LYING HAPPILY EVER AFTER: ALTRUISTIC WHITE LIES, POSITIVE ILLUSIONS, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Anne Gordon, Advisor

Although some lies can damage relationships, we hypothesized that altruistic white lies (i.e., lies of minimal importance told to protect another) may benefit romantic relationships by buffering individuals against the potentially damaging effects of hurtful, albeit relatively minor, information. Positive relationship illusions (e.g., believing your relationship is more immune than others' relationships to conflict and divorce) have been shown to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction. We hypothesized that altruistic white lies may help create positive illusions within relationships. In order to evaluate the potential links between altruistic white lies, positive relationship illusions, and relationship satisfaction, we created and validated a new scale called the Lying In Amorous Relationships Scale (LIARS). This scale assesses individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic relationship partner. In a series of three studies we assessed the factor structure, internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity of the LIARS, as well as whether favorable attitudes toward altruistic white lies are positively correlated with positive illusions and relationship satisfaction. The results of Study 1 indicated that the LIARS is a reliable, unidimensional scale that is best conceptualized as a single factor. In Study 2 the LIARS demonstrated good discriminant validity with measures of academic achievement and locus of control, as well as good predictive validity with behavioral intentions to tell one’s partner an altruistic white lie in response to a variety of scenarios. As predicted, LIARS scores also differed as a function of participants’ marital status and affiliation with the university. Contrary to predictions, the LIARS scores of men and women did not differ. Additionally, the LIARS did
not demonstrate convergent validity with measures of empathic concern and perspective taking. Study 3 indicated that, contrary to our predictions, LIARS scores were negatively, rather than positively, correlated with positive relationship illusions ($r = -.22$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.36$). Thus, more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a relationship partner were associated with fewer positive illusions and less relationship satisfaction. Stated another way, a preference for truth-telling (versus telling white lies) was associated with more positive illusions and greater relationship satisfaction. Overall, we conclude that the LIARS is a reliable measure of individual differences in attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies that demonstrates good discriminant and predictive validity. We also conclude that a preference for telling one’s partner the harsh truth (as opposed to telling altruistic white lies) is associated with greater positive illusions and relationship satisfaction, particularly for younger individuals, presumably with less relationship experience.
This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jim and Lorrie Kaplar,
who have always been there to inspire and encourage me.
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Honesty is the best policy. Thou shalt not lie. The truth will set you free. These maxims remind us that honesty is lauded as proper and morally correct, whereas lying is condemned as morally wrong and potentially harmful to our relationships. The belief that honesty is important to relationships is warranted because trust is a fundamental component of happy relationships, and uncovered lies between partners can irreparably damage romantic relationships. Upon learning that they have been lied to about topics such as infidelity, the severity of a loved one’s illness, money, and jobs, individuals react with defiance, anger, sadness, crying, and a variety of other negative emotions (DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden’s, 2004). Discovered lies between intimates can lead to uncertainty about the relationship (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985), the erosion of trust, a weakening of shared love and intimacy, and even the dissolution of the relationship (McCornack & Levine, 1990).

For instance, McCornack and Levine asked participants to think of a situation in which they discovered that a relational partner had lied to them and complete a variety of questions regarding the incident (e.g., the importance of the information lied about). Lying was defined as deliberate falsification or omission of information by a communicator with the intent to mislead another. Forty-four percent of respondents described an incident involving a romantic partner (as opposed to a friend, family member, etc.). Moreover, 24% of these individuals reported that their relationship had terminated since the discovery of the lie, and more than two thirds (67%) indicated that the lie directly influenced the breakup of the relationship. In addition, the likelihood of
relationship termination increased as the importance of the information lied about and the importance attributed to the act of lying itself increased. Thus, the aforementioned maxims suggesting that lies can lead to relationship difficulties and possibly even relationship termination are supported by empirical evidence.

However, not all lies lead to negative relationship outcomes. Indeed, the types of lies that harm and destroy relationships differ from the majority of lies that occur in everyday life. Ordinary, everyday lies are commonly told to ease awkward social situations, adhere to politeness norms, and protect others from minor hurt or embarrassment. DePaulo, Kirkendol, Kashy, Wyer, and Epstein (1996) explored everyday lies among both a community and a college sample. Participants recorded their social interactions and the lies told within those interactions for one week. A lie was defined as any instance in which the participant intentionally tried to and actually did mislead another person. Participants from the community sample lied in one out of every five interactions, and participants in the college sample lied in one out of every three interactions. Based on the results of this diary study, the authors concluded that lying is a common occurrence in everyday life. Moreover, most everyday lies concern relatively unimportant information and are told within the context of generally pleasant interactions. Thus, a universal or cross-situational condemnation of lying may be tenuous because different types of lies exist, and some lies result in substantially more negative outcomes than others.

Different Types of Lies

A variety of names have been used to designate different types of lies. For example, in her book on deception, Harriet Lerner (1993) uses over 50 separate terms and
expressions to describe the act of lying and the various types of lies (e.g., fibbing, fabricating, misleading, exaggerating, distorting, faking, hiding behind a façade, betraying, speaking falsely, engaging in self-deception, revealing nothing, throwing others off track, acting with discretion, lying for the greater good, and lying with honor). Although people condemn lying in general, research has shown that the severity and intentionality of a lie are major determinants of the acceptability of the lie. Lies told to protect another or to spare another from minor hurt, shame, or embarrassment are judged to be most socially acceptable, whereas lies told to benefit oneself or to purposely harm another are judged to be least acceptable (Backbier, Hoogstraten, & Terwogt-Kouwenhoven, 1997; DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004; Lindskold and Walters, 1983). In the current research, we focus on the severity of lies and motivations for lying. Regarding severity, lies can be classified as serious or minor. Regarding motivations, lies can be classified as altruistically or egoistically motivated.

*Serious Lies.* DePaulo et al. (2004) define a serious lie as a lie that: (a) is perceived as a threat, transgression, or betrayal, (b) results in specific relationship problems or endangers people’s reputations, or (c) is forbidden by organized religion and the law. Common examples of serious lies told within romantic relationships include lying about infidelity, lying about one’s feelings toward a close partner (e.g., expressing but not feeling love), and lying about past sexual activity (DePaulo, 2004). Serious lies are often discovered. In a study by Kaplar and Gordon (2004a), participants were asked to recall an incident in which they lied to a romantic partner. Although participants were not specifically instructed to recall a serious lie, most of the topics they wrote about were relatively serious in nature (e.g., infidelity). Approximately 50% of participants described
incidents in which the lie receiver had uncovered the lie. When discovered, serious lies usually result in negative outcomes (DePaulo et al., 2004).

**Minor Lies.** In ordinary conversation, minor lies are often referred to as white lies. White lies are untruths that are of minimal importance (Bok, 1978) and that involve trivial subject matter. Unlike serious lies, which are often detected, white lies often go undetected. Even when white lies are detected or suspected, they are typically not damaging to the relationship. For example, a woman may arrive late to a dinner party because she and her husband were having an argument and may try to avoid embarrassment by telling the host of the party that she was late because she was having car trouble. This deception constitutes a white lie because even if discovered it would likely not result in negative consequences. In fact, there are many situations in which people are expected to lie in order to maintain their privacy or to comply with politeness and social etiquette norms (Brown, 1990). Common examples of white lies told within romantic relationships include: exaggerating your liking of a present given to you by your spouse, saying that your girlfriend looks great in her new dress when you do not find it flattering, and saying that you would love to have dinner with your in-laws when you know you would not enjoy it.

**Egoistic Lies.** Egoistic lies are untruths motivated by the desire to protect oneself from punishment or negative consequences, enhance one’s self-presentation, or benefit oneself in some way. Some egoistic lies may even harm another person. Egoistic lies are also referred to as self-oriented lies (DePaulo, Kirkendol, Kashy, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996). Egoistic lies may be about trivial topics (e.g., exaggerating the size of the fish you caught on your recent fishing trip) or serious topics (e.g., lying about the results of your
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study to make it more publishable). The defining feature of an egoistic lie is that it is told to benefit oneself in some manner.

*Altruistic Lies.* Altruistic lies are untruths motivated by the desire to protect or benefit another person. They are also referred to as other-oriented lies (DePaulo, et al., 1996). Unlike white lies, which always concern trivial subject matter, altruistic lies can be about minor topics (e.g., “I told her that I really liked her new haircut because I did not want to hurt her feelings.”) or serious topics (e.g., “I lied about having an affair because I did not want to upset my wife.”). The defining feature of an altruistic lie is that the lie teller believes that he or she is telling the lie to benefit another person.

*Altruistically Motivated White Lies.* The focus of this research is on altruistically motivated white lies told within romantic relationships. Altruistically motivated white lies are lies that concern relatively trivial topics and that are told with the intention of benefiting someone else or preventing another person from being hurt or harmed (but see footnote 2). Altruistically motivated white lies are commonly told within the context of romantic relationships to avoid hurting one’s partner. For example, to avoid hurting her feelings a man may tell his wife that he has not noticed that she gained weight over the holidays when, in fact, he has noticed the additional weight. Similar to white lies, altruistically motivated white lies often go undetected and, if discovered, are not particularly likely to result in negative outcomes (although this proposition has not been tested).

*When the Truth Hurts*

Few would dispute the important role that honesty plays within close relationships. In close relationships people feel free to express themselves truthfully to
another person (Anderson, Ansfield, & DePaulo, 1999). In fact, Stiff, Kim, and Ramesh (1992) have shown that a truth bias, or assumption of trust, characterizes well-developed romantic relationships. Without an assumption of honest communication between oneself and one’s partner, the relationship may not feel close.

However, telling the truth to one’s partner at all times may lead to communicating negative or unpleasant information (e.g., learning that your new outfit is not quite as attractive on you as you thought, being informed about your shortcomings or areas of weakness, hearing information that is threatening to your self-esteem, or learning that your partner finds your best friend attractive). Hearing negative information from one’s partner can lead to hurt feelings and possibly damage the relationship. In one study (Leary, Sringer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), participants wrote a narrative describing either a time when they hurt someone else’s feelings (perpetrator perspective) or a time when someone else hurt their feelings (victim perspective). They also completed questionnaires in reference to the incident. Sixty-seven percent of participants writing from the victim perspective reported that the incident weakened their relationship with the perpetrator. Moreover, 60% of victims reported trusting the perpetrator less, and 44% reported liking the perpetrator less after the incident.

This potential for harmful consequences is due, in part, to the fact that negatively-valenced events (e.g., receiving criticism) have a greater impact on individuals than positively-valenced events of the same type (e.g., receiving praise) across a broad range of domains (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). Gottman (1994; as cited in Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001) has shown that it is the number of negative interactions rather than the number of positive interactions predicts
relationship (dis)satisfaction. Gottman estimates that, on average, it takes 5 positive interactions to counteract the impact of a single negative event within a romantic relationship. Most people recognize that it is important to prevent hurting their partners’ feelings, and that “the truth can be used as a bludgeon, cruelly inflicting pain” (Eckman 1985, pp. 23). Accordingly, people are sometimes reluctant to tell their partners the truth for fear of causing hurt feelings (Peterson, 1996), conflict, and potential damage to the relationship (Metts, 1989).

Positive Illusions and Relationship Satisfaction

Positive illusions refer to unrealistically positive self-evaluations, exaggerated perceptions of control or mastery, and unrealistic optimism. After reviewing a large body of social psychological literature, Taylor and Brown (1988) concluded that these illusions characterize healthy and well-functioning adults and are associated with feelings of happiness and contentment, the ability to care for others, and the capacity to engage in creative, productive work. Sandra Murray and her colleagues have extended the study of positive illusions about the self to the study of illusions about romantic partners and romantic relationships.

Individuals’ perceptions of their romantic partners are based partly on reality and partly on social construction (Murray & Holmes, 1993). Murray and her colleagues have demonstrated that positive illusions about one’s relationship and one’s relationship partner are associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Griffin, 2000; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b). Within this context, relationship illusions have been operationalized in three ways: (a) transforming partners’ negative qualities or faults into positive traits (Murray & Holmes,
1993, 1994), (b) seeing one’s partner as better than the partner sees him- or herself (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b) or better than mutual friends see the partner (Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Griffin, 2000), (c) and the better-than-average effect (e.g., believing one’s relationship is less likely than average to end in divorce; Murray & Holmes, 1997).

When people first fall in love they tend to focus on their partner's positive qualities. However, as people get to know their partner more intimately over time, they may notice potentially troubling behaviors or traits (e.g., a temper, below average intelligence, a tendency to be attracted to others, etc.). These faults may cause doubts to surface about the partner after one has already invested time, resources, and emotional energy in the relationship. One may begin to wonder if this person is right for them. Yet despite these doubts, many people remain hopeful about the future of the relationship. In order to justify one’s continuing commitment to the relationship it is necessary to reach a resolution between one’s hopes for the future of the relationship and one’s doubts about the relationship partner. Accordingly, when confronted with potentially negative information about their relationship or their partner, individuals may weave stories about their relationships or their partners so as to depict their partner’s faults or imperfections in the best possible light (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994).

For example, Murray and Holmes (1993) asked participants to rate their partners’ willingness to initiate conflict over things that are mutually important to them and list instances of their partners initiating disagreements. They then gave participants bogus, standardized feedback that suggested that their partner was low in conflict initiation and asked them to endorse one of two statements: (a) “My partner tends to promote a sense of
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harmony in or interactions: My partner rarely initiates disagreement over the activities we may share,” or (b) “My partner is not particularly concerned with preserving harmony in our interactions: My partner frequently initiates disagreement over activities we may share.” The previous feedback, as well as the wording of these statements, was designed to induce participants to choose the first option (i.e., minimal conflict). In the experimental condition the apparent virtue of minimal conflict was then turned into a potential threat to the relationship by exposing participants to a bogus article in which conflict avoidance was depicted as a potential barrier to intimacy.

Participants then wrote narratives describing the development of intimacy in their relationships. The narratives were coded for themes pertaining to conflict. Participants in the experimental condition completed the narratives and dependent measures after reading the bogus article; participants in the control condition completed the narratives and dependent measures before reading the bogus article. Results indicated that participants in the experimental condition wrote narratives in which they construed situations involving conflict in their own relationships to be more positive than participants in the control condition. These participants embellished situations involving conflict and constructed relationship-bolstering explanations for their partners’ conflict avoidance. Thus, they wrote narratives depicting their partner’s apparent negative characteristic in the best possible light.

Individuals often see themselves in more positive, idealized ways than their actual attributes appear to warrant. A large body of literature suggests that people see themselves as smarter, kinder, more honest than average. (See Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1985; Weinstein, 1980.) Murray and Holmes
Lying Happily (1997) borrowed the paradigm used in research on the better-than-average effect to study relationship illusions. In this research, participants rate themselves on various traits in relation to an average person. If 70% of individuals believe that their partner is kinder than average, this is a statistical impossibility. By definition, only 50% of people can be better-than-average. Therefore, these perceptions must contain an element of illusion.

Along these lines, Murray and Holmes (1997) operationalized positive illusions in three different ways: (a) believing one’s relationship is less vulnerable to a variety of negative outcomes (e.g., break-up, divorce) than the average relationship, (b) believing one has more control over positive and negative relationship events than individuals in an average relationship, and (c) seeing one’s partner more positively than the average partner. Participants completed measures assessing their optimism regarding the likelihood of various positive and negative events occurring in their own relationships compared to a typical (or average) relationship of equal length, as well as their perceived control over positive and negative relationship events (e.g., getting married; relationship ending in divorce). In addition, participants rated their own partners and an average relationship partner on various personal attributes (e.g., kindness, patience).

As expected, individuals who exhibited the better-than-average effect tended to endorse greater relationship satisfaction, love, and trust, as well as less conflict, than individuals who did not exhibit the better-than-average effect. Furthermore, the results of a one-year follow-up questionnaire suggested that the relationships of intimates whose positive illusions were particularly strong at the time of the initial assessment were more likely to remain intact than intimates whose positive illusions were initially not as strong.
Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996a) examined whether relationship satisfaction is associated with idealistic, rather than realistic, perceptions of one’s romantic partner. Given that individuals often see themselves as better than average (e.g., Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1985), individuals’ self-ratings provide a conservative benchmark against which to compare their partner’s ratings. For example, if John sees himself as kinder than he really is and his partner, Betty, considers him to be even kinder than he sees himself, then Betty is said to have an illusion about John’s kindness. In this study, both members of 180 couples (98 dating, 60 married, 11 cohabitating, 11 engaged) completed a relationship satisfaction measure and rated themselves, their partners, an ideal partner, and an average partner on various positive and negative attributes (e.g., kindness, patience). Results indicated that participants who viewed their relationship partners more positively than their partners viewed themselves reported greater relationship satisfaction than those who did not. In general, positive illusions and the idealization of their partners (controlling for their partner’s actual, self-reported attributes) were associated with relationship satisfaction.

In this study Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996a) collected all of their measures at the same time, which precluded examining whether positive relationship illusions predict satisfaction over time. In order to address this issue, Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996b) conducted a follow-up, longitudinal study. Using similar sources of data (rating of self, partner, ideal partner, and average partner), couples were assessed three times over a one year period. Results indicated that both idealizing one’s partner and being idealized by one’s partner at Time 1 was associated with greater relationship satisfaction,
less conflict, less destructive conflict style, and less serious doubts about the relationship one year later.

Thus, people appear to be motivated to construe threats to their relationship in such a way as to arrive at the most dissonance-reducing, relationship-enhancing conclusions, interpretations, and beliefs. These perceptions may result in participants’ forming positive illusions about their relationships and their relationship partners. A substantial body of literature suggests that relationship illusions are associated with positive relational outcomes (c.f., Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994). However, less is known about the explicit means by which positive relationship illusions are created. As we will later argue, we believe that the telling of altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner may help create positive relationship illusions.

**Kindness, Honesty, and Positive Illusions**

Kindness and honesty are valued across many types of interpersonal relationships. In one study, participants imagined a person described as having each of a number of traits (e.g., loyal, unselfish, impulsive, moody) and rated how much they would like that person. Of 555 traits, kindness and honesty were considered to be the two most desirable traits, and being a liar was considered the most undesirable trait (Anderson, 1968). Anderson’s study examined the likeability of traits without specifying any relationship context. Buss and Barnes (1986) asked individuals about what they consider to be important characteristics of a potential long-term mate. Results indicated that both honesty and kindness were considered by people within the United States to be very important traits of a long-term partner. This finding has been replicated with a large, cross-cultural sample. Individuals from 37 different cultures, including the United States,
ranked kindness as the most important characteristic for one’s mate to possess (Buss et al., 1990). This, both kindness and honesty are highly desirable traits, particularly in the context of long-term romantic relationships.

Yet, in some situations it is not possible to be both kind and honest at the same time. For example, a man may believe that a joke his wife told was not funny, but if he is honest and tells her the truth he risks hurting her feelings. Thus, in this situation, he must choose between being honest and being kind. If he pretends to laugh and says that the joke was funny he can preserve her feelings but is not being honest. If the man chooses to lie, his wife most likely will not know that he is lying and will, therefore, see him as honest. Because he said something nice, she will also perceive him as being kind. Thus, telling an altruistic white lie may enable the man to be seen as both kind and honest in a situation in which kindness and honesty are otherwise mutually exclusive. Over time, these minor deceptions (as long as they go undetected) may have a positive effect on the wife’s feelings toward her husband and their relationship. The positive emotions felt by the wife toward her husband may consequently increase his positive emotions toward her and lead to mutual relationship satisfaction. Therefore, both may underestimate the likelihood of negative relationship events, such as divorce, and feel happier and more secure in their relationship.³

We formulated the current research to examine whether, at least under some conditions, the telling of altruistically motivated white lies may promote positive relationship illusions and enhance relationship satisfaction. We argue that in some circumstances telling altruistically motivated white lies may function as a social lubricant (see Saxe, 1991) and may ease difficult situations within relationships and prevent hurt
feelings and conflict between relationship partners. We will now review the literature that supports our position that altruistically motivated white lies may be associated with relationship satisfaction.

*Altruistically Motivated White Lies as Relationship Enhancers*

Even though lying in general is condemned as immoral or unethical, only 27% of undergraduates in one study (Boon & McLeod, 2001) agreed with the notion that complete honesty is essential for the success of romantic relationships. Sixty-seven percent of participants conditionally agreed with this idea by indicating that the necessity of honesty depends on the situation. Moreover, 63% of participants believed it is sometimes acceptable to lie to a romantic partner in order to protect the partner or the relationship. Thus, evidence suggests that many people believe that some form of deception may be acceptable within their relationships, at least under certain circumstances. We now turn to data that bear on the issue of whether deception may benefit romantic relationships.

Cole (2001) examined whether being successfully mislead by one's partner is related to relationship satisfaction and commitment. Both members of a couple completed measures assessing their use of deception (e.g., “I sometimes lie to my partner”) and their beliefs about their partner’s use of deception (e.g., “I think that my partner withholds important information from me.”). Participants also indicated the number of times they lie to their partner during the course of a typical week and the estimated number of times they believe their partner lies to them during the course of typical a week. Results indicated that individuals whose partners lied with greater frequency reported more satisfaction with their relationships. However, the belief that one’s partner
engages in deception was associated with less relationship satisfaction. Together, these findings suggest that lies may be related to relationship satisfaction as long as your partner does not know that you are lying. This study is important because it demonstrated a positive link between lying and relationship satisfaction. However, the authors made no distinction between serious lies, white lies, altruistic lies, or egoistic lies. Thus, it is not clear which types of lies might be related to relationship satisfaction.

In one of our own studies (Kaplar & Gordon, 2004b), we examined the relationship between deception and positive emotions by focusing specifically on altruistic white lies versus harsh truths. We asked undergraduate participants whether they would prefer that a romantic partner (either present, past, or hypothetical) resolve each of 14 relationship dilemmas by telling them a harsh truth (e.g., admitting to not liking their new hair style) or an altruistic white lie (e.g., saying that they like their new style even though they dislike it). Participants reported a strong and cross-situational preference for being told harsh truths versus altruistic white lies from a romantic partner.

Participants in three other conditions of this study imagined specific outcomes to these same 14 relationship dilemmas. In one condition, participants imagined a relationship partner telling them a series of harsh truths (e.g., that he or she does not like their new haircut, did not enjoy a sexual experience, or did not enjoy dinner). In another condition, participants imagined a relationship partner reporting positive evaluations (e.g., of a hair cut, sexual experience, dinner, etc.) and later discovering that their partner's evaluations did not reflect their actual beliefs (i.e., that they had been lied to). In a third condition, participants imagined a relationship partner simply reporting positive evaluations in all 14 situations. (This latter condition was designed to mirror real-life
situations in which lie receivers perceive what are actually altruistic white lies to be the truth.) In all three conditions participants reported how happy, upset, angry, etc. they would feel in each situation. Results indicated that participants reacted more positively to hearing positive evaluations from their partners (e.g., that their partner liked the new haircut, dinner, etc.) than to being told harsh truths or receiving positive feedback that they later learned to be untrue.

These results suggest that individuals prefer to hear the harsh truth from their partners, even though research (Cole, 2001) has demonstrated that being told lies by one’s partner may be associated with relationship satisfaction. Moreover, despite endorsing a strong preference for hearing harsh truths from romantic partners, our results suggest that hearing the harsh truth is associated with negative emotional reactions. Thus, although people may believe that they want to hear harsh truths from their partners, hearing altruistic white lies, on occasion, may be better for them emotionally, at least in the short-term. (It is possible that, over the long run, experiencing short-term negative emotions may be less important than believing that you can trust your partner to tell you the truth). Over time the positive feelings resulting from being told altruistic white lies by your partner may help maintain positive relationship illusions and, as Murray and her colleagues suggest, promote greater relationship satisfaction.

**Summary and Description of the Current Research**

Most people condemn lying and believe that honesty is extremely important within romantic relationships. There is little doubt that, on the whole, communicating in an honest manner with one’s partner is an integral part of building and maintaining high-quality relationships. Moreover, research has demonstrated that the discovery of lies can
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have detrimental effects on romantic relationships (e.g., McCornack & Levine, 1990). However, as shown by DePaulo et al. (1996), most lies told on a daily basis are minor in nature. These everyday lies function to smooth social interactions, avoid hurt feelings, and adhere to politeness norms. However, no study to date has examined the role of these ordinary, everyday lies specifically within the context of romantic relationships. Our study seeks to address this gap in the literature.

In the current study we introduce a scale to assess individuals’ attitudes toward telling their partner altruistically motivated white lies. Ideally we would have measured participants’ lying behaviors within their own relationships to examine whether altruistic white lies contribute to positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction. However, given the frequency and automaticity with which lying occurs (DePaulo et al., 1996), as well the extent to which recall biases, dissonance reduction, and social desirability may play a role in individuals’ reporting of their lying behaviors, this approach would have been difficult and problematic. Therefore, we chose to examine individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner, as well as whether attitudes toward altruistically motivated white lies are associated with positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction (based on the assumption that attitudes toward telling a partner altruistic white lies serve as an acceptable proxy for actual lying behavior).

We designed three studies to examine the idea that more positive attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies may be associated with greater relationship illusions and increased relationship satisfaction. In Study 1 we introduce a scale to measure individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated
white lies to a relationship partner. We also examine the scale’s internal consistency and factor structure. In Study 2 we examine the construct and predictive validity of our newly designed scale. In Study 3 we examine whether having more positive attitudes toward telling one's partner altruistic white lies is associated with having a) more positive illusions about one's relationship partner and the relationship itself, and b) increased relationship satisfaction. Assuming we obtained the expected relationship between attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies, positive relationship illusions, and relationship satisfaction, we also planned to explore whether positive illusions mediate the relationship between LIARS scores and relationship satisfaction.

Most people agree on the wrongness of extremely negative acts, such as murder and rape (see Darley, 1992). However, there is considerably less consensus about the wrongness of less serious acts, such as smoking marijuana. Along these lines, although serious types of lies are generally viewed with condemnation, we expect there to be substantial variability in individuals’ attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies. In order to adequately capture the variability that we expect to find among adults in attitudes toward altruistic white lies within dating relationships, in all 3 studies we included undergraduate students, graduate students, professors, and staff members. Given that faculty, staff, and graduate students are likely to have more relationship experience than undergraduates, they may have learned that telling the truth to a partner at all times can result in negative outcomes. In contrast, undergraduate students may not have had enough experience with romantic relationships to learn the potentially negative effects of telling their partner the complete truth at all time or of hearing the truth from their partner at all times. Thus, by including participants who vary
in age (and presumably relationship experience), we hoped to capture the potentially large degree of variability in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies within romantic relationships.
STUDY 1
RELIABILITY AND FACTOR STRUCTURE

In order to investigate whether altruistic white lies play a role in creating positive illusions and enhancing relationship satisfaction we created a scale to measure attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a relationship partner. In Study 1 we describe the formulation of the LIARS and examine its internal consistency and test-retest reliability.

Method

Participants

An email describing the study was sent to 600 individuals at Bowling Green State University (See Appendix A). These individuals were randomly selected through the Office of Institutional Research from a database containing all Bowling Green State University faculty, students, and staff members. Participants were not required to be involved in a romantic relationship in order to participate. As incentive for their participation, participants were entered into a random drawing to win one of two $50.00 gift certificates to Barnes and Noble’s online bookstore. Our response rate was approximately 29%.

Participants were 174 heterosexual individuals affiliated with Bowling Green State University (119 female; 55 male; $M_{\text{age}} = 29.71; SD = 12.52). Of the original 174 participants, 74 (43%) responded to follow-up emails and completed the second administration of the survey, which was designed to examine test-retest reliability.

Of the 174 individuals who participated in Study 1, approximately 40% were not involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. Of the 104 participants (60%) who were involved in a romantic relationship, approximately 53% were married, 40%
were involved in an exclusive dating relationship, 6% were engaged, and 1 person described his relationship as “other.”

The sample was comprised primarily of Caucasians (94%), but also included African Americans (3%), Latinos (3%), and 1 Native American. Slightly over half of the participants (55%) were undergraduate students. The remaining participants consisted of staff members (21%), faculty members (13%), graduate students (11%), and “other” affiliations (1%). T-tests indicated that participants who completed the second portion of the study did not differ significantly from the original sample in terms of age, gender, relationship status, ethnicity, or affiliation with the university, all p-values > .05.

**Materials**

**Demographics.** Participants completed several demographic items. These items assessed participants’ gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nature of affiliation with Bowling Green State University (e.g., undergraduate student), relationship status (e.g., single, married), and length of the participant’s current relationship (if applicable). See Appendix B.

**The Lying In Amorous Relationships Scale.** We designed the LIARS to measure individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic relationship partner. We developed 13 items for inclusion in the LIARS. Sample items include, “I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s)” and “I believe that it is better to tell my romantic partner a little white lie rather than risk hurting him or her by telling the truth.” Participants indicated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree). See Appendix C.
Procedure

As stated earlier, all materials for this study were posted online. Emails sent to potential participants stated that the purpose of the study was to gather information on their thoughts and feelings about romantic relationships. Participants were informed that this study had two parts and that they would be asked to complete another questionnaire after a delay of three weeks. They were also informed that each portion would take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The email specified that participants who completed both portions of the survey would be entered into a drawing to win a $50 gift certificate from Barnes and Noble’s online store. The email contained a URL for a website that participants could access to take the survey online. Interested participants clicked on this link, which led them to a screen describing the study in more detail (see Appendix B). This screen specified that completing and submitting the survey was indicative of giving informed consent.

After reading the description of the study, participants were directed to a screen that contained demographic items. After completing the demographic items, participants were directed to a screen that contained the LIARS. Participants then completed the LIARS and provided an email address that we could use to contact them regarding the second portion of the study. Participants submitted their responses electronically by clicking on a “submit” button at the bottom of the screen. Clicking the “submit” button brought them to a final screen on which they were thanked for their participation and reminded that they would be contacted by email in three weeks to complete the second portion of the study.
Three-Week Follow-Up. It is necessary to let a minimum of two weeks elapse between administrations in order to assess a test’s stability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Thus, each participant was sent a reminder email approximately three weeks (give or take two days in either direction) after he or she completed the first part of the survey. The reminder email contained the same URL as the original email and asked participants to complete another questionnaire (which contained the same items as the first questionnaire). Interested participants clicked on this link and followed the same procedure described above to complete the second portion of the study. For the second administration of the scale, the items on the LIARS were presented to participants in one of two orders, each of which was different from the original order.

Results

Factor Analysis of the Items

Items 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 13 on the LIARS were reverse-worded such that higher numbers indicated more positive attitudes toward telling harsh truths. Therefore, these items were reverse-scored so that higher scores indicated more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic relationships.

We conceptualized attitudes toward altruistic white lies within romantic relationships as a uni-dimensional construct. To test this assumption, after reverse-scoring the appropriate items, we submitted all items to a principle components factor analysis. We used a factor cutoff loading of .5 as our primary criteria for interpreting the results of the factor analysis. We expected all of the items on the LIARS to load onto a single factor, suggesting that the scale assesses a single, uni-dimensional construct.
As seen in Table 1, 12 of the 13 items loaded onto a single factor. Item factor loadings ranged from .52 to .82. Only one item (“I believe that honesty is always the best policy in romantic relationships”) loaded on a second factor. We removed the item that loaded on a second factor and repeated the factor analysis. As seen in Table 2, item factor loadings ranged from .51 to .83 on a single factor. Therefore, although each participant completed 13 items, we dropped the aforementioned item from all subsequent analyses. As predicted, the LIARS appears to be appropriately conceptualized as a single factor.

Scale Reliability

We used Cronbach’s alpha to examine the scale’s internal consistency (DeVellis, 1991). The original 13 items yielded an alpha of .89. Dropping the item, “I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s) did not significantly alter the scale’s internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$).

Test-retest reliability

We examined the test-retest reliability of the LIARS using a sub-sample of the original sample ($n = 74$) who completed the LIARS on two separate occasions. We correlated these participants' scores on the 12 individual items of the LIARS at Time 1 with their scores at Time 2. Time 1 scores were highly similar to Time 2 scores (See Table 3). We also correlated each participant’s LIARS composite score from the initial administration of the scale with their LIARS composite score from the three-week follow-up administration. Participants’ composite LIARS scores at Time 1 were highly similar to their composite LIARS scores at Time 2, $r (n = 74) = .91, p < .001$. Thus, the LIARS demonstrated good test-retest reliability over a three-week period.

Descriptive Information Regarding Attitudes Toward Altruistic Lying
Although the primary purpose of Study 1 was to examine the reliability of the LIARS, it was also of interest to examine participants’ general attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies. The possible range of scores was between 1 and 5, with a neutral anchor attached to the midpoint of the scale. Overall, participants slightly disfavored telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies (mean LIARS composite score = 2.50; SD = .83). See Table 4 for means and standard deviations of individual LIARS items.

As expected, participants’ composite LIARS scores showed considerable variability. As seen in Figure 1, participants’ composite scores ranged between 1.0 and 4.92, indicating that participants endorsed a wide range of attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies, from extremely positive to extremely negative. Also, LIARS composite scores dropped off precipitously at approximately 3.8, indicating that only a few people had very strong and consistent attitudes in favor of telling altruistically motivated white lies over telling the harsh truth. However, a number of participants had very strong and consistent attitudes in favor of always telling the truth. No significant differences in LIARS scores were found as a result of the order in which participants completed LIARS items, $p_s > .05$.

**Summary and Discussion**

In Study 1 we sought to create a reliable, unidimensional scale for assessing individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner. We initially developed 13 items for inclusion in the LIARS, 12 of which were retained based on the results of the factor analysis. The factor analysis suggested that, as predicted, attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic
relationships, as measured by the LIARS, may be considered a single, uni-dimensional construct. Moreover, the LIARS yielded good internal consistency and test-retest reliability over a three-week period. In addition, there was substantial variability in participants’ LIARS scores, suggesting that individuals vary considerably in their attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner. Overall, however, individuals tended to slightly disfavor telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner.

Thus, Study 1 established the factor structure, reliability, and internal consistency of the LIARS. Next, we will examine the validity of the LIARS.
STUDY 2

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND PREDICTIVE VALIDITY

Overview of Study 2

In Study 2 we examined the construct validity and predictive validity of the LIARS. Construct validity consists of two components: convergent validity and discriminant validity. According to Campbell (1960), in order to demonstrate construct validity, a test must correlate with other variables with which it should theoretically correlate (i.e., show convergent validity) and not correlate with variables with which it should not theoretically correlate (i.e., show discriminant validity). We also examined the scale’s predictive validity, or whether the scale is able to predict individuals’ behaviors (or behavioral intentions).

As will be described, we expected LIARS scores to be positively correlated with empathic concern and perspective taking (indicative of convergent validity) and uncorrelated with academic achievement and locus of control (indicative of discriminant validity). We also examined convergent validity by exploring whether women, as well as individuals who presumably have more relationship experience (married individuals and faculty, staff, and graduate students), would endorse more positive attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies than men and individuals who presumably have less relationship experience (unmarried individuals and undergraduate students), respectively. In addition, we examined the scale’s predictive validity by comparing participants’ scores on the LIARS with their self-reported behavioral intentions regarding a variety of scenarios in which they indicated whether they would tell their partner a harsh truth or an altruistic white lie.
Convergent Validity

Empathy. Empathy has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Some researchers regard empathy as a cognitive skill that involves perspective-taking (e.g., Deutsch & Maddle, 1975; Dymond, 1949; Hogan, 1969). Others focus on the emotional aspects of empathy, or the ability to feel what others feel (e.g., Batson & Shaw, 1991; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Stotland, 1969; Kerr & Speroff, 1954). However, researchers have increasingly combined these two approaches. Most notably, Davis (1980) has conceptualized empathy as consisting of both a cognitive component (comprehending the suffering and plight of another person) and an affective component (becoming emotionally moved by another person’s suffering and responding with distress and/or inner turmoil). In 1983, Davis developed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), which is a multi-faceted index to measure empathy. The IRI contains a subscale measuring perspective-taking and a subscale measuring empathic concern. In this research we relied on Davis’s multidimensional conception and treated empathy as a stable individual differences variable.

We reasoned that a higher capacity for empathy is likely to be associated with more positive attitudes toward altruistic white lies within romantic relationships. The decision to tell one’s partner an altruistic white lie may require the ability to put oneself in the partner’s place in order to understand the emotional experience of what hearing the truth may be like for this other person. In other words, one could not tell a kind lie to spare a partner's feelings without some understanding of how telling the truth might make the other person feel. Thus, we expected individuals who are higher in both cognitive and affective empathy to have more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to
their relationship partners. In other words, we expected participants’ LIARS scores to be positively correlated with their scores on measures of perspective taking and empathic concern.

Gender. A number of studies have shown that women are more likely than men to react negatively to their experiences of telling and being told relatively serious types of lies. When asked to describe the most serious lie they had ever told and that had ever been told to them, women reported being more distressed by their experiences of telling serious lies than did men (DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004). In addition, they rated the telling of serious lies as less justifiable than men. DePaulo and Kirkendol (as cited in DePaulo, Epstein, & Wyer, 1993) found that, as lie receivers, women were more actively involved in testing their suspicions and reported more bitterness about being deceived, both at the time the lie was discovered and for longer periods of time afterwards. As the sex with the greater minimum parental investment women, in general, have more to lose from being lied to by their mates (see Trivers, 1972). Although there are a few select cases in which men are more upset than women, women tend to become more upset than men when they discover they have been lied to by their mates (see Haselton & Buss, 2000). Thus, women may be particularly likely to react negatively to serious lies, which could potentially pose a threat to their relationship.

However, despite reacting more negatively to being told serious lies by their partners, it is likely that women, more so than men, may recognize the potential harm that can be caused by telling the truth in certain situations. Consequently, women may be more likely than men to use relatively mild forms of well-intentioned deception in order to spare another person’s feelings and maintain relationship harmony. For example,
DePaulo and Bell (1996) found that women, more so than men, were willing to lie to art students whose paintings they did not like in order to avoid hurting the artists’ feelings. Given the importance women tend to place on relationships relative to men (see DePaulo et al., 1993), they may recognize the potential strain that telling the truth can sometimes cause (e.g., hurt feelings). Therefore, in situations involving trivial but potentially hurtful information women may be more willing than men to engage in altruistic lying to avoid hurting their partners and to preserve their relationships in the face of potentially threatening information. Thus, we predicted that women would score higher on the LIARS than men.

**Relationship Experience.** Despite the importance of honesty in romantic relationships, there are times when telling the truth means communicating negative information to one’s partner. As noted, research (Leary et al., 1998) has shown that hearing negative information from one’s partner can lead to hurt feelings or relationship damage. We reasoned that individuals who have acquired a substantial amount of relationship experience may have learned over the years that telling their partner the truth can at times result in negative outcomes. In addition, these individuals may have learned that an occasional white lie can prevent conflict or result in other positive outcomes. In contrast, we reasoned that individuals with relatively little relationship experience may not yet have had the opportunity to experience the potentially negative results of communicating truthfully with one’s partner regardless of the circumstances and, therefore, may adhere more closely to the notion that honesty is always the best policy.

We did not directly ask participants about their degree of relationship experience. Instead, we assessed relationship experience indirectly using participants’ current marital
status (married versus unmarried) and affiliation with the university (faculty, staff, and graduate students versus undergraduates). We predicted that married participants and faculty, staff, and graduate students (who presumably have more relationship experience) would endorse more positive attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies than unmarried participants and undergraduates (who presumably have less relationship experience), respectively.

**Discriminant Validity**

**Academic Achievement.** There is no theoretical reason to expect academic achievement, as measured by GPA, to be correlated with individuals’ attitudes toward altruistic white lying within dating relationships. Therefore, we predicted that attitudes toward altruistic white lies, like empathy, would be uncorrelated with academic achievement. This prediction stems in part from evidence suggesting that neither intelligence nor aptitude are correlated with cognitive or emotional empathy. Davis (1983) found that individuals’ scores on a written version of WAIS-III Vocabulary subtest and on the SAT were not significantly correlated with their scores on the perspective-taking or empathic concern subscales of Davis’s Interpersonal Reactivity Index. We conceptualized telling altruistic white lies as an interpersonal skill used to smooth difficult interpersonal situations (i.e., similar to emotional intelligence and empathy).

**Locus of Control.** Locus of control refers to an individual’s beliefs about whether life events are contingent upon what one does or upon events outside of personal control. An internal locus of control is characterized by the belief that events are contingent upon one’s own behavior or enduring personality characteristics. An external locus of control
is characterized by the belief that events are contingent upon luck, fate, the control of powerful others, the environment, or other characteristics not under one’s control (Lefcourt, 1976; Rotter, 1966, 1975). There is no evidence in the literature that locus of control is correlated with attitudes toward lying or altruistic behavior, nor is there any logical or theoretical reason to expect a relationship between locus of control and attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies. Thus, we predicted that attitudes toward altruistic white lies within romantic relationships, as measured by the LIARS, would be uncorrelated with scores on Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External Locus of Control Scale.

Predictive Validity

Behavioral Intentions. A major tenet of social psychology is that attitudes often do not predict behavior in specific situations, especially in specific situations that are novel or ambiguous. However, attitudes may be good predictors of patterns of behavior over time and a large number of observations (Meyers, 2002). Therefore, we expected participants’ attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to be positively correlated with their self-reported behavioral intentions toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic partner. Specifically, we asked participants to choose between telling a romantic partner an altruistic white lie or a harsh truth across a number of contexts. We expected individuals who scored higher on the LIARS to endorse greater intentions to tell altruistic white lies versus harsh truths.

Method

Participants and procedure
Five independent samples were used to assess the validity of the LIARS (for a similar approach, see Crandall, 1994). All five samples consisted of individuals affiliated with Bowling Green State University (undergraduate and graduate students, professors, staff members). Having asked a single sample of participants to complete six different scales would have taken up to an hour of their time and likely would have resulted in a lowered response rate. In addition, this method would have created error variance due to carryover effects. Therefore, we asked participants in each sample to complete the LIARS and just one other scale (as well as demographic items). The use of separate samples substantially shortened the time required for each participant to complete the study, presumably allowed us to achieve an adequate response rate, and by eliminating the need for multiple orders (aside from counterbalancing the order in which the materials were presented within each condition) minimized the degree of error variance within our results.

An email describing the study was sent to approximately 200 randomly selected individuals per sample (i.e., 1000 total) at Bowling Green State University. These individuals were randomly selected through the Office of Institutional Research from a database containing Bowling Green faculty, students, and staff members. To ensure that the samples used in Study 2 were independent of the sample used in Study 1, individuals who received an email inviting them to participate in Study 1 were not eligible to participate in Study 2. The email stated that the purpose of the study was to measure various psychological attributes, as well as participants’ attitudes toward certain aspects of romantic relationships. Participants were informed that it was not necessary to be involved in a current romantic relationship in order to participate in the study. They were
also informed that the study was expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. This email contained a URL for the website that participants could access to take the study online. As incentive for their participation, participants were entered into a random drawing to win one of two $50.00 gift certificates to Barnes and Noble’s online bookstore.

Interested participants clicked on the link provided in the email, which led them to a screen describing the study in more detail (see Appendix B). This screen specified that completing and submitting the survey was indicative of giving informed consent. After reading the description of the study, participants were directed to a screen that contained demographic items. Demographic items (see Appendix B) include sex, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, affiliation with Bowling Green State University, whether the participant is currently involved in a romantic relationship, and the length and type (e.g., dating, married) of the participant’s current relationship (if applicable).

All participants completed the LIARS and one additional measure (described later in detail). After completing the measure on the first screen, participants were directed to a second screen containing the second measure. These measures varied depending upon the sample: Participants in the Perspective-Taking Sample completed the LIARS and the Perspective-Taking subscale of Davis’s (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Participants in the Empathic Concern Sample completed the LIARS and the Empathic Concern subscale of Davis’s Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Participants in the Academic Achievement Sample completed the LIARS and responded to an item concerning their GPA. Participants in the Locus of Control sample completed the LIARS and Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. Participants in the Behavioral Intentions
Sample completed the LIARS and a measure of behavioral intentions used in Kaplar and Gordon’s (2004b) study.

After completing their specified measures, participants submitted their responses electronically by clicking on a “submit” button at the bottom of the screen. Clicking the “submit” button brought them to a final screen on which they were thanked for their participation and provided with debriefing information.

**Materials**

*The Lying In Amorous Relationships Scale.* As noted, we designed the LIARS to measure individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic relationship partner. As described earlier, participants used 5-point Likert scales to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with 13 items (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree). Higher scores on the LIARS are indicative of more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic relationships. See Appendix C.

*Perspective-Taking and Empathic Concern.* As stated earlier, Davis (1983) developed a multi-faceted index to measure empathy (the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, or IRI). The IRI consists of several independent but related scales, only two of which are relevant to the current study. Each subscale measures a specific component of the more general construct of empathy. The constructs assessed by these subscales are related in the sense that they all assess the degree to which one is responsive to others. However, the subscales were intended to be independent of one another. In fact, Davis has cautioned against summing the various subscales to obtain a total empathy score. Instead,
the subscales were designed to stand alone as a brief measure of a particular aspect of empathy.

This commonly used measure of empathy includes both a perspective-taking scale (i.e., cognitive empathy, or the ability to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others) and an empathic concern scale (i.e., emotional empathy, or caring and compassionate regard for other people and other-oriented feelings of sympathy and concern for others). Participants indicated, on a 5-point Likert scale, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements. Sample perspective-taking items include, “When I’m upset with someone I usually try to “put myself in their shoes” for a while” and “Before criticizing somebody I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.” Sample empathic concern items include, “I am often quite touched by things that I see happen” and “I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.” Each subscale contained 7 items.

The IRI has demonstrated adequate reliability, with test-retest reliability estimates ranging between .62 and .71, and internal consistency estimates ranging between .71 and .77 (Davis, 1983). Both subscales demonstrated adequate test-retest reliability after a two month delay (Perspective-Taking $\alpha = .62$; Empathic concern $\alpha = .71$). Using two samples of college students, Davis (1983) also found evidence of the convergent and discriminant validity of both the perspective-taking subscale and the empathic concern subscale. The perspective-taking subscale was found to be significantly correlated with the Hogan empathy scale (Hogan, 1969) which measures empathy from a cognitive viewpoint. Similarly, the empathic concern subscale was shown to be significantly correlated with Mehrabian and Epstein’s (1972) Emotional Empathy Scale.
Additional evidence for the factor structure of the IRI was obtained by Carey, Fox, and Spraggins (1988), who replicated Davis’s (1983) factor structure using a sample of female dieticians and dietetic interns. Thus, the factor structure of the IRI appears to be stable across several sampled populations.

**Academic Achievement.** We assessed discriminant validity by correlating participants’ scores on the LIARS with their GPA, a measure of academic achievement. GPA has been widely used as an indicator of academic achievement in previous validity studies (e.g., O’Connor & Little, 2003; Pentony, 1996). Given that our study included undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff members, we instructed participants to think of the GPA that they felt was most representative of their overall abilities. They were provided with a blank line on which to indicate their GPA, as well as a drop-down menu on which to indicate the source (e.g., high school, undergraduate, graduate) of this GPA.

**Locus of Control.** We also examined discriminant validity by correlating participants’ scores on the LIARS with their scores on Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. This widely used scale contains 23 forced-choice items and 6 filler items. Participants were asked to indicate which statement out of a pair of statements they agree with most (e.g., “Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck” versus “People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make”). This scale has demonstrated sufficient internal consistency across a variety of samples. For example, Rotter (1966) reported $\alpha$ coefficients ranging from .69 to .73 and Blau (1984) reported an $\alpha$ coefficient of .71 using a sample of business students. Locus of
control has been shown to predict a variety of behaviors (e.g., exercise, as shown by Parsons & Betz, 2001.) See Appendix F for items.

**Behavioral Intentions.** Participants were presented with 10 scenarios (taken from Kaplar & Gordon, 2004b) that depicted common relationship dilemmas. For each scenario, participants were instructed to imagine the situation occurring within a current or past romantic relationship and were asked to indicate whether they would tell their partner the truth or an altruistically motivated white lie. Examples include whether or not to give their true opinion of their partner’s unflattering new haircut and whether or not to reveal the true reason for turning down a dinner invitation with the partner’s family. See Appendix G for scenarios. The ten scenarios chosen were those which participants in Kaplar and Gordon’s (2004b) study indicated were easiest to understand and to which they were best able to relate.

**Perspective-Taking Sample**

**Participants and Procedure**

Recruitment emails were sent to 200 faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research. The Perspective-Taking Sample consisted of 42 participants (36 females, 6 males; \( M_{age} = 28.56, SD = 8.81 \)). Our response rate was approximately 21%.

Participants in the Perspective-Taking Sample followed the general procedure described previously. In addition to completing demographic items and the LIARS, these participants completed the Perspective-Taking subscale of Interpersonal Reactivity Index (See Appendix E for items). The LIARS and the Perspective-Taking subscale of the IRI were presented in counterbalanced order.
Empathic Concern Sample

Participants and Procedure

Recruitment emails (described previously) were sent to 200 faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research. This sample consisted of 46 participants (25 females; 21 males; $M_{age} = 32.50, SD = 14.19$) and yielded a response rate of approximately 23%.

All participants followed the general procedure described previously. In addition to completing demographic items and the LIARS, participants in the Empathic Concern Sample completed the Empathic Concern subscale of Interpersonal Reactivity Index (See Appendix D for items). The LIARS and the Empathic Concern subscale of the IRI were presented in counterbalanced order.

Academic Achievement Sample

Participants and Procedure

Recruitment emails were sent to 200 faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research. The Academic Achievement Sample consisted of 46 participants (36 females, 10 males; $M_{age} = 28.13, SD = 12.95$) and yielded a response rate of approximately 23%.

Participants in the Academic Achievement Sample followed the general procedure described previously. In addition to completing demographic items and the LIARS, these participants completed an item assessing academic achievement, as measured by GPA. As described earlier, participants were instructed to provide whatever GPA they felt was most representative, as well as to indicate the type of GPA they provided (i.e., high school, undergraduate, or graduate.) Approximately 74% of
participants reported their undergraduate GPA, 15% reported their high school GPA, and 11% reported their graduate GPA.

*Locus of Control Sample*

*Participants and Procedure*

Recruitment emails were sent to 200 faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research. The Locus of Control Sample included 44 participants (24 females, 20 males; $M_{age} = 31.73, SD = 13.20$) and yielded a response rate of approximately 22%.

Participants in the Locus of Control Sample followed the procedure described earlier. In addition to completing demographic items and the LIARS, these participants completed Rotter’s Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. See Appendix F for items. The LIARS and Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale were presented in counterbalanced order.

*Behavioral Intentions Sample*

*Participants and Procedure*

Recruitment emails were sent to 200 faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research. The Behavioral Intentions Sample included 42 participants (32 females, 14 males; $M_{age} = 29.74, SD = 14.31$) and yielded a response rate of approximately 21%.

Participants in the Behavioral Intentions Sample followed the procedure described previously. In addition to completing demographic items and the LIARS, these participants completed a measure of behavioral intentions, as described above. See Appendix G. The LIARS and the scenarios were presented in counterbalanced order.
See Table 5 for demographic information for each of the five samples.

**Combined Sample**

**Participants and Procedure**

Data from participants in each of the previously described samples were merged into a single sample to examine the potential effects of gender, presumed relationship experience (marital status and affiliation with the university), relationship status, and ethnicity on attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a relationship partner. The combined sample consisted of 224 individuals affiliated with Bowling Green State University (153 females; 71 males; \(M_{age} = 29.64; SD = 13.01\)). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 64. See Table 5 for demographic information.

**Results**

Study 2 was conducted concurrently with Study 1. Therefore, participants completed all 13 LIARS items instead of just the 12 items that we retained as a result of the factor analysis conducted in Study 1. (As discussed in Study 1, the item “I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s) was removed from all subsequent analyses.) As before, items 3, 5, 8, 10, and 13 on the LIARS were worded such that higher numbers indicated less positive attitudes toward altruistic white lies. Therefore, these items were reverse-scored. After reverse-scoring the appropriate items, all LIARS items were averaged to form a LIARS composite for each participant.

**Convergent Validity**

**Perspective Taking.** We predicted that attitudes toward altruistic lying would be positively correlated with scores on a measure of perspective-taking. Items 1 and 4 on the perspective-taking subscale were worded such that higher scores indicated lower
perspective-taking. (See Appendix D.) Therefore, these items were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated greater perspective-taking. The 7 items on the perspective taking scale were averaged to create a perspective taking composite for each participant. Contrary to predictions, no significant correlation was obtained between participants’ scores on the LIARS and their scores on the Perspective-Taking subscale of the IRI, $r (n = 42) = -.15, p = .35$.

**Empathic Concern.** We predicted that positive attitudes toward altruistic lying would be positively correlated with scores on a measure of empathic concern. Items 2, 4, and 5 on the empathic concern scale were worded such that higher scores indicated lower empathic concern. (See Appendix E.) Therefore, these items were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated greater empathic concern. The 7 items on the empathic concern scale were summed and averaged to create an empathic concern composite score for each participant. Contrary to predictions, a significant correlation between LIARS scores and scores on the Empathic Concern subscale of the IRI was not obtained, $r (n = 46) = .06, p = .70$.

**Gender.** We predicted that women would endorse more positive attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies than men. The combined sample of 224 participants was used to examine this prediction. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Men and women reported similar attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner ($M_{males} = 2.57, SD = .77; M_{females} = 2.47, SD = .80$), $t (1, 222) = .92, p = .36$.

**Relationship Experience**
We reasoned that individuals with more relationship experience may have learned the potentially negative consequences of telling a romantic partner the truth at all times, as well as the potential benefits of telling a partner an occasional altruistically motivated white lie. Therefore, we predicted that individuals with more relationship experience would endorse more positive attitudes toward telling their partner altruistically motivated white lies than individuals with less relationship experience. As stated earlier, we indirectly assessed relationship experience using participants’ marital status and affiliation with the university.

To examine differences in LIARS scores as a function of marital status, we compared married participants with participants who were involved in committed relationship but were not married (i.e., exclusive dating relationships and engaged). The combined sample of 224 participants was used to examine this hypothesis. Consistent with our expectations, results indicated that married individuals (n = 60) endorsed more favorable attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner \( (M = 2.66, SD = .71) \) than individuals (n = 81) who were involved in romantic relationships but were not married \( (M = 2.31, SD = .89) \), \( t (1,139) = -2.57, p < .05 \).

Additionally, to examine differences in LIARS scores as a function of affiliation with the university, we compared undergraduate students with all other participants (faculty, staff, and graduate students). As expected, faculty, staff, and graduate students (n = 104) endorsed more positive attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner \( (M = 2.70, SD = .84) \) than undergraduate students \( (n = 120; M = 2.33, SD = .06) \), \( t (1, 222) = -3.53, p < .01 \).
Thus, as predicted, individuals who presumably had more relationship experience tended to have more favorable attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies than individuals with less relationship experience. This pattern of results supports the convergent validity of the LIARS.

**Discriminant Validity**

*Academic Achievement.* We predicted that academic achievement would be uncorrelated with attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic relationships. As predicted, LIARS scores were not significantly correlated with academic achievement, \( r (n = 46) = .04, p = .79 \).

*Locus of Control.* We predicted that locus of control would be uncorrelated with attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic relationships. Participants received 1 point for endorsing choice “a” on the following items of Rotter’s Locus of Control scale: 2, 6, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, and 29. Participants also received 1 point for endorsing choice “b” on the following items: 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 22, 26, and 28. A locus of control composite was created for each participant by summing the scores on the above items. Higher scores indicated a stronger external locus of control. (See Appendix F.) As predicted, LIARS scores were uncorrelated with scores on Rotter’s Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, \( r (n = 44) = -.16, p = .30 \).

**Predictive Validity**

*Behavioral Intentions.* We predicted that LIARS scores would be correlated with greater self-reported intention to engage in altruistic lying when presented with a variety of scenarios. Participants were given a score of 1 for each scenario in which they reported they would tell their partner an altruistically motivated white lie versus a harsh truth.
Each participant’s scores on the 10 scenarios were then summed to form a scenario composite variable. Possible scores on this variable ranged between 0 and 10, with higher scores indicating greater behavioral intentions to tell altruistically motivated white lies. (See Appendix G.) As predicted, LIARS scores were positively correlated with behavioral intentions, $r (n = 42) = .52, p < .001$. Higher LIARS scores predicted greater self-reported behavioral intention to engage in altruistic lying in the scenarios presented.

In addition, we conducted a between-groups analysis to examine differences in behavioral intentions to tell altruistic white lies as a function of whether participants obtained low versus high scores on the LIARS. Participants who obtained LIARS composite scores between 1 and 2.99 ($n = 33$) were grouped into a “preference to tell the truth” group, whereas those who obtained scores between 3 and 5 ($n = 13$) were grouped into a “preference to tell altruistic white lies” group. Participants in the latter group endorsed greater behavioral intentions to tell their partners altruistically motivated white lies ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 2.10$) than participants in the former group ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.45$), $t (1, 44) = 2.34, p < .05$. Thus, LIARS scores successfully predicted differences in behavioral intentions to tell altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner, which supports the predictive validity of the LIARS.

**Ethnicity and Current Relationship Status**

No significant differences in LIARS scores were expected or found as a result of participants’ ethnicity, $F (2, 221) = 2.13, p = .06$, or whether they were involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study, $t (1, 222) = -1.05, p = .29$.

**Summary and Discussion**
The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the construct validity (which includes both convergent and discriminant validity) and the predictive validity of the LIARS. Results of Study 2 provided some support for the convergent validity of the LIARS. As predicted, significant differences in LIARS scores emerged as a function of presumed relationship experience (indirectly measured using marital status and affiliation with the university). Individuals who presumably had more relationship experience tended to have more positive attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner than individuals who presumably had less relationship experience. However, contrary to predictions, LIARS scores were uncorrelated with measures of perspective-taking and empathic concern, as well as gender. Potential reasons for these null results will be addressed in the discussion section.

The LIARS demonstrated good discriminant validity both with regard to academic achievement and locus of control. As predicted, attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner were uncorrelated with academic achievement (as measured by GPA) and locus of control. Thus, Study 2 yielded evidence in support of the discriminant validity of the LIARS.

The LIARS demonstrated good predictive validity with regard to participants’ behavioral intentions to tell their partners altruistically motivated white lies in response to a variety of scenarios. As expected, attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner predicted individuals’ behavioral intentions to tell their partners altruistically motivated white lies in response to a variety of scenarios.

Despite a lack of strong support for the convergent validity of the LIARS, overall, the results of Study 2 suggest that the LIARS shows promise as a reliable and valid
measure of individuals’ attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a
relationship partner. In Study 3 we will use the LIARS to examine whether attitudes
toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner are associated with
increased positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction.
STUDY 3
ALTRUISTIC WHITE LIES, POSITIVE ILLUSIONS,
AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Overview of Study 3

As previously discussed, we hypothesized that altruistic white lies may foster the creation and/or perpetuation of positive relationship illusions, which have been shown to be associated with relationship satisfaction. In Study 3 we explored whether higher LIARS scores (i.e., more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies) are associated with greater positive illusions and relationship satisfaction. Assuming we obtained the expected relationship between attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies, positive relationship illusions, and relationship satisfaction, we planned, in accordance with the procedure described by Baron and Kenny (1986), to explore whether positive illusions mediate the relationship between LIARS scores and relationship satisfaction.

Method

Participants

An email describing the study was sent to approximately 1500 randomly selected individuals affiliated with Bowling Green State University. This sample was independent of the samples used in Studies 1 and 2, in that individuals who received an email inviting them to participate in Studies 1 or 2 were not included on this list. These individuals were randomly selected through the Office of Institutional Research from a database containing all Bowling Green faculty, students, and staff members. The email stated that the study would take approximately 15 to 30 minute to complete and that the purpose of the study was to measure various psychological attributes, as well as participants’
attitudes toward certain aspects of romantic relationships. The email also specified that in order to participate in this study individuals had to be involved in a romantic relationship of at least 3 months' duration. As incentive for their participation, participants were entered into a random drawing to win one of two $50.00 gift certificates to Barnes and Noble’s online bookstore.

Participants were 157 undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff members (117 females; 40 males; $M_{age} = 31.27, SD = 12.81$) affiliated with Bowling Green State University. The sample consisted of approximately 45% undergraduate students, 24% staff members, 20% faculty members, and 12% graduate students. All participants were involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. Approximately 48% were involved in an exclusive dating relationship; 40% were married; 8% were engaged; and, 5% described their relationship as “other”. The average relationship was approximately 8.1 years in length ($SD = 9.3$). The sample was approximately 92% Caucasian, 5% African American, 3% Asian, 1% Latino, and 1% “Other.”

Our response rate was approximately 11%. The response rate for Study 3 was significantly lower than the response rates for Studies 1 and 2, possibly because participants had to be involved in a romantic relationship of at least 3 months' duration and because of the longer time commitment to complete the study (15 to 30 minutes in Study 3, versus 10 minutes in Studies 1 and 2).

Materials

*The Lying In Amorous Relationships Scale.* We designed the LIARS to measure individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic
relationship partner. As described earlier, participants used 5-point Likert scales to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with 13 items (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree). Higher scores on the LIARS indicated more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies within romantic relationships. See Appendix C.

Positive Relationship Illusions (Optimism about the relationship). In order to assess unrealistic optimism about participants’ relationships, we followed the procedure used by Murray and Holmes (1997). Positive illusions were operationalized based on the better-than-average effect, as described earlier. Participants were presented with 11 items, designed by Murray and Holmes (1997) to measure participants’ perceptions of the likelihood of a variety of positive events (e.g., “The love my partner and I share continuing to grow”) and negative events (e.g., “Our relationship will break up within the next 6 months) occurring in their own relationships relative to the average or typical relationship. Participants indicated the degree to which they believe that various events are likely to occur in their own relationships relative to the average (or typical) relationship (1 = much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship; 5 = much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship.) Items 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 were reversed-worded such that higher scores indicated fewer positive illusions. Thus, these items were reverse-scored such that higher scores indicated greater positive illusions. A relationship-illusions composite variable was created for each participant by averaging their scores on all items (after reverse-scoring). See Appendix H for items.

Relationship Satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was assessed using Hendrick’s (1988) 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The RAS has been shown to have
good internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$), as well as sufficient concurrent validity ($\alpha = .83$) with the relationship satisfaction subscale of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Hendrick, 1988). Sample items include, “My romantic partner meets my needs” and “I wish I hadn’t gotten into this relationship.” Participants were asked to respond to each of the 7 items using 5-point Likert scales. Items 4 and 7 were reverse-worded such that higher scores indicated lower relationship satisfaction. Therefore, these items were reverse-scored such that higher scores indicated greater relationship satisfaction. We calculated a relationship satisfaction composite variable for each participant by averaging their scores on all items (after reverse-scoring). See Appendix I for items.

**Procedure**

The email sent to potential participants contained a URL for the website that participants could access to take the study online. Interested participants clicked on the link provided in the email, which led them to a screen describing the study in more detail (see Appendix B). This screen specified that completing and submitting the survey was indicative of giving informed consent. After reading the description of the study, participants were directed to a screen that contained demographic items. Demographic items include sex, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, affiliation with Bowling Green State University, and the length and type (e.g., dating, married) of the participant’s current romantic relationship. (See Appendix B.)

Participants were then directed to a screen containing either the LIARS, a measure of positive relationship illusions, or a measure of relationship satisfaction. These measures were presented in three different orders, such that each scale was presented in each serial position: (Order 1: LIARS, positive illusions, relationship...
Participants submitted their responses electronically by clicking on a “submit” button at the bottom of the screen. Clicking the “submit” button brought them to a final screen on which they were thanked for their participation and provided with debriefing information.

Results

As was true regarding Study 2, participants in Study 3 received the original LIARS which contained 13 items. However, based on the results of the factor analysis conducted in Study 1 the item “I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s),” was removed from all analyses. Items 3, 5, 8, 10, and 13 on the LIARS were worded such that higher numbers indicated less positive attitudes toward altruistic white lies. Therefore, these items were reverse-scored. After reverse-scoring the appropriate items, all LIARS items were averaged to form a LIARS composite score for each participant.

The Relationship Between Altruistic Lying, Positive Illusions, and Relationship Satisfaction

Murray and Holmes (1997) found that positive relationship illusions (operationalized as the better-than-average effect) were positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Our results replicated Murray and Holmes’ finding, in that we also found that positive relationship illusions were strongly and positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, $r (n = 157) = .67, p < .001$. In other words, individuals with more positive illusions (e.g., those who viewed their partners as better than average or
viewed their relationships as less prone to divorce than average) tended to be more satisfied with their romantic relationships.

The primary goal of this research was to explore the potential relationships between attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner, positive relationship illusions, and relationship satisfaction. We predicted that LIARS scores would be positively correlated with both relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction. However, our results did not support our hypothesis. Contrary to prediction, LIARS scores were negatively rather than positively correlated with positive illusions, $r(n = 157) = -.221, p < .01$. Thus, a preference for truth-telling rather than a preference for telling altruistically motivated white lies was associated with holding more positive illusions about one's relationship. Also contrary to predictions, LIARS scores were negatively rather than positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, $r(n = 157) = -.36, p < .001$. More positive attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies (i.e., greater endorsement of a preference for truth telling) were associated with less rather than more relationship satisfaction. (See Table 6.)

Overall, these findings support lay theories concerning the importance of honesty within romantic relationships. Namely, although telling an altruistically motivated white lie on occasion may smooth social interactions in certain situations, it appears as though, at least in the context of romantic relationships, the benefits of a general orientation toward being honest with one’s partner are more powerful than the potential benefits that may be obtained as a result of telling an altruistically motivated white lies.

However, a more detailed examination of the data revealed that, although more positive attitudes toward altruistic white lies were associated with fewer or less strong
positive illusions for unmarried participants, $r (n = 94) = -.31, p < .01$ and undergraduate students, $r (n = 71) = -.35, p < .01$, this was not the case for married participants, $r (n = 63) = -.12, p = .36$, and faculty, staff, and graduate students, $r (n = 86) = -.14, p = .19$. There appears to be no relationship between attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies and positive illusions among older participants and currently married participants.

Thus, overall a preference for truth-telling (versus telling altruistically motivated white lies) tends to be associated with greater positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction. However, the relationship between attitudes toward telling a partner altruistically motivated white lies, positive relationship illusions, and relationship satisfaction seems to vary as a function of relationship experience. In particular, honesty, at least in the form of telling harsh truths, appears to be particularly valued by individuals who presumably have less relationship experience.

We proposed that telling altruistically motivated white lies may be one means by which positive illusions are created and/or maintained. However, the results we obtained did not support this hypothesis. Therefore, although we had initially planned to examine whether positive relationship illusions mediate the relationship between positive attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies and relationship satisfaction, this analysis is no longer meaningful or necessary.

**Summary and Discussion**

In Study 3 we examined the relationships between attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner, positive illusions, and relationship satisfaction. We hypothesized that LIARS scores would be significantly positively correlated with both positive illusions and relationship satisfaction. In both
cases, we obtained results opposite of our predictions; LIARS scores were negatively correlated with both positive illusions and relationship satisfaction. In other words, in accordance with lay theories concerning the importance of honesty within romantic relationships, individuals who express more positive attitudes toward truth-telling versus telling altruistic white lies within their romantic relationships appear to have more positive relationship illusions and greater relationship satisfaction. Thus, it seems as though the potential benefits of telling altruistic white lies to a romantic partner may be outweighed by the importance of truth-telling. However, the relationship between attitudes toward telling a partner altruistically motivated white lies and positive relationship illusions seemed to vary as a function of relationship experience; there did not appear to be a significant relationship between attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies and positive illusions among older participants and currently married participants.
General Discussion

With this study we accomplished several goals. First, we created a reliable scale to assess individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic partner. In Study 1 the LIARS demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliability over a three-week period. Moreover, the factor analytic results indicated that attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner represents a uni-dimensional construct, at least as measured in this research.

Second, we established the construct validity of the LIARS. We found that, as predicted, LIARS scores were uncorrelated with both academic achievement and locus of control. Although some may find it problematic to accept null results as evidence of validity, a commonly relied upon definition of discriminant validity requires that one accept nonsignificant correlations as evidence of validity (Campbell, 1960). Moreover, it is unlikely that these particular results were due to low power based on the low absolute value of the correlations (.04 GPA and .16 for locus of control) and the size of the p-values (.79 for GPA and .30 for locus of control). Had the null results been due to low power, it is likely that the magnitude of the correlations and the size of the p-values would have approached, but not met the criteria for, significance.

Additionally, LIARS scores were positively correlated with self-reported behavioral intentions to tell altruistically motivated white lies in response to various scenarios. Also, as predicted, married individuals and faculty, staff, and graduate students, who presumably had more relationship experience, tended to endorse more positive attitudes toward altruistically motivated white lies than unmarried individuals and undergraduate students, who presumably had less relationship experience. Although
individuals with more relationship experience still endorsed a slight preference for truth-telling over altruistic lying, it is likely that they have learned through experience that there are certain times when maintaining harmony and preserving their partner’s feelings may be more important than telling the truth.

However, some of the predictions we made as a means of establishing construct validity were not supported. Women did not report more positive attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies than men. This result may be due to the fact that our scale assessed domain-general attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic relationship partner. An evolutionary perspective suggests that gender differences may emerge when examining domain-specific items (such as appearance, which is likely to be more important to women, and bravery, which is likely to be more important to men) rather than domain-general items. Thus, in order to further assess the role of gender in attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies, it may be useful to examine this construct using domain-specific items.

Additionally, LIARS scores were not positively correlated with the empathic concern and perspective-taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). We based this prediction on the assumption that individuals with a greater capacity for empathy would be better able to imagine how painful it could be to hear harsh truths from a romantic partner and so would not want to hurt their partner’s feelings. However, in hindsight, it may be that individuals with greater empathy were more likely to put themselves in their partner’s shoes and think about what they themselves would want their partner to tell them if they were in the same situation. The results of Kaplar and
Gordon’s (2004a) study indicated that individuals tend to endorse a preference for hearing harsh truths rather than kind lies from their partner. Thus, it may be that individuals with greater empathy did not endorse more positive attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies because, based on their own preference for hearing the truth from their partners, they reasoned that their partners would also prefer to hear the truth.

Overall, the results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that the LIARS shows promise as a reliable, valid scale for assessing individual differences in attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a relationship partner. Although we obtained only partial support for our hypotheses related to the validity of the LIARS, we believe that we had enough evidence of validity to justify examining in Study 3 whether attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies are correlated with both positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction.

As discussed, Murray and Holmes (1997) demonstrated that positive relationship illusions are associated with increased relationship satisfaction. We speculated that altruistically motivated white lies may be one way of creating and perpetuating positive relationship illusions and, thereby, bolstering relationship satisfaction. Specifically, we hypothesized that more positive attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies (i.e., higher LIARS scores) would be positively correlated with both positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction. We also planned to examine whether positive illusions mediated the (expected) relationship between attitudes toward altruistically motivated white lies and relationship satisfaction.
Contrary to predictions, however, we found that attitudes toward telling one’s partner altruistically motivated white lies were correlated with less, rather than more, positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction. Thus, in accordance with lay theories concerning the importance of honesty within romantic relationships, it appears as though the potential benefits of telling an occasional altruistically motivated white lie to a romantic partner may be outweighed by the benefits of truth-telling. Although it may be commonly accepted that "honesty is the best policy" regarding romantic relationship, this research may be the first to provide empirical evidence of a relationship between attitudes toward honesty versus deception within relationships and relationship illusions and satisfaction.

Overall, the results of Study 3 suggest that a general preference for telling one’s romantic partner the truth may contribute to positive relationship illusions and, consequently, relationship satisfaction. Although telling one’s partner the truth at all times may occasionally cause hurt feelings, it appears as though truth-telling may nonetheless help create the conditions (e.g., love, trust, a positive image of one’s partner) that foster positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction.

A closer examination of the data revealed that, although more positive attitudes toward truth-telling were associated with greater positive illusions for individuals who presumably had less relationship experience, this was not the case for individuals who presumably had more relationship experience. Similarly, the negative association between LIARS scores and relationship satisfaction was stronger among individuals who presumably had less relationship experience than among individuals who presumably had more relationship experience.
This pattern of results may be explained in that, in the initial stages of a relationship, truth-telling and disclosure may be particularly important for increasing intimacy. As Anderson, Ansfield, and DePaulo (1999) suggest, individuals in close relationships feel free to express themselves truthfully to their partners. It is likely that in the initial stages of a relationship telling altruistically motivated white lies may interfere with the process of developing trust and closeness. Instead, in relatively new relationships, truth-telling may be particularly important for building trust and feeling satisfied with the relationship.

Moreover, it is likely that individuals in the formative stages of a relationship already have high levels of positive relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction because they have not yet had enough experience with one another to encounter potential problems. As discussed earlier, when individuals first fall in love they tend to focus on their partner’s positive qualities and overlook potential faults. Thus, looking through the rose-colored glasses of a new relationship, it may not be necessary to tell altruistic white lies because problems have not yet surfaced. In fact, at this stage of a relationship catching one’s partner telling a white lie, even if it is well-intentioned, may be detrimental to the building of trust. In other words, the benefits of telling altruistically motivated white lies may be outweighed by the potential negative consequences of being discovered.

As the relationship becomes more stable over time, however, it is likely that the potential negative consequences of being discovered telling an altruistic white lie will lessen. Thus, although truth-telling remains important over time, it is likely that with increased experience individuals will come to view the telling of altruistic white lies as
less risky and more beneficial for their relationships (as evidenced by more experienced individuals’ greater acceptance of telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies).

In addition, it may be useful to examine the direction of causation in the relationships described above. Up to this point we have speculated that truth-telling contributes to greater relationship satisfaction. However, it may also be that the case that close, satisfying relationships create a safer environment in which to tell the truth than less satisfying relationships. In other words, perhaps people whose relationships are more satisfying to begin with may have more positive attitudes toward truth-telling because of the open, accepting nature of the relationship itself. One is not likely to endorse a positive attitude toward honesty if telling the truth is typically met with negative consequences. In contrast, if one’s partner reacts relatively well to hearing unpleasant truths, one may endorse more positive attitudes toward truth-telling than someone whose partner reacts negatively. Thus, rather than assuming that a preference for honesty leads to increased satisfaction, it may be worthwhile to consider the alternate possibility that individuals differ in their attitudes toward truth-telling versus altruistic lying in part because of the dynamics already present in their relationship.

As discussed earlier, younger individuals who have only known their partners for a relatively short period of time are likely to possess high levels of positive illusions and relationship satisfaction due to the relative newness of their relationship. In contrast, older, married individuals may possess equally high levels of positive illusions and relationship satisfaction because their relationships have withstood the test of time and have grown in depth. Given the high percentage of first marriages that end in divorce, it
is likely that the individuals in our study who have been married for many years have stayed married because they are satisfied with their relationships; those who were not satisfied likely divorced. The very fact that these participants have been married so long suggests that they are likely to be more satisfied with their relationships than individuals who are no longer together. Thus, although married and unmarried individuals possess approximately equal levels of relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction, the reasons behind these scores may be quite different.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

A major tenet of social psychology is that attitudes do not predict behavior in specific situations. This may be particularly true for attitudes that are highly sensitive to social desirability (such as attitudes toward lying) and behaviors that are carried out in private (such as lying to one’s partner). In our study we used the LIARS to measure self-reported attitudes toward telling altruistically motivated white lies to a romantic partner. However, given the overwhelming emphasis placed on the importance of honesty in romantic relationships and the general condemnation of lying to one’s partner, social desirability may have significantly influenced participants’ responses on the LIARS. This possibility is supported in that participants’ endorsement of items in favor of telling altruistically motivated white lies dropped off substantially when the word “lie” was used (see Table 4). Thus, individuals’ self-report of their attitudes toward telling their partners altruistically motivated white lies may be a poor indicator of their actual behavior within their own relationships.

In our future research, we plan to examine the relationship between participants’ behavioral intentions to tell kind lies versus harsh truths (as measured by their responses
to the scenarios described previously) and positive illusions and relationship satisfaction. It is likely that the scenarios used to assess behavioral intentions would be less reactive and less subject to social desirability concerns that the LIARS. Thus, we believe that our initial hypothesis regarding altruistic lie-telling as a means of creating relationship illusions and relationship satisfaction is not ready to be abandoned.

As a final consideration, it is possible that the unexpected results obtained in Study 3 may be due in part to the LIARS items themselves. Although we intended the LIARS to measure attitudes toward altruistically motivated white lies, some of these items may not place enough emphasis upon the minor nature of the lies. For example, the item, “I believe that lying to my partner is the best thing to do if it means sparing him or her unnecessary pain” references altruistic motivations for lying, but does not specifically state whether the lie is serious versus minor in nature. In the future it would be useful to replicate Study 3 using items which place greater emphasis upon the fact that these lies are minor in nature.

Summary

Telling the truth has long been regarded as essential to building a solid romantic relationship. In accordance with this age-old belief, our results offer additional support for the importance of truth-telling within romantic relationships. Although we hypothesized that altruistically motivated white lies would be associated with positive illusions and increased relationship satisfaction by protecting one’s partner from potentially hurtful truths, it appears as though a positive attitude toward truth-telling triumphs any potential benefits of altruistic lying, particularly for younger individuals whose relationships are still in the formative stages. While common sense suggests that
more positive attitudes toward truth-telling would be associated with increased relationship satisfaction, this research is the first to document this finding empirically. Thus, although it may be tempting to lie to spare a romantic partner’s feelings, as the old saying goes, perhaps honesty really is the best policy.
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Kaplar, M.E., & Gordon, A.K. (2004b). Tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies: Preferences for and emotional reactions to altruistic white lies and harsh truths within romantic relationships. Unpublished manuscript.


Planalp, S., & Honeycutt, J.M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal


Footnotes

1. Although this study did not focus exclusively on romantic relationships, many of the lies described occurred with the context of a romantic relationship (e.g., infidelity was the most frequent category about which participants had lied).

2. Although we define altruistic lies as lies motivated by the desire to protect another person, Kaplar and Gordon (2004a) showed that the construal of a lie as altruistically motivated depends largely on one’s perspective as lie teller or lie receiver. Lie tellers tend to view the lies they tell to others as more altruistically motivated than lie receivers view the lies that are told to them.

3. Telling altruistic white lies may also benefit lie tellers themselves. Most individuals tend to view themselves as better or more moral than most others (Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995). Telling a lie is generally viewed as a negative behavior and liars are typically condemned for their dishonesty. Thinking of oneself as a lie teller is likely to conflict with one’s positive self-perception as an honest person and create cognitive dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). However, framing the lie as altruistically motivated may prevent or reduce this dissonance by allowing individuals to continue to believe that they are good, moral people despite their deceitful behavior (Kaplar & Gordon, 2004a). This framing may even allow lie tellers to feel particularly considerate after lying. For example, a woman who
lies to her husband by telling him that he is good in bed when in fact he is not may believe that she is a particularly caring spouse because she is able to put her own sexual needs aside in order to boost her husband’s self-esteem.

4. Comrey (1988) suggests that a sample size of 200 is adequate for evaluating scales containing 40 items or fewer. Tinsley and Tinsley (1987) recommend using five to ten subjects per scale item. The original version of the LIARS contained 13 items and was expected to yield a single factor. Therefore, by this standard, our sample size is adequate for the purposes of this study.

5. We also examined the scree plot and the number of eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1960). Two factors yielded eigenvalues greater than 1. However, this did not match with a meaningful interpretation of the data.

6. We also indirectly assessed relationship experience using age and the length of participants’ relationships (if applicable).

7. As stated earlier, relationship experience was also measured using participants’ age and relationship length. As expected, LIARS scores were also positively correlated with participants' age, \( r (n = 224) = .19, p < .01 \). To further examine differences in LIARS scores as a function of age, we divided participants into two groups: (1) those 35 years of age and younger and (2) those over 35 years of age. We reasoned that 35 was a reasonable age by which most individuals are settled into their
adult lives. Results indicated that participants over 35 years of age (n = 63) scored significantly higher on the LIARS ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .85$) than participants 35 years of age and younger (n = 161; $M = 2.40$, $SD = .74$), $t(1, 222) = -3.05, p < .01$.

In addition, LIARS scores were significantly correlated with relationship length, $r (n = 224) = .26, p < .01$. To further examine differences in LIARS scores as a function of relationship length, we divided participants into 2 groups: (1) those in relationships of 5 years or less in duration and (2) those in relationships of more than 5 years in duration. We reasoned that 5 years would be a sufficient length of time for a relationship to develop the qualities characteristic of long-term relationships. Results indicated that individuals (n = 59) who were involved in relationships of more than five years in duration ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .85$), endorsed more positive attitudes toward telling altruistic white lies to a romantic partner than individuals (n = 85) who were involved in relationships of 5 years or fewer in duration ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .72$), $t(1,142) = -3.86, p < .001$. 
Table 1

*Study 1: Factor Loadings for LIARS items (all 13 items)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying is the best thing to do if it means sparing my partner pain</td>
<td>.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding causing pain will—and should—have a higher value than truth</td>
<td>.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing wrong with lying in partner’s best interest</td>
<td>.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always best to be honest, even if my partner’s feelings will be hurt</td>
<td>.75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some things my partner is better off now knowing</td>
<td>.73*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong to lie to my partner regardless of circumstances</td>
<td>.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to tell a little white lie than risking hurting my partner</td>
<td>.65*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is naïve and unrealistic to always tell my partner the complete truth</td>
<td>.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying about minor things could hurt my relationship</td>
<td>.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner can always count on me to tell the truth</td>
<td>.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes telling my partner the truth can cause more harm than good</td>
<td>.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner, even about minor things, makes me uncomfortable</td>
<td>.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s)</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Asterisk indicates the factor on which the item loaded.
Table 2
Study 1: Factor Loadings for LIARS items (excluding item, “I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s)”)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lying is the best thing to do if it means sparing my partner pain</td>
<td>.83*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding causing pain will—and should—have a higher value than truth</td>
<td>.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing wrong with lying in my partner’s best interest</td>
<td>.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always best to be honest, even if my partner’s feelings will be hurt</td>
<td>.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some things my partner is better off now knowing</td>
<td>.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong to lie to my partner regardless of circumstances</td>
<td>.70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to tell a little white lie than risking hurting my partner</td>
<td>.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is naïve and unrealistic to always tell my partner the complete truth</td>
<td>.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner about minor things could hurt my relationship</td>
<td>.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner can always count on me to tell the truth</td>
<td>.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes telling my partner the truth can cause more harm than good</td>
<td>.56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner, even about minor things, makes me uncomfortable</td>
<td>.51*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Asterisk indicates the factor on which the item loaded.
Table 3  
*Study 1: Correlations Between LIARS Items at Time 1 and Time 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIARS Composite</td>
<td>.91***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying is the best thing to do if it means sparing my partner pain</td>
<td>.74***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is naïve and unrealistic to always tell my partner the complete truth</td>
<td>.71***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to tell a little white lie than risking hurting my partner</td>
<td>.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner, even about minor things, makes me uncomfortable</td>
<td>.68***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding causing pain will—and should—have a higher value than truth</td>
<td>.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some things my partner is better off now knowing</td>
<td>.64***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner about minor things could hurt my relationship</td>
<td>.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always best to be honest, even if my partner’s feelings will be hurt</td>
<td>.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong to lie to my partner regardless of circumstances</td>
<td>.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing wrong with lying in my partner’s best interest</td>
<td>.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner can always count on me to tell the truth</td>
<td>.46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes telling my partner the truth can cause more harm than good</td>
<td>.44***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *** indicates $p < .001$
Table 4

*Study 1: Mean scores for Individual LIARS Items Prior to Reverse-Scoring*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items on which higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward altruistic lying</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes telling my partner the truth can cause more harm than good</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding causing pain will—and should—have a higher value than truth</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some things my partner is better off now knowing</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is naïve and unrealistic to always tell my partner the complete truth</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to tell a little white lie than risking hurting my partner</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying is the best thing to do if it means sparing my partner pain</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing wrong with lying in my partner’s best interest</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items on which higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward truth-telling</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner, even about minor things, makes me uncomfortable</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s)</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner can always count on me to tell the truth</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying to my partner about minor things could hurt my relationship</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong to lie to my partner regardless of circumstances</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always best to be honest, even if my partner’s feelings will be hurt</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Possible scores ranged from 1 to 5. Higher numbers indicate greater agreement with each statement.
Table 5

Study 2: Demographic Information (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>BI</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliation with the University</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involved in a Relationship</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Relationship (in years)</strong></td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PT = Perspective-Taking Sample, EC = Empathic Concern sample, GPA = Academic Achievement Sample, LC = Locus of Control Sample, BI = Behavioral Intentions Sample, and Combined = All 5 Samples Combined.
Table 5 (Cont’d)
*Study 2: Demographic Information (in Percentages)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>BI</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive Dating</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PT = Perspective-Taking Sample, EC = Empathic Concern sample, GPA = Academic Achievement Sample, LC = Locus of Control Sample, BI = Behavioral Intentions Sample, and Combined = All 5 Samples Combined.
Table 6

*Study 3: Correlations between LIARS Scores, Positive Illusions, and Relationship Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LIARS</th>
<th>Illusions</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIARS</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td>-0.36***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Illusions</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.67***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$; *** indicates $p < .001$. 


Figure 1

*Frequency Distribution of LIARS items*
Appendix A: Sample Email (Study 1):

BGSU Research: Chance to win $50.00 gift card through online survey!

Dear BGSU faculty, student, or staff member:

You have been randomly selected by the Office of Institutional Research as eligible to participate in a brief online study being conducted here at BGSU about romantic relationships. If you choose to complete this short survey you will be entered into a drawing to **win one of two $50 Barnes and Noble’s gift certificates**! You can use this gift certificate either at Barnes and Noble’s online store or at one of their regular locations.

I am a doctoral student in the Psychology Department working with Dr. Anne Gordon. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a study examining individuals’ thoughts and feelings toward various aspects of romantic relationships.

This study is being conducted entirely online. You will be asked to fill out two questionnaires, each of which is expected to take approximately 10 minutes to complete (for a total of 20 minutes). You can complete the first questionnaire now or whenever is convenient for you. The second questionnaire must be completed 3 weeks later. You will be sent an email 3 weeks after you complete the first questionnaire reminding you to complete the second questionnaire.

To show our appreciation for your participation, after you complete both questionnaires you will be entered into a drawing to win one of two **$50.00 Barnes and Noble’s gift certificates**! We anticipate that approximately 200 people will participate in this study. Therefore, your odds of winning are approximately 1 in 100. In order to be eligible for this prize you must complete **both** parts of the study.

You can access the study at this URL:

http://survey.bgsu.edu/surveys/IR/relationships1/relationships1.htm

Your responses will be anonymous; you will not be asked to indicate your name at any time. However, in order to send you a reminder email in 3 weeks and notify you if you win one of the prizes, we will ask you to provide us with an email address. In order to protect your identity you may wish to provide an email address that does not contain any identifying information (e.g., angel37@yahoo.com). The email address you provide will be used ONLY to send reminder emails and notify you if you win the drawing. These emails will not be shared with anyone.

If you have any questions concerning this study or wish to receive additional information you may contact Mary Kaplar at mkaplar@bgnet.bgsu.edu or my project advisor, Dr.
Anne Gordon, at akg@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Additionally, if you have concerns about any aspect of this study you may contact the Human Subjects Review Board at 372-7716.

If you wish to participate please click on the following link:

http://survey.bgsu.edu/surveys/IR/relationships1/relationships1.htm

This URL will take you to a website where you will receive more detailed information about the study and where you can complete the survey online. Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,
Mary E. Kaplar, M.A.
mkaplar@bgnet.bgsu.edu
Appendix B:
Sample Informed Consent Sheet,
Instructions, and Demographic Information (Study 1)

Thank you for your interest in our study on romantic relationships! We hope that you will take a few minutes to complete this brief online survey. Your responses are very important to us!

I am a doctoral student in the Psychology Department working with Dr. Anne Gordon. This research project is being conducted as part of my dissertation. The purpose of the study is to gather information on your thoughts and feelings about the role of honesty within romantic relationships. You will be asked to respond to a variety of questions pertaining to this topic.

This study consists of two parts. In each part you will be asked to complete a brief online questionnaire. By completing and submitting this questionnaire online you are indicating your consent to participate in this study. You may complete the first part immediately or whenever is convenient for you. The second part must be completed 3 weeks after you complete the first part.

You will be sent an email 3 weeks after you complete the first part of the study reminding you to complete the second part. We estimate that each part of the study should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thus, the total estimated time for your participation is approximately 20 minutes. Please note that email is not 100% secure, so it is possible that someone intercepting your email will gain knowledge of your interest in the study.

Once you have completed both parts of the study you will be entered into a random drawing to **win one of two $50.00 Barnes and Noble’s gift certificates**! We anticipate that approximately 200 individuals will participate in this study. Therefore, your odds of winning are approximately 1 in 100.

Although your responses will remain anonymous, in order to send you a reminder email in 3 weeks and contact you if you win one of the prizes, you will be asked to provide an email address. If you are concerned about your anonymity, you may wish to use an email address that does not in any way identify you (e.g., “angels37@yahoo.com”). If you provide an email containing identifying information (e.g., a BG account), we can no longer guarantee your anonymity. The email address you provide will be used ONLY for sending you a reminder email and contacting you if you win a prize. This email address will not be shared with anyone at any point.

This study is being conducted completely online and your responses will be anonymous. At no point will you be asked to provide your name. Anonymity of you as a respondent and your responses will be protected throughout the study and publication of
study results. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time
during this study you would like to discontinue your participation you can simply close
your web browser. You will not in any way be penalized for choosing not to participate.

The anticipated risks of participating in this study are no greater than those
normally encountered in daily life. The potential benefits of participating in this study
include the opportunity to learn about how psychological research is conducted and the
chance to learn more about yourself by reflecting on your attitudes. In addition, you will
be helping researchers learn more about the nature of romantic relationships.

Please note that you do NOT have to be currently involved in a romantic
relationship in order to participate.

As a participant, you have the right to have all questions answered by the
researcher. In addition, you may request a summary or copy of the results of this study. If
you have any questions concerning this study or would like additional information, please
contact the principle investigator, Mary Kaplar, at mkaplar@bgnet.bgsu.edu or 734-847-
8462. You may also contact my project advisor, Dr. Anne Gordon, at
akg@bgnet.bgsu.edu or 419-372-8161. If you have questions about the conduct of this
study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling
Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716
(hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

If you feel that you have received enough information about this study and you
wish to participate please click on the “next” button below. This will enable you to
complete the questionnaire.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please enter today’s date.

2. Please enter your age.

3. Are you male or female?
   - Male
   - Female

4. Are you currently involved in an exclusive romantic relationship?
   - Yes
   - No
5.) How long have you been involved in this relationship? (in months)

6. What is the nature of this relationship?
   - Exclusive dating relationship
   - Engagement
   - Marriage
   - Other

7. What is your ethnicity? (optional)
   - Asian
   - African American
   - Caucasian/White
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Native American
   - Pacific Islander
   - Other

8. What is your ethnicity? (optional)
   - Heterosexual
   - Homosexual
   - Bisexual
   - Other

9. What is your affiliation with BGSU?
   - Undergraduate student
   - Graduate student
   - Faculty member
   - Staff member
   - Other
Appendix C: LIARS (Lying In Amorous Relationships Scale)

Instructions: Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the role of honesty within exclusive romantic relationships. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested solely in your opinions. Please remember that all of your responses are anonymous. You do not have to be currently involved in a romantic relationship in order to complete this questionnaire.

1. I believe that honesty is always the best policy in my romantic relationship(s).
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

2. I believe that it is better to tell my romantic partner a little white lie rather than risk hurting him or her by telling the truth.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

3. My romantic partner can count on me to always tell him or her the truth no matter what.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

4. There are some things that my romantic partner is better off not knowing.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
5. I believe that it is wrong to lie to my romantic partner, regardless of the circumstances.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

6. Sometimes telling my romantic partner the truth can cause more harm than good.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

7. There are times when avoiding causing my partner unnecessary pain will—and should—have a higher value than being completely honest.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

8. Lying to my romantic partner, even about minor things, makes me feel uncomfortable.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
9. I believe that lying to my romantic partner is the best thing to do if it means sparing him or her unnecessary pain.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

10. I believe that it is best to always be honest with my romantic partner, even if this means that his or her feelings will likely be hurt.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

11. I see nothing wrong with lying to my partner as long it is in his or her best interest.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

12. I think it is naive and unrealistic to expect that I will always tell my romantic partner the complete truth.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
13. I believe that lying to my romantic partner, even about minor things, could hurt my relationship.

  o  Completely disagree
  o  Somewhat disagree
  o  Neutral
  o  Somewhat agree
  o  Completely agree
Appendix D:
Perspective-Taking Subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index

Instructions: Below you will find a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement as it pertains to you.

1. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

2. I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

3. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

4. If I’m sure I’m right about something I don’t waste much time listening to other people’s arguments.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
5. I believe that there are two sides to every question and I try to look at them both.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

6. When I’m upset with someone I usually try to “put myself in their shoes” for a while.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

7. Before criticizing somebody I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
Appendix E:
Empathic Concern Subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index

Instructions: Below you will find a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully
and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement as it pertains to
you.

1. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

2. Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

3. When I see someone being taken advantage of I feel kind of protective towards them.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

4. Other people’s misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
5. When I see someone being treated unfairly I sometimes don’t feel very much pity for them.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

6. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

7. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree
Appendix F:
Rotter’s Internal-External Locus of Control Scale

For each pair of statements, please choose the one that you feel is most correct.

- Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much.
- The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.

- Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.
- People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

- One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.
- There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.

- In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.
- Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.

- The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.
- Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.

- Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.
- Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.

- No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you.
- People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.

- Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality.
- It is one's experiences in life which determine what they're like.

- I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
- Trusting fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.
o In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test.
  o Many times, exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying in really useless.

o Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
  o Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.

o The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
  o This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.

o When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
  o It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

o There are certain people who are just no good.
  o There is some good in everybody.

o In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.
  o Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.

o Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.
  o Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability - luck has little or nothing to do with it.

o As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.
  o By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.

o Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.
  o There really is no such thing as "luck."
o One should always be willing to admit mistakes.
o It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.

o It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.
o How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.

o In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
o Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.

o With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.
o It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.

o Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
o There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.

o A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do.
o A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.

o Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
o It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

o People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.
o There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.

o There is too much emphasis on athletics in high school.
o Team sports are an excellent way to build character.

o What happens to me is my own doing.
o Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
o Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.
o In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.
Appendix G: Scenarios

Instructions: Please read each of the following scenarios and imagine yourself in that particular situation with your romantic partner. For each situation, decide whether you would tell your romantic partner a white lie in order to spare his/her feelings or tell your partner the truth even though you know it might hurt him/her. Please place a check on the line that best describes what you believe you would do.

1. You and your partner are walking together in a shopping mall when a very attractive member of the opposite sex passes by. Your partner catches you looking at this person and half-jokingly says that he thinks you are looking at him because you are attracted to him. You actually are attracted to him. How would you handle this situation?
   - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
   - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

2. Your partner just got a new haircut that he is really excited about. He asks you if you like his new style. You think it looks awful. How would you handle this situation?
   - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
   - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

3. One night at a party you and your partner are talking with some acquaintances and your partner tells a joke. It is clear that nobody is laughing, and one of the guys at the party comments under his breath that your partner should stop trying to be funny. Your partner shrugs off his comment at first, but later approaches you and asks you whether you thought his joke was funny. You did not think the joke was funny. How would you handle this situation?
   - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
   - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings
4. You and your partner are taking a course together. The night before your partner must give his first presentation he tells you that he is extremely nervous and is worried that he will do poorly. The next day he gives his presentation, but he feels uncertain about how he did. After class your partner asks you if you thought he sounded nervous. You think that he did indeed sound nervous. How would you handle this situation?

- I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
- I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

5. One day you come home to find your partner straightening up your apartment. As you look around you realize that your entire apartment is clean. He says that he knows that you had a busy week and that you hate cleaning so he wanted to surprise you. At first you are delighted to have such a clean apartment, but you realize that in the process of cleaning he accidentally threw out an item that was very important to you. You feel quite upset about losing this special item, but are hesitant to mention anything to him because--after all—he was nice enough to spend the whole day cleaning your apartment. He senses that something is troubling you and asks if anything is wrong. How would you handle this situation?

- I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
- I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

6. You and your partner have just been physically intimate with each other. Usually you think that he is great in bed but for some reason tonight you just did not enjoy yourself as much as usual. As you are lying in bed, your partner asks whether it was good for you. How would you handle this situation?

- I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
- I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

7. Your partner invites you over to his house for dinner. He tells you that his mom cooked her special spaghetti recipe and is eager to have you over as a guest. You know it is important to him that you occasionally spend time with his family, but you feel like you have seen way too much of them lately and would like some time to yourself. As you dial your partner’s phone number to turn down his dinner invitation you debate whether you should tell him how you really feel or make up an excuse for missing the dinner. How would you handle this situation?

- I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
- I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings
8. You and your partner are having a conversation about your relationship. In the past the two of you had some difficulties, but for the last few months things have been absolutely great. He tells you that he is extremely happy and that even when things were not going well he always wanted to try to work it out. Breaking up was never an option for him. He asks you if you had ever considered throwing in the towel and ending the relationship. Although you are currently very happy in the relationship, in the past you had considered ending the relationship several times. How would you handle this situation?

   - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
   - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

9. Over the past few weeks you have found yourself feeling less attracted to your partner. Although you still care very deeply about him you begin to avoid situations in which there may be an opportunity for the two of you to become physically intimate. He notices that you have not seemed as physically interested in him lately and asks you if anything is bothering you. How would you handle this situation?

   - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
   - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings

10. Your partner needs to have his wisdom teeth removed. The night before his appointment your partner tells you that he heard that the procedure can be painful. You sense that your partner is very nervous about having his teeth removed. He asks you what your experience was like, hoping your response will calm his nerves. You think back to having your wisdom teeth removed and recall that it hurt quite a bit. How would you handle this situation?

    - I would tell him a white lie in order to spare his feelings
    - I would tell him the truth even though I know it might hurt his feelings
Appendix H: Positive Illusions (Optimism)

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you believe the following events are likely to occur in your relationship in comparison to the typical or average relationship. Please compare your relationship to a typical relationship of approximately the same length. For example, if you and your partner have been exclusively dating for 6 months, compare your relationship to the typical relationship that has been intact for 6 months.

1. I will become closer to my romantic partner even when external events or forces conspire to tear our relationship apart.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

2. The love my partner and I share will continue to grow.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

3. My partner and I will become happier and even more satisfied with our relationship than we are today.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

4. My partner and I will discover areas in which our needs conflict in a serious way.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
5. My partner or I will be attracted enough to another person to consider leaving our relationship.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

6. My partner and I will grow further apart as we discover the negative aspects of our relationship.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

7. My partner and I will never tire of one another’s company no matter how much time we spend together.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

8. Our relationship will break up within the next 6 months.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

9. Our relationship will lead to marriage.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
10. My partner or I will question our involvement with one another as we discover one another’s faults.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship

11. The passion my partner and I share will remain as intense as it is today.
   - Much less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat less likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Equally likely to occur in my relationship and in the typical relationship
   - Somewhat more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
   - Much more likely to occur in my relationship than in the typical relationship
Appendix I: RAS (Relationship Satisfaction)

Below you will see a list of statements. Please consider each statement in reference to your current relationship and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree.

1. My romantic partner meets my needs.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

2. In general, I am very satisfied with my relationship.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

3. Compared to most other relationships, I feel that my relationship is very good.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

4. I wish I hadn’t gotten into this relationship.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

5. My relationship meets my original expectations.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
6. I love my partner.
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree

7. There are many problems in my relationship.
   - Completely disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat agree
   - Completely agree