bazzini. She will begin working towards hers Ph.D. in Behavior, Cognition, and Neuroscience at American University in the fall of 2020.

Miss Murray is a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, a performing singer/songwriter, and an instructor-in-training with the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship.