Romantic relationship functioning is a frequent topic of interest in research about borderline personality disorder (BPD). Elevated BPD features tend to contribute to shorter-lasting, less satisfying, and more conflictive relationships (Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017). Less is known, however, about the moderators that contribute to these adverse outcomes. This study explored whether romantic competence (RC) moderates the negative impact of BPD features on romantic relationship outcomes. Romantic competence refers to a tacit skillset for navigating through romantic relationship experiences with insight, from mutuality, and in an emotionally regulated manner (Davila et al., 2017). This dissertation study assessed romantic competence using three published instruments and explored its role on both global and daily indices of relationship satisfaction and conflict tactics through a two-week daily diary protocol. There were modest correlations among the romantic competence instruments. The Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC; Faber et al., 2019) produced strong main effects that were aligned with the proposed global hypotheses. Using the IRRC, romantic competence was predictive of all global relationship outcomes and moderated the effect of BPD features on the use of global compromise tactics. Specifically, higher IRRC scores were associated with increased daily indices of relationship satisfaction and compromise behaviors. However, it did not moderate daily outcomes. BPD features did not predict global outcomes but predicted engaging in reactive behaviors in response to daily conflict. In short, this study is the first to compare three romantic competence instruments and to explore the interactive nature between romantic competence and BPD features for predicting romantic relationship outcomes.
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ROMANTIC COMPETENCE IN BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

by

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

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Date of Final Oral Examination
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CHAPTER I: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ROMANTIC COMPETENCE IN BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

A prominent feature of borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the literature, romantic relationships where one partner has a diagnosis or elevated features of BPD tend to be less satisfying, shorter-lasting, and more conflictive than non-BPD relationships (see review by Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017). Less is known, however, about the factors that contribute to these adverse outcomes. This study aimed to investigate how romantic competence, one possible factor, impacts relationship outcomes in which one partner has elevated BPD features. Romantic competence refers to one’s ability to navigate through romantic relationship experiences with insight, from a place of mutuality, and in an emotionally regulated manner (Davila et al., 2017). At present, it is not known whether deficits in romantic competence significantly contribute to adverse relationship outcomes and daily experiences in young adult couples where one partner has elevated BPD features.

As will be discussed in more detail later, previous romantic competence research has focused on adolescent romantic relationships (Davila et al., 2009). Adolescents higher in romantic competence tend to view their relationships more positively, endorse higher indices of romantic security, and make healthier relationship decisions than adolescents low in romantic competence (Davila et al., 2009). Although romantic competence was initially studied as a developmental construct, it is likely relevant to adult romantic relationship functioning. Moreover, empirical research on romantic competence and BPD is limited.
At present, only one study (Penzel et al., submitted) has examined the relationship between BPD features and romantic competence. Results showed that BPD features were predictive of lower indices of romantic competence, above and beyond other factors. In general, this dissertation intended to advance these findings by exploring the interactive nature between BPD and romantic competence, utilizing multiple romantic competence instruments, and incorporating daily diary methodology. Global reports of satisfaction and conflict tactics may differ from in-vivo, daily experiences. Therefore, this dissertation investigated the protective impact of romantic competence at daily and global levels.

To review the literature, I first describe the poor outcomes associated with BPD romantic relationships. Next, I provide an overview of the background, empirical findings, and measurement of the romantic competence construct. Also, this section intends to support the relevance of romantic competence to relationships where one partner has elevated BPD features. I then discuss the utility of daily diary methodology and its relevance to the present research questions. Lastly, I provide an overview of my primary hypotheses, given the literature review. In this review, the term “BPD partner” denotes a romantic partner with elevated BPD features.

BPD and Romantic Relationship Outcomes

According to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder (BPD) depicts a pervasive pattern of instability regarding one’s self-image and interpersonal relationships. Individuals with this diagnosis tend to behave in risky and impulsive ways, which sometimes puts their safety at risk (Linehan, 1986). They tend to experience unregulated aggressive feelings and exhibit significant impairments in emotion regulation abilities (Linehan, 1993). To receive a BPD diagnosis, one must meet any five of the nine diagnostic criteria, as outlined by the latest diagnostic manual (American Psychiatric
Association, 2013) depicted in Figure 1. Research on BPD suggests that disturbed romantic relationships serve as a hallmark feature in this personality disorder (Gunderson, 2007).

**Figure 1. Borderline Personality Disorder DSM-5 Criteria**

<p>| Borderline Personality Disorder, 301.83 (F60.3) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description: <em>A pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image and affects, and marked impulsivity beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by 5 (or more) of the following:</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Note. The figure displayed contains information about borderline personality disorder that was obtained from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; p. 663), by American Psychiatric Association, 2013, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing. Copyright 2013.

Individuals with elevated BPD features tend to struggle in similar ways to those who meet full diagnostic criteria. Nathan (1994) argued that a formal diagnosis through a categorical approach is based on somewhat arbitrary criteria (i.e., five of nine criteria, since there are no data to show that five criteria are any more valid than four or six criteria). Also, the severity of experienced symptoms has the potential to impact individuals with sub-clinical symptoms. For example, the negative impacts on relationship functioning are not limited to formal borderline personality disorder diagnoses. Individuals with non-clinical borderline personality disorder features report similar types of dysfunctions that approach clinical samples (Bhatia et al., 2013).

For the purposes of reading this document, the phrase “BPD romantic relationships” refer to couples in which one partner has elevated BPD features or a diagnosis of BPD. Overall, BPD relationships are associated with lower indices of satisfaction and less overall quality than non-clinical couples (Bouchard & Sabourin, 2009). Moreover, both partners tend to feel dissatisfied in the relationship, as evidenced by a community sample of 82 married couples (South et al., 2008). Another study replicated these results and found that low satisfaction ratings remained significant following 18 months (Bouchard et al., 2009). Furthermore, a four-year follow-up study suggested that BPD symptoms are significantly related to attenuated indices of relationship satisfaction and increased marital problems (Lavner et al., 2015). Overall, both partners tend to report low ratings of relationship satisfaction in BPD couples, and this trend remains consistent over time.
BPD individuals tend to engage in reactive and erratic manners towards their romantic partners. For example, elevated borderline features influence negative ways of responding to both positive and negative partner-initiated experiences (Bhatia et al., 2013). Another study replicated these findings among a diagnosed sample; when romantic partners exhibited prosocial behaviors (e.g., acceptance), BPD individuals tended to display decreased positive responses towards them (Lazarus et al., 2018). Moreover, BPD individuals are more likely to engage in quarrelsome behaviors compared to healthy controls (Sadikaj et al., 2013). Indeed, BPD partners tend to blame their partners for relationship conflict rather than utilize problem-solving tactics (Miano et al., 2017). Overall, these quarrelsome and maladaptive behaviors contribute to relationship dysfunction.

Multiple studies suggest that BPD relationships are more vulnerable to dissolution than non-clinical couples (Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017). According to cross-sectional data collected from a community sample, the romantic relationships of individuals with elevated BPD features were more likely to be terminated compared to non-clinical relationships (Korzekwa et al., 2008). In another study, Bouchard and colleagues (2009) compared non-clinical couples with couples where the female partner was diagnosed with BPD. Within the first six months of each relationship’s commencement, about 68% of BPD individuals broke-up and got back together with their respective partners, and 28.6% of this subset terminated the relationship indefinitely before an 18-month follow-up (Bouchard et al., 2009). These trends indicate that BPD partners are likely to break-up with and get back together with previous romantic partners. Bouchard and colleagues (2009) did not report the dissolution rates for the control group, which serves as a limitation to this study.
Individuals with a diagnosis of BPD also tend to have more romantic partners than non-clinical individuals (Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017). At the end of an 18-month follow-up period, women diagnosed with BPD reported that they had participated in more romantic relationships than healthy controls (Bouchard et al., 2009). A 10-yearlong study revealed that both men and women with BPD had more romantic partners in their lifetime compared to psychiatric patients without BPD (Reich & Zanarini, 2008). Likewise, diagnosed BPD individuals have a higher likelihood of reconciling with previous partners with whom they have broken-up in the past (Bouchard et al., 2009). Finally, diagnosed BPD individuals tend to have shorter-lasting romantic relationships than individuals with other personality disorders and non-clinical samples (Sansone & Sansone, 2011).

Overall, research supports that BPD individuals have great difficulty maintaining stable and satisfactory romantic relationships and utilize unhealthy conflict resolution tactics. There are likely numerous factors that contribute to these poor romantic outcomes. Presently, it is unclear whether individuals with elevated BPD features lack specific skills associated with romantic relationship interactions. Romantic competence taps into skills and knowledge relevant to prosocial romantic relationship functioning (Davila et al., 2017). One of the primary goals of this study was to investigate whether romantic competence moderates the impact of BPD features on levels of relationship satisfaction, as well as the types of tactics used to respond to conflict. In theory, BPD partners with elevated romantic competence abilities should fare better in their relationships than BPD partners who lack these skills.
Romantic Competence

Background & Theory

Romantic competence signifies tacit or implicit knowledge about successful romantic relationships and how they function (Burleson, 1995). In theory, this construct is likely related to other positive relationship predictors, like interpersonal problem-solving and emotion regulation abilities (Shulman et al., 2011). In theory, romantic competence should facilitate the acquisition, development, and maintenance of mutually satisfying relationships (Hansson et al., 1984). Previous research on romantic competence implies that specific skills are necessary for successfully maintaining relationships, and identifying such skills is crucial for understanding the construct (Davila et al., 2009).

Romantic competence is likely related to the skills and processes that foster romantic relationship functioning, such as interpersonal problem-solving, attachment theory, and emotion regulation (Davila et al., 2009). Davila and colleagues (2009) pioneered the construct of romantic competence, suggesting that in a romantic relationship, a competent individual can put their partner’s needs before their own, maintain trust in the relationship, and regulate their emotions appropriately when conflict arises. Thus, romantic competence may be best understood as a skills-based construct associated with successful relationship functioning. Next, I discuss empirical data and evidence that supports romantic competence as a relevant construct in romantic relationship research. Also, several different measures have been developed to assess romantic competence.

The Romantic Competence Interview

Davila and colleagues (2009) developed the Romantic Competence Interview (RCI) to assess romantic competence among 83 early adolescent females ($M_{age} = 13.45$). Measured
abilities include emotion regulation skills, insight from previous romantic relationship experiences or another person’s romantic relationship experiences and understanding relationship motives and behaviors of the self and the partner. The RCI is scored using a reliable and comprehensive behavioral-coding system. Adolescents higher in romantic competence endorsed higher indices of romantic relationship security and a self-reported higher likelihood of marrying in the future (Davila et al., 2009).

Shulman and colleagues (2011) advanced romantic competence research by focusing on adolescents in the 11th and 12th grades. The authors used a revised version of the RCI, in which factors related to social cognitive problem solving, attachment, and emotion regulation comprised the romantic competence construct. Each factor was significantly correlated with intimacy and commitment in romantic relationships, and individuals higher in romantic competence showed more involvement in their romantic relationships (Schulman et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Davila and colleagues (2017) adapted the RCI for males and females between the ages of 18 to 25 to better understand the role of romantic competence among young adults. Young adults tend to engage in more relationship involvement than adolescents, like sexual activity and cohabitation (Chandra et al., 2011). Romantic competence was associated with greater feelings of security in the relationship and higher indices of satisfaction for both men and women (Davila et al., 2017). Furthermore, other research has supported romantic competence as a predictor of optimal psychosocial adjustment and relationship satisfaction among college students, using the RCI (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

The Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire

Bouchey (2007) developed a self-report questionnaire intended to gauge one’s self-perceived romantic abilities. The Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire (RSC-Q) consists of five
subscales supported by a Principal Components Factor Analysis, each deemed to incorporate relevant aspects of romantic relationship abilities. The subscales include positive partner characteristics, maintenance, communication, romantic appeal, and sexual competence (Bouchey, 2007). Each of these subscales assesses one’s self-perception of their abilities in each of these romantic competence domains. The study found that college students who perceived themselves to have strong positive partner characteristics, communication skills, and romantic appeal had higher global feelings of self-worth and social acceptance (Bouchey, 2007). Therefore, the RSC-Q theoretically converges with the RCI, in that both measures indicate that romantic competence is related to positive psychosocial adjustment.

Though the RSC-Q intends to assess some of the important domains for maintaining healthy romantic relationships, its research is limited. Bouchey (2007) did not measure the relationship between romantic competence domains and romantic relationship outcomes; the focus of the study was on psychosocial adjustment. Though other research has established a link between romantic involvement and psychosocial adjustment (Samet & Kelly, 1987), future studies should investigate whether the RSC-Q is predictive of positive relationship outcomes. Bouchey (2007) surmises that individuals who perceive themselves as having high romantic competence and therefore positive psychosocial adjustment should fare better in their romantic relationship endeavors.

The Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence

The Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC) is a more recent instrument that gauges romantic competence (Faber et al., 2019). Like the RSC-Q, the IRRC is a self-report questionnaire that divides romantic competence into distinct subscales, including relationship locus of control, perspective-taking, romantic appeal, intimacy avoidance, emotion
regulation, temperament, and conflict resolution. The questionnaire items were derived from previous literature on romantic competence conducted by Bouchey (2007) and Davila and colleagues (2007), attachment security (Bowlby, 1969), perspective-taking (Schröder-Abé & Schutz, 2011), and locus of control (Bandura, 1977). From these theoretical orientations, Faber and colleagues (2019) developed a pool of relevant items and performed an Exploratory Factor Analysis to ascertain their instrument's specific subscales. Furthermore, the authors conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis to finalize each subscale's items (Faber et al., 2019).

The IRRC is unique in multiple ways, including its construction, robust subscales, and theoretical ties to romantic relationship and social-cognitive research. The IRRC is limited in certain ways, however. First, there is no research comparing the IRRC to the RSC-Q or the RCI; therefore, it is unknown how it differentially measures the RC construct. Second, the IRRC's data are derived from a non-diverse undergraduate population (84% White), in which only 44% of participants reported being in a committed relationship (Faber et al., 2019). In contrast, the RCI is normed for young adults and adolescents in romantic relationships and correlated to positive romantic relationship outcomes (Davila et al., 2017). Lastly, the IRRC is a relatively new instrument, so it is not yet present in other published research studies. Despite these shortcomings, the IRRC appears to be a versatile and intuitive instrument for gauging one's romantic competence abilities.

**The RC Measure**

Unlike the RSC-Q and IRRC, the Romantic Competence (RC) Measure (Robinson et al., 2020) is not constructed as a self-report questionnaire. Instead, it is based in Situational Judgement Test (SJT) methodology, which gauges competency through tasking people to respond to real-life dilemmas (McDaniel et al., 2007; Whetzel & McDaniel, 2009). Currently,
SJT is utilized widely for determining career-related competence (Lievens & Sackett, 2012). The test structure encompasses unique scenarios related to a particular domain and asks test-takers to rate how effective distinct behavioral responses would be to a given situation (Motowidlo et al., 1990). One's response as to what constitutes an effective behavior is compared to a normed population of interest (e.g., workers in a specific job). Other research, known as “work basket samples,” employs a similar methodology of utilizing work-based scenarios to determine employee job competence (Sarchione et al., 1998). Interestingly, individuals tend to display differences between possessing knowledge of effective behaviors versus the likelihood of engaging in them (McDaniel et al., 2007).

Romantic competence is likely composed of two distinct facets: one that is knowledge-based and the other pertains to report of engagement in effective relationship behaviors (Robinson et al., 2020). The knowledge facet (RC-Knowledge) taps into one’s explicit understanding of behaviors and cognitions useful for facilitating positive relationship outcomes. The behavioral component (RC-Behavior) refers to a person’s self-reported tendency to engage in effective relationship behaviors. It may be easier to understand the intricacies of relationship dysfunction by separating the knowledge and behavioral component of romantic competence. Perhaps poor relationship outcomes are attributed to a distinct knowledge deficit. Contrarily, maladaptive behavioral tendencies (such as poor emotion regulation), absent of a knowledge deficit, may better explain poor outcomes.

Using the SJT model, Robinson and colleagues (2020) devised the Romantic Competence (RC) Measure, which presents participants with 10 different romantic relationship scenarios paired with four separate ways of responding (Robinson et al., 2020). Participants are first presented with a hypothetical person's romantic relationship dilemma and four possible ways of
responding. Participants rate how effective each response is for solving that person's relationship problem, which assesses RC-Knowledge. Next, participants read the same scenarios, but this time presented in the first-person orientation. In other words, as if the given dilemma pertains to one’s personal, romantic relationship. Participants rate how likely they are to engage in each of the four behavioral responses they saw earlier, which gauges the RC-Behavior construct.

Essentially, individuals who are more likely to engage in behaviors that a normed college dating sample deems to be “effective” are more romantically competent. Table 1 depicts an example of one item from each subscale, sample responses, and scoring.

Table 1. RC Measure Example Scenario, Effectiveness Norms, Hypothetical Responses, and Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RC-Knowledge Scenario: Roger is suspicious that his partner has cheated, but has no proof.</th>
<th>***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Roger could deal with the situation. 1 = Not effective at all; 5 = Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ways of Responding:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Secretly follow her around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Start snooping around for evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Get his best friend to find out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Confront the partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness Norms (%)</td>
<td>E. Rat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Follow</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Snoop</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Friend</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Confront</td>
<td>02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. The hypothetical participant made ratings of 2, 3, 3, and 4 for effectiveness (E. Rat.) and would receive a scenario-specific romantic competence knowledge (RC-K) score of .2725 (the average of .41, .14, .22, and .32). The hypothetical participant gave self-likelihood ratings (S. Rat.) of 1, 3, 4, and 3, and their scenario-specific romantic competence behavior (RC-B) is .2250 (the average of .51, .14, .04, and .21).

Both sections of the RC Measure are interpreted using a consensus scoring technique used in other literature (Mayer et al., 2003). Consensus-based measuring (CBM) believes that the average opinion of a large group of people is likely to be the best choice (Legree et al., 2005). CBM intends to form expert knowledge of a given domain from a consensus of non-experts. Researchers have utilized this technique to measure many constructs that lacked “experts” early in their development, such as emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2003). Indeed, CBM procedures are appropriate for measuring competency domains where tacit knowledge underlies one's behavioral performance (Legree et al., 2005). Therefore, given the idea that romantic competence is a tacit-based skill set for engaging in effective romantic relationship behaviors, CBM procedures appeared applicable (Robinson et al., 2020). For this research, non-experts should be individuals of similar age and culture as the sample, who are also in committed romantic relationships.

In a preliminary study, the RC Measure was administered to a group of college students in a committed romantic relationship for at least three months (n = 148, 50% female) to obtain normed data for RC-Knowledge (Robinson et al., 2020). All future data obtained is compared to this normed, random sample to determine what constitutes an “effective” romantic relationship behavior. According to the initial study, RC-Behavior, but not RC-Knowledge, was more predictive of relationship satisfaction and overall relationship quality, as well as decreased levels
of reactivity to conflict (Robinson et al., 2020). In other words, the likelihood of engaging in effective relationship behaviors, versus possessing knowledge of it, is highly predictive of positive relationship outcomes.

A follow-up study (briefly described early in this introduction) aimed to determine how levels of romantic competence may impact couples' romantic relationship outcomes when BPD features are accounted for. Penzel and colleagues (submitted) sampled 236 undergraduate students (\(M_{\text{age}} = 19.44\) years; 75.85% female) in a committed romantic relationship for at least three months, with almost half of the sample indicating their relationship lasted for one or more years. Elevated BPD features were predictive of lower RC-Behavior indices, indicating that these individuals were more likely to engage in behaviors deemed ineffective for relationship maintenance (Penzel et al., submitted). Furthermore, RC-Behavior was correlated with adaptive emotion regulation tactics, and inversely correlated with anxious and avoidant attachment styles. This study is the first to explore the relationship between BPD features and romantic competence but is limited using one romantic competence instrument and cross-sectional data.

Some limitations of the RC Measure should be noted. For example, the RCI was predictive of efficacious problem-solving abilities (Davila et al., 2017); however, its relationship was not investigated with the RC Measure. Next, the SJT and CBM procedures used to measure romantic competence are very different from the interview structure of the RCI and self-report scales of the IRRC and RSC-Q. Though SJT and CBM procedures may be considered more objective in some ways, some researchers may question how “correct” a group consensus is (Legree et al., 2005). Lastly, convergent validity is unknown between the RC Measure and any other romantic competence instrument.
Comparing Romantic Competence Instruments

To date, no study has compared different romantic competence instruments to one another. Investigating how these measures compare to one another may provide further insight into the romantic competence construct and expand its role in romantic relationship research. Ultimately, this present study sought to compare different romantic competence instruments for better understanding the construct. The RCI has been used in more published studies than any other validated romantic competence instrument. However, because the RCI involves an interview which is coded in real time, it was not a convenient instrument to utilize during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, both the interview and its coding require extensive training from its native lab. The procedures used to code romantically competent behaviors are still relatively new and have met some criticism by its own authors (Davila et al., 2017).

The RSC-Q, IRRC, and RC Measure were used in the present study. Each of these measures is related to the RCI through their theoretical orientations about romantic competence. Additionally, some empirical data support the convergence of these instruments. For example, there are data to show that RC-Knowledge, RC-Behavior (Penzel et al., submitted), and the RSC-Q (Bouchey, 2007) correlate with secure attachment indices, as does the RCI (Davila et al., 2017). Furthermore, the development of the RC Measure and IRRC are rooted in romantic relationship literatures that pertain to social-cognitive problem-solving and emotion regulation, akin to the development of the RCI. Given their theoretical ties to the RCI, it seemed worthwhile to investigate the relationship among the three questionnaire measures of romantic competence (i.e., RC measure, RSC-Q, and IRRC), as well as their relationship to romantic relationship outcome measures.
Daily Diary Research

The daily diary methodology has considerably benefitted both romantic relationship and BPD research. It allows researchers to garner a deeper understanding of nuanced processes that cannot be observed using cross-sectional data. There are several advantages to utilizing daily diary methods in romantic relationship research. First, daily diary methods allow researchers to assess everyday relationship processes across various contexts, which likely provides insight into the multifaceted nature of the relationship (Duck et al., 1991). Second, daily diary methods allow for the examination of within-relationship processes and related consequences (Bolger et al., 2003). Indeed, cross-sectional research is likely not able to capture the nuances of these within-relationship processes. Third, daily measures reduce the potential bias associated with global reports of relationship outcomes (Bolger et al., 2003). Finally, daily diary measures allow researchers to explore micro-level data about relationship processes that are not captured using cross-sectional or longer longitudinal methodology (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005).

BPD research has also flourished from the implementation of the daily diary methodology in recent research. Daily diary measures can capture the microlevel data relevant to BPD features to determine how it impacts relationship processes. For example, Lazarus and colleagues (2018) examined the affective responses of BPD individuals to their perceptions of interpersonal behavior in daily interactions with romantic and non-romantic partners. Through these procedures, the authors found that BPD individuals responded with heightened hostility in response to aggressive behaviors from romantic partners and attenuated positive affect in response to perceptions of accepting behaviors from romantic partners (Lazarus et al., 2018). Cross-sectional procedures would not be able to examine the intricate nature of these relationship-related interactions.
Other studies, too, have implemented daily diary methodology to investigate BPD-romantic relationship questions. Bhatia and colleagues (2013) used a daily diary protocol to assess the association between BPD features and appraisals of romantic relationship experiences. The daily diary design revealed that BPD features were significantly associated with negatively appraising both positive and negative partner-initiated behaviors (Bhatia et al., 2013). Also, another study utilized a two-week daily diary protocol among female college students in committed romantic relationships, and with varying levels of BPD (Kuhlken et al., 2014). The authors were able to effectively examine how BPD related to daily indices of anger and relationship satisfaction. Obtaining reports of affective, momentary responses to interpersonal behavior in daily life help to capture more accurate and proximal ratings about how BPD partners feel in their day-to-day relationship experiences and endeavors (Santangelo & Bohus, 2014). The ecological validity of the results from daily diary research is bolstered, too.

This dissertation study incorporated a daily diary protocol to gain further insight into BPD-romantic relationship processes. The proposed daily diary procedures have been implemented in other published research for the sample of interest (Kuhlken et al., 2014). Obtaining daily indices associated with one’s feelings of satisfaction, and how one handles possible conflict, may provide a greater depth of understanding for how BPD individuals perceive their relationship experiences. Although informative, global assessments may not capture the fluctuating feelings of BPD partners concerning their relationship (Bhatia et al., 2013). At present, there are no published studies that have investigated romantic competence using a daily diary design. Incorporating a daily diary protocol, then, would also advance the field’s understanding of how romantic competence influences daily appraisals of relationship satisfaction and approaches to relationship conflict.
The Current Study

To date, researchers have paid considerable attention to BPD and their romantic relationships. Though there is consensus about poor BPD relationship outcomes in the literature (Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017), it is less clear whether certain factors moderate these outcomes. Romantic competence skills generally contribute to prosocial and optimal outcomes in non-clinical romantic relationships. However, research on romantic competence is limited. To date, Penzel and colleagues (submitted) have conducted the only study that examined romantic competence abilities concerning romantic partners with elevated BPD features. This study found that elevated BPD features predicted lower RC-Behavior and RC-Knowledge scores. Also, this study found that romantic competence served as a protective factor in relationships to decrease the likelihood of responding to conflict in a reactive manner. In my dissertation, I hypothesized that romantic competence may be a protective factor in relationships where one partner has elevated BPD features. However, it is currently unknown whether romantic competence has global and short-term impacts on relationship satisfaction and conflict-response tactics.

The current study aimed to examine the impact of romantic competence on romantic relationship outcomes where one partner has elevated BPD features. Only females were recruited for the study because according to published research, a higher proportion of females struggle with BPD (Skodal & Bender, 2003). Thus, there is more research on this demographic. The RC Measure, RSC-Q, and IRRC were each administered to gauge the romantic competence construct. Romantic competence instruments were compared to one another to determine which was the most robust. In this context, the most robust instrument refers to the one that has the strongest predictive validity for the hypothesized study outcomes, a significant negative correlation with BPD features, at least moderate correlations with the other romantic competence
instruments, and good reliability. The RCI was not utilized because of its inconvenience during the COVID-19 pandemic and necessity for special interview and coding training. Global romantic relationship outcomes included BPD partners’ feelings of satisfaction in the relationship, and the tactics they use to respond to conflict. Furthermore, a daily diary protocol was utilized to cultivate more information about how satisfied BPD partners feel in their relationships and how they respond to daily conflict or arguments. Daily variables were examined over a designated two-week period. Romantic competence was expected to moderate the impact of BPD features on both global and daily ratings of satisfaction and conflict-response tactics. The next section expicates specific hypotheses about the study.

**Hypotheses**

1. It was expected that the three measures of romantic competence (i.e., RC Measure, IRRC, and RSC-Q) would moderately correlate with one another since they are purportedly measuring the same construct. Specifically, I believed RC-Behavior, opposed to RC-Knowledge, would correlate with the composite scores of the RSC-Q and IRRC. BPD features were expected to be inversely related to each romantic competence instrument. Lastly, I predicted the RC Measure would produce more main effects on global relationship outcomes compared to the other two instruments due to its unique design and previous research on its association with relationship outcomes.

2. It was predicted that romantic competence would mitigate the impact of BPD features on global levels of relationship satisfaction and approaches to handling global conflict. Each romantic competence instrument was examined. Participants with elevated BPD features and high levels of romantic competence were expected to yield higher ratings of satisfaction and a more prosocial manner for addressing relationship conflict than BPD partners low in romantic
competence. In addition, main effects of BPD features and romantic competence were expected. Higher BPD features were expected to predict decreased levels of global relationship satisfaction and more reactive approaches to examining global conflict. Likewise, higher romantic competence indices were expected to predict higher ratings of global satisfaction, and more compromise-oriented tactics to global relationship conflict.

3. It was predicted that romantic competence would mitigate the impact of BPD features on daily levels of relationship satisfaction and daily approaches to handling relationship conflict. Main effects of both BPD features and romantic competence were also expected. BPD features were expected to predict low daily feelings of satisfaction about the relationship and more reactive ways of responding to conflict, daily. Likewise, higher romantic competence levels were expected to predict high ratings of daily satisfaction, and more compromise-oriented ways of approaching conflict. I selected one romantic competence instrument (based on the analyses of global data) for all daily analyses.
CHAPTER II: METHOD

Participants

To participate in the study, participants had to identify as female, be in an exclusive romantic relationship for at least three months, and their partner had to live in the Greensboro-Triad area (i.e., to optimize the amount of contact romantic partners would have with one another). Using the SONA system at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, there were 158 eligible participants who completed the entire study, that is, both the global measures and daily diary requirements. Nine participants were dropped from this data set because of inattention to the study protocol, as assessed by the Attentive Responding Scale (Maniaci & Rogge, 2014). Thus, the final sample size was composed of 149 participants ($M_{age} = 19.10$, $SD = 1.63$) who were ethnically diverse (e.g., 34.90% White, 44.97% Black, 12.75% Latinx). On average, participants reported being in their current relationship for 17.27 months ($SD = 15.60$ months).

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the study was conducted online, through Qualtrics. The requirement to have their romantic partner live in the Greensboro-Triad area was dropped due to COVID-19 restrictions. On average, romantic partners resided approximately 42.05 minutes from participants’ home ($SD = 74.16$ minutes). Participants consented to participate in both the global measures and daily diary portions of the study. A pictorial sequence of the study’s methodology is depicted in Figure 2.
Participants were expected to vary in their severity of BPD features or traits, as opposed to having a formal diagnosis of BPD. Therefore, the study oversampled for individuals high in BPD features. To accomplish this, undergraduate students in introductory psychology classes were administered the Wisconsin Personality Disorders Inventory–Borderline Features (WISPI-BOR), which is a mass screening measure used to identify individuals with borderline traits that
are above the mean for that mass screening sample (Klein et al., 1993). All psychology undergraduates in introductory psychology were given the opportunity to participate in mass screening at the beginning of the semester, which included the WISPI-BOR. Female students who scored more than half of one standard deviation above the mean on the WISPI-BOR for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters were invited over email to sign up for the study through SONA. Other female undergraduates signed-up for this study through SONA. It was not possible to determine what percent of the final sample responded to the invitation to participate versus self-initiated participation.

Measures

Mass-Screening Measure

*Wisconsin Personality Disorders Inventory–Borderline Features (WISPI-BOR)*

The WISPI-BOR (Klein et al., 1993) contains 18 self-report items measuring borderline traits, using a 10-point Likert scale ranging from never/not at all to always/extremely. The WISPI-BOR is part of a larger measure, the Wisconsin Personality Inventory IV (WISPI-IV), which contains 214 self-report items concerning symptoms of DSM-IV personality disorders. The WISPI-IV has demonstrated excellent internal reliability and two-week test-retest reliability, as well as good discriminant and concurrent validity (Barber & Morse, 1994; Hyler et al., 1988; Klein et al., 1993). Although it is used less often than the PAI-BOR, it is nonetheless a reliable and valid measure, which is appropriate as a screening tool. Its use is also free of charge with the author’s permission, which was obtained.
Global Measures

Demographics

To describe the final sample, the demographics questionnaire asked each participant to report their age, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Participants also reported descriptive information about their romantic relationship. For example, participants reported how far their partner lives from them \((M = 42.04 \text{ minutes}, SD = 74.16 \text{ minutes})\), how frequently they communicate with the romantic partner, and their typical modes of communication (e.g., in person, phone, video chat). Approximately 85.91\% of participants communicate with their partner multiple times throughout the day. The demographics form is in Appendix A.

Attentive Responding

The Attentive Responding Scale (ARS; Maniaci, & Rogge, 2014) helped to ensure the validity of participant responses. The ARS contains two scales, the inconsistency and infrequency subscales. The inconsistency subscale contains 11 pairs of items that should yield the same response (e.g., “I am an active person,” and “I have an active lifestyle”) using a designated Likert scale \((0 = \text{not true at all}, 4 = \text{very true})\). Eleven items were administered at the beginning of the study, and its paired items were given at the end. Absolute differences were calculated for each pair. Then, the sum of all absolute differences was calculated to determine a total score for inconsistent responses. Higher scores indicated more infrequent responses. Participants who scored 10.5 or higher were excluded from data analyses, indicating excessive inconsistent responses. The infrequency subscale contains 11 items that are likely not true for participants (e.g., “My favorite subject is agronomy”). Six items are administered at the beginning of the study, and the other five at the end. Participants rated how much each statement is true to them using a designated Likert scale \((0 = \text{not true at all}, 4 = \text{very true})\). To score the
infrequency items, the scores from all 11 items were summed. Higher scores indicated that participants endorsed items that are not likely to be true for anyone. Participants that scored 11.5 or higher were cut from the study. Each cut-off score (i.e., 10.5 for the inconsistency scale and 11.5 for the infrequency scale) was determined by the authors when the ARS was validated. The ARS was used to determine whether participants actively responded to the study and the content of the items presented. Nine participants who failed the ARS were dropped from data analyses. The ARS is in Appendix B.

**Borderline Features**

The Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline Features (PAI-BOR) is a 24-item self-report measure of borderline personality traits (Morey, 1991). The copyright fees that allow researchers to use the PAI-BOR were paid to the Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR). Participants rate items on a four-point scale—false, slightly true, mainly true, and very true. Higher scores indicate endorsement of more BPD traits. The Personality Assessment Inventory Professional Manual provides normative data for the PAI-BOR in a college sample ($n = 1051, M = 22.93, SD = 1.33$; Morey, 1991). A score of 38 or higher indicates the presence of significant BPD features (Trull, 1995). In the current sample ($M = 33.20, SD = 11.59, \alpha = .86$), 31.54% of participants met this cutoff of 38 or higher. Descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 2. The PAI-BOR measure is in Appendix C.
Table 2. Means, SDs, and Reliability Coefficients for Predictor and Outcome Variables

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<th>Obs.</th>
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<td>Composite Score</td>
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</table>
Note. See the Results section for more information about each measure. BPD features measured by Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline Features; RC-Knowledge and RC-Behavior measured by RC Measure; RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire; IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence; Global Satisfaction measured by the Perceived Relationship Quality Components; Global Compromise and Reactivity measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale; Daily Outcomes measured by a questionnaire adapted from Campbell et al. (2005).

**Romantic Competence**

This study utilized three measures of romantic competence to compare them and better understand the construct, including the Romantic Competence (RC) Measure, the Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire (RSC-Q), and the Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC). Each measure was tested for the global analyses.

**Romantic Competence Measure**

This measure assessed romantic competence by determining the degree to which the participant knows how to respond to relationship challenges, and how they report they might respond to these challenges. The intended purpose is to determine how successful that participant will be as a romantic partner. As opposed to explicitly asking an individual whether they think they are a good romantic partner, this measure is derived from the situation judgment test literature (Whetzel & McDaniel, 2009) and consensus-based scoring techniques (Legree, 1995). There are ten romantic relationship scenarios, each consisting of challenges and dilemmas that are believable and relatable. Each scenario includes four distinct behavioral responses to the relationship dilemma.
First, participants were presented with scenarios that depict a problem in someone else's romantic relationship. Participants rated how effective each response was for responding to the relationship dilemma, using a Likert scale (1 = not effective at all, 5 = extremely effective). This first half of the paradigm gauges one's knowledge of effective romantic relationship behaviors (RC-Knowledge). Next, participants were presented with the same relationship scenarios as before; however, the scenarios were phrased in the first-person context. Participants rated how likely they would be to engage in each behavioral response if they were in that dilemma, using a Likert scale (1 = not at all likely, 5 = extremely likely). The likelihood of engaging in relationship behaviors that are deemed effective is indicative of the behavioral facet of romantic competence (RC-Behavior).

The RC Measure has been utilized in previous research (Robinson et al., 2020). Consensus-based norms are derived from a non-clinical college population in committed romantic relationships. Each participant received an RC-Knowledge score ($M = .41, SD = .05, \alpha = .93$) and an RC-Behavior score ($M = .33, SD = .05, \alpha = .92$). In other words, on average, participants agreed with 41% of a normed sample as to what constitutes an effective relationship behavior and were likely to engage in relationship behaviors that 33% of a normed sample believed to be efficacious for promoting relationship satisfaction and maintenance. Thus, higher scores on each scale are indicative of higher indices of RC. The two romantic competence scores were correlated with each other ($r = .46, p < .001$), though it was predicted that the RC-Behavior score would be more predictive of actual relationship behaviors, based on previous research (Robinson et al., 2020). Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 2. The RC-Knowledge and RC-Behavior measures are in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively.
**Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire**

The Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire (RSC-Q; Bouchey, 2007) was the second romantic competence instrument administered. Participants rated their perceived competence by evaluating how much they self-identify with 25 statements across five domains (1 = not at all true for me, 7 = very true for me): positive partner characteristics, maintaining relationships, communication, romantic appeal, and sexual competence. Participants did not rate their perceived importance of each romantic domain. A composite score of the average of all subscales (7-point rating scale) was calculated ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .65$, $\alpha = .86$). In line with previous research (Penzel et al., submitted), RC-Behavior, opposed to RC-Knowledge, was expected to yield higher correlations with the RSC-Q subscales and composite score, since they both assess self-reported romantic aspects. Descriptive statistics for the RSC-Q and its respective subscales are displayed in Table 2. The RSC-Q is in Appendix F.

**Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence**

The Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC; Faber et al., 2019) was the third romantic competence instrument administered. Participants rated their perceived competence by evaluating how much they self-identify with 35 statements across seven domains (1 = not very true, 5 = very true): relationship locus of control, perspective-taking, romantic appeal, intimacy avoidance, emotion regulation, temperament, and conflict resolution skills. Items from each subscale were scored so that higher ratings indicated higher indices of romantic competence. However, the intimacy avoidance subscale was inversely scored so that higher ratings indicated more avoidance, and thus lower indices of romantic competence. Lastly, a composite score averaged across all subscales (5-point rating scale) was calculated ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .45$, $\alpha = .80$). In this computation, the intimacy avoidance subscale was reversed-scored so
that higher ratings indicated higher indices of romantic competence. Descriptive statistics for the composite score and each subscale are in Table 2. The IRRC is in Appendix G.

**Romantic Relationship Satisfaction**

Participants were given the questionnaire, the Perceived Relationship Quality Components scale (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000), which asks them how much they agree with 18 statements characteristic of high-quality relationships (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely). The measure entails individual subscales related to overall relationship quality. Subscales include satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. This study only utilized the satisfaction subscale ($M = 6.08, SD = 1.06, \alpha = .95$), and it was scored in a positive direction. Descriptive statistics are in Table 2. Items for the PRQC is in Appendix H.

**Romantic Relationship Conflict**

The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS; Zacchilli et al., 2009) is a questionnaire that was used to examine problematic responses to relationship conflict. Participants were presented with 39-items that are rated using an agreement-based scale (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The RPCS has subscales for compromise, avoidance, interactional reactivity, separation, domination, and submission. This study only utilized the compromise ($M = 3.24, SD = .59, \alpha = .92$) and reactivity ($M = .82, SD = .77, \alpha = .81$) subscales for global analyses, and they were each scored so that high scores denoted high levels of both compromise and reactivity. Descriptive statistics are in Table 2. The RPCS is in Appendix I.

**Daily Diary Measures**

All items used for daily diary procedures were derived from a questionnaire published in previous research (Campbell et al., 2005). Descriptive statistics for all daily outcomes are in Table 2. Appendix J contains all items included in the daily diary questionnaire. The daily
measure took less than 10 minutes to complete. Participants were asked to complete a daily diary survey for 14 consecutive evenings. On average, participants completed surveys for 12.28 days ($SD = 1.75$).

**Daily Relationship Satisfaction**

Based on previous research (Campbell et al., 2005), participants were asked every day how satisfied they feel with their relationship, and how close they feel to their partner. Each question was answered using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely). First, scores from both questions were averaged for each day to create a daily relationship satisfaction score. Participants had a satisfaction score for each day they participated in the study (e.g., 14 scores). Then a composite score was computed by averaging those satisfaction scores across all 14 days for each participant ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.58$, $\alpha = .92$). Thus, each participant had one composite score representative of daily feelings of relationship satisfaction.

**Daily Relationship Conflict**

The questions used to derive daily feelings about relationship conflict were based on previous research (Campbell et al., 2005). Participants were first asked how frequently they had experienced conflict or other negative events with their partner, using a 7-point scale (1 = none, 7 = many; $M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.20$). Using a similar 7-point scale (1 = none, 7 = extremely), participants were asked questions that fall into two categories: 1) perceived hurtfulness of the conflict (“How hurt were you by this conflict?; How hurt was your partner during this conflict?”) and 2) positive behaviors toward the partner (“How much did you compromise to try to resolve the conflict?; How fair were you to your partner during the conflict?; How much did you listen to your partner?”). Two composite scores were computed to aid data interpretation. The first composite score was computed for conflict reactivity by averaging the two hurtfulness questions,
so that high scores were indicative of more reactivity (\(M = 3.02, SD = 1.67, \alpha = .68\)). The second composite score was computed for compromise-based tactics by averaging its three questions, so that high scores denoted more compromise (\(M = 4.80, SD = 1.61, \alpha = .75\)). If participants did not experience any conflict on a given day, they did not answer any subsequent questions about conflict-response tactics. There were up to 14 individual daily conflict scores for both compromise-and-reactivity-oriented ways of responding to daily relationship conflict.

Procedure

Global Measures Protocol

Participants seeking SONA credits completed a set of self-report questionnaires online, through Qualtrics. These self-report questionnaires targeted global BPD symptomology, romantic competence, romantic relationship satisfaction, and romantic relationship conflict. Participants received 3 SONA credits upon completion of this portion of the study (contingent upon additional completion of at least 8 daily diary surveys). The Attentive Responding Scale (ARS; Maniaci & Rogge, 2014) was used to flag possible inattention and infrequent responding in participants. The use of the ARS helped ensure that the data collected through an online platform was valid.

Following the global portion of the study, participants were emailed information about the two-week daily diary study, in which they received the study’s start date and an email address to contact the study coordinator for questions. Participants had the opportunity to earn up to an additional 7 SONA credits upon completing a total of 14 daily diary surveys. Participants would receive less credit for partial completion of the daily diary protocol. For example, participants who completed eight diary entries would receive only 4 SONA credits. Data were analyzed for participants who completed a minimum of eight daily diary reports, in line with
other research studies (e.g., Robinson et al., 2020). Participants who did not complete at least 8 surveys were subsequently sent an email offering the opportunity to re-do the daily diary protocol in a new 2-week period. Approximately 38 participants received the opportunity for a “second chance,” in which 8% re-engaged and completed at least 8 surveys.

**Daily Diary Protocol**

Following the completion of the global portion of the study, participants were emailed a web-link to Qualtrics to participate in a daily diary study. Participants engaged in the daily diary study the Monday following their completion of the global survey. The daily diary study was modeled after a former daily diary protocol, which lasted 14 consecutive days and included experience-based outcomes deemed to be important for relationship functioning (Bolger et al., 2003). Daily emails were sent out to participants reminding them to take each daily survey. Participants were granted access to the surveys between 5:00 pm and 11:59 pm on that day. Any survey not taken within this time frame was considered a missed day. Participants had to complete at least 8 daily surveys to receive credit.
CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: Analyses of Romantic Competence Instruments

Hypothesis 1 predicted at least moderate relationships between each utilized romantic competence instrument: the RC Measure, RSC-Q, and IRRC. Table 3 displays all zero-order correlations for all study variables. Note that the composite scores for the IRRC and RSC-Q were utilized for these analyses. As predicted, romantic competence instruments shared small to large correlations ($r = .18$ to $.58$) with one another. The IRRC and RSC-Q were strongly correlated ($r = .58$, $p < .001$). The two RC scales shared a modest correlation ($r = .46$, $p = .001$). However, RC-Knowledge shared a small correlation with the RSC-Q ($r = .18$, $p = .024$) and was not significantly correlated with the IRRC. Additionally, BPD features were negatively correlated with each romantic competence instrument except the RC-Knowledge. The strongest negative correlation was between BPD features and the IRRC composite score ($r = -.62$, $p < .001$).
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<td>9. Daily Satisfaction</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td>-.07**</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>-.19***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Daily Compromise</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>-.15***</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Daily Reactivity</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.15***</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>-.31***</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. BPD features measured by Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline Features; RC-Knowledge and RC-Behavior measured by RC Measure; RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire (composite score); IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (composite score); Global Satisfaction measured by the Perceived Relationship Quality Components; Global Compromise and Reactivity measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale; Daily Outcomes (averaged across 14 days) measured by a questionnaire adapted from Campbell et al. (2005). *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Hypothesis 2: Global Analyses

Correlational Analyses

Table 3 displays all zero-order correlations between each romantic competence instrument and BPD features with each global relationship outcome. RC-Behavior, the RSC-Q, and IRRC each were correlated with relationship satisfaction, compromise, and reactivity behaviors in expected directions. RC-Knowledge, however, was not correlated with satisfaction and compromise, though it negatively correlated with reactivity. Given its weak correlations with other romantic competence instruments and non-significant correlations with global outcomes, RC-Knowledge was not included in further analyses. All subsequent analyses assess RC-Behavior, the RSC-Q composite, and IRRC composite as predictors to garner a more thorough understanding of romantic competence and its role in BPD romantic relationships. All predictors were z-score transformed for all moderation analyses.

Predicting Global Satisfaction

Romantic competence was predicted to moderate the impact of BPD features on global satisfaction. Multiple regression analyses were used to examine this hypothesis by testing each romantic competence instrument as predictors. Table 4 displays data for each analysis that was
conducted. The first model examined BPD features, RC-Behavior, and their interaction term as predictors. Results indicated a collective significant effect of romantic competence and BPD features, $R^2 = .008, F(3, 145) = 4.13, p = .008$. There was a main effect of BPD features; higher indices of BPD features were associated with lower reports of global satisfaction, $b = -.23, t(145) = -2.66, p = .009$. No main effect was observed for RC-Behavior, $b = .15, t(145) = 1.69, p = .093$. Indeed, there was no moderating effect of RC-Behavior on global feelings of satisfaction, $b = .01, t(145) = .12, p = .901$.

Table 4. Examining the Moderating Effect of Romantic Competence on BPD Features in Predicting Global Relationship Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-2.66</td>
<td>.009</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC-Behavior</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*RC-Behavior</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.901</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
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<td>RSC-Q</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*RSC-Q</td>
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<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.907</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRC</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>.265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RC-Behavior measured by RC Measure; RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire; IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence; Global Satisfaction measured by the Perceived Relationship Quality Components.

The second model examined BPD features, the RSC-Q composite, and their interaction term as predictors of global relationship satisfaction. Results indicated a collective significant
effect of romantic competence and BPD features on global satisfaction, $R^2 = .283$, $F(3, 145) = 19.06, p < .001$. There was a main effect of the RSC-Q; higher scores on the RSC-Q were associated with greater reports of global satisfaction, $b = .54, t(145) = 6.69, p < .001$. However, their levels of BPD features did not yield a main effect, $b = -.06, t(145) = -.80, p = .425$. There was no observed moderating effect from the RSC-Q, $b = .01, t(145) = .12, p = .907$. This analysis indicates a prominent effect of romantic competence when measured by the RSC-Q on daily feelings of satisfaction, compared to BPD features.

The third model examined BPD, the IRRC composite, and their interaction term as predictors of global relationship satisfaction. Results indicated a collective effect of romantic competence and BPD features on the outcome, $R^2 = .170$, $F(3, 145) = 9.92, p < .001$. Participants’ scores on the IRRC produced a main effect; in other words, higher IRRC scores were associated with greater reports of global feelings of satisfaction, $b = .43, t(145) = 4.26, p < .001$. In contrast, levels of BPD features were not associated with changes in global feelings of satisfaction, $b = -.00, t(145) = -.03, p = .978$. Additionally, romantic competence as measured by IRRC did not moderate global feelings of satisfaction, $b = -.08, t(145) = -1.12, p = .265$. The IRRC had a significant impact on global feelings of satisfaction compared to BPD features.

**Predicting Global Compromise Behaviors**

The next set of analyses examined the moderating effect of romantic competence on BPD features when predicting compromise behaviors in response to global relationship conflict. Table 5 displays data for each analysis that was conducted. The first model tested RC-Behavior, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The findings indicated a collective effect of BPD features and romantic competence on global compromise behaviors, $R^2 = .074$, $F(3, 145) = 4.94, p = .003$. Higher RC-Behavior scores were associated with more compromise oriented
behaviors in response to global relationship conflict, $b = .13, t(145) = 2.77, p = .006$. However, participants’ level of BPD features were not associated with global compromise behaviors, $b = -.09, t(145) = -1.92, p = .057$. In addition, RC-Behavior did not moderate this outcome, $b = -.04, t(145) = -.86, p = .392$. Overall, RC-Behavior was a significant predictor of global compromise behaviors compared to BPD features, but this effect was not strong.

**Table 5. Examining the Moderating Effect of Romantic Competence on BPD Features in Predicting Compromise Behaviors in Response to Global Relationship Conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-Behavior</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPD*RC-Behavior</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>.392</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>-.91</td>
<td>.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSC-Q</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*RSC-Q</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>.313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRC</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-2.12</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* RC-Behavior measured by RC Measure; RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire; IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence; Global Compromise measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.

The second model tested the RSC-Q composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The collective effect of romantic competence and BPD features on global compromise behaviors was significant, $R^2 = .141, F(3, 145) = 9.07, p < .001$. Higher RSC-Q scores were associated with more global compromise behaviors, $b = .22, t(145) = 4.42, p < .001$. 39
BPD features, however, were not associated with global compromise behaviors, $b = -.04, t(145) = -.91, p = .366$. Indeed, participants’ RSC-Q scores did moderate this outcome, $b = -.05, t(145) = -1.01, p = .313$. Overall, the RSC-Q had a significant impact on one’s likelihood to engage in compromise-oriented tactics in response to global relationship conflict, compared to BPD features.

The third model tested the IRRC composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The collective effect of romantic competence and BPD features on global compromise behaviors was significant, $R^2 = .224, F(3, 145) = 13.99, p < .001$. Higher IRRC scores from participants were associated with more global compromise behaviors, $b = .30, t(145) = 5.48, p < .001$. In contrast, participants’ levels of BPD features were not associated with global compromise behaviors, $b = .06, t(145) = .99, p = .326$. Further analyses showed that IRRC scored moderated global compromise levels, $b = -.09, t(145) = -2.12, p < .035$.

Simple slopes analyses were subsequently conducted to further examine the nature of the effect with romantic competence as the moderator, as depicted in Figure 3. The conditional effect of BPD features on global compromise behaviors showed corresponding results. BPD features were associated with compromise behaviors at low levels of romantic competence (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), $b = .14, t(145) = 3.18, p = .002$. In contrast, BPD features were associated with global compromise behaviors at high levels of romantic competence (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), $b = -.03, t(145) = -.32, p = .749$. In short, BPD features are predictive of more global compromise behaviors in relationships at low levels of romantic competence.
Figure 3. Simple Slopes of BPD Features Predicting Compromise Behaviors for 1SD Below the Mean of Romantic Competence and 1SD Above the Mean of Romantic Competence

Note. Romantic Competence is represented as a composite score that was measured by the Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC), BPD features were measured by the Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline Features (PAI-BOR), and Compromise Behavior scores was measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS). The predictor (BPD features) and moderator (Romantic Competence) were standardized into z-scores to aid interpretation of the effects.

Next, the other set of simple slopes analyses were conducted to examine BPD features as the moderator, as depicted in Figure 4. This analysis was conducted to promote a further understanding of the interactive nature between romantic competence and BPD features. The conditional effect of romantic competence on global compromise behaviors showed
corresponding results. Levels of romantic competence were associated with compromise behaviors at low levels of BPD features (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), $b = .39$, $t(145) = 8.74$, $p < .001$. Likewise, levels of romantic competence were associated with compromise behaviors at high levels of BPD features (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), $b = .22$, $t(145) = 2.17$, $p = .032$. Therefore, romantic competence appears predictive of compromise behaviors at varying levels of BPD features, especially at low levels.

**Figure 4. Simple Slopes of Romantic Competence Levels Predicting Compromise Behaviors for 1SD Below the Mean of BPD Features and 1SD Above the Mean of BPD Features**

*Note.* Romantic Competence is represented as a composite score that was measured by the Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence (IRRC), BPD features were measured by the Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline Features (PAI-BOR), and Compromise Behavior scores was measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS). The predictor
(Romantic Competence) and moderator (BPD features) were standardized into z-scores to aid interpretation of the effects.

Predicting Global Reactivity Behaviors

The final set of analyses on global outcome measures examined the moderating effect of romantic competence on BPD features when predicting reactive behaviors in response to global relationship conflict. Table 6 displays data for each analysis that was conducted. The first model tested RC-Behavior, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The findings indicated a collective effect of BPD features and romantic competence on global compromise behaviors, $R^2 = .180, F(3, 145) = 10.64, p < .001$. Participants’ higher RC-Behavior scores were associated with less reactivity to global conflict, $b = -.20, t(145) = -3.36, p < .001$. Contrarily, higher levels of BPD features were associated with more global reactivity, $b = .22, t(145) = 3.71, p < .001$, yielded main effects. No moderating effect was observed for this analysis, $b = .03, t(145) = .58, p = .567$. According to the findings, both RC-behavior and BPD features are predictive of responding to global conflict in reactive manners.
Table 6. Examining the Moderating Effect of Romantic Competence on BPD Features in Predicting Reactive Behaviors in Response to Global Relationship Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-Behavior</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-3.36</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*RC-Behavior</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSC-Q</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>-5.18</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*RSC-Q</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRC</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RC-Behavior measured by RC Measure; RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire; IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence; Global Reactivity measured by the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.

The second model tested the RSC-Q composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The collective effect of romantic competence and BPD features on global reactivity behaviors was significant, $R^2 = .256$, $F(3, 145) = 16.61$, $p < .001$. Similar to the previous analysis, higher RSC-Q scores were associated with less global reactivity, $b = -.31$, $t(145) = -5.18$, $p < .001$. In addition, higher levels of BPD features were associated with more global reactivity, $b = .15$, $t(145) = 2.51$, $p = .013$. However, participants’ RSC-Q scores did not moderate the impact of BPD features on global reactivity, $b = -.02$, $t(145) = -.39$, $p = .694$. Overall, the analyses that incorporate the RSC-Q mirror those that include RC-Behavior as a predictor.
The third model tested the IRRC composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors. The collective effect of romantic competence and BPD features on global reactivity behaviors was significant, $R^2 = .190$, $F(3, 145) = 11.37, p < .001$. Higher IRRC scores among participants were associated with less global reactivity, $b = -.26, t(145) = -3.47, p < .001$. In contrast, levels of BPD features were not associated with global reactivity, $b = .11, t(145) = 1.54, p = .126$. Lastly, participants’ IRRC scores did not moderate the outcome, $b = .07, t(145) = 1.21, p = .227$. In sum, the IRRC is predictive of the decreased likelihood of engaging in reactive behaviors in response to global conflict. Interestingly, BPD features are not predictive of this outcome when the IRRC is used in the equation.

**Calculating Difference in Slopes**

Both the IRRC and RSC-Q yielded main effects for each global outcome. To better understand the nature of the results, the betas yielded from the IRRC and RSC-Q were directly compared using a significance of the difference between slopes test (Cohen et al., 2003). This analysis was conducted using an online calculator that accounted for the sample size, slopes (i.e., unstandardized betas), and standard errors of each variable (Soper, 2021). The slopes did not significantly differ for global satisfaction scores, $t(294) = .86, p = .391$, global compromise scores, $t(294) = 1.02, p = .307$, or global reactivity scores, $t(294) = .54, p = .588$. Therefore, it was concluded that neither instrument was better than the other regarding the magnitude of slopes for the regression analyses.

**Discussion of Global Results and Romantic Competence Instruments**

The global protocol set out to explore two things: examine the relationship between the three romantic competence instruments and determine if romantic competence is predictive of global relationship outcomes. Furthermore, it was of interest to examine the interactive nature of
romantic competence and BPD Features. Though the three instruments were correlated with one another, the magnitude of these correlations was mild to modest. Of note, the IRRC shared the biggest correlations with every other instrument, except RC-Knowledge. Indeed, both the RSC-Q and IRRC yielded the biggest main effects on global outcomes. However, only the IRRC moderated the impact of BPD features on one’s likelihood to engage in compromise tactics in response to global conflict.

To further determine which of the three romantic competence instruments was the strongest, inter-item reliability indices were evaluated. Even though the subscales were not used in the main analyses, the subscales were considered for evaluating reliability coefficients. As noted in Table 2, the subscales of the IRRC were generally more reliable than the RSC-Q, as well as to focus on composite scores for this study. Three of the RSC-Q subscales were below .60, which may limit the interpretation of the data. The low reliability scores from some of the RCS-Q subscales may suggest that the measure may have to be re-examined, and thus makes it more problematic to focus on in this study. The overall reliability coefficients between the RSC-Q and IRRC were comparable with one another (.86 and .80, respectively). Though RC-Behavior had the strongest reliability among the three instruments, it was the weakest predictor for global outcomes. Given the stronger correlation with BPD features, good reliability index, and strong predictive validity of global outcomes aligned with the proposed hypotheses, the IRRC was deemed as the best romantic competence instrument in context to this study. Thus, IRRC was used as the single measure of romantic competence for the subsequent daily diary analyses.

Hypothesis 3: Daily Analyses

Hypothesis 3 examined whether romantic competence moderated the impact of BPD features on daily reports of relationship satisfaction and conflict experiences. Hierarchical linear
modeling (HLM) procedures were used to investigate this question. Daily diary protocols include multiple daily reports acquired from each participant in the study. In such designs, days are “nested” within individuals, forming various levels of predictors. Repeated-measures ratings (Level 1) include daily reports of satisfaction and conflict response tactics. Participants’ BPD and romantic competence scores (Level 2) were taken at a single time point at the beginning of the study. A means-as-outcomes model was utilized to determine whether there were main effects and an interaction between romantic competence and BPD features for each outcome, that is, daily ratings of satisfaction and conflict-response tactics. Accordingly, I analyzed daily diary data within a HLM framework, using SAS Proc Mixed (Singer, 1998).

The means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients for daily relationship outcomes are reported in Table 2. Daily satisfaction was gauged using two items based on a daily diary protocol from a previous study (Campbell et al., 2005), and they shared a strong correlation with one another, \( r = .87, p < .001 \). Again, the items were averaged for each day to form a daily satisfaction score (e.g., one for each day), and then those scores were averaged across the 14-day period to form a single composite daily satisfaction score. The decision to average both items for each day was prompted by the magnitude of their correlation. Table 3 displays all zero-order correlations between romantic competence, as measured by the IRRC, and BPD features with each daily outcome. As predicted, romantic competence was correlated with each outcome; however, these correlations were small. BPD features were not correlated with compromise tactics, yielded a very small correlation with satisfaction, and a stronger correlation with reactivity, compared to romantic competence.
Predicting Daily Satisfaction

The first model incorporated the IRRC composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors of daily indices of relationship satisfaction. Level 2 predictors were grand-mean centered. Table 7 displays outcome data for this analysis. Within-person variance was found across days for feelings of satisfaction, $R = 1.63, p < .001$, and between-person variance was also significant, $U = .97, p < .001$. The calculated ICC was .642, meaning that approximately 64% of the variance in daily satisfaction was accounted for by the differences between participants. Participants’ IRRC scores yielded a main effect for predicting levels of daily satisfaction, $b = .72, t(145) = 3.02, p = .003$. However, participants’ level of BPD features did not predict the daily outcome, $b = .01, t(145) = .73, p = .450$. In addition, no moderating effect was found, $b = -.01, t(145) = .02, p = .486$. Therefore, romantic competence appears to be important for predicting daily feelings of satisfaction, compared to BPD features, but it does not change satisfaction levels for individuals with high levels of BPD features.
Table 7. Examining the Moderating Effect of Romantic Competence on BPD Features in Predicting Daily Relationship Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<th>S.E.</th>
<th>t(145)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.76</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IRRC</td>
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<td>.72</td>
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<td>3.02</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.70</td>
<td>.486</td>
</tr>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRRC</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>4.19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.336</td>
</tr>
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<td>BPD*IRRC</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.698</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence; Daily Outcomes measured by a questionnaire adapted from Campbell et al. (2005).

Predicting Daily Compromise

The second model incorporated the IRRC composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors of engaging in compromise behaviors in response to daily relationship conflict. Level 2 predictors were grand-mean centered. Table 7 displays outcome data for this analysis. Within-person variance was found across days for compromise behaviors, $R = 1.74$, $p < .001$. In addition, between-person variance was significant, $U = .68$, $p < .001$. The calculated ICC was .720, meaning that 72% of the variance in daily compromise was due to differences between people. Participants’ IRRC scores yielded a main effect on levels of daily compromise, $b = 1.13$, $t(133) = 4.19$, $p < .001$. In contrast, participants’ level of BPD features did not yield a main effect, $b = .02$, $t(133) = 1.53$, $p = .129$. Lastly, IRRC scores did not yield a moderating effect on
compromise behaviors, $b = .02$, $t(133) = .97$, $p = .336$. Once again, the results indicate a significant impact of romantic competence on daily relationship behaviors, opposed to BPD features. However, romantic competence is not a moderator of these daily outcomes.

**Predicting Daily Reactivity**

The third model incorporated the IRRC composite, BPD features, and their interaction term as predictors of engaging in reactive behaviors in response to daily relationship conflict. Level 2 predictors were grand-mean centered. Table 7 displays outcome data for this analysis. Within-person variance was found across days for reactivity behaviors, $R = 2.36$, $p < .001$, and between-person variance was significant, $U = .32$, $p = .006$. The calculated ICC was .880, meaning that 88% of the variance in daily compromise was due to differences between people. Unlike the previous models, higher levels of BPD were associated with more daily reactivity, $b = .02$, $t(133) = 2.59$, $p = .011$), whereas participants’ IRRC scores were not associated with the outcome, $b = -.11$, $t(133) = -.43$, $p = .670$. In addition, romantic competence levels did not moderate daily reactivity, $b = -.01$, $t(133) = -.39$, $p = .698$. According to these results, it appears BPD is a strong predictor of one’s likelihood to respond to daily relationship conflict in a reactive manner. Romantic competence does not buffer this outcome, as initially predicted.

**Summary of Daily Results**

The results of that daily protocol mirror the global in that romantic competence was a significant predictor of satisfaction and compromise. However, the results from the daily protocol reveal the significant effect that BPD features have on one’s likelihood to engage in reactive manners when dealing with relationship conflict from day-to-day. Contrary to the main hypothesis, no moderating effects were found. Furthermore, unlike global results, there was no main effect of BPD on daily satisfaction or compromise. Overall, the daily study revealed how
both romantic competence and BPD features impact different daily relationship outcomes, opposed to global ones. In fact, this is the first study to elucidate the role of romantic competence for daily romantic relationship outcomes.
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

This study's primary purpose was to advance the field’s understanding of romantic competence, its association in romantic relationship functioning, and its relationship with BPD features. More specifically, I hypothesized that romantic competence might serve as a moderator for better outcomes in the romantic relationship functioning of those high in BPD features. This study recruited female participants in a romantic relationship and over-sampled for elevated BPD features to examine global and daily romantic relationship outcomes. The present study also intended to examine the convergent validity and utility of three romantic competence instruments with one another.

Romantic Competence Instruments

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the three romantic competence instruments correlated with one another. However, these correlations ranged from small to large in their magnitude. RC-Behavior shared the weakest significant correlations with the IRRC and RSC-Q, whereas the IRRC shared the strongest correlations with almost every other instrument. Of note, RC-Knowledge did not significantly correlate with the IRRC or BPD features. A non-significant correlation between RC-Knowledge and BPD features suggests that individuals with BPD features do not lack knowledge of effective relationship behaviors. Furthermore, this result is replicated from previous research (Penzel et al., submitted). Overall, it is important to note the variation of correlation sizes, as well as how RC-Behavior was more closely aligned with the other two romantic competence instruments compared to RC-Knowledge. For these reasons, RC-Knowledge was not included in subsequent global analyses, due to the nature of correlational results.
Aside from RC-Knowledge, BPD features negatively correlated with every other romantic competence instrument. The IRRC shared the largest inverse relationship with BPD features, compared to RC-Behavior and the RSC-Q. Overall, this data further support the inverse relationship between BPD features and romantic competence (Penzel et al., submitted). Additionally, this study is the first to establish convergent validity among three distinct romantic competence instruments. Given the disparity in content and format between each romantic competence instrument, however, it did not make sense to compute a combined romantic competence composite score based on all three measures.

Other factors were examined for comparing romantic competence instruments. For example, there were differences in the inter-item reliability indices between each instrument. The RC Measure yielded the highest reliability coefficients, followed by the RSC-Q and then the IRRC. However, given the poor predictive validity of the RC Measure, it could not be considered the strongest instrument. The overall reliability indexes to the RSC-Q and IRRC were comparable; however, the RSC-Q contained subscales with non-optimal reliability coefficients (i.e., less than .60). In contrast, the IRRC subscales yielded reliability coefficients above .60. The lower reliability coefficients for the RSC-Q subscales cast doubt on the measure’s overall reliability index compared to the IRRC.

The IRRC might incorporate the most extensive empirical and theoretical framework regarding romantic competence compared to the RC Measure and RSC-Q. Faber and colleagues (2019) carefully developed its items and subscales through an Exploratory Factor Analysis, followed by a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. As a result, the authors developed seven comprehensive subscales compared to the five of the RSC-Q. Furthermore, the IRRC’s items are worded in a manner that is easier to understand compared to the RSC-Q. Item wording, along
with ease of understanding the directions and its items might be one reason why the subscales of the IRRC yield higher reliability coefficients than those of the RSC-Q. The items of the RSC-Q and IRRC can be found respectively in Appendices F and G. Lastly, the IRRC’s construction was inspired by research from both Davila et al. (2007) and Bouche (2007). Faber and colleagues (2019) used this existing research to develop the IRRC as an empirically and theoretically based instrument to gauge romantic competence abilities.

The disparity between each romantic competence instrument may be best accounted for by a few different factors. First, the structure of each instrument differs significantly from one another. The IRRC and RSC-Q are both self-report questionnaires that differ in their wording and specific subscales. The RC-Measure is constructed from SJT literature, which tasks participants to rate the effectiveness of behavioral responses to given relationship dilemmas and their likelihood of engaging in each behavior. The relationship scenarios of the RC Measure generally gauge some level of relationship conflict, whereas the IRRC and RSC-Q ask participants to reflect on both positive and negative relationship attributes. Thus, the romantic competence instruments likely share modest correlations with one another due to their differences in measurement constructions, questionnaire directions, and the included items.

The established differences between romantic competence instruments may elucidate some concerns about the romantic competence construct. For example, are they measuring the same thing, or is romantic competence differentially defined for each instrument? The three instruments are likely measuring one single romantic competence construct, given their significant correlations with one another and with BPD features with correlations in the expected direction. Additionally, each measure correlated with relationship outcomes in their expected directions. However, each instrument has only ever been implemented in one study, and each
entailed limited data for accounting for romantic relationship outcomes. The IRRC yielded strong correlations with the RSC-Q and with BPD features. Both the RSC-Q and the IRRC yielded very similar results for predicting global relationship outcomes. It is possible that RC-Behavior is tapping into the romantic competence but fails to comprehensively assess romantic competence, compared to the other two measures, given its weaker correlations with the other questionnaires and fewer significant regression results with global outcome measures. Therefore, I conclude that the three instruments roughly measure the same romantic competence construct. However, this study revealed that RC-Behavior does so rather poorly compared to the IRRC and the RSC-Q.

Based on measurement construction, reliability indices, and empirical data from this study, the IRRC was deemed the best romantic competence instrument of the three. Since it did not make sense to create a composite romantic competence score of all three instruments, only the IRRC was utilized for the daily analyses. Solely using the IRRC in the daily diary protocol facilitated more streamlined and interpretable data analysis procedures. It was also intuitive to compare daily trends of romantic competence to global ones regarding the IRRC. Though the IRRC was the strongest of the three measures used in this study, it would be advantageous to compare it to the RCI in the future.

Global Protocol

Hypothesis 2 predicted that romantic competence would serve as a significant moderator for the impact of BPD features on global relationship outcomes. Zero-order correlational results supported this hypothesis. As measured by all three instruments, romantic competence was generally predictive of global feelings of satisfaction, compromise behaviors, and reactive behaviors. However, BPD features modestly predicted global reactivity, though it depended on
the romantic competence instrument used in the model. Next, multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine if romantic competence and BPD features were significant predictors. Overall, the IRRC was the strongest predictor of global relationship outcomes and was the only instrument to yield a moderating effect, with romantic competence contributing to compromise behaviors in the face of conflict. Furthermore, BPD features were mainly predictive of reactive behaviors in response to global conflict.

Romantic competence generally yielded consistent main effects for each global outcome among the three measures. Therefore, romantic competence appears to be an important factor to consider when evaluating global trends in relationship functioning. Of note, romantic competence generally had a greater number of significant correlations to global outcomes compared to BPD features. However, BPD features remained a significant predictor of global reactivity when examined with RC-Behavior and the RSC-Q. BPD features may have a more substantial impact on one’s likelihood to engage in maladaptive relationship behaviors, such as reactivity to conflict. Still, the main effects yielded by romantic competence were moderate to large and bolster the construct as one that should be utilized in future romantic relationship research.

The study yielded mixed results on the moderating effect of romantic competence. A moderating effect was found only for the IRRC when predicting compromise behaviors in the predicted direction: romantic competence was predictive of more compromise behaviors at both low and high levels of BPD features. This outcome supports the initial hypothesis that depicts romantic competence skills as a buffer against BPD features. In this way, individuals high in BPD features and romantic competence levels may handle conflict in more adaptive and effective manners compared to their low-level romantic competence counterparts. However,
when romantic competence was tested as the moderating variable, results suggested that BPD features are not associated with global compromise behaviors among those high in romantic competence. Contrary to the hypothesis, BPD features were associated with more global compromise behaviors at low levels if romantic competence. It appears that the interplay between romantic competence and BPD features is more complex than originally predicted. These interesting findings merit further exploration of the romantic competence construct.

Moderation effects were minimal, however. The IRRC yielded only one moderating effect for the three outcomes that were examined. Additionally, romantic competence did not yield any other moderating effects, regardless of the instrument used. In general, the hypothesis was not supported; romantic competence does not buffer the impact of BPD features on multiple relationship outcomes. However, romantic competence significantly impacted these outcomes above and beyond BPD features. Therefore, romantic competence is still an influential predictor of global relationship outcomes. Note that the R-squared values for each model varied between .008 and .256, depending on the romantic competence instrument and specific outcome. Some research suggests that an R-squared value of .04 represents a small effect size, while .25 represents a moderate effect size (Ferguson, 2009). Therefore, these values indicate that romantic competence and BPD features explain a relatively small to moderate portion of the variance for predicting global relationship outcomes. As stated previously, there are likely many factors that contribute to these outcomes, and this study deems romantic competence as one factor of focus.

Perhaps BPD and romantic competence do not generally interact with one another because it is unknown which specific features of BPD are impacting relationship outcomes. The PAI-BOR gauges several different features of BPD that form a composite score for subsequent data analyses. Likewise, this study examined the general romantic competence construct, as
opposed to its associated skills and behaviors. Thus, the interactive nature of specific features of BPD features and romantic competence skills is relatively unknown. The findings of this study reveal that general BPD features do not interact with general romantic competence skills. Though they each impact global relationship outcomes independently, this study is the first to test their interactive nature. Given the magnitude of their main effects, researchers should continue exploring romantic competence in romantic relationships and BPD research.

Daily Protocol

Hypothesis 3 posited that romantic competence would moderate the impact of BPD features on daily feelings of satisfaction, compromise behaviors, and reactive behaviors in relationships. The IRRC was used to gauge romantic competence for these analyses. The findings revealed that romantic competence was not a moderating factor. However, the findings signify the importance of romantic competence abilities for predicting positive daily outcomes in relationships. Individuals higher in romantic competence levels reported feeling more satisfied in their relationships daily and responded to conflict in compromise-oriented manners. These results mirror those from the global analyses, in which romantic competence fared as a significant predictor of global feelings of satisfaction and compromise-oriented behaviors. These daily analyses bolster the importance and relevance of the romantic competence construct beyond global relationship outcomes.

Unlike the global results, BPD features were significant in predicting reactive behaviors in response to daily conflict, above and beyond romantic competence. It appears that BPD features significantly impact maladaptive daily relationship behaviors, opposed to adaptive behaviors (compromise) and daily satisfaction feelings in the relationship. These results align with those from a study conducted by Kuhlken and colleagues (2014). Their study found that
BPD features were not predictive of daily feelings of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, BPD features are not supported as relevant factors for predicting daily relationship satisfaction compared to other factors, such as romantic competence. As opposed to decreasing the likelihood of engaging in compromise behaviors in response behaviors, BPD features were predictive of the increased propensity to engage in conflict behaviors. After all, other research indicates that impulsivity and emotionally dysregulated behaviors contribute to interpersonal dysfunction in BPD relationships (Euler et al., 2021). Knowing how BPD features differentially impact daily relationship trends, compared to romantic competence, is informative for better understanding their dyadic relationship.

Daily results significantly differed from global results in their lack of any moderation effects. Of note, romantic competence did not moderate BPD features for predicting daily compromise behaviors. The interactive nature between romantic competence and BPD is weak; the entire study yielded only one moderation effect despite utilizing three measures of romantic competence. Romantic competence (as measured by the IRRC) did not serve to moderate any of the three daily outcomes. Furthermore, the daily study may be limited in how it assessed daily relationship outcomes. For example, participants only reported their engagement in compromise behaviors if they engaged in conflict on a given day. Only 483 observations were observed for rating conflict response behaviors, as opposed to 1834 observations for daily satisfaction ratings (i.e., a rating that was provided every day). Therefore, the daily study may have been underpowered for observing the interactive nature of BPD and romantic competence regarding daily conflict response tactics. Nonetheless, the main effects for both romantic competence and BPD features are informative for understanding which factors impact specific daily relationship outcomes.
Overall, romantic competence was not a protective factor against BPD features for predicting optimal daily relationship outcomes. Instead, findings suggested that romantic competence was a relevant predictor for positive relationship trends from day to day, whereas BPD features predicted negative trends, such as conflict reactivity. Given the multifaceted nature of romantic relationships, understanding which factors predict bad outcomes is as valuable as knowing which factors predict good outcomes. Here, I conclude that romantic partners higher in romantic competence, as measured by the IRRC, feel more satisfied daily and respond to conflict in more proactive ways. Likewise, individuals higher in BPD features tend to respond to daily relationship conflict in more reactive manners. Future research should further examine how romantic competence predicts daily relationship behaviors.

Strengths

This dissertation study encompassed several strengths. First, this study was the first to examine multiple romantic competence instruments. Specifically, it compared three published instruments and examined their relationship to global relationship outcome measures as well as BPD features. Second, this study is the first to implement the romantic competence construct in a daily diary protocol. Indeed, results supported the importance of romantic competence as a predictor for relationship outcomes at both global and daily levels. This investigation bolsters support for incorporating romantic competence in future studies. Third, this dissertation study provided a better understanding of the dynamic between romantic competence and BPD features. Though romantic competence may not serve as a comprehensive “protective” set of skills against BPD features, it was still generally predictive of positive relationship outcomes.

Finally, this study's findings converge with other research that suggests the negative impact of BPD on romantic relationship outcomes. As expected, BPD features were negatively
correlated with relationship satisfaction and compromise tactics, while they positively correlated with reactive tactics in response to conflict. These maladaptive responses to conflict align with previous research (e.g., Bhatia et al., 2013). More importantly, BPD features were predictive of reactive behaviors at daily and sometimes global levels when the RSC-Q and RC-Behavior were in the regression analysis. The relationship between BPD features and the likelihood of engaging in conflictive behaviors is supported in the literature (e.g., Sadikaj et al., 2013). Likewise, its influence for engaging in less prosocial and more negative relationship behaviors (Lazarus et al., 2018) was also supported. Overall, this study elucidates the influence of BPD features on maladaptive relationship behaviors, even when considering romantic competence.

Limitations

The current study included several limitations. First, the sample population was limited to female undergraduate students without clinical diagnoses of BPD. Though BPD features can negatively impact subclinical individuals (Bhatia et al., 2013), the study sample is still limited in its scope of BPD features and severity. Furthermore, it is unclear how romantic competence skills might operate in conjunction with BPD features among male participants and married couples. It was advantageous to utilize a female undergraduate sample because most research on BPD romantic relationship functioning and romantic competence focuses on heterosexual female samples. Davila and colleagues (2017) pioneered romantic competence work through scenario-based assessments using primarily heterosexual female participants. In addition, the RC Measure is normed for a heterosexual college-based population (Robinson et al., 2020). A bulk of BPD-romantic relationship research utilizes heterosexual female samples to speculate about romantic relationship trends (e.g., Bhatia et al., 2013). Therefore, results are limited in their generalizability for clinical and married couples, and men.
Second, the current investigation is limited to how daily romantic relationship behaviors were measured. The daily diary study broadly investigated feelings of satisfaction and conflict response approach. It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced results from the daily diary protocol. For example, couples quarantining separately may have spent less time physically being with their partners. Alternatively, some participants reported living with their partners and spending more time with them in quarantine, which might have incited new conflicts. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that some results may have been influenced by the pandemic. In any case, this study successfully extends the findings from Penzel and colleagues (submitted) in that it is not limited to cross-sectional research.

Lastly, the romantic competence measures utilized in this study are not commonly used in the literature. Each measure provided insight into the role of romantic competence in global and daily relationship outcomes. However, very few studies have utilized the RC Measure, RSC-Q, or IRRC, so the generalizability of romantic relationship outcomes is limited. Furthermore, I discovered differences among each instrument’s predictive nature of romantic competence. Future research should explore each measure’s utility and the nuanced differences between how each depicts the romantic competence construct.

Future Directions

Despite these limitations, this dissertation provides a new foundation for understanding the dyadic nature between romantic competence and BPD features at both global and daily levels. To examine the generalizability of the present results, future studies should extend this research to married couples, male participants, and clinical samples. Research following this study should also investigate the utility of each romantic competence instrument further. This study is the first of its kind to compare each measure to one another and analyze their differential
impact on relationship outcomes. Perhaps incorporating the RCI (Davila et al., 2009) as an additional romantic competence measure would shed more insight about the interplay between BPD features and romantic competence. The RCI is regarded as more of a “gold standard” approach for investigating romantic competence (Davila et al., 2017). It would be advantageous to examine how clinically diagnosed romantic partners fare in this interview-based measure. Furthermore, comparing the IRRC to the RCI would help establish further convergent validity between these two romantic competence instruments.

Lastly, this study offers treatment-based implications from this research. Considering that one of the chief problems of BPD is romantic relationship functioning (Hill et al., 2011), clinicians could benefit from learning about romantic competence among BPD patients to understand better their challenges and areas of growth in therapeutic contexts. Study results showed that romantic competence levels were associated with compromise behaviors in response to conflict across varying levels of BPD features. Therefore, it is possible that these skills could be taught in a therapeutic setting. Additionally, it is likely that specific skills associated with romantic competence, such as conflict resolution, are integral when BPD features are considered. Overall, the results of this study, indicating poor conflict resolution skills in those high in borderline features, merit further investigation in treatment-based research.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

To date, there is limited research on romantic competence and its role in romantic relationship processes. BPD features are associated with poor romantic relationship outcomes (Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017), yet nearly no other research has examined the role of romantic competence within this population. This study aimed to advance previous research (Penzel et al., submitted) by implementing three different romantic competence instruments, a daily diary protocol, and a sample with significantly elevated BPD features. As predicted, romantic competence predicted both global and daily relationship outcomes across a range of BPD features. However, it was a weak moderator, contrary to the initial hypothesis, in that romantic competence moderated only the relationship between BPD features and global compromise behaviors in response to conflict. In short, this study provided further validation for the relevance of romantic competence in BPD romantic relationship processes. The results from this study suggest future research on utilizing the romantic competence construct and the investigation of its role in clinically diagnosed couples.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about yourself and your relationship as honestly and accurately as possible.

1. What is your age?

2. Please identify the gender that you identify with:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other (i.e., Transgender, Gender Non-Binary)

3. Please identify your race/ethnicity:
   a. White
   b. Black/African American
   c. Asian/Pacific Islander
   d. Hispanic/Latino
   e. Native American
   f. Other

4. Is English your native language?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. What is your sexual orientation?
   a. Heterosexual
   b. Homosexual
   c. Bisexual

6. What is the gender of your romantic partner?
a. Male
b. Female
c. Other (i.e., Transgender, Gender Non-Binary)

7. Is your romantic relationship exclusive (i.e., only one romantic partner)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. Please indicate, in the number of months, how long you have been in your current romantic relationship.
   _______ months

9. Please indicate, in the number of months, the length of your longest romantic relationship in your lifetime.
   _______ months

10. When you are on campus, approximately how far does your partner live from you?
    _______ minutes

11. When you are at home (e.g., school is online or not in session), approximately how far does your partner live from you?
    _______ minutes

12. How often do you communicate with your partner?
    a. Multiple times throughout the day (e.g., more than 4 separate times)
    b. At least once or twice a day
    c. At least every other day
    d. At least 4 separate times a week
e. Once or twice a week
f. Every other week
g. A couple of times a month

13. What are your typical means of communicating with your partner? (Select all that apply)
   a. In person
   b. Phone call
c. Text message
d. Facebook message
e. Video chat (e.g., Facebook, Skype, FaceTime, etc.)
f. Email
g. Other and specify

14. In your lifetime, how many committed romantic relationships have you had? (Here, a committed romantic relationship refers to a romantic relationship with only one partner for at least 3 months).
   ________ committed romantic relationships

15. In your lifetime, how many break-ups have you experienced from a committed romantic relationship? (Here, a committed romantic relationship refers to a romantic relationship with only one partner for at least 3 months).
   ________ break-ups
APPENDIX B: ATTENTIVE RESPONDING SCALE

Instructions: Please rate how true each statement is for you using this subscale:

0 = Not at all true; 5 = Very true

[Presented at the beginning of the study]

1) I am an active person
2) I enjoy the company of my friends
3) I don't like getting speeding tickets*
4) I look forward to my time off*
5) I find it easy to open up to my friends
6) I am a very considerate person
7) I enjoy the music of Marlene Sandersfield*
8) I spend most of my time worrying
9) Occasionally people annoy me
10) My favorite subject is agronomy*
11) I am a happy person
12) I don’t like being ridiculed or humiliated*
13) I am a very energetic person
14) I am a lively person
15) I love going to the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles)*
16) It frustrates me when people keep me waiting
17) I enjoy relaxing in my free time

[Presented at the end of the study]

1) I have an active lifestyle
2) I like to spend time with my friends
3) I enjoy receiving telemarketers’ calls*
4) It feels good to be appreciated*
5) It’s easy for me to confide in my friends
6) I always try to be considerate of other people
7) I’d rather be hated than loved*
8) I worry about things a lot
9) Sometimes I find people irritating
10) I’d be happy if I won the lottery*
11) I am usually happy
12) My main interests are coin collecting and interpretive dancing*
13) I have a lot of energy
14) I tend to be pretty lively
15) It's annoying when people are late.
16) In my time off I like to relax
APPENDIX C: PAI-BOR

Personality Assessment Inventory-Borderline Scale

Instructions: Read each statement and decide if it is an accurate statement about you. We are interested in studying the interaction between personality and relationships.

   If the statement is FALSE, NOT AT ALL TRUE, select False

   If the statement is SLIGHTLY TRUE, select Slightly True.

   If the statement is MAINLY TRUE, select Mainly True.

   If the statement is VERY TRUE, select Very True.

Give your own opinion of yourself. Be sure to answer every statement.

1) My mood can shift quite suddenly.

2) My attitude about myself changes a lot.

3) My relationships have been stormy.

4) My moods get quite intense.

5) Sometimes I feel terribly empty inside.

6) I want to let certain people know how much they’re hurt me.

7) My mood is very steady.

8) I worry a lot about other people leaving me.

9) People once close to me have let me down.

10) I have little control over my anger.

11) I often wonder what I should do with my life.

12) I rarely feel very lonely.

13) I sometimes do things so impulsively that I get into trouble.

14) I’ve always been a pretty happy person.
15) I can’t handle separation from those close to me very well.

16) I’ve made some real mistakes in the people I’ve picked as friends.

17) When I’m upset, I typically do something to hurt myself.

18) I’ve had times when I was too mad I couldn’t do enough to express all my anger.

19) I don’t get bored very easily.

20) Once someone is my friend, we stay friends.

21) I’m too impulsive for my own good.

22) I spend money too easily.

23) I’m a reckless person.

24) I’m careful about how I spend my money.
Instructions: We will describe a situation involving a named character (the protagonist) who is in a heterosexual romantic relationship. The situation will be about the romantic relationship, and we will use the word "partner" to describe the other person. You should read the situation, think about how the protagonist should deal with the situation, read the way of responding to it, and make a rating according to the question asked. The situations will be repeated, but a different question will be asked each time.

Scenario 1:

Jason does not like his partner's best friend. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Jason could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. FIND HIS PARTNER A NEW BEST FRIEND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. TRY TO FIND REDEEMING QUALITIES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. SUCK IT UP AND PLAY NICE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. ASK THE PARTNER TO MAKE A CHOICE - HIM OR THE BEST FRIEND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Scenario 2:**

Henry has a partner who gets angry too often. **Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Henry could deal with the situation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. SUGGEST ANGER MANAGEMENT CLASSES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. GET ANGRY IN RETURN</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. BE CAREFUL NOT TO ANGER HIS PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. IGNORE HER WHEN SHE GETS ANGRY</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 3:**

Jerry finds out that his partner has a Tinder account and has been using it to meet other guys. **Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Jerry could deal with the situation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. STEAL HER PHONE AND DELETE THE TINDER ACCOUNT</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. PRETEND TO BE ONE OF THOSE GUYS TO CATCH HER IN THE ACT</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. TRY TO BE MORE SATISFYING AS A PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. GET A TINDER ACCOUNT TOO</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 4:
Charles does not want to use condoms anymore. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Charles could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. STOP USING CONDOMS DURING SEX</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. ARRANGE A MEETING AT THE BIRTH CONTROL CLINIC</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. “FORGET” TO BUY THEM ON PURPOSE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. TALK TO HIS PARTNER ABOUT ALTERNATIVE BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scenario 5:
Steven looks on his partner’s phone and finds text messages and pictures from other men. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Steven could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. TEXT THEM TELLING THEM TO STOP MESSAGING HER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. GET ADVICE FROM HIS FRIENDS ON WHAT TO DO</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. CONFRONT HIS PARTNER ABOUT THE TEXTS AND PICTURES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. FLIRT WITH OTHER WOMEN IN RETURN</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 6:
Roger is suspicious that his partner has cheated, but has no proof. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Roger could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. SECRETLY FOLLOW HER AROUND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. START SNOOPING AROUND FOR EVIDENCE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. GET HIS BEST FRIEND TO FIND OUT</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. CONFRONT THE PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scenario 7:
Donna senses there is something wrong in her relationship. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Donna could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. SERIOUSLY CONSIDER BREAKING UP</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. TRY TO FIX THE RELATIONSHIP SO THIS FEELING GOES AWAY</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. IGNORE THESE FEELINGS</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. TALK TO HER PARTNER TO SEE IF SOMETHING IS WRONG</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 8:

William’s partner has not called or texted in two weeks. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that William could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. TALK TO HIS PARTNER’S BEST FRIEND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. FOLLOW HER AND SEE WHAT SHE IS DOING</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. CALL THE POLICE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. CALL HIS PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scenario 9:

Michelle wants to have sex more frequently with her partner. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Michelle could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. BUY MORE ALCOHOL FOR HIM</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. BUY MORE SEXY CLOTHING</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. LEARN NEW STRATEGIES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. AMBUSH HIM MORE OFTEN</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 10:

Shirley wants to go out on a Saturday night, but her partner enjoys staying in and watching Netflix. ***Rate the effectiveness of the following ways that Shirley could deal with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not effective at all</th>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. GO OUT WHILE HER PARTNER STAYS IN TO WATCH NETFLIX</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. GIVE IN AND WATCH NETFLIX</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. ALTERNATE THESE ACTIVITIES AS A COMPROMISE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. UNSUBSCRIBE TO NETFLIX</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E: RC-BEHAVIOR

Romantic Competence Measure – Behavior

Instructions: We will now present the scenarios again, but this time, you will make a very different rating. Specifically, imagine that you are in the situation being described and rate how likely it is that YOU would respond in each of the indicated ways, if YOU were in the situation.

Scenario 1:

You do not like your partner’s best friend. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. FIND YOUR PARTNER A NEW BEST FRIEND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. TRY TO FIND REDEEMING QUALITIES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. SUCK IT UP AND PLAY NICE</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. ASK YOUR PARTNER TO MAKE A CHOICE – YOU OR THE BEST FRIEND</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scenario 2:

You have a partner who gets angry too often. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. SUGGEST ANGER MANAGEMENT CLASSES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. GET ANGRY IN RETURN</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. BE CAREFUL NOT TO ANGER YOUR PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. IGNORE YOUR PARTNER WHEN THEY GET ANGRY</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Scenario 3:**

You find out that your partner has a Tinder account and has been using it to meet other people.

*** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i. STEAL YOUR PARTNER’S PHONE AND DELETE THE TINDER ACCOUNT</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii. PRETEND TO BE A PERSON ON THE APP TO CATCH YOUR PARTNER IN THE ACT</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iii. TRY TO BE MORE SATISFYING AS A PARTNER</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iv. GET A TINDER ACCOUNT TOO</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 4:**

You do not want to use condoms anymore. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i. STOP USING CONDOMS DURING SEX</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii. ARRANGE A MEETING AT THE BIRTH CONTROL CLINIC</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iii. “FORGET” TO BUY THEM ON PURPOSE</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iv. TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT ALTERNATIVE BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 5:**
You look on your partner's phone and find text messages and pictures from other people. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. TEXT THEM TELLING THEM TO STOP MESSGING YOUR PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. GET ADVICE FROM YOUR FRIENDS ON WHAT TO DO</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. CONFRONT YOUR PARTNER ABOUT THE TEXTS AND PICTURES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. FLIRT WITH OTHER PEOPLE IN RETURN</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 6:**

You are suspicious that your partner has cheated, but have no proof. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>iii. GET YOUR BEST FRIEND TO FIND OUT</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv. CONFRONT THE PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 7:**
You sense there is something wrong in your relationship. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. SERIOUSLY CONSIDER BREAKING UP</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. TRY TO FIX THE RELATIONSHIP SO THIS FEELING GOES AWAY</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. IGNORE THESE FEELINGS</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. TALK TO YOUR PARTNER TO SEE IF SOMETHING IS WRONG</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 8:**

Your partner has not called or texted in two weeks. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>ii. FOLLOW YOUR PARTNER AND SEE WHAT THEY ARE DOING</td>
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<td>iii. CALL THE POLICE</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. CALL YOUR PARTNER</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 9:**
You want to have sex more frequently with your partner. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& \text{Not likely at all} & & \text{Extremely likely} & \\
i. BUY MORE ALCOHOL FOR YOUR PARTNER & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
ii. BUY MORE SEXY CLOTHING & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
iii. LEARN NEW STRATEGIES & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
iv. AMBUSH YOUR PARTNER MORE OFTEN & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array}
\]

Scenario 10:

You want to go out on a Saturday night, but your partner enjoys staying in and watching Netflix. *** If you were in this situation, how likely would it be that YOU would do the following?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& \text{Not likely at all} & & \text{Extremely likely} & \\
i. GO OUT WHILE YOUR PARTNER STAYS IN TO WATCH NETFLIX & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
ii. GIVE IN AND WATCH NETFLIX & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
iii. ALTERNATE THESE ACTIVITIES AS A COMPROMISE & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
iv. UNSUBSCRIBE TO NETFLIX & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array}
\]
APPENDIX F: RSCQ

Romantic Self-Competence Questionnaire

Instructions: We have some sentences here and, as you can see from the top of your sheet where it says, “What I am like”, we are interested in what each of you is like, what kind of a person you are like. This is a survey, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Since people are very different from one another, each of you will be putting down something different. Please use the following scale to indicate how true each statement is for you.

1 = Not at all true for me, 6 = Very true for me

What I Am Like...

1) Some people feel that their partners respect them as a person.
2) Some people experience a pretty equal balance of power in their relationships.
3) Some people are not pleased with how their partner makes them feel as a person.
4) Some people feel that their romantic partners accept them for who they are.
5) Some people are not happy with how their partner thinks of them.
6) Some people are not pleased with their romantic partner’s level of commitment in the relationship.
7) Some people are not comfortable being in a long-term relationship.
8) Some people prefer not to be involved in a long-term, committed relationship.
9) Some people have the social skills that allow them to stay in long-term romantic relationships.
10) Some people are able to stay in a relationship with someone they like.
11) Some people are happy with their own level of commitment in romantic relationships.
12) Some people put the same amount of effort into their relationships as their partners do.
13) Some people are not very comfortable sharing personal information with their partners.
14) Some people find it easy to tell their partners what they like or need.
15) Some people have a hard time communicating with their romantic partner.
16) Some people find it easy to talk with their romantic partners.
17) Some people find it difficult to have romantic relationships.
18) Some people feel that others their age will be romantically attracted to them.
19) Some people feel that if they are romantically interested in someone, that person will like them back.
20) Some people feel that they are fun and interesting on a date.
21) Some people usually don’t go out with people they would really like to date.
22) Some people are not dating the people they are really attracted to.
23) Some people feel that they could benefit from more sexual experience.
24) Some people are happy with the amount of sexual activity they engage in.
25) Some people feel that they could use more knowledge about sex.
APPENDIX G: IRRC

Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence

Instructions: Please read each statement and indicate how true it is for you.

1 = Almost Never or Never True
2 = Note Very Often True
3 = Sometimes True
4 = Often True
5 = Almost Always or Always True

1) I believe I will be able to effectively deal with conflicts that arise in my relationships.
2) I feel good about the prospects of making a romantic relationship last.
3) I feel I have the skills needed for a lasting stable romantic relationship.
4) I am confident I can handle relationship challenges that arise.
5) I feel I am able to meet the emotional needs of my significant other.
6) I feel I can influence my relationship satisfaction.
7) I feel that if I am not happy in a relationship, I can improve the relationship.
8) I am confident that I will have a long term happy committed relationship.
9) I take into account other people’s feelings when making decisions.
10) When I get into a fight with someone, I try to understand how it happened.
11) I try to understand why people are upset with me.
12) I tend to put myself in another person’s shoes to see their perspective.
13) I usually know why someone is upset with me.
14) I think about how my actions will affect others.
15) I worry at times that I will end up alone the rest of my life.
16) I am lonely.
17) I struggle to find someone to date.
18) I struggle to trust people that I am close with.
19) I worry other people will hurt me emotionally.
20) I have a hard time letting people get close to me.
21) I have a hard time sharing my feelings with others.
22) When I am upset, I like to be alone.
23) I lose my temper at times.
24) I get into arguments with people.
25) I often say things I don’t mean when I am mad.
26) When I get mad, I do things that later I regret.
27) People say I am easy going.
28) I don’t get too upset over things.
29) I am pretty flexible.
30) I can receive negative feedback without getting upset.
31) I tend to address issues that are bothering me.
32) I tend to avoid discussing issues that might upset someone.
33) I feel I handle conflict well.
34) I feel I can communicate my feelings well.
35) I feel I can communicate my points/thoughts well.
APPENDIX H: PRQC

Perceived Relationship Quality Components

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your current romantic relationship using the following scale.

1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely

1) How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2) How content are you with your relationship?
3) How happy are you with your relationship?
4) How committed are you to your relationship?
5) How dedicated are you to your relationship?
6) How devoted are you to your relationship?
7) How intimate is your relationship?
8) How close is your relationship?
9) How connected are you to your partner?
10) How much do you trust your partner?
11) How much can you count on your partner?
12) How dependable is your partner?
13) How passionate is your relationship?
14) How lustful is your relationship?
15) How sexually intense is your relationship?
16) How much do you love your partner?
17) How much do you adore your partner?
18) How much do you cherish your partner?
APPENDIX I: RPCS

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

Instructions: Think about how you handle conflict with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about a significant conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. Using the options provided, please indicate which response is most like how you handled conflict.

0 = Strongly disagree with statement
1 = Moderately disagree with statement
2 = Neutral, neither agree nor disagree
3 = Moderately agree with statement
4 = Strongly agree with statement

1) My partner and I try to avoid arguments.

2) I avoid disagreements with my partner.

3) I avoid conflict with my partner.

4) When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.

5) Our conflicts usually last quite a while.

6) My partner and I have frequent conflicts.

7) I suffer a lot from my partner.

8) I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.

9) My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.
10) When we argue or fight, I try to win.

11) I try to take control when we argue.

12) I rarely let my partner win an argument.

13) When we disagree, my goal is to convince my partner that I am right.

14) When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.

15) When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.
APPENDIX J: DAILY DIARY MEASURES

Instructions: For each of the following questions, think about your feelings and your experiences in your romantic relationship today. Remember, these questions target your thoughts and feelings since the start of your day (e.g., 9:00 am) to right now (e.g., the time you are reading these questions). Answer the following questions, to the best of your ability, using the designated scale.

Daily Relationship Satisfaction

(1 = not at all, 7 = extremely)

1) How satisfied did you feel with your romantic relationship today?

2) How close did you feel with your romantic partner today?

Daily Relationship Conflict

(1 = none, 7 = many)

1) How often did you experience conflict or other negative events with your romantic partner today?

(1 = none, 7 = extremely)

2) How hurt were you by this conflict?

3) How hurt was your partner during this conflict?

4) How much did you compromise to try to resolve the conflict?

5) How fair were you to your partner during the conflict?

6) How much did you listen to your partner?
APPENDIX K: LIST OF ACRONYMS

Romantic Competence Instruments:

IRRC = Inventory for Romantic Relationship Competence

RC Measure = Romantic Competence Measure

RCI = Romantic Competence Interview

RSC-Q = Romantic Self-Concept Questionnaire

Romantic Relationship Outcome Measures:

PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components

RPCS = Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

Other:

BPD = Borderline Personality Disorder

CBM = Consensus-based Measuring

SJT = Situation Judgement Test