

## Giving Up and Giving In: The Costs and Benefits of Daily Sacrifice in Intimate Relationships

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This research provided the first empirical investigation of how approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice in intimate relationships are associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. In Study 1, the nature of everyday sacrifices made by dating partners was examined, and a measure of approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice was developed. In Study 2, which was a 2-week daily experience study of college students in dating relationships, specific predictions from the theoretical model were tested and both longitudinal and dyadic components were included. Whereas approach motives for sacrifice were positively associated with personal well-being and relationship quality, avoidance motives for sacrifice were negatively associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. Sacrificing for avoidance motives was particularly detrimental to the maintenance of relationships over time. Perceptions of a partner's motives for sacrifice were also associated with well-being and relationship quality. Implications for the conceptualization of relationship maintenance processes along these 2 dimensions are discussed.

*Keywords:* motivation, close relationships, sacrifice, relationship maintenance, daily experience methods

In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up that makes us rich.—Henry Ward Beecher

I swear, by my life and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man.—Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*

With these statements, Beecher and Rand express two competing values in Western society: one emphasizing an ethic of altruism, selflessness, and sacrifice, and the other emphasizing individualism, autonomy, and a relentless pursuit of personal freedom. In our intimate relationships, we often find ourselves at a crossroads between these two paths—in situations that pit giving selflessly to a romantic partner against being “true” to our own wishes and desires. After all, what is best for one partner may not always

coincide with the other partner's own interests, and vice versa. Some conflicts of interest in relationships are of major importance: Should I relocate to a new city so my partner can take a better job? Should I give away my beloved miniature dachshund puppy because my partner is allergic to dogs? Others are more mundane but potentially recurrent such as disagreements about what TV show to watch, whose friends to go out with, or whether to engage in sexual activity on a particular occasion.

One possible resolution to such conflicts of interest is to sacrifice, that is, to give up one's immediate self-interest for the sake of a partner or a relationship (Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997). Clearly, successful relationships require some willingness to set aside personal interests and desires. But, sacrifice cannot always be a useful strategy. Under what circumstances is it harmful to place a partner's interests ahead of one's own? Many feminist clinicians and researchers have been critical of sacrifice, suggesting that it sets the stage for “codependency,” relationship dissatisfaction, and depression (e.g., Jack, 1991; Jordan, 1991; H. G. Lerner, 1988). On the one hand, empirical research has shown that subverting one's true wishes and desires in a relationship is associated with increased psychological distress and decreased relationship satisfaction (e.g., Cramer, 2002; Fritz & Helgeson, 1998; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). On the other hand, social psychologists have investigated the positive role of sacrifice in relationships and demonstrated a variety of relational benefits, including increased satisfaction and a greater likelihood of persistence over time (Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997; Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999).

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The present research seeks to reconcile these contradictory findings by presenting and testing a new approach–avoidance motivational analysis of sacrifice. The central thesis of this article is that the personal and relational consequences of sacrifice depend—at least in part—on the motives that underlie an individual’s decision to engage in these behaviors. To develop the rationale for a motivational analysis of sacrifice, we first review previous research and theory on sacrifice, focusing in particular on the potential costs and benefits of giving up one’s own desires in relationships. We then introduce the approach–avoidance theoretical framework and apply it to the study of sacrifice. Next, we present the results of two studies. In Study 1, we investigated the types of sacrifices made by dating partners in everyday life and developed a measure of sacrifice motives. In Study 2, we used a daily experience method to provide a systematic test of daily associations between sacrifice motives and both personal well-being and relationship quality. Finally, we discuss implications for the conceptualization of relationship maintenance processes in terms of the approach and avoidance motivational systems.

### Previous Research on Sacrifice in Close Relationships

Despite the potential importance of sacrifice in close relationships (see Whitton, Stanley, & Markman, 2002, for a review), it has not been a topic of great empirical inquiry. By definition, to sacrifice is to forgo one’s immediate self-interest for the sake of a partner or a relationship (Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997). Sacrifice may be passive (involving the forfeiting of desirable behaviors), active (involving the enacting of undesirable behaviors), or both. Previous research has focused primarily on major acts of sacrifice. In these studies, participants indicated the extent to which they would give up their favorite activities or pastimes in order to continue their relationship. In other studies, participants responded to experimenter-generated examples of sacrifice by indicating the extent to which they would give up moderately desirable activities (e.g., “spending time with same-gender friends”) or engage in moderately undesirable activities (e.g., “attending parties where I do not know anyone”) in order to maintain and improve their relationships. Neither of these methods taps the full range of sacrifices experienced in daily life. One goal of the present research was to go beyond measures that rely on participants’ hypothetical willingness to sacrifice and instead to examine the kinds of sacrifices that intimate partners actually make in their everyday lives.

Most empirical research on sacrifice has been guided by an interdependence theoretical framework (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) that posits that the structure of relationships sometimes makes it necessary for individuals to give up their immediate preferences. According to the theory, when partners’ interests align, their outcomes are said to be *correspondent*. That is, what is good for one partner is good for the other, and therefore sacrifice is unnecessary. However, when partners’ interests are at odds, their outcomes are said to be *noncorrespondent*. In such situations, individuals are forced to choose between their own self-interest and sacrifice to solve a dilemma involving noncorrespondent outcomes. When individuals depart from their own preferences, they are said to undergo a *transformation of motivation* in which desires to pursue self-interest may be replaced or supplanted by concerns about the well-being of the partner or the relationship.

Empirical research has focused almost exclusively on the potential benefits of sacrifice for intimate relationships. Across several studies of dating and married couples, willingness to sacrifice was associated with increased dyadic adjustment, assessed both cross-sectionally and longitudinally (Van Lange, Agnew, et al., 1997; Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997). Furthermore, willingness to sacrifice was a small but significant predictor of whether a dating relationship persisted or ended over the course of an academic semester (Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997). Research has also shown that perceiving one’s partner as making a sacrifice increases trust in the partner, which in turn increases commitment to the relationship (Wieselquist et al., 1999).

Sacrifice can also be costly. For instance, one person’s sacrifice may resolve an immediate interdependence dilemma but leave lingering feelings of resentment, guilt, dependence, or ensure other psychological costs (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). In a similar vein, research on conflict avoidance has shown that keeping one’s “true” feelings inside is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction, both concurrently and over time (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Cramer, 2002; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, & Callan, 1994). Feminist clinicians and theorists have noted that an unfortunate liability of the subordination of personal desires can be a heightened risk for depression and a loss of self and authenticity, problems that may affect women more often than men (Jack & Dill, 1992; Jordan, 1991; Miller, 1986). Furthermore, research on the construct of “unmitigated communion” has shown that focusing on others to the detriment of oneself negatively affects well-being (e.g., Fritz & Helgeson, 1998).

In summary, research on sacrifice and related phenomena suggests that there are both costs and benefits to giving up one’s immediate desires in relationships. What might account for these differing consequences? In this article, we propose that the consequences of sacrifice depend at least in part on the motives that are served. Acts of sacrifice that are motivated by desires to meet another’s needs may result in feelings of happiness and satisfaction (Batson, Bolen, Cross, & Neuringer-Benefiel, 1986). In contrast, denying one’s own needs out of a desire to avoid harmful repercussions may lead to negative outcomes. Although interdependence theorists have proposed that solutions to correspondence dilemmas are diagnostic of an individual’s goals, values, and motives (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), very little research has examined people’s motives for sacrifice, and none has investigated the consequences of sacrifices undertaken in the service of different motives.

### An Approach–Avoidance Analysis of Sacrifice

A “No” uttered from deepest conviction is better and greater than a “Yes” merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble.

—Mahatma Gandhi

The present research examined intimate sacrifice from an approach–avoidance motivational perspective (e.g., Carver & White, 1994; Gray, 1987). In the realm of close relationships, approach motives focus on obtaining positive outcomes, such as a partner’s happiness or enhanced intimacy in the relationship, whereas avoidance motives focus on evading negative outcomes, such as conflict, disapproval, or a partner’s loss of interest in the

relationship (Gable & Reis, 2001). The present study draws on the approach–avoidance framework to understand how sacrifices undertaken in pursuit of different motives are associated with both personal well-being and the quality of intimate relationships.

### *The Approach–Avoidance Framework*

Several theories of motivational processes postulate the existence of distinct approach (also called *appetitive*) and avoidance (also called *aversive*) motivational systems (see Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Elliot & Covington, 2001, for reviews). For instance, Gray's (1987) neuropsychological model of motivation posits independent appetitive and aversive motivational systems, referred to as the *behavioral approach system* (BAS) and the *behavioral inhibition system* (BIS) (see also Carver & White, 1994). Specifically, the BAS is an appetitive system that motivates behavior in response to signals of reward, whereas the BIS is an aversive system that motivates behavior in response to signals of punishment. Higgins' (1998) theory of regulatory focus also distinguishes between two independent forms of self-regulation, one focused on the promotion (attainment) of positive end states, the other focused on the prevention of negative end states. Elliot has also distinguished between approach and avoidance goals in the domains of personal strivings (Elliot & Sheldon, 1997) and academic achievement (Elliot & Church, 1997).

Approach and avoidance motivational systems have been shown to be relatively independent such that individuals with strong approach tendencies do not necessarily possess weak avoidance motives, and vice versa (e.g., Gray, 1987). Neurophysiological research provides support for this idea. For example, both Harmon-Jones and Allen (1997) and Sutton and Davidson (1997) used electroencephalographic technology to investigate the utility of BIS and BAS scores in predicting resting prefrontal asymmetry. Whereas participants with higher BAS scores showed more relative left prefrontal activation, those with higher BIS scores showed more relative right prefrontal activation. On the basis of these and other findings, Davidson and colleagues have suggested that approach and avoidance are managed by two separate neural systems (e.g., Davidson, Ekman, Saron, Senulis, & Friesen, 1990).

The distinction between approach and avoidance motives has implications for understanding emotions and health. In terms of emotions, Carver and Scheier (1990, 1998) outlined two independent dimensions of affective experience, one managing approach behavior (and ranging from elation to depression) and the other managing avoidance behavior (and ranging from fear to relief). In a study of motivational dispositions and daily events, Gable, Reis, and Elliot (2000) found that participants with higher BAS sensitivity reported experiencing more daily positive affect (PA) than those with lower BAS sensitivity, whereas participants with higher BIS sensitivity reported experiencing more daily negative affect (NA) than those with lower BIS sensitivity. In terms of health, approach motives are associated with greater life optimism, higher subjective well-being, and lower depression (Coats, Janoff-Bulman, & Alpert, 1996; Elliot, Sheldon, & Church, 1997). In contrast, avoidance personal goals are associated with more physical symptom reports, both prospectively and retrospectively (Elliot & Sheldon, 1997).

The approach–avoidance motivational distinction has been particularly helpful in understanding social motivation. Several early

theorists distinguished between approach and avoidance social regulation (e.g., Boyatzis, 1973; Mehrabian, 1976). For instance, Mehrabian (1976) distinguished between two social motives: the need for affiliation and the fear of rejection. People high in the need for affiliation generally expect to be positively reinforced in their interpersonal relationships, whereas people high in fear of rejection generally expect punishment (Mehrabian & Ksionzky, 1974). Whereas people high in the need for affiliation report feeling more self-confident and elicit more PA, people high in fear of rejection report feeling less self-confident and are judged more negatively by others (Mehrabian, 1976; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978). Recently, Gable (in press) has shown that approach and avoidance motives and goals predict different social outcomes. In three short-term longitudinal studies, whereas approach social motives and goals were linked to outcomes characterized by the presence of positive social features (e.g., more satisfaction with social bonds and less loneliness), avoidance social motives and goals were linked to outcomes characterized by the presence of negative social features (e.g., more negative social attitudes and greater relationship insecurity) and the absence of positive social features. These studies suggest that the effects of approach motives may be more specific than those for avoidance, at least in the interpersonal realm.

### *Applying the Framework to Sacrifice*

The following section considers possible ways in which approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice may influence both personal well-being, the well-being of the partner, and the quality of intimate relationships.

### *Effects on the Person Who Sacrifices*

In terms of personal well-being, people may have different emotional experiences if they sacrifice for a partner in pursuit of different motives. For instance, gratifying a partner's wishes to make him or her happy (an approach motive) may lead to increased pleasure and positive emotions through the process of empathic identification (e.g., Blau, 1964; M. J. Lerner, Miller, & Holmes, 1976). However, sacrificing to prevent conflict (an avoidance motive) may at best lead to relief and at worst produce the very anxiety and tension that an individual was trying to avoid (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998).

In the interpersonal realm, people may feel differently toward their partners and their relationships, depending on whether they sacrifice for approach or avoidance motives. A man who sacrifices to please his wife (an approach motive) may subsequently feel greater satisfaction knowing that he has cared for and responded to his wife in a loving manner. In contrast, a man who sacrifices to avoid disappointing his wife (an avoidance motive) may feel resentment or other negative emotions that detract from his satisfaction in the marriage.

A recent empirical study of dating relationships provides preliminary support for these claims (Neff & Harter, 2002). In this study, individuals who typically resolved conflicts by subordinating their own needs out of genuine concern for a partner's well-being reported more personal benefits (e.g., personal fulfillment) and interpersonal benefits (e.g., a strengthened relationship). In contrast, those who subordinated their own needs in order to avoid

conflict reported more negative personal consequences (e.g., unhappiness and resentment) and interpersonal consequences (e.g., a weakened relationship). Although this study was not guided explicitly by an approach–avoidance motivational framework and did not examine variability in conflict resolution style within persons, it is, nevertheless, consistent with the claim that motives for sacrifice may be associated with both personal well-being and relationship quality.

### *Effects on the Recipient of Sacrifice*

When faced with a potential conflict of interest in relationships, individuals often pay attention to whether or not their partner chooses to deviate from self-interested concerns (Kelley, 1979). In other words, when one person makes a sacrifice, his or her partner may be motivated to figure out why. Perceiving that one's partner has sacrificed for approach versus avoidance motives may be differentially associated with well-being and relationship quality. For example, a man who believes that his wife is missing lunch with friends to make it to his tennis match because she wants to show her love and support (approach motives) may have a very different experience than thinking that she is coming to the match out of obligation or to avoid her partner's disappointment (avoidance motives). In order to more fully understand the effects of sacrifice on relationships, both *motive expression* (the sacrificer's self-reported motives) and *motive attribution* (the recipient's perception of the sacrificer's motives) need to be taken into account.

### *Individual Differences*

As previous research has documented, there may be strong dispositional tendencies to construe social situations in approach or avoidance terms (e.g., Carver & White, 1994; Gable et al., 2000). Whereas individuals who are high in the hope for affiliation ( $H_{AFF}$ ) expect their interpersonal interactions to be relatively rewarding, those who are high in fear of rejection ( $F_{REJ}$ ) generally expect punishment (e.g., Mehrabian, 1976). These two general dispositions for social regulation are likely to be associated with motives for sacrifice in intimate relationships. Specifically, whereas individuals who are high in  $H_{AFF}$  may be likely to sacrifice for approach motives, those high in  $F_{REJ}$  may be relatively more likely to sacrifice for avoidance motives.

### Overview of the Present Research

We conducted two studies to test predictions from approach–avoidance theories of motivation about when sacrifice is beneficial or costly for individuals and their intimate relationships. In Study 1, we used both open- and closed-ended methods to gain rich, contextual information about the types of sacrifices made by dating partners in everyday life, to develop a measure of sacrifice motives, and to provide preliminary evidence for the predictive validity of the approach and avoidance subscales of the new measure. In Study 2, we used an experience-sampling method to provide a systematic test of the associations between daily sacrifice motives and both personal well-being and relationship quality. Four main sets of predictions were tested. The first set was within person in nature and included specific predictions about how motives for sacrifice are associated with personal well-being (e.g.,

emotions, life satisfaction) and relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction, closeness, conflict). The second set was between person in nature and included specific predictions about how individual differences in  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$  are associated with motives for sacrifice. The third set was longitudinal in nature and concerned the association between sacrifice motives and relationship satisfaction and stability over a 1-month span of time. The fourth set concerned associations between perceptions of a partner's motives for sacrifice and both personal well-being and relationship quality.

### Study 1

We had two main goals in Study 1. The first goal was to provide descriptive information about actual sacrifices made in dating relationships. The second goal was to create a reliable and valid measure of approach and avoidance sacrifice motives. To provide initial evidence for the discriminant validity of the two subscales, it is important to demonstrate that approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice are differentially associated with relationship satisfaction. Specifically, we predicted that approach sacrifice motives will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction, whereas avoidance motives will be negatively associated with satisfaction.

### *Method*

#### *Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 45 male and 77 female undergraduates at the University of California, Los Angeles who received credit toward a psychology course. Their age ranged from 18 to 37 years ( $M = 19.8$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ). The sample was ethnically diverse: 4% were African American, 39% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 10% were Hispanic, 34% were White, and 13% self-identified as multiethnic or "other." To be eligible, participants had to be currently involved in a dating relationship ( $M = 1$  year, 7 months).

#### *Measures*

*Types of sacrifice.* To facilitate the recall of as many instances of sacrifice in their dating relationships as possible, *sacrifice* was defined as both doing something unwanted (i.e., "active sacrifice") and giving up something wanted (i.e., "passive sacrifice"). First, participants were asked to list up to 10 sacrifices for which they engaged in an activity, either for a partner (e.g., going to the library to pick up a book) or with a partner (e.g., going to a movie) that they were personally not interested in doing. Second, they were asked to list up to 10 sacrifices for which they gave up an activity that they were personally interested in for the sake of their partner (e.g., spending time with your friends). Adequate space was provided to allow participants to write open-ended descriptions of each sacrifice.

*Motives for sacrifice.* Sacrifice motives were assessed with both closed- and open-ended questions. For the closed-ended questions, approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice were adapted from the Motivations for Caregiving Scale, developed by Feeney and Collins (2003). Eight of the original items that focused on obtaining positive outcomes and seven items that focused on avoiding negative outcomes were altered to refer specifically to sacrifice instead of caring for a partner. The approach items were "I love my partner and am concerned about his or her well-being," "I want my partner to be happy," "I get a great deal of pleasure out of making my partner happy," "Just knowing that I have done a nice thing for my partner makes me feel good," "I want to develop a closer relationship with my partner," "I want my partner to appreciate me," "I feel good about myself when I sacrifice for my partner," and "I truly enjoy sacrificing

for my partner." The avoidance items were "I do not want my partner to think negatively about me," "I want to avoid negative consequences from my partner (e.g., anger)," "I feel guilty if I do not sacrifice," "I feel less anxious when I sacrifice for my partner," "I feel obligated to sacrifice for my partner," "I sometimes feel that I do not deserve my partner, so I sacrifice to make up for it," and "I have to sacrifice or my partner will not love me." Participants were presented with the phrase, "On occasions when I sacrifice for my current partner, I generally do so because . . ." and were asked to rate each of the motives on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*). Participants were also given adequate space to provide open-ended descriptions of any additional motives that were not captured by the items in the scales.

**Relationship satisfaction.** Relationship satisfaction was assessed with five questions from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Participants responded to such statements as "Our relationship makes me happy" on 9-point scales ranging from 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8 (*agree completely*). In this sample,  $\alpha = .88$ .

## Results and Discussion

### Types of Sacrifice

The first goal of this study was to develop a coding scheme to classify the open-ended descriptions of sacrifice into a smaller number of important categories. Participants listed an average of 10 sacrifices. Many of the sacrifices contained elements of both active and passive sacrifice, so for thematic coding purposes, these two types of sacrifice were collapsed. Emily A. Impett and a research assistant read through approximately 10% of the sacrifices and developed a list of 12 important themes (plus one "other" category). Two independent raters were provided with a description of each type of sacrifice as well as sample items (see Table 1). They coded the sacrifices into one of the 12 major categories, with 91% agreement ( $\kappa = .92$ ),  $t(1221) = 87.64$ ,  $p < .001$ . The two raters then discussed all sacrifices until the discrepancies were resolved. Only 30 of the 1,221 sacrifices could not be classified with the coding scheme and were therefore dropped from the

analyses. Topics listed by over half the participants included friends (mentioned at least once by 87% of participants); recreation (86%); errands, chores, and favors (65%); school and work (59%); and family (56%). Other common topics included communication and interaction (49%), gifts and money (33%), and other-sex interactions (25%). Less frequently mentioned topics included appearance (10%) and intimacy (10%). Only 9% of participants listed a sacrifice that was considered "major" (e.g., relocating to a new city).

### Motives for Sacrifice

The second goal was to develop a reliable and valid measure of approach (APPROACH) and avoidance sacrifice motives (AVOID) to be used in Study 2. Participants' responses to the eight approach items and the seven avoidance items were averaged into composite variables. Both variables had sufficiently high internal reliability ( $\alpha = .72$  and  $.68$ , respectively). On the whole, participants placed relatively greater importance on APPROACH ( $M = 4.07$ ) than on AVOID ( $M = 2.55$ ),  $t(121) = 21.55$ ,  $p < .001$ . This finding is consistent with research in other domains (e.g., achievement, social relations, sexuality) documenting that approach motives are more common than avoidance motives (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998; Elliot & Church, 1997; Gable, in press). Consistent with the idea that approach and avoidance motivational tendencies are relatively independent, there was no association between APPROACH and AVOID,  $r(122) = .04$ ,  $p = .66$ . In other words, individuals who reported high levels of APPROACH did not necessarily report low (or high) levels of AVOID, and vice versa.

To provide initial evidence for the discriminant validity of the two motives subscales, APPROACH and AVOID were regressed simultaneously onto relationship satisfaction. As predicted, APPROACH were positively associated with satisfaction ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas AVOID were negatively associated with

Table 1  
Sacrifice Categories and Sample Items From Studies 1 and 2

Category	Sample item	Study 1	Study 2	Study 2 (partners)
Friends	"Went to his friend's party" and "Cancelled plans with my friends"	87	44	32
Recreation	"Went to the LA Auto Show" and "No video games when she comes over"	86	69	47
Errands, chores, and favors	"Ironing his clothes" and "No laundry when he's at my apartment"	65	61	50
School and work	"Editing his papers" and "Spend less time studying"	62	73	62
Health and lifestyle	"Got him medicine when he was sick" and "Smoke less when I'm around her"	59	59	48
Family	"I went to Thanksgiving with his family" and "I don't see my sister very much"	56	23	20
Communication and interaction	"Staying up late to talk to him" and "Gave up seeing him when he was studying"	49	59	44
Gifts and money	"Bought a necklace for her" and "Provided for him when he was unemployed"	33	19	47
Other-sex interactions	"I avoid talking to other men" and "Stopped dating other girls"	25	5	5
Appearance	"Wearing things he finds sexy" and "Not wearing revealing clothes"	10	4	9
Intimacy	"Having sex when I don't want to" and "Gave up physical contact"	10	18	13
Major sacrifices	"Learning her native language" and "Moved away from home"	9	0	0

Note. The numbers represent the percentage of participants who listed at least one sacrifice in each category.

satisfaction ( $\beta = -.20, p < .05$ ). These findings provide initial support for the validity of the two subscales, showing that APPROACH and AVOID are differentially associated with an individual's satisfaction in his or her relationship. Study 2 provided a more systematic test of the approach-avoidance predictions in the context of daily life.

## Study 2

### *Overview and Summary of the Hypotheses*

A daily experience study was designed to provide the first empirical test of how approach and avoidance motives for sacrifice are associated with day-to-day personal well-being and relationship quality. Individuals in an ongoing dating relationship completed a brief survey for 14 consecutive nights. These daily surveys included measures of sacrifice, personal well-being, and relationship quality. In addition to the daily assessments, there was also an initial survey measuring personality and relationship quality and a 1-month follow-up to assess the longer term relationship consequences of sacrifice. Finally, a questionnaire was also given to each participant's partner to assess the extent to which perceiving one's partner engage in sacrifice for approach and avoidance motives is associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. Within-person, between-person, longitudinal, and partner hypotheses are outlined below.<sup>1</sup>

### *Hypotheses About Daily Sacrifice and Well-Being*

*Hypothesis 1:* On a given day, participants who report increases in sacrifice for approach motives (compared with their own mean) will report higher PA, higher satisfaction with life (SWL), greater positive relationship quality (POSREL) (i.e., satisfaction, closeness, and fun), and less relationship conflict (CONFLICT).

*Hypothesis 2:* On a given day, participants who report increases in sacrifice for avoidance motives (compared with their own mean) will report higher NA, lower SWL, poorer POSREL (i.e., less satisfaction, closeness, and fun), and more CONFLICT.

### *Hypotheses About Individual Differences*

*Hypothesis 3:* Higher hope for affiliation ( $H_{\text{AFF}}$ ) will be associated with higher average levels of approach sacrifice motives, PA, SWL, and POSREL and with lower average levels of CONFLICT across days.

*Hypothesis 4:* Higher fear of rejection ( $F_{\text{REJ}}$ ) will be associated with higher average levels of avoidance sacrifice motives, NA, and CONFLICT and with lower average levels of SWL and POSREL across days.

### *Hypotheses About Relationship Well-Being Over Time*

*Hypothesis 5:* Increased sacrifice for approach motives during the course of the study will be associated with

increased relationship satisfaction and a decreased likelihood of breaking up at the 1-month follow-up.

*Hypothesis 6:* Increased sacrifice for avoidance motives during the course of the study will be associated with decreased relationship satisfaction and an increased likelihood of breaking up at the 1-month follow-up.

### *Hypotheses About Partners' Perceptions of Sacrifice*

*Hypothesis 7:* Perceiving that one's partner has engaged in sacrifice for approach motives will be associated with higher PA, lower NA, higher SWL, and higher relationship satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 8:* Perceiving that one's partner has engaged in sacrifice for avoidance motives will be associated with higher NA, lower PA, lower SWL, and lower relationship satisfaction.

## *Method*

### *Participants and Procedure*

One hundred sixty-one undergraduate participants at the University of California, Los Angeles began the study, and 153 (69 men and 84 women) completed a minimum of three daily assessments on time. They received credit toward psychology course work in exchange for participation. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 38 years ( $M = 20.1, SD = 2.4$ ). The sample was ethnically diverse: 4% were African American, 40% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 13% were Hispanic, 35% were White, and 8% self-identified as multiethnic or "other." To be eligible, all participants had to be currently involved in a dating relationship ( $M_{\text{LENGTH}} = 1$  year, 7 months) and see their partner at least 5 days per week (i.e., no long-distance relationships).

During an initial session, participants completed a questionnaire assessing basic demographic information, personality characteristics, and relationship quality. Next, each participant was given 14 booklets, each containing the daily measures, one for each night of the 2-week period. A researcher reviewed the procedures for completing the daily logs, specifically emphasizing that participants should begin completing their logs that evening; that they should complete the logs before going to bed; that their responses were anonymous and confidential; that they should not discuss

<sup>1</sup> Previous research on dispositional motives and personal well-being (i.e., affect) suggests that whereas approach motives are associated with the presence and absence of PA, avoidance motives are associated with the presence and absence of NA (e.g., Gable et al., 2000). The research is less conclusive about the specificity of the effects of motives on interpersonal well-being, but several recent studies reported in Gable (in press) suggest that the effects of approach motives may be more specific than those for avoidance (i.e., approach motives may predict only positive outcomes, whereas avoidance motives may predict both positive and negative outcomes). On the basis of the previous research, our predictions for daily affect reflect a greater degree of specificity than those for interpersonal well-being.

their logs with their partner;<sup>2</sup> and that if they missed a day, then they should leave that particular log blank.

To bolster and verify compliance with the daily schedule, participants were asked to return completed logs every 2–3 days to a locked mailbox located outside the laboratory. As an incentive, each time participants handed in a set of logs on time, they received a lottery ticket for one of several cash prizes (\$100, \$50, \$25) to be awarded after the study. Participants who did not return a particular set of logs on time were reminded by phone or e-mail. Only daily logs returned on time were treated as valid and retained in the data set. Participants completed 1,928 daily logs on time, an average of 12.6 (out of 14) days per person. Eighty-nine percent of participants completed all 14 daily logs days on time.

All participants were asked to return on the day after they completed their final log (i.e., Day 15) for an “exit” session. During this session, they handed in their last two or three daily logs, completed a short questionnaire about their experiences in the study, and were asked to take a short questionnaire to their partner to be completed privately at home and mailed back in exchange for a \$5 payment. Seventy-nine percent of the participants’ partners initially agreed to complete the take-home survey, and of those, 88% returned their surveys within 1 week. In total, 70% ( $N = 107$ ) of the participants’ partners provided data. Participants whose partners completed versus did not complete the survey did not differ significantly on any of the aggregated measures of personal well-being or relationship quality in the daily experience study. The participants’ partners ranged in age from 16 to 41 years ( $M = 20.6$ ,  $SD = 3.3$ ). The sample was ethnically diverse: 2% were African American, 38% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 14% were Hispanic, 37% were White, and 9% self-identified as multiethnic or “other.”

Additionally, 1 month after their exit session, participants were sent a short e-mail survey with questions about their current relationship status and satisfaction. Of the 153 original participants, 134 (88%) responded to the follow-up e-mail survey sent 1 month after completion of the daily experience study. Participants who completed and did not complete the follow-up did not significantly differ in baseline relationship satisfaction or commitment. Of the 134 participants who responded to the follow-up, 18 (13%) of the respondents indicated that they had broken up with their partner sometime during the month after the exit session.<sup>3</sup>

### Background Measures

At the initial session, participants completed a background questionnaire. The first page asked participants for basic demographic information (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, relationship duration, and the like), and the remainder contained measures of sacrifice, social motivation, and relationship quality. Only those measures relevant to the aims of the present article are described below.

**Sacrifice.** A sacrifice information sheet provided participants with definitions of the two types of sacrifice (i.e., doing something unwanted; giving up something wanted) as well as examples of sacrifices commonly identified by participants in Study 1. To ensure that participants understood the definitions of sacrifice, they provided written descriptions of several sacrifices they had made in their own relationships. Any questions about the definition or conceptualization of sacrifice were answered at this point.

**Approach and avoidance social motivation.** Individual differences in  $H_{AFF}$  (an approach social motive) and  $F_{REJ}$  (an avoidance social motive) were measured with a semiprojective measure called the *Multi-Motive Grid* (MMG), developed by Schmalz (1999). Previous research has established good internal and test–retest reliability of the MMG and provided evidence of external validity (Sokolowski, Schmalz, Langens, & Puca, 2000). The MMG was included rather than more traditional self-report measures of social motivation to ensure that any associations we documented between approach and avoidance social motivation and sacrifice motives would not be because of shared method variance. The MMG contains 14 Thematic Apperception Test-like ambiguous pictures, followed by a series of state-

ments about the picture used to measure  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$ . Participants indicated whether the statements describe the way they would think or feel in the situation depicted in each picture. Sample statements are “Feeling good about meeting other people” and “Being afraid of being rejected by others.” Twelve statements compose the  $H_{AFF}$  scale and 12 statements compose the  $F_{REJ}$  scale. In the present study,  $\alpha = .66$  for the  $H_{AFF}$  scale and  $\alpha = .78$  for the  $F_{REJ}$  scale.

**Relationship satisfaction and commitment.** Relationship satisfaction and commitment were assessed with standard measures developed by Rusbult and her colleagues (1998). Participants responded to such statements as “Our relationship makes me happy” (satisfaction) and “I want our relationship to last for a very long time” (commitment) on 9-point scales ranging from 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8 (*agree completely*). In this sample,  $\alpha = .89$  for satisfaction, and  $\alpha = .94$  for commitment.

### Daily Measures

Each daily log contained two sections. The first section included measures of PA, NA, SWL, and POSREL. The second section contained questions about particular sacrifices made that day, if any.

**Well-being.** The 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Tellegen, & Clark, 1988) was used to measure daily PA and NA. Participants were instructed to answer the questions according to “how you felt today.” The average within-person reliability coefficients over the 14-day period were .95 for PA and .94 for NA. The PA and NA scales were also relatively independent; correlations for daily ratings were  $-.05$  (at the person level,  $N = 153$ ) and  $-.20$  (at the day level,  $N = 1,925$ ). Subjective well-being was assessed with the five-item Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and was modified to refer to how participants felt that day. The average within-person alpha over the 14-day period for this scale was .95. Four items assessed different aspects of relationship quality. On 7-point scales, participants responded to the following questions: “How close did you feel to your partner today?”; “How satisfied with your relationship were you today?”; “How fun was your relationship today?”; and “How much conflict did you experience in your relationship today?” Because the three POSREL variables (closeness, satisfaction, and fun) were so highly intercorrelated, they were combined into a composite variable called *positive relationship quality*. The average within-person reliability coefficient was .95 for this new measure over the 14-day period.

**Sacrifice.** To capture the greatest possible number of sacrifices over the 2-week period, sacrifice was assessed with two different questions: “Today, did you do anything *for* or *with* your partner that you were personally not interested in doing?” and “Today, did you give up anything that you were personally interested in doing for the sake of your partner?” After each question, adequate space was provided for participants to write an open-ended description of each sacrifice, if any. For each sacrifice reported, participants completed a 10-item sacrifice motives scale (5 approach and 5 avoidance items) based on the measure developed in Study 1. Slight modifications were made to the previous

<sup>2</sup> In dyadic research, it is extremely difficult to prevent participants from discussing the nature of the study or their responses to survey questions with their partners. During the initial session in the daily experience study, special care was taken to emphasize the private nature of the daily questions and to discourage participants from discussing the details of the study with their partner. In the exit session, 89% of participants indicated that they discussed the study with their partner either “rarely” or “not at all.” All analyses that include responses from partners control for the amount of time participants indicated that they talked to their partner during the course of the 2-week study.

<sup>3</sup> None of the participants had relationships that ended during the 14-day study.

measure, including (a) decreasing the number of items to minimize participant burden, (b) combining similarly worded items, and (c) including two new items based on participants' open-ended descriptions of their motives for sacrifice obtained in Study 1. Participants rated the importance of each of the reasons in influencing their decision to sacrifice on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*). The approach items were "To enhance intimacy in my relationship"; "To express love for my partner"; "To make my partner happy"; "To feel good about myself"; and "To gain my partner's appreciation." The avoidance items were "To avoid conflict in my relationship"; "To prevent my partner from becoming upset"; "To avoid feeling guilty"; "To prevent my partner from getting angry at me"; and "To prevent my partner from losing interest in me." On days that participants made both types of sacrifices (i.e., active and passive), their responses to the motives scales for each sacrifice were aggregated. That is, each person received one daily score for approach motives and one daily score for avoidance motives. In the present study, a two-factor solution principal-components analysis with varimax rotation explained 61% of the scale variance. The first factor (37% of explained variance) included the five avoidance motives items, and the second factor (24% of explained variance) included the five approach motives items. The average within-person reliability coefficients over the 14-day study were .80 for approach motives and .92 for avoidance motives.

### Follow-Up Measures

One month after the end of the daily experience study, participants were sent a short e-mail survey inquiring about their current relationship status (i.e., broken up vs. still together) and relationship satisfaction if still together (Rusbult et al., 1998). In this sample,  $\alpha = .93$  for follow-up relationship satisfaction.

### Partner Measures

The survey sent to each participant's partner included questions about specific sacrifices that the individual's partner made over the previous 2 weeks, if any. The partners were provided with an information sheet that included definitions and examples of sacrifice. They were instructed to list up to 10 sacrifices made by their partner in the previous 2 weeks. Then, they responded to the same 10-item sacrifice motives measure used in the daily experience study and indicated the importance of each of the reasons in influencing their partner's decision to sacrifice during the previous 2 weeks on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*). The reliability for the two subscales was adequate ( $\alpha = .69$  for approach motives and  $\alpha = .86$  for avoidance motives). The survey also included measures of personal well-being and relationship quality. PA and NA were again assessed with the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988), with participants indicating the extent to which they felt each of 20 emotions during the previous 2 weeks ( $\alpha = .87$  for positive emotion and  $\alpha = .80$  for negative emotion). Subjective well-being was assessed with the Diener et al. (1985) Satisfaction With Life Scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Relationship satisfaction was assessed with the Rusbult et al. (1998) measure ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### Results and Discussion

Participants reported making sacrifices on 48% of days, with an average of 8.7 sacrifices made over the course of the 2-week study. Two independent raters used the coding scheme developed in Study 1 to categorize the sacrifices. The initial agreement rate was 90%, with  $\kappa = .91$ ,  $t(1621) = 92.87$ ,  $p < .001$ . The raters then discussed the sacrifices until all discrepancies were resolved. Table 1 presents the percentages of participants

who listed a sacrifice of each type at least once during the 2-week study. As in Study 1, the most common sacrifices were school and work (73%); recreation (69%); errands, chores, and favors (61%); communication and interaction (59%); health and lifestyle (59%); and friends (44%). Other less common but important sacrifices included family (23%), gifts and money (19%), and intimacy (18%).

### Daily Sacrifice, Personal Well-Being, and Relationship Quality (Hypotheses 1 and 2)

A central goal of this study was to test predictions about the daily associations between sacrifice motives and both personal well-being and relationship quality during the 14-day study. Traditional analysis of variance methods assume independence of observations, a criterion that is clearly violated when the same individual completes the same measures repeatedly over several days. Consequently, the data were analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques (HLMwin, Version 5.02; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2000). HLM provides independent estimates of the associations among constructs at the lower level (within persons) and models them at the upper level (between persons) as a random effect using maximum-likelihood estimation. A strength of HLM techniques is that they can readily handle an unbalanced number of cases per person (i.e., number of diaries provided or number of days sacrificed), giving greater weight to participants who provide more data (Reis & Gable, 2000; Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

A series of HLM equations was constructed to examine the lower level within-person associations between PA, NA, SWL, POSREL, and CONFLICT on the one hand and APPROACH and AVOID on the other. For example, the equation testing the association between SWL and sacrifice motives is as follows:

$$SWL_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{APPROACH}) + b_{2j}(\text{AVOID}) + r_{ij}. \quad (1)$$

In this equation,  $b_{0j}$  refers to the intercept (i.e., the person's SWL on their average day),  $b_{1j}$  represents the slope between SWL and APPROACH,  $b_{2j}$  represents the slope between SWL and AVOID, and  $r_{ij}$  represents error. APPROACH and AVOID were both centered around each person's mean; therefore,  $b_{1j}$  and  $b_{2j}$  represent the degree to which an individual's APPROACH and AVOID on the  $i$ th day deviated from his or her average level of APPROACH and AVOID. Thus, person  $j$ 's SWL on the  $i$ th day was predicted from his or her average SWL, APPROACH (on the  $i$ th day) weighted by its coefficient ( $b_{1j}$ ), AVOID (on the  $i$ th day) weighted by its coefficient ( $b_{2j}$ ), and error. Because there was a small but significant correlation between APPROACH and AVOID at the day level,  $r(1002) = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ , they were entered simultaneously in each equation in order to examine their unique effects.

Table 2 reports maximum-likelihood estimates relating each of the measures of well-being to APPROACH and AVOID. For example, the coefficient for the association between APPROACH and SWL (1st row of numbers, 3rd column in the table) can be interpreted as follows: Each unit increase in APPROACH (i.e.,

sacrificing for APPROACH one unit more on a given day than one's own average) was associated with a .34 unit increase in SWL on that day.<sup>4</sup>

First, in terms of personal well-being, the results show, as predicted, that APPROACH were significantly and positively associated with daily SWL and PA, but they were not associated with NA. In contrast, AVOID were negatively associated with SWL, positively associated with NA, and not associated with PA. Second, in terms of interpersonal well-being, the results show, as predicted, that APPROACH were significantly and positively related to POSREL and were negatively related to CONFLICT. AVOID were negatively associated with POSREL and positively associated with CONFLICT. In short, on days when participants reported increases in APPROACH (above their own average), they reported higher PA, SWL, POSREL, and less CONFLICT. In contrast, on days when they reported increases in AVOID (above their own average), they reported higher NA, less SWL, less POSREL, and more CONFLICT.

*Lagged-Day Analyses of Sacrifice Motives and Well-Being*

Documenting covariation between motives for sacrifice and personal and relationship well-being within days does not address the causality question, and either direction may be plausible. For example, on days when people sacrifice for approach motives, they may subsequently feel more positive emotions and greater relationship satisfaction. Alternatively, being in a good mood or feeling satisfied in one's relationship may lead people to sacrifice for approach motives. In order to compare these two alternatives, we conducted lagged-day analyses to examine the temporal sequence across days (West, Biesanz, & Pitts, 2000). Although lagged-day analyses cannot definitely demonstrate the existence of particular causal pathways because of the possible influence of a third variable, they can rule out causal pathways (cf. Kenny, 1975; Rogosa, 1980). A significant association from one day to the next does not provide full evidence of a causal pathway; it only suggests that a causal relationship cannot be ruled out.

In order to conduct these lagged-day analyses, we constructed HLM equations that predicted today's motives and well-being from yesterday's motives and yesterday's well-being. These two causal sequences are depicted in Figure 1. We predicted that

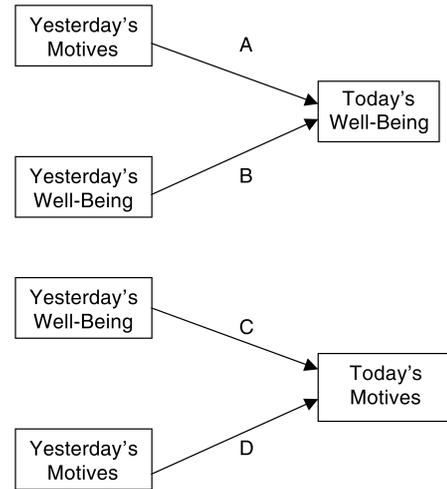


Figure 1. Model depicting the lagged-day analyses for the association between well-being and sacrifice motives.

yesterday's motives would be associated with today's well-being (Path A) after controlling for yesterday's well-being (Path B). We further predicted that yesterday's well-being would not be associated with today's motives (Path C) after controlling for yesterday's motives (Path D).

Tests of lagged-day associations were performed only for those variables that demonstrated significant associations in the earlier nonlagged analyses. Two HLM equations were constructed to test the association between each type of motive (APPROACH and AVOID) and each of the measures of well-being (see Equations 2 and 3 below). Using the association between approach motives and PA as an example, the equations testing the lagged-day associations were as follows:

$$\text{Today's PA}_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{PA}_{i-1j}) + b_{2j}(\text{APPROACH}_{i-1j}) + r_{ij}, \tag{2}$$

$$\text{Today's APPROACH}_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{PA}_{i-1j}) + b_{2j}(\text{APPROACH}_{i-1j}) + r_{ij}. \tag{3}$$

In Equation 2, today's PA is predicted from yesterday's PA (Day  $i - 1$ ) and yesterday's APPROACH (Day  $i - 1$ ). In Equation 3, today's APPROACH are predicted from yesterday's PA (Day  $i - 1$ ) and yesterday's APPROACH (Day  $i - 1$ ).

Table 2  
Associations Between Daily Sacrifice Motives and Measures of Personal Well-Being and Relationship Quality Using Unstandardized HLM Coefficients

Predictor	Outcome				
	PA	NA	SWL	POSREL	CONFLICT
APPROACH	.13**	-.09	.34***	.43***	-.36***
AVOID	-.06	.17**	-.26***	-.24***	.43***

Note.  $N = 153$ . The analysis with PA (positive affect) as an outcome controls for NA (negative affect), and vice versa. HLM = hierarchical linear modeling; SWL = satisfaction with life; POSREL = positive relationship quality; CONFLICT = relationship conflict; APPROACH = approach sacrifice motives; AVOID = avoidance sacrifice motives. \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>4</sup> In each of the initial HLM analyses, gender and relationship length were entered both as covariates and as interactions with approach and avoidance motives. Because none of these effects was significant, they were dropped from the final analyses. In addition, commitment was added both as a covariate and as an interaction with approach and avoidance motives in predicting daily well-being. Although commitment was significantly associated with PA ( $b = .09, p < .05$ ), NA ( $b = -.07, p < .05$ ), SWL ( $b = .15, p < .001$ ), and POSREL ( $b = .23, p < .001$ ), the associations between motives and well-being remained significant after controlling for commitment; furthermore, commitment did not significantly interact with either approach or avoidance motives in predicting any of the well-being variables. For these reasons, commitment was dropped from the final analyses.

In total, we tested 16 possible lagged-day associations, 8 testing the pathway from motives to well-being (i.e., Path A) and 8 testing the pathway from well-being to motives (i.e., Path C). We report maximum-likelihood estimates for each of these tests in Table 3. We begin with the evidence for Path A. Consistent with our predictions, we found some evidence that yesterday's motives are associated with today's well-being, controlling for yesterday's well-being. Specifically, yesterday's AVOID predicted today's POSREL even after controlling for yesterday's POSREL ( $b = -.16, p < .01$ ). In other words, a one-unit increase in AVOID predicted a 0.16 unit decrease in POSREL on the following day. In addition, yesterday's AVOID predicted today's CONFLICT even after controlling for the amount of conflict reported in the relationship on the previous day ( $b = .15, p < .01$ ). However, yesterday's AVOID did not significantly predict today's NA ( $b = .06, p = .34$ ) or today's SWL ( $b = .02, p = .66$ ). In addition, contrary to expectations, an individual's APPROACH on one day did not predict his or her personal or relationship well-being the next day, controlling for well-being on that day. Specifically, yesterday's APPROACH did not significantly predict today's PA ( $b = .02, p = .72$ ), SWL ( $b = .06, p = .34$ ), POSREL ( $b < -.01, p = .90$ ), or CONFLICT ( $b = .03, p = .54$ ).

Turning to Path C, as we predicted, there was very little evidence that yesterday's well-being predicted today's motives, controlling for yesterday's motives. Today's APPROACH were not significantly predicted by yesterday's PA ( $b = -.02, p = .72$ ), SWL ( $b < -.01, p = .96$ ), or POSREL ( $b = -.02, p = .55$ ), controlling for APPROACH on the previous day. However, yesterday's CONFLICT did significantly predict today's APPROACH ( $b = .06, p = .02$ ), controlling for yesterday's APPROACH. In other words, the more CONFLICT individuals reported in their relationships on one day, the more likely they were to sacrifice for APPROACH on the following day. Furthermore, today's AVOID were not significantly predicted by yesterday's NA ( $b = .01, p = .86$ ), SWL ( $b = .01, p = .80$ ), POSREL ( $b = -.05, p = .16$ ), or CONFLICT ( $b = .01, p = .77$ ), controlling for AVOID on the previous day.

In summary, the lagged-day results revealed almost no evidence that well-being causes changes in motives from one day to the next; furthermore, the results did not reveal evidence that

APPROACH cause increases in personal well-being and relationship quality from one day to the next or that AVOID cause increases in personal well-being from one day to the next. However, AVOID were associated with decreases in POSREL and increases in CONFLICT from one day to the next. Of course, these associations may or may not reflect a causal relationship, as a third variable may have caused increases in both variables. The results do, however, suggest that sacrificing for avoidance motives may be harmful to the maintenance of relationships over time, a point that we return to when analyzing the results of the longitudinal portion of the study.

### Testing Two Alternative Hypotheses

We propose that the motives underlying sacrifice are associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. Two alternative hypotheses merit consideration. First, it is possible that the frequency with which individuals make sacrifices in their relationships is a better predictor of relationship quality than motives for sacrifice. That is, regardless of their motives for doing so, the more often individuals give up their own interests for the sake of a partner, the more their relationship may benefit. This hypothesis is consistent with research documenting an association between willingness to sacrifice and relationship quality (e.g., Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997).

Second, another important idea guiding this research is that motives for sacrifice are more powerful predictors of well-being than the particular types of sacrifices that individuals make for an intimate partner. That is, when examining daily as opposed to major sacrifices, it should matter less "what" you do than "why" you do it. Alternatively, regardless of their motives for making sacrifices, there may be certain types of sacrifices that are associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. Both of these alternative hypotheses—one concerning the frequency of sacrifice and the other concerning the type of sacrifice—are compared with the hypotheses concerning the association between motives and well-being.

*Motives for sacrifice versus frequency of sacrifice.* To test the prediction that sacrifice motives would be more powerful predictors of well-being or relationship quality than frequency of sacri-

Table 3  
Lagged-Day Associations Between Motives for Sacrifice and Measures of Personal and Interpersonal Well-Being Using Unstandardized HLM Coefficients

DV (today's well-being)	Path A	Path B	DV (today's motives)	Path C	Path D
PA	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.02)	PA <sub>i-1</sub> (.36***)	APPROACH	PA <sub>i-1</sub> (-.02)	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.12**)
SWL	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.06)	SWL <sub>i-1</sub> (.21***)	APPROACH	SWL <sub>i-1</sub> (-.01)	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.12**)
POSREL	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (-.01)	POSREL <sub>i-1</sub> (.17***)	APPROACH	POSREL <sub>i-1</sub> (-.02)	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.13**)
CONFLICT	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.03)	CONFLICT <sub>i-1</sub> (.20***)	APPROACH	CONFLICT <sub>i-1</sub> (.06*)	APPROACH <sub>i-1</sub> (.15**)
NA	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.06)	NA <sub>i-1</sub> (.24***)	AVOID	NA <sub>i-1</sub> (.01)	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.55***)
SWL	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.02)	SWL <sub>i-1</sub> (.23***)	AVOID	SWL <sub>i-1</sub> (.01)	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.53***)
POSREL	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (-.16**)	POSREL <sub>i-1</sub> (.14**)	AVOID	POSREL <sub>i-1</sub> (-.05)	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.54***)
CONFLICT	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.15**)	CONFLICT <sub>i-1</sub> (.15**)	AVOID	CONFLICT <sub>i-1</sub> (.01)	AVOID <sub>i-1</sub> (.58***)

Note.  $n = 127$  (sample size represents the number of participants who sacrificed 2 days in a row at least three times during the 14-day study). Variable names without a subscript refer to today's motives and well-being, and variable names with the  $i - 1$  subscript refer to yesterday's motives and well-being. PA = positive affect; SWL = satisfaction with life; POSREL = positive relationship quality; CONFLICT = relationship conflict; NA = negative affect; APPROACH = approach sacrifice motives; AVOID = avoidance sacrifice motives; HLM = hierarchical linear modeling; DV = dependent variable. \* =  $p < .05$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

fice, data were aggregated across days so that each person received summary scores for APPROACH and AVOID as well as for each of the measures of well-being (PA, NA, SWL, POSREL, and CONFLICT). In addition, each participant received a score for the percentage of days on which he or she made a sacrifice over the course of the 2-week study (FREQ).<sup>5</sup> Regression equations were then constructed in which APPROACH, AVOID, and FREQ were entered simultaneously to predict each of the well-being variables. Table 4 displays the results of these analyses. As predicted, FREQ was not significantly associated with PA ( $p = .10$ ), NA ( $p = .69$ ), SWL ( $p = .84$ ), POSREL ( $p = .88$ ), or CONFLICT ( $p = .10$ ). Furthermore, after controlling for FREQ, APPROACH and AVOID remained strong and significant predictors of each of the measures of personal well-being and relationship quality.

*Motives for sacrifice versus type of sacrifice.* To test the prediction that sacrifice motives would be more powerful predictors of well-being than the types of sacrifices made for an intimate partner, data were again aggregated across days such that each person received summary scores for APPROACH and AVOID and each of the measures of well-being. In addition, each person received scores for the percentage of days on which he or she made a sacrifice of each of the 11 types (there were no sacrifices coded as "major" in the daily experience study). Regression equations were then constructed in which APPROACH, AVOID, and the 11 types of sacrifice were entered simultaneously to predict each of the well-being variables. Table 5 displays the results of these analyses. As predicted, none of the types of sacrifice was associated with any of the measures of personal well-being or relationship quality (all  $ps > .10$ ), after controlling for APPROACH and AVOID, with one minor exception. The more often participants made a sacrifice that involved communication and interaction with a partner, the more conflict they reported in their relationships ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ). This may be because conflict prompts interactions aimed at conflict resolution or because interactions provide more possibilities for conflict to arise. Nevertheless, after controlling for the percentage of days on which participants made a sacrifice of each type, APPROACH and AVOID remained significant predictors of each of the measures of personal and relationship well-being (except in one case in which AVOID marginally predicted SWL). Furthermore, as predicted, AP-

PROACH were not associated with NA, and AVOID were not significantly associated with PA (see Table 5).

Because these regression analyses included a large number of predictor variables, an additional set of analyses was conducted. Specifically, we conducted partial correlations between the frequency with which individuals engaged in each type of sacrifice and each of the measures of well-being, controlling for APPROACH and AVOID. These analyses enabled us to determine whether any of the 11 types of sacrifice were individually associated with any of the well-being variables. Out of 55 possible correlations, again, the only significant result was that sacrifices involving communication and interaction were positively correlated with CONFLICT ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ). Taken together, these results provide strong empirical support for the idea that motives for sacrifice are more powerful predictors of personal well-being and relationship quality than are the particular types of activities in which individuals engage.

#### *Individual Differences in Hope for Affiliation and Fear of Rejection (Hypotheses 3 and 4)*

Another goal of this research was to test specific predictions concerning individual differences in  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$ . We predicted that  $H_{AFF}$  would be associated with APPROACH, whereas  $F_{REJ}$  would be associated with AVOID. To examine these purely between-subjects predictions, data were aggregated over the 14 days of the study such that each person received summary scores for both APPROACH and AVOID. Because  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$  were not significantly associated ( $r = .02, p = .86$ ), we examined the bivariate correlations between each of these variables and sacrifice motives. As predicted,  $H_{AFF}$  was positively associated with APPROACH ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and marginally associated with AVOID ( $r = -.15, p = .07$ ). Also as predicted,  $F_{REJ}$  was positively associated with AVOID ( $r = .19, p = .02$ ) but not associated with APPROACH ( $r = -.03, p = .74$ ). In other words, individuals who scored high on  $H_{AFF}$  were more likely to sacrifice for APPROACH, whereas individuals who scored high on  $F_{REJ}$  were more likely to sacrifice for AVOID.<sup>6</sup>

We also predicted that these individual-differences measures would be differentially associated with personal and relationship well-being. Data were aggregated across days so that each person

Table 4  
*Associations Between Daily Sacrifice Motives and Well-Being, Controlling for the Percentage of Days Sacrificed Using Standardized Beta Coefficients*

Predictor	Outcome				
	PA	NA	SWL	POSREL	CONFLICT
APPROACH	.42***	-.13	.41***	.50***	-.22**
AVOID	-.01	.34***	-.14†	-.47***	.52***
FREQ	-.13	.13	-.02	.01	.12

Note.  $N = 127$ . PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; SWL = satisfaction with life; POSREL = positive relationship quality; CONFLICT = relationship conflict; APPROACH = approach sacrifice motives; AVOID = avoidance sacrifice motives; FREQ = the percentage of days sacrificed.

† =  $p < .10$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

<sup>5</sup> For the analyses that controlled for frequency of sacrifice, we used a percentage score rather than a raw frequency score to account for the fact that not every participant turned in a daily log on each of the 14 days.

<sup>6</sup> We constructed additional regression equations that pitted the variables measuring dispositional motives (i.e.,  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$ ) against the variables measuring the partner's well-being (i.e., PA, NA, SWL, and POSREL) in predicting sacrifice motives. As one of the reviewers suggested, it is possible that participants were merely responding to their partner's state rather than sacrificing on the basis of a dispositional motive. The results of the multiple regression analyses showed that the only significant predictor of approach sacrifice motives was  $H_{AFF}$  ( $b = .29, p < .01$ ), and the only significant predictor of avoidance motives was  $F_{REJ}$  ( $b = .22, p < .05$ ). That is, the partner's affect, SWL, and satisfaction in the relationship over the previous 2 weeks were not significantly associated with the participant's motives for sacrifice. Furthermore, once controlling for these variables, the measures of dispositional motives still significantly predicted daily sacrifice motives.

Table 5

Associations Between Types of Sacrifice and Well-Being, Controlling for Sacrifice Motives Using Standardized Beta Coefficients

Outcome	Predictor												
	Fr	R	E	S	H	F	C	G	Op	Ap	I	AP	AV
PA	.01	-.01	-.09	.03	-.06	.04	-.03	-.10	.04	.12	.08	.42***	-.02
NA	-.02	-.06	-.02	-.03	.04	.03	.15	-.12	-.02	.03	.02	-.11	.33**
SWL	.04	-.01	-.02	.04	-.09	.04	.01	-.01	-.01	.05	.06	.40***	-.17†
POSREL	-.08	.03	.05	-.04	-.02	.14†	-.06	-.01	-.02	.09	-.03	.49***	-.47***
CONFLICT	.05	-.07	-.02	.11	-.06	.02	.23**	-.02	-.05	-.08	-.03	-.19*	.50***

Note.  $n = 147$ . Fr = friends; R = recreation; E = errands, chores, and favors; S = school and work; H = health and lifestyle; F = family; C = communication and interaction; G = gifts and money; Op = interactions with the opposite sex; Ap = appearance; I = intimacy; AP = approach sacrifice motives; AV = avoidance sacrifice motives; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; SWL = satisfaction with life; POSREL = positive relationship quality; CONFLICT = relationship conflict.

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

received summary scores for each of the measures of well-being (i.e., PA, NA, SWL, CONFLICT, and POSREL). As predicted,  $H_{AFF}$  was positively associated with SWL ( $r = .16, p = .05$ ) and PA ( $r = .25, p = .002$ ) but was not associated with NA ( $r = .04, p = .63$ ). Contrary to predictions,  $H_{AFF}$  was not associated with either POSREL ( $r = .06, p = .45$ ) or CONFLICT ( $r = .04, p = .67$ ) across days. As predicted,  $F_{REJ}$  was positively associated with NA ( $r = .27, p = .001$ ), was negatively associated with SWL ( $r = -.23, p = .004$ ) and POSREL ( $r = -.24, p = .003$ ), and was not associated with PA ( $r = -.14, p = .10$ ). Contrary to predictions,  $F_{REJ}$  was not associated with CONFLICT ( $r = .11, p = .16$ ).

Because  $H_{AFF}$  and  $F_{REJ}$  predicted motives and some of the well-being measures, and because motives and well-being covaried, we reasoned that motives for sacrifice may mediate the association between the individual-differences measures and personal and relationship well-being. Figure 2 depicts a sample model representing these associations. To test these purely between-subjects predictions, data were aggregated over the 14 days of the study. Standard (OLS) hierarchical regression analysis, based on the principles of Baron and Kenny (1986), was used to test the mediational hypotheses.

The first requirement in demonstrating mediation is that the predictor variable be associated with the outcome variable. Starting with hope for affiliation, the results reported above demonstrate that  $H_{AFF}$  was significantly associated with PA ( $r = .25$ ) and SWL ( $r = .16$ ). The second requirement is to show that  $H_{AFF}$  predicts the putative mediator, APPROACH. Again, as reported above,  $H_{AFF}$  was positively associated with APPROACH ( $r = .30$ ). The final requirement is that the mediator predicts the outcome variables (in this case, PA and SWL) and that these effects account for the direct effect between the predictor and the outcome variables. Starting with positive affect, APPROACH significantly predicted PA ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ), and the direct effect from  $H_{AFF}$  to PA dropped to nonsignificance ( $\beta$  dropped to  $.12, p = .14$ ). A significant Sobel (1982) test indicated that the drop in the value of the betas was significant ( $z = 2.97, p < .01$ ), providing evidence for mediation. As for satisfaction with life, APPROACH significantly predicted SWL ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ), and the direct effect from  $H_{AFF}$  to SWL dropped to nonsignificance ( $\beta$  dropped to  $.05, p = .51$ ). The Sobel test was also significant ( $z = 2.89, p < .01$ ), again providing evidence for mediation. Thus,  $H_{AFF}$  may influence personal well-being (PA and SWL), in part, through its association with APPROACH.

As for  $F_{REJ}$ , the first requirement of mediation was met (again, as reported above) by showing that it was positively associated with NA ( $r = .27$ ) and negatively associated with POSREL ( $r = -.25$ ). The second requirement was met by demonstrating that  $F_{REJ}$  was positively associated with the putative mediator, AVOID ( $r = .19$ ). For the final requirement, the mediator must predict the outcome variables (in this case, NA and POSREL), and these effects must account for the direct effect between the predictor and the outcome variables. Starting with negative affect, AVOID significantly predicted NA ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ), and the direct effect from  $F_{REJ}$  to NA dropped slightly ( $\beta$  dropped to  $.24, p < .01$ ). The Sobel test approached significance ( $z = 1.93, p = .053$ ), providing weak evidence for partial mediation. As for positive relationship quality, AVOID significantly predicted POSREL ( $\beta = -.33, p < .05$ ), and the direct effect from  $F_{REJ}$  to POSREL dropped moderately ( $\beta$  dropped to  $-.18, p < .05$ ). The Sobel test was significant ( $z = 2.07, p < .05$ ), providing evidence for partial mediation. Thus,  $F_{REJ}$  may influence negative affect and relationship quality, in part, through its association with AVOID.

#### Sacrifice Motives and Relationship Quality Over Time (Hypotheses 5 and 6)

A further goal of this research was to go beyond the daily association of sacrifice motives and relationship quality to consider the possible longer term associations between motives and relationship quality and stability. We hypothesized that increased sacrifice for APPROACH during the course of the 2-week study would predict greater relationship satisfaction and fewer breakups at the 1-month follow-up. Conversely, increased sacrifice for AVOID would predict lower relationship satisfaction and more breakups. To test these predictions, data were aggregated across

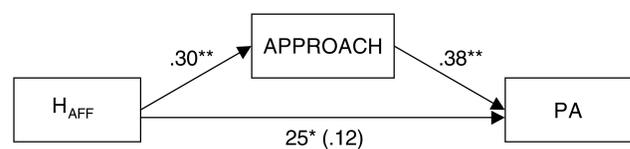


Figure 2. Model with approach sacrifice motives (APPROACH) mediating the link between hope for affiliation ( $H_{AFF}$ ) and positive affect (PA). Numbers are standardized betas from the final step in multiple regression. \*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

the 14 days of the study such that each person received summary scores for APPROACH and AVOID. Two regression equations were constructed. Linear regression was used in the first equation; initial relationship satisfaction was entered on the first step, and scores for both APPROACH and AVOID were entered on the second step to predict relationship satisfaction at the follow-up. Logistic regression was used in the second equation; initial commitment was entered on the first step, and APPROACH and AVOID were entered on the second step to predict relationship status (0 = *broken up*, 1 = *still together*) at the follow-up. Initial commitment was controlled for when predicting relationship status because previous research has shown that commitment (and not satisfaction) is the critical and most proximal predictor of stay/leave behavior (see Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996, for a review). APPROACH and AVOID were entered simultaneously in these equations to examine their unique associations with longer term relationship quality.

The hypothesis that APPROACH would predict increases in relationship satisfaction and greater couple persistence over time received partial support. Whereas APPROACH were correlated with initial relationship satisfaction ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and follow-up satisfaction ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ), they no longer significantly predicted follow-up satisfaction ( $\beta = .12, p = .13$ ) after controlling for initial relationship satisfaction. APPROACH did, however, predict relationship status at the 1-month follow-up after controlling for initial commitment. That is, for each unit increase in APPROACH, participants were more than twice as likely to still be together at the 1-month follow-up (odds ratio [OR] = 2.13, 95% confidence interval [CI] = 1.04, 4.37,  $p < .05$ ).

The hypothesis that AVOID would predict decreases in relationship satisfaction and more breakups over time received strong support. AVOID were correlated with initial relationship satisfaction ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ) and follow-up satisfaction ( $r = -.27, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, after controlling for initial relationship satisfaction, the more often participants sacrificed for AVOID over the course of the 2-week study, the lower their follow-up satisfaction ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ). When AVOID were entered by themselves in the regression equation (without APPROACH), they accounted for a significant increase in the variance in follow-up satisfaction ( $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ),  $\Delta F(1, 109) = 3.89, p < .05$ , after controlling for initial satisfaction. AVOID also predicted relationship status at the 1-month follow-up after controlling for initial commitment. That is, for each unit increase in AVOID, participants were more than two-and-a-half times as likely to have broken up by the 1-month follow-up (OR = 2.56, 95% CI = 1.51, 4.35,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>7</sup>

#### *Perceived Sacrifice Motives and Well-Being (Hypotheses 7 and 8)*

As noted earlier, a majority of the participants' partners completed a take-home survey about their perceptions of recent sacrifices made by the participant. The partners listed a total of 484 perceived sacrifices, for an average of 4.5 per person. Two independent raters used the coding scheme developed in Study 1 to categorize the perceived sacrifices. The initial agreement rate was 90%, with  $\kappa = .91, t(484) = 56.63, p < .001$ . The raters then discussed the sacrifices until all discrepancies were resolved. Table 1 presents the percentages of participants who indicated that their

partner made a sacrifice of each type at least once during the previous 2 weeks.

We hypothesized that perceiving one's partner sacrifice for approach motives (AP<sub>PER</sub>) would be associated with greater personal and relationship well-being, whereas perceiving one's partner sacrifice for avoidance motives (AV<sub>PER</sub>) would be associated with poorer personal and relationship well-being. Because AP<sub>PER</sub> and AV<sub>PER</sub> were correlated ( $r = .40, p < .001$ ), they were entered simultaneously into regression equations to predict PA, NA, SWL, and POSREL. As predicted, AP<sub>PER</sub> were positively associated with PA ( $\beta = .58, p < .001$ ), SWL ( $\beta = .52, p < .001$ ), and POSREL ( $\beta = .31, p < .01$ ), but were not associated with NA ( $\beta = .04, p = .69$ ). In contrast, AV<sub>PER</sub> were negatively associated with PA ( $\beta = -.20, p < .05$ ), SWL ( $\beta = -.31, p < .01$ ), and POSREL ( $\beta = -.24, p < .05$ ). Contrary to expectations, AV<sub>PER</sub> were not significantly associated with NA ( $\beta = .16, p = .14$ ).

We tested the hypothesis that perceived sacrifice motives would be better predictors of partner well-being than the number of sacrifices individuals reported that their partner made over the previous 2 weeks (NUM<sub>PER</sub>) with further analyses. To test this prediction, regression equations were constructed in which AP<sub>PER</sub>, AV<sub>PER</sub>, and NUM<sub>PER</sub> were entered simultaneously to predict each of the measures of the partner's well-being (i.e., PA, NA, SWL, POSREL). Table 6 displays the results of these analyses. As predicted, NUM<sub>PER</sub> were not significantly associated with PA ( $p = .40$ ), NA ( $p = .50$ ), SWL ( $p = .39$ ), or POSREL ( $p = .89$ ), controlling for perceived motives for sacrifice. Furthermore, AP<sub>PER</sub> and AV<sub>PER</sub> remained significant predictors of each of the measures of personal and relationship well-being (except for NA), even after controlling for NUM<sub>PER</sub>.

Though not included in the initial predictions, another important question concerned partners' ability to read or decode each other's motives for sacrifice. In other words, when one person makes a sacrifice, is his or her partner able to understand why? The following analyses compared the participants' scores on AP<sub>PER</sub> and AVOID measured over the 2-week study and the partners' scores on the measures of AP<sub>PER</sub> and AV<sub>PER</sub> for sacrifice. Results indicated that individuals, to at least some degree, were able to pick up on a partner's motives for sacrifice. AP<sub>PER</sub> and AVOID were marginally positively associated ( $r = .17, p = .09$ ), and AVOID and AV<sub>PER</sub> were significantly associated ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ). The higher correlation between actual and perceived avoidance motives suggests that it may be easier to tell when one's partner sacrifices for avoidance as opposed to approach motives. It is possible that sacrifices undertaken in the pursuit of avoidance motives may be enacted with less enthusiasm and more reluctance, making it easier for the partner to detect the sacrifice, a point that we return to below.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that analyses performed on the relationship status (together/broken up) variable were relatively conservative. Only 18 relationships ended between the initial session and the 1-month follow-up, so estimates for the group who broke up are based on a small number of participants and therefore may be less reliable and stable than would be the case if the sample were larger.

Table 6  
*Associations Between Perceived Sacrifice Motives and Well-Being, Controlling for the Perceived Number of Sacrifices Using Standardized Beta Coefficients*

Predictor	Outcome			
	PA	NA	SWL	SAT
AP <sub>PER</sub>	.47***	.07	.47***	.25*
AV <sub>PER</sub>	-.21*	.20†	-.35***	-.25*
NUM <sub>PER</sub>	.09	-.03	.11	-.02

Note.  $n = 107$ .

PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; SWL = satisfaction with life; SAT = relationship satisfaction; AP<sub>PER</sub> = perceived approach sacrifice motives; AV<sub>PER</sub> = perceived avoidance sacrifice motives; NUM<sub>PER</sub> = perceived number of sacrifices.

† =  $p < .10$ . \* =  $p < .05$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

### General Discussion

Feminist clinicians and researchers have long voiced strong concerns about the dangers of giving up one's own wishes and desires in relationships (e.g., Jack & Dill, 1992; H. G. Lerner, 1988). Social psychologists, however, have emphasized the positive aspects of sacrifice and have argued that sacrifice not only reflects but also promotes healthy couple functioning (Van Lange, Agnew, et al., 1997; Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997). The present research sought to reconcile these contradictory views by presenting and testing a new theoretical perspective on sacrifice. Two studies demonstrated the utility of an approach-avoidance model of intimate sacrifice.

#### *The Positive Side of Sacrifice*

The present research adds to the social psychological literature on the benefits of sacrifice by identifying one particular set of circumstances in which sacrifice is beneficial—when enacted for approach as opposed to avoidance motives. In the daily experience study, on days when people sacrificed for approach motives, they experienced more positive emotions, greater satisfaction with life, more positive relationship quality, and less relationship conflict. Furthermore, the more individuals sacrificed for approach motives over the course of the study, the more likely they were to have remained together 1 month later, providing initial evidence for the potential relationship benefits of approach-motivated sacrifice over time.

This study also documented that hope for affiliation is an important individual difference in the extent to which people sacrifice for approach motives. The higher individuals were in hope for affiliation, the more likely they were to sacrifice for approach motives over the course of the study and, in turn, the higher their positive affect and satisfaction with life. That is, approach motives for sacrifice mediated the association between hope for affiliation and personal well-being. Individuals who strongly desire intimacy and closeness may experience acts of sacrifice as inherently rewarding to the self. In some ways, approach-motivated sacrifices are appropriate to our cultural understanding of what "true" (i.e., selfless) love really is.

Perceiving that one's partner has sacrificed for approach motives was associated with greater positive affect, satisfaction with

life, and satisfaction in the relationship. These results have important implications for understanding the development of trust in romantic relationships (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Empirical research has shown that when individuals perceive that their partner has deviated from self-interest, they develop trust that their partner is a caring and responsive person (Wieselquist et al., 1999). This study suggests, however, that perceptions of a partner's motives may make a difference. That is, trust may only develop to the extent that individuals believe that their partners are really concerned about their happiness and not when they think their partners are merely trying to avoid conflict or criticism.

#### *The Darker Side of Sacrifice*

There is also a darker side to sacrifice. On days when participants sacrificed for avoidance motives, they experienced more negative emotions, lower satisfaction with life, less positive relationship well-being, and more relationship conflict. The results of both the lagged-day and longitudinal analyses suggest that sacrificing for avoidance motives may be particularly detrimental to the maintenance of relationships over time. Specifically, avoidance motives were negatively associated with relationship quality and positively associated with conflict from one day to the next. Furthermore, the more often participants sacrificed for avoidance motives over the course of the 2-week study, the less satisfied they were and the more likely they were to have broken up 1 month later, regardless of their initial relationship satisfaction and commitment.

This study also documented that fear of rejection is an important individual difference in avoidance motives for sacrifice. The higher individuals were in fear of rejection, the more likely they were to sacrifice for avoidance motives over the course of the study. Furthermore, they experienced more negative affect and poorer positive relationship well-being (i.e., satisfaction, closeness, and fun). That is, avoidance motives mediated the association between fear of rejection and well-being.

Perceptions of a partner's avoidance motives for sacrifice were also associated with poorer well-being. The more individuals indicated that their partner sacrificed for avoidance motives over the previous 2 weeks, the lower their personal well-being and relationship quality. In other words, having your own needs met in relationships is not always beneficial; rather, it can be experienced as personally and interpersonally costly if you perceive that your partner has sacrificed for avoidance motives. It is interesting to note that perceived partner avoidance motives were associated with less positive affect but not more negative affect. In other words, perceiving that one's partner is making sacrifices to prevent problems was associated with less positive emotions, such as joy and excitement, but not necessarily more negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger. This unanticipated finding suggests that an individual's attempt to prevent his or her partner from feeling negative affect or experiencing negative outcomes may be somewhat successful in the short term (after all, the partner is still making the sacrifice), but it is, unfortunately, also associated with less positive emotion, well-being, and relationship quality on the part of the partner.

#### *Methodological and Theoretical Contributions*

A major strength of this research concerns the definition and measurement of sacrifice. Previous research has focused on major

acts of sacrifice, in essence forcing participants to pit their favorite activities against the future of their relationships in a way that may rarely occur in everyday life. This study focused on less major but potentially recurrent sacrifices made by intimate partners on a daily basis. Common domains of sacrifice included recreational activities, friends, family, school, errands, health, gifts, and communication. Other important but less common sacrifices included aspects of appearance, intimacy, and other-sex interactions. The detailed information provided by participants about the nature of their sacrifices will be useful for creating a new, close-ended measure of sacrifice in future research.

Second, because this project emphasized both motive expression (one person's self-reported motives for sacrifice) and motive attribution (one person's perceptions of a partner's motives), it takes an important step toward providing a dyadic perspective on intimate sacrifice. Not only were one's own motives associated with personal well-being and relationship quality but also perceptions of a partner's motives made a difference. Future research that focuses on other interpersonal processes in sacrifice—the partner's expressed or perceived needs for the sacrifice, the partner's reaction to the sacrifice, and the partner's own sacrifices—is clearly needed, a point that we return to below.

Third, this study adds to a growing body of research demonstrating the utility of approach–avoidance models of motivation in understanding a broad range of phenomena in everyday life (e.g., Elliot & Sheldon, 1997; Gable et al., 2000). Furthermore, this study is part of an emerging area of research that focuses on motivation and close relationships. Very little research has investigated the motivational processes involved in establishing and maintaining intimate relationships. This study represents a first step toward articulating how motives for sacrifice are associated with day-to-day well-being and the maintenance of relationships over time.

### *Broader Implications*

#### *Relationship Maintenance Processes*

Much of the existing research on social motivation has emphasized motives that focus on the formation, but not the maintenance, of social bonds. This article represents a first step toward articulating how the motivation to maintain intimate relationships is reflected in daily sacrifice and ultimately influences the well-being of individuals and the quality of their intimate relationships. Results from this study suggest that behaviors enacted in order to maintain and preserve harmony in a relationship may be much more useful to couples than are behaviors enacted to prevent conflict or relationship discord. It will be important for future research to extend the approach–avoidance motivational perspective to other relationship maintenance behaviors such as accommodation (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovic, & Lipkus, 1991), forgiveness of betrayal (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002), and derogation of tempting alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989) to name a few. Such research might inform couples therapy programs, perhaps by teaching couples to focus on things that they want to create in their relationships (e.g., peaceful communication) rather than things they want to avoid (e.g., fighting).

#### *Is Sacrifice Prosocial?*

According to interdependence theory, situations involving non-correspondence provide individuals with the opportunity to reveal whether they are guided by self- or other-oriented motives (Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001). Interdependence theorists often describe the transformation of motivation process as prosocial or even altruistic in nature. For example, Rusbult and Van Lange (1996) regard it as admirable that despite the natural human desire to act on the basis of self-interest, “humans frequently exhibit prosocial transformation and enact behaviors that promote the well-being of interaction partners” (p. 578). Many acts of sacrifice are indeed prosocial. That is, they are made with the best interests of the partner in mind, and desires to be responsive to a partner may be experienced as inherently rewarding to the self. But not all sacrifices reflect genuine concern for a partner's best interests. Acts that appear unselfish (e.g., agreeing to drive the kids to school) may actually be motivated by self-interested concerns (e.g., to avoid conflict or a partner's disappointment). In short, acts of sacrifice that interdependence theorists have labeled prosocial may instead be motivated by desires to avoid negative outcomes that ultimately affect the self.

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

Several limitations of this research deserve comment. First, both samples consisted primarily of first- and second-year college students in dating relationships, compromising the generalizability of the findings. It will be important to replicate and extend these findings both to nonstudents and to those involved in relationships of greater duration and commitment (e.g., married couples). It is possible that dating and married couples may differ in the types of sacrifices they make on a daily basis, with married couples reporting more sacrifices that focus on childcare or maintaining a shared residence. The theoretical model that links motives to well-being should apply equally well to married and dating couples, but future research is needed to examine this possibility.

Second, these studies are correlational in nature and cannot demonstrate causality. Although the results of the lagged-day analyses ruled out certain causal pathways, they did not definitely demonstrate the existence of others. Only two out of the eight predicted lagged-day effects were significant. More specifically, approach motives were not associated with any measures of well-being, and avoidance motives were only associated with the measures of interpersonal well-being from one day to the next. In some ways, the lagged-day analyses may provide too stringent a test because they constrain the effects from one day to the next. It is possible that the effects of sacrifice may be realized more than 1 day later. In daily experience studies, the lack of reported lagged-day effects beyond a day suggests that effects are usually evident within 1 day; however, this may not be the case for dyadic processes that involve responses from a partner. That is, in many cases, the partner may not have even noticed, responded to, or appreciated a particular sacrifice by the time that the participant filled out the daily log. In this way, we may not see the full repercussions of sacrifice (either positive or negative) until more than 1 day after the sacrifice has been made.

Third, the retrospective nature of this daily experience study is a limitation. All daily entries were end-of-day assessments and

may have been somewhat affected by retrospection. Because participants were instructed to complete their daily logs each evening, the data do not control for possible time-of-day mood effects associated with personality (Rusting & Larsen, 1998). Furthermore, because the participants completed their daily surveys after the sacrifices were made, it is possible that their responses to the motives measure may have been influenced by the partner's reaction to the sacrifice, although as we mentioned previously, in some cases the partner may not yet have recognized or responded to the sacrifice on that day. Clearly, future research is needed that assesses the partner's reaction to the sacrifice.

Fourth, in addition to assessing the partner's reaction to sacrifice, it will be important for future research to assess individuals' perceptions of a partner's needs for sacrifice as well as the partner's own expressed needs. For instance, Bob may sacrifice for approach motives because he believes that his partner will be happy if he does so, or, he may sacrifice for avoidance motives because his partner tells him that she will be disappointed if he does not. Thus, motives may be influenced by a range of factors—individual dispositions, characteristics of the partner (although motives were, in Study 2, unassociated with the partner's general affect or satisfaction with life), or other contextual factors not addressed in this study.

Finally, another important step in understanding sacrifice will be to elucidate the processes by which approach and avoidance motives influence personal well-being and relationship quality. One possible mediator may be the specific behaviors enacted by the individual who sacrifices. When individuals sacrifice for approach motives, they may verbally or nonverbally communicate more pleasure and delight, demonstrating the joy they feel when pleasing a partner. Avoidance-motivated sacrifices may be enacted with more reluctance and less enthusiasm. A second mediator may be the partner's reaction to sacrifice. Study 2 suggested that perceiving a partner sacrifice for approach versus avoidance motives is differentially associated with personal well-being and relationship quality. These outcomes may, in turn, affect the experience of the "sacrificer." For example, if John sacrifices to show his love for Mary, then Mary may feel happy, loved, valued, and cared for. In turn, John may notice Mary's increased happiness and well-being and feel happier in general and with the relationship (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Or, in another scenario, Abbey may sacrifice to avoid conflict with Ted; Ted may worry that Abbey is sacrificing only out of obligation rather than out of a genuine concern for his well-being; Abbey may notice Ted's reluctance to appreciate her sacrifice and, in turn, feel less satisfied with her relationship and her life in general. A third mediator may be the processing of cues from the recipient of sacrifice. Individuals who sacrifice for approach or avoidance motives may be more or less likely to attend to particular perceptual cues from the partner. Research has shown that whereas individuals with strong approach motives tend to be biased toward positive cues, those with strong avoidance motives tend to be biased toward negative cues (e.g., Derryberry & Reed, 1994; Gomez, Gomez, & Cooper, 2002). Sacrificing for approach motives may lead people to pay attention to and notice more positive cues—a partner's smile, a simple thank you, a knowing nod. Sacrificing for avoidance motives may lead people to notice more negative cues—possible signs of a partner's guilt or lingering hostility. In short, people may orient themselves to and then

ultimately experience the very things they were trying to obtain or avoid.

### Concluding Comments

One of the emerging truisms in research on close relationships in Western societies is that couples have to engage in ongoing relationship "work" to maintain their relationships over time (Baxter & Dindia, 1990). Such work can entail giving up one's own personal desires in order to accommodate a partner. Sometimes people sacrifice to promote a partner's satisfaction or enhance intimacy in their relationship. At other times, they do so to prevent tension, conflict, or a partner's loss of interest. The central idea guiding this research is that these two very different motives—the first focusing on obtaining positive outcomes and the second focusing on avoiding negative outcomes—have important and unique implications for understanding both personal well-being and the quality of intimate relationships.

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