

Research Article

Interpersonal goals, others' regard for the self, and self-esteem: The paradoxical consequences of self-image and compassionate goals

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Abstract

People often adopt self-image goals to increase others' regard for them and perhaps their own self-esteem. But do these impression management goals achieve their intended result in close relationships? And do they endure over time? We suggest that self-image goals predict decreased self-esteem and close others' regard for the self through decreased responsiveness to others. In contrast, compassionate goals, which reflect a genuine concern for others' well-being, predict increased self-esteem and others' regard through increased responsiveness. We tested these hypotheses in a longitudinal study of college roommates followed across a semester. Path analyses supported both predictions, suggesting a paradox for interpersonal goals in close relationships: explicit attempts to increase close others' regard for the self backfire and damage self-esteem, but having goals to meet others' needs result in others' positive regard and promote self-esteem. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

People often adopt self-image goals, attempting to gain others' esteem by constructing desired images of the self in others' eyes (e.g., Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). But do self-image goals achieve their intended results in close relationships? And do those results endure over time? The impression management literature suggests that attempts to shape others' views of the self sometimes succeed and sometimes fail (Schlenker, 2003). However, most of this research focuses on relatively brief laboratory interactions, in which impression management is manipulated, and so it does not address whether people are able to maintain these impressions over time. Furthermore, most prior studies of the consequences of impression management goals examine these goals in the context of relationships with strangers or in work or academic-related contexts (e.g., employment interviews), rather than close personal relationships (e.g., Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981; Wayne & Liden, 1995). The present study examines whether students' self-image goals for roommate relationships predict increases in roommates' regard for students or in students' self-regard. We compare self-image goals with compassionate goals, aimed at supporting others' well-being. We examine these associations in a longitudinal study of roommate relationships and explore a potential mechanism by which self-image goals and compassionate goals shape others' regard for the self and self-regard.

We hypothesize that self-image goals and compassionate goals have paradoxical consequences. Specifically, we suggest that when people have self-image goals, they actually undermine close others' regard for the self and their own

self-esteem. In contrast, when people have compassionate goals, reflecting genuine concern for others' well-being (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), they bolster close others' regard for the self and their own self-esteem.

Impression Management and Self-Image Goals as a Means to Positive Regard

People attempt to influence how others view them for a variety of reasons (see Schlenker & Weigold, 1992, for a review). People may want to "please the audience" and strive to present themselves in ways the audience defines as desirable, regardless of the veracity of the audience's impression, to obtain desired outcomes. Alternatively, people may want to validate their desired self-images and strive to present their ideal self to others so that others recognize and acknowledge their desired qualities, enhancing both others' regard and self-regard (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989; Schlenker, 1987). We call this latter aim a self-image goal. People with self-image goals do not necessarily intend to deceive others but instead try to convey an idealized or glorified conception of the self that the actor genuinely believes or hopes to be true (Baumeister, 1982). But are self-image goals effective? That is, when people adopt self-image goals aimed toward increasing others' regard for the self and their own self-worth, do they gain others' regard or experience increased self-esteem?

The impression management literature provides mixed support for the effectiveness of self-image goals. Effectiveness appears to depend on several factors, including self-presentation

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ability, motivation, and confidence (see Schlenker, 2003, for a review). People are most effective at impression management when they possess better self-presentation abilities, are highly motivated to present the self in a desirable way, and believe that their efforts will be successful. However, the impression management literature has typically tested the consequences of self-image goals under limited circumstances—in short, one-time interactions with strangers in a laboratory setting (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995).

Laboratory studies of impression management in interactions with strangers may not apply to “real” ongoing close relationships. Previous research suggests that people employ different impression management strategies, depending on the nature of the relationship. For example, people are relatively modest in how they present themselves to close others, compared with strangers (Tice et al., 1995). And for good reason, others appear to interpret people’s impression management attempts differently, depending on how much information they have. For example, explicit attempts to demonstrate one’s positive qualities yield positive reactions from people with no information about one’s actual qualities but negative reactions from people armed with information about one’s actual qualities (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Thus, in close relationships, others’ regard may not come from conveying desired images of the self, for example, as smart, rich, or popular. In fact, it is likely that, in close relationships, attempts to get others to recognize one’s positive qualities backfire, decreasing the regard others have for the self.

Self-image goals may backfire because of their effects on responsiveness in the relationship. Responsiveness involves being understanding, caring, and validating of others (Gable & Reis, 2006). Reis, Clark, and Holmes (2004, p. 23) identified responsiveness as a core principle in close relationships and defined it as the process by which others “attend to and react supportively to central core defining features of the self”. When people have self-image goals, they should be motivated to convey a specific impression of the self to others because others provide validation of a desired self-image. Thus, people should view others as a means to that end. That is, when people have self-image goals, they care about how others view them and about obtaining validation or acknowledgement, but they may not care about others or their needs (e.g., Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985). Indeed, people with self-image goals are generally unresponsive to others. Others notice their lack of responsiveness and become unresponsive in return (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). This lack of responsiveness creates distance in relationships, which thwarts others’ security and relationship satisfaction, closeness, and commitment (e.g., Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Reis et al., 2004). It seems reasonable, then, that the decreased responsiveness associated with self-image goals predicts decreases, not increases, in others’ regard for the self.

Impression Management and Self-Image Goals as a Means to Self-Esteem

The negative effect of self-image goals on responsiveness may also undermine self-esteem. The handful of studies that have focused on consequences of impression management for the self suggest that self-image goals lead to greater self-esteem

(e.g., Jones et al., 1981; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986). But these investigations involved brief laboratory interactions with strangers, and their results may not extend to ongoing close relationships.

In close relationships, self-image goals may lead to decreased feelings of self-worth, through their association with decreased responsiveness. There are two possible routes through which the lack of responsiveness may lead to a decreased self-esteem. First, when people with self-image goals are unresponsive, their relationship partners are unresponsive in return (Canevello & Crocker, 2010), and they perceive partners as less responsive (e.g., Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Lemay, Clark, & Feeney, 2007). When people with self-image goals perceive that their relationship partners are unresponsive to them, indicating a lack of understanding, caring, and validation, they may feel that their relational value has declined, as indicated by a decrease in self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Second, independent of whether people perceive others as responsive to them, simply being unresponsive to others may lead to decreased self-esteem. In close relationships, one’s own worth and value (i.e., relational value) may be based on what one gives, rather than on what one receives. Thus, when people give less in their relationships, their relational value may decrease, leading to a decrease in self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Compassionate Goals as an Alternative Means to Positive Regard and Self-Esteem

If having self-image goals undermines others’ regard for the self and for own self-esteem, how, then, can people increase others’ regard and their own self-esteem? Paradoxically, others’ regard and self-regard may both increase when people focus not on the image others have of them but rather on being supportive of close others. Specifically, compassionate goals, reflecting a genuine concern for close others’ well-being, may predict increases in others’ regard and self-esteem. Again, we suggest that responsiveness is responsible for these effects. When people have compassionate goals, they become more responsive to others, and others detect their increased responsiveness (Canevello & Crocker, 2010), which should increase others’ regard for the self. Responsiveness should also lead to an increased self-esteem for at least two reasons. First, when people are responsive, others’ become responsive in return (e.g., Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Lemay et al., 2007), which should raise self-esteem. Second, when people are responsive they make a difference in others’ lives, which increases their relational value and self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

In sum, we hypothesize that, in close relationships, self-image goals actually undermine others’ regard for the self and one’s own self-esteem because self-image goals lead people to be less responsive to others. We also hypothesize that when people have compassionate goals, they bolster their own self-esteem and others’ regard for the self because compassionate goals lead people to be more responsive to others.

We tested these hypotheses in two path models. First, we tested a model in which self-image and compassionate goals lead to responsiveness to close others, which leads to others’

perceptions of their responsiveness, which in turn leads to others' regard for the self. In the second model, we tested whether self-image and compassionate goals predict change in responsiveness to close others, which in turn, predicts change in self-esteem. In this second model, we also tested whether being responsive to others predicts increased self-esteem because of simultaneous increases in perceptions of others' responsiveness.

We also tested whether associations between interpersonal goals and self-esteem and between interpersonal goals and responsiveness could be explained by approach and avoidance motives. Because approach goals are related to positive self-evaluations and avoidance goals are related to negative self-evaluations (e.g., Coats, Janoff-Bulman, & Alpert, 1996; Tice & Masicampo, 2008), associations between self-image goals and decreased self-esteem might be attributed to avoidance motives and associations between compassionate goals and increased self-esteem might be attributed to approach motives. Additionally, in close relationships, approach goals are associated with greater responsiveness and avoidance goals are associated with less responsiveness (Impett et al., 2010). Consequently, approach and avoidance motives may explain associations between self-image and compassionate goals and responsiveness.

We examined these associations over time in first-semester college roommates who did not know each other before living together, leaving these relationships unbiased by relationship histories, past interactions, or self-selection. We expected self-image and compassionate goals to have both immediate and enduring consequences, so we followed roommates weekly over the course of their first semester. We conducted weekly analyses to examine within-person associations on the same week, lagged-week analyses to examine changes from week to week, and pretest-to-posttest analyses to examine longer-term associations across a semester.

OVERVIEW

We used data from the Roommate Mental Health Study (Canevello & Crocker, 2010, Study 1; Crocker, Canevello, Breines, & Flynn, 2010, Study 2) to explore whether and how people's self-image and compassionate goals lead to change in others' regard for them and in their own self-worth. A previous investigation using these data demonstrates how students' interpersonal goals create responsiveness dynamics in their roommate relationships (Canevello & Crocker, 2010, Study 1). The primary goals for this investigation were to examine (i) the associations between students' interpersonal goals and their roommates' regard for them and their own self-esteem and (ii) the role responsiveness plays in these associations.

We addressed these goals in two ways. First, we tested whether students' self-image and compassionate goals for their roommates predicted change in their roommates' regard for them. We examined whether students' self-image goals predicted their decreased responsiveness to their roommates and compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness to their roommates, which then predict their roommates' increased perceptions of students' responsiveness, which in

turn predict their roommates' increased regard for students. Second, we tested whether students' self-image and compassionate goals for their roommates predicted change in their self-esteem. We examined whether students' self-image goals predicted their decreased responsiveness to their roommates and compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness to their roommates, which then predicted students' increased self-esteem. Because it is possible that students' self-esteem results from their perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness, instead of their own responsiveness to their roommates, we tested this alternative explanation.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred fifteen first-semester same-sex freshmen roommate dyads ($N=230$) at a large Midwestern university who did not know each other prior to college volunteered for a study of goals and roommate relationships during the fall semester. Eighty-six pairs (75%) were female, and the participants ranged in age from 18 to 21 years ($M=18.1$ years, $SD=0.36$). Of the original sample of 115 pairs, 109 completed the pretest, posttest, and at least eight weekly surveys. For more information about the participants and procedure, see Crocker and colleagues (2010, Study 2).

Procedure

Roommate pairs completed the pretest survey in person and the weekly and posttest surveys online. After completing the posttest survey, the students were debriefed and paid for their participation.

Measures

The students completed measures of self-image and compassionate goals, self-esteem, regard for roommates, responsiveness to roommates, and perceptions of roommates' responsiveness at pretest, posttest, and weekly surveys. At pretest, participants provided demographic information. Additional measures not germane to the goals of the present investigation were also included.

Self-image and compassionate goals for students' relationships with their roommates were measured using a modified measure from Crocker and Canevello (2008). Pretest and posttest items began with the phrase "In my relationship with my roommate, I want/try to." Weekly items began with "This week, in my relationship with my roommate, I wanted/tried to." All items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Six items reflected self-image goals, including "avoid showing my weaknesses"; "avoid revealing my shortcomings or vulnerabilities"; "avoid the possibility of being wrong"; "convince my roommate that I am right"; "get my roommate to do things my way"; and "avoid being blamed or criticized." Eight items assessed compassionate goals: "be supportive of my roommate"; "have compassion for my roommate's mistakes and weaknesses"; "be aware of the impact my behavior might have on my roommate's feelings";

“make a positive difference in my roommate’s life”; “avoid neglecting my relationship with my roommate”; “avoid being selfish or self-centered”; “be constructive in my comments to my roommate”; and “avoid doing things that aren’t helpful to me or my roommate.” Both scales had high internal consistency at pretest (self-image $\alpha=.79$; compassionate $\alpha=.75$), posttest (self-image $\alpha=.87$; compassionate $\alpha=.94$), and across the participants and weeks (self-image goals: $.83 < \alpha < .91$, $M_\alpha=0.88$; compassionate goals: $.85 < \alpha < .94$, $M_\alpha=0.91$).

Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1965). In the pretest and posttest surveys, self-esteem was measured using the original 10-item measure. We used an abbreviated version of this measure in the weekly surveys, with the stem “Over the past week:” followed by five questions: “I felt that I had a number of good qualities”; “all in all, I was inclined to feel that I was a failure” (reverse scored); “I took a positive attitude with myself”; “on the whole, I was satisfied with myself”; and “at times I thought that I was no good at all” (reverse scored). Self-esteem had adequate internal consistency at pretest ($\alpha=.88$), posttest ($\alpha=.91$), and across weeks ($.87 < \alpha < .91$, $M_\alpha=.89$).

Regard for roommates was measured at pretest, posttest, and in each of the weekly surveys. In the pretest and posttest, esteem for roommates was measured with 10 questions, adapted from the Rosenberg self-esteem measure, with items assessing evaluation of roommates. Sample items included: “I certainly feel my roommate is useless at times” (reverse scored); “I feel that my roommate has a number of good qualities”; and “I feel that my roommate is a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.” The students responded on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In the weekly surveys, we measured esteem for the roommates with the stem “Over the past week:” followed by five questions: “I felt that my roommate was a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others”; “I felt that my roommate had a number of good qualities”; “I took a positive attitude with my roommate”; “On the whole, I was satisfied with my roommate”; and “I certainly felt that my roommate was useless at times” (reverse scored). Regard for roommates had adequate internal consistency at pretest ($\alpha=.92$), posttest ($\alpha=.93$), and across weeks ($.85 < \alpha < .92$, $M_\alpha=.90$).

Responsiveness to roommates was measured using a six-item modified version of a responsiveness measure used in previous research (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Cutrona, Hessling, & Suhr, 1997; Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006). Students indicated how they acted toward their roommate in general at pretest and posttest. All items were rated on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Sample items included “I really listen to my roommate when he/she talks” and “I behave warmly toward my roommate.” We measured weekly responsiveness using the same items, asking how students acted toward their roommate that week. Responsiveness was reliable at pretest ($\alpha=.93$), posttest ($\alpha=.97$) and in each weekly survey ($.94 < \alpha < .98$, $M_\alpha=0.97$).

Perceptions of roommates’ responsiveness were measured using six items that parallel those assessing responsiveness to roommates. Pretest and posttest items asked about roommates’ general responsiveness. Sample items included

“my roommate really listens to me when I talk” and “my roommate behaves warmly toward me.” We measured weekly roommate responsiveness with the same items, referring to how roommates acted toward participants that week. Perceptions of roommates’ responsiveness was reliable at pretest ($\alpha=.95$), posttest ($\alpha=.98$), and in the weekly surveys ($.94 < \alpha < .98$, $M_\alpha=0.97$).

RESULTS

Overview of Primary Analyses

We conducted data analyses in two phases. In phase 1, we focused on the process by which students’ (i.e., actors’) goals lead to change in their roommates’ (i.e., partners’) regard for them. We hypothesized that actors’ goals would predict change in their responsiveness to their roommates, which would then predict change in partners’ perceptions of actors’ responsiveness, which would then predict change in partners’ regard for actors. In phase 2, we tested the process by which actors’ self-image and compassionate goals lead to change in their own self-esteem. We hypothesized that actors’ goals would predict change in their responsiveness to their roommates, which would then predict change in actors’ own self-esteem. We also tested whether perceptions of roommates’ responsiveness could account for associations between responsiveness to roommates and change in self-esteem. We tested both of these path models (i) within weeks, (ii) across three weeks using lagged analyses, and (iii) across the semester from pretest to posttest.

General Analytic Strategy

Because, in these data, individuals were nested within dyads and dyads were crossed within weeks, we controlled for the non-independence of individuals within dyads in all analyses using the MIXED command in SPSS (Chicago, IL, USA) (e.g., Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). We specified compound symmetry to equate intercept variances between dyad members because individuals within dyads were nondistinguishable (Kenny et al., 2006). We structured all data such that each dyad was represented by two lines of data, thus participants within a dyad represented both an actor and a partner. We calculated partial correlations for all analyses using the method described by Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991).

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and intrapersonal (i.e., within-person) intraclass correlations (Griffin & Gonzalez, 1995), for all primary pretest, posttest, and chronic weekly variables. We created measures of chronic self-image and compassionate goals by averaging each measure across the 10 weeks. Although compassionate goals and responsiveness to roommates were strongly correlated at pretest and posttest and across weeks, factor analyses of these scales suggest that they are empirically distinct (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). Because self-image and compassionate goals were significantly correlated, we regressed all outcome variables on self-image and compassionate goals simultaneously. Table 2 shows the interpersonal (i.e. actor-partner)

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intrapersonal intraclass correlations for all primary pretest, posttest, and chronic weekly variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	M (SD)
1. Pretest compassionate goals	-.22***														4.04 (0.50)
2. Pretest self-image goals	.55***	-.27***													2.54 (0.69)
3. Pretest responsiveness	.10	-.18**	.15*												4.38 (0.61)
4. Pretest self-esteem	.37***	-.19**	.50***	.02											4.03 (0.65)
5. Pretest esteem for roommates	.49***	-.17*	.41***	.09	.33***										4.59 (0.58)
6. Posttest compassionate goals	-.02	.54***	-.13	-.22**	-.15*	-.14*									3.89 (0.82)
7. Posttest self-image goals	.35***	-.18**	.37***	.09	.32***	.84***	-.21**								2.35 (0.76)
8. Posttest responsiveness	.05	-.17*	.22**	.65***	.11	.24***	-.28***	.32***							4.16 (0.85)
9. Posttest self-esteem	.19**	-.15*	.28***	.18**	.35***	.69***	-.28***	.72***	.41***						4.11 (0.68)
10. Posttest esteem for roommates	.69***	-.24***	.53***	.15*	.44***	.84***	-.12	.70***	.29***	.52***					4.29 (0.79)
11. Chronic compassionate goals	-.14*	.67***	-.20**	-.21**	-.17*	-.21**	.88***	-.24***	-.25***	-.32***	-.23***				2.38 (0.67)
12. Chronic self-image goals	.51***	-.28***	.57***	.17**	.45***	.76***	-.20**	.76***	.34***	.56***	.83***	-.31***			4.03 (0.70)
13. Chronic responsiveness	.11	-.19**	.21**	.69***	.10	.28***	-.27***	.31***	.79***	.40***	.32***	-.31***	.40***		4.11 (0.63)
14. Chronic self-esteem	.35***	-.27***	.45***	.23***	.52***	.62***	-.31***	.66***	.41***	.76***	.66***	-.38***	.76***	.44***	4.39 (0.61)

Note: N = 230 at pretest; N = 218 at posttest. SD, standard deviation. Chronic scores were calculated by averaging across the weekly reports. Self-image and compassionate goals were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Responsiveness to roommates, self-esteem, and esteem for roommates were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

Table 2. Interpersonal (i.e. actor-partner) intraclass correlations for all pretest, posttest, and mean weekly variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Pretest compassionate goals	.24***														
2. Pretest self-image goals	-.11	.02													
3. Pretest responsiveness	.20**	-.08	.13*												
4. Pretest self-esteem	-.03	.04	-.09	.06											
5. Pretest esteem for roommates	.15	-.07	.08	-.14*	.05										
6. Posttest compassionate goals	.13*	-.05	.10	-.04	.05	.22**									
7. Posttest self-image goals	-.08	-.01	-.14*	-.08	-.04	-.09	.07								
8. Posttest responsiveness	.06	-.03	.10	-.04	.08	.23**	-.10	.32***							
9. Posttest self-esteem	.06	-.02	-.05	.01	-.07	.07	-.13*	.12	.14*						
10. Posttest esteem for roommates	.12	.05	.06	.00	.05	.25***	-.05	.31***	.14*	.30***					
11. Chronic compassionate goals	.23***	-.10	.19**	-.00	.17*	.20**	-.14*	.20**	.12	.22**	.30***				
12. Chronic self-image goals	-.10	.01	-.09	-.04	-.05	-.11	.04	-.10	-.13*	-.05	-.12	.01			
13. Chronic responsiveness	.21**	-.13*	.14*	-.01	.17*	.24***	-.18**	.25***	.09	.24***	.33***	-.16*	.33***		
14. Chronic self-esteem	.09	.01	-.06	.06	-.10	.13	-.14*	.11	-.08	.15*	.11	-.10	.06	.05	
15. Chronic esteem for roommates	.19**	-.08	.09	-.05	.10	.26***	-.07	.27***	.11	.25***	.31***	-.09	.31***	.07	.28***

Note: N = 230 at pretest; N = 218 at posttest. Chronic scores were calculated by averaging across the weekly reports. Self-image and compassionate goals were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Responsiveness to roommates, self-esteem, and esteem for roommates were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

intraclass correlations for all primary variables. Roommates' compassionate goals and responsiveness correlated moderately across time points; actors' self-image goals correlated with fewer partner variables.

Do Actors' Goals Predict Change in Partners' Regard for Actors?

In phase 1 analyses, we tested associations between actors' self-image and compassionate goals and their roommate's regard for them in weekly, lagged, and pretest and posttest analyses. Although we did not necessarily expect actors' goals to directly predict partners' regard for actors, we first tested this direct association.

First, we examined these associations within weeks, testing whether weekly fluctuation in actors' interpersonal goals predicted their roommates' regard for them that same week. We person-centered predictors so that scores represent differences from each individual's own average across 10 weeks (e.g., Enders & Tofghi, 2007; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Coefficients for weekly analyses were derived from random-coefficients models using restricted maximum-likelihood estimation, and models included fixed and random effects for the intercept and each predictor. We regressed partners' regard for actors on actors' and partners' self-image and compassionate goals.

Next, we tested whether actors' and partners' goals for one week predicted change in partners' regard for actors the following week using lagged analyses. Unlike within-week analyses, examining the temporal sequence of effects across weeks can shed light on the plausibility or implausibility of causal pathways (Kenny, 1975; Leary, 1995; Rogosa, 1980; West, Biesanz, & Pitts, 2000). Coefficients for lagged-week analyses were derived from random-coefficients models using restricted maximum-likelihood estimation, with models including fixed and random effects for the intercept and each predictor. We used a residual change strategy to test changes from week to week, regressing the week ($N+1$) dependent variable on relevant week N predictors, controlling for the week N dependent variable. When change in a variable was a predictor, we entered the week N and week ($N+1$) predictors into the model and interpreted the week ($N+1$) variable. For simplicity, we refer to week N as "week 1" and week ($N+1$) as "week 2." Predictors were grand mean centered. We regressed partners' week 2 regard for actors on actors' and partners' week 1 self-image and compassionate goals, controlling for partners' week 1 regard for actors.

We also tested whether actors' and partners' chronic goals predicted change in partners' regard for actors across the semester. Coefficients for testing a change from pretest to posttest were derived from fixed-effects models using restricted maximum likelihood estimation. We grand mean centered predictors and regressed partners' posttest regard for actors on actors' and partners' chronic self-image and compassionate goals, controlling for partners' pretest regard for actors.

As shown in Table 3, actors' goals did not directly predict partners' regard for actors in any analyses. Unsurprisingly, partners' goals predicted their regard for actors: partners' self-image goals predicted their decreased regard for actors and

partners' compassionate goals predicted their increased regard for actors. Thus, we controlled for partners' goals in all subsequent tests of associations between actors' goals and partners' regard for actors.

Because associations between actors' and partners' interpersonal goals and partners' regard for actors might differ for men and women, we examined whether gender moderated associations between actors' and partners' self-image and compassionate goals and partners' regard for actors in weekly, lagged, and pretest and posttest analyses. In all analyses, gender was treated as a fixed effect and coded such that 1 = women and 2 = men. Gender moderated only the association between actors' week 1 self-image goals and change in partners' regard for actors from weeks 1 to 2, $pr = -.14$, $p < .05$, such that actors' week 1 self-image goals predicted partners' decreased regard for actors in male roommate pairs, $pr = -.14$, $p < .05$, but not in female pairs, $pr = .03$, not significant (ns). None of the 11 other associations between actors' and partners' goals and partners' regard for actors differed by gender (all $prs \leq |.03|$, ns).

Do Actors' Goals Predict Change in Partners' Regard for Actors Through Responsiveness in the Relationship?

Next, using the analytic strategy described earlier, we tested a series of path models to determine whether actors' goals predict their responsiveness, which predicts partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness, which in turn predict partners' regard for actors. We tested path models with separate regression equations for each path. To test each path, we regressed the criterion on the predictor(s), controlling for all variables preceding that specific path in the model. Because partners' goals predicted their regard for actors, all analyses also controlled for partners' self-image and compassionate goals.

Results largely supported our hypothesis. As shown at the top of Figure 1, actors' weekly self-image goals predicted their lower responsiveness to partners and compassionate goals predicted their higher weekly responsiveness to partners, which then predicted partners' greater perceptions of actors' responsiveness, which led to partners' greater regard for actors that week. Next, we examined lagged associations across three weeks to assess the plausibility of causal associations between actors' week 1 goals and change in responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 and between change in partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 and change in partners' esteem for actors from weeks 1 to 3. The middle of Figure 1 shows that actors' week 1 self-image goals predicted actors' decreased responsiveness and week 1 compassionate goals predicted actors' increased responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2. However, change in actors' responsiveness did not predict change in partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2. We then examined whether actors' chronic goals predicted change in their responsiveness from pretest to posttest, which predicted simultaneous change in partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness from pretest to posttest, which then predicted change in partners' esteem for actors from pretest to posttest. The bottom of Figure 1 shows that actors' chronic self-image goals predicted their decreased

Table 3. Unstandardized regression coefficients, ts, and partial correlations for actors' and partners' self-image and compassionate goals predicting partners' esteem for actors in weekly, lagged, and pretest/posttest analyses

	Partners' esteem for actors		
	<i>B</i>	(<i>df</i>) <i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>
Actors' and partners' weekly goals predicting partners' weekly esteem for actors			
Actors' weekly goals:			
Self-image	-.02	(874.34) -.49	-.02
Compassionate	.02	(864.29) .35	.01
Partners' weekly goals:			
Self-image	-.15	(874.82) -3.05	-.10
Compassionate	.41	(864.14) 8.06	.26***
Actors' and partners' week 1 goals predicting partners' residual week 2 esteem for actors			
Partners' week 1 esteem for actors			
	.39	(390.04) 12.85	.55***
Actors' week 1 goals:			
Self-image	-.02	(238.86) -.74	-.05
Compassionate	.04	(270.17) 1.38	.08
Partners' week 1 goals:			
Self-image	-.12	(246.29) -4.52	-.28***
Compassionate	.12	(359.05) 3.99	.21***
Actors' and partners' chronic goals predicting partners' residual posttest esteem for actors			
Partners' pretest esteem for actors			
	.23	(185.90) 2.80	.20***
Actors' chronic goals:			
Self-image	.03	(191.13) .41	.03
Compassionate	.11	(211.56) 1.47	.10
Partners' chronic goals:			
Self-image	-.24	(192.01) -3.57	-.25***
Compassionate	.52	(212.00) 6.56	.41***

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

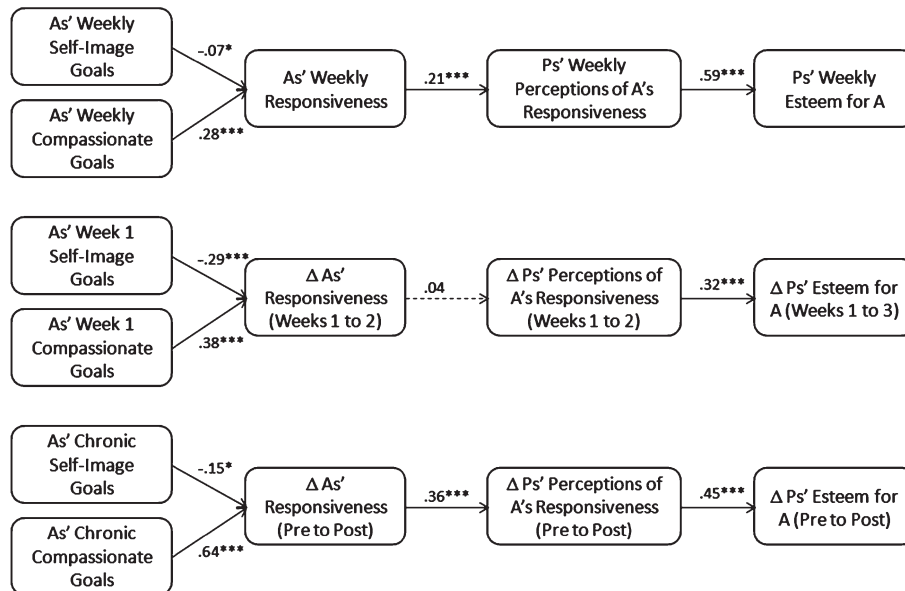


Figure 1. Path coefficients for effects of actors' (As') self-image and compassionate goals and responsiveness to partners (Ps) on partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness and esteem for actors in weekly, lagged-week, and pretest and posttest data. Note: All estimates are partial correlations, *** *p* < .001, ** *p* < .01, * *p* < .05. Each path controls for partners' self-image and compassionate goals

responsiveness and chronic compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness from pretest to posttest, which then predicted partners' increased perceptions of actors' responsiveness from pretest to posttest, which predicted partners' increased regard for actors across the semester.

Again, because the process leading from actors' goals to their responsiveness to partners' perceptions of actors' responsiveness to partners' regard for actors might differ by gender, we tested whether gender moderated each individual path, not controlling for other variables in the

models, in weekly, lagged, and pretest and posttest analyses. Gender did not moderate any of the nine associations tested (all pr s \leq 1.111, ns).

We also tested whether associations between actors' goals and their responsiveness could be explained by approach and avoidance motives. Because both goal scales included approach and avoidance items, we created two new measures of each goal, one comprised of approach items and one comprised of avoidance items. We then conducted additional analyses, entering approach compassionate and self-image goals in one set of analyses and avoidance compassionate and self-image goals in a second set of analyses to see if they produce similar effects.

Associations between actors' compassionate goals and responsiveness remained significant whether predictors were approach-oriented or avoidance-oriented (in weekly analyses, $pr = .26$ vs $.21$; in lagged analyses, $pr = .38$ vs $.31$; in pretest and posttest analyses, $pr = .64$ vs $.57$, all $ps < .001$, for approach and avoidance items, respectively). Associations between actors' self-image goals and responsiveness also remained significant in lagged analyses (approach items: $pr = -.20$, $p < .01$; avoidance items: $pr = -.30$, $p < .001$). In pretest to posttest analyses, actors' chronic self-image goals predicted decreased responsiveness when goals were approach-oriented ($pr = -.20$, $p < .01$); this association became marginal for avoidance self-image goals ($pr = -.14$, $p = .053$). In weekly analyses, actors' approach self-image goals predicted their responsiveness ($pr = -.08$, $p < .05$), but their avoidance self-image goals did not ($pr = -.02$, ns).

In sum, results from analyses of partners' regard for actors suggest that, although actors' goals do not directly predict partners' regard for actors, they predict actors' responsiveness, which partners detect and in turn predicts partners' regard for actors in weekly and pretest and posttest analyses. This hypothesis was not supported in lagged analyses, suggesting that partners do not corroborate actors' self-reported change in responsiveness from week to week. Importantly, associations examined in phase 1 analyses are largely similar between male and female pairs—gender moderated only one of the 21 associations examined. Further, the effects of self-image goals on decreased responsiveness and the effects of compassionate goals on increased responsiveness did not depend on avoidance-oriented self-image goals or approach-oriented compassionate goals items.

Do Actors' Goals Predict Change in Actors' Self-Esteem?

In phase 2 analyses, we examined associations between actors' self-image and compassionate goals and their self-esteem. We used the analytic strategies described earlier, testing whether actors' goals predicted their self-esteem, controlling for partners' goals.

Results provide strong support for a direct association between actors' compassionate goals and self-esteem but are somewhat mixed for the relation between actors' self-image goals and their own self-esteem. Weekly analyses, shown at the top of Table 4, revealed that on weeks when actors reported higher compassionate goals, they also reported higher self-esteem; weekly fluctuations in actors' self-image goals did not predict their weekly self-esteem. In lagged-week

analyses, shown in the middle of Table 4, actors' self-image goals in one week predicted their decreased self-esteem the following week, and their compassionate goals in one week predicted their increased self-esteem the following week. In analyses of change across the semester, shown at the bottom of Table 4, actors' chronic compassionate goals predicted their increased self-esteem; actors' chronic self-image goals predicted their marginally decreased self-esteem. The partners' goals did not predict actors' self-esteem in any analyses.

We tested whether gender moderated associations between actors' and partners' self-image and compassionate goals and actors' self-esteem in weekly, lagged, and pretest and posttest analyses using the analytic strategies described earlier. Gender did not moderate any of the 12 product terms tested (all pr s \leq 1.101, ns).

Because approach and avoidance goals are both linked to self-evaluation, we tested whether links between actors' goals and their self-esteem were due to approach or avoidance items. We reran our primary analyses for self-esteem, again, including actors' and partners' approach self-image and compassionate goals in one set of analyses and their avoidance goals in another.

Overall, results were similar regardless of whether the goals items were approach-oriented or avoidance-oriented. Associations between actors' compassionate goals and their self-esteem remained significant and nearly identical (for weekly analyses, $pr = .11$, $p < .01$, vs $pr = .12$, $p < .001$; for lagged analyses, $pr = .17$, $p < .01$ vs $pr = .14$, $p < .01$; for pretest-to-posttest analyses, $pr = .17$, $ps < .05$, for both approach and avoidance items). Associations between actors' self-image goals and their self-esteem did not differ for approach and avoidance items in weekly ($pr = -.03$, ns, for both approach and avoidance items) or pretest-to-posttest analyses ($pr = -.12$, $p < .09$ vs $pr = -.13$, $p < .06$, for approach and avoidance items, respectively). However, in lagged analyses, actors' avoidance self-image goals predicted their decreased self-esteem, $pr = -.17$, $p < .01$, but actors' approach self-image goals did not, $pr = -.08$, ns.

Do Actors' Goals Predict Change in Actors' Self-Esteem Through Their Responsiveness to Roommates?

Next, we examined whether actors' goals predict their self-esteem through their responsiveness to relationship partners. We tested this model within weeks, from week to week, and across the semester, following the general analytic strategies described previously. We did not include partners' goals in these analyses because they did not predict actors' self-esteem in any previous analyses.

Across analyses, results support our hypothesized model. As shown in the top of Figure 2, on weeks when actors had higher self-image goals, they reported being less responsive to roommates; on weeks when actors had higher compassionate goals, they reported being more responsive to roommates. Responsiveness to roommates then predicted greater self-esteem that week. In lagged analyses, we tested whether actors' week 1 goals predicted change in their responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2, which then predicted change in their self-esteem from weeks 1 to 3, which allowed us to determine the

Table 4. Unstandardized regression coefficients, ts, and partial correlations for actors' and partners' self-image and compassionate goals predicting actors' self-esteem in weekly, lagged, and pretest/posttest analyses

	Actors' self-esteem		
	<i>B</i>	(<i>df</i>) <i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>
Actors' and partners' weekly goals predicting actors' weekly self-esteem			
Actors' weekly goals:			
Self-image	-.07	(934.88) -1.29	-.04
Compassionate	.22	(922.26) 4.06	.13 ¹
Partners' weekly goals:			
Self-image	-.04	(934.88) -.80	-.03
Compassionate	-.07	(922.26) -1.28	-.04
Actors' and partners' week 1 goals predicting actors' residual week 2 self-esteem			
Actors' week 1 self-esteem			
	.44	(299.45) 15.83	.67 ¹
Actors' week 1 goals:			
Self-image	-.08	(267.07) -2.66	-.16**
Compassionate	.10	(317.78) 3.09	.17**
Partners' week 1 goals:			
Self-image	.00	(261.72) .06	.00
Compassionate	-.01	(293.81) -.49	-.03
Actors' and partners' chronic goals predicting actors' residual posttest self-esteem			
Actors' pretest self-esteem			
	.63	(203.94) 11.93	.64 ¹
Actors' chronic goals:			
Self-image	-.10	(203.02) -1.92	-.13 [†]
Compassionate	.15	(210.06) 2.51	.17**
Partners' chronic goals:			
Self-image	-.06	(201.73) -1.23	-.09
Compassionate	.06	(210.23) 1.01	.07

Note:****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05; [†]*p* < .07.

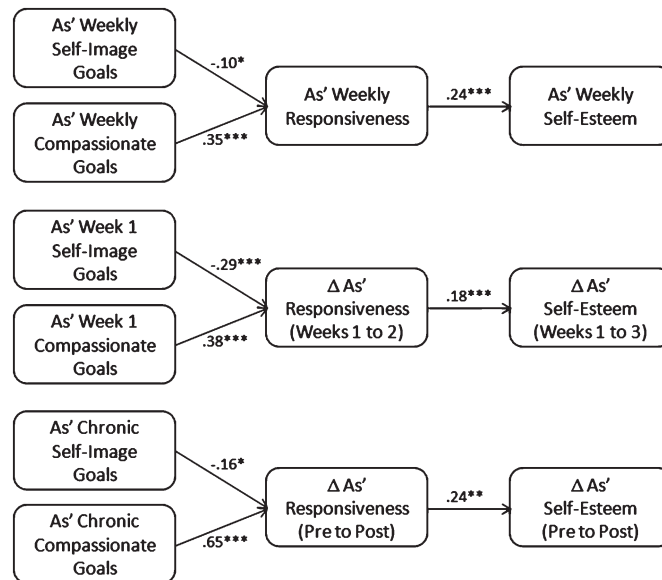


Figure 2. Path coefficients for effects of actors' (As') self-image and compassionate goals on actors' responsiveness and actors' self-esteem in weekly, lagged-week, and pretest and posttest data. Note: All estimates are partial correlations, *** *p* < .001, ** *p* < .01, * *p* < .05

plausibility of causality for each association. As shown in the middle of Figure 2, actors' week 1 self-image goals predicted their decreased responsiveness and week 1 compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2, which then predicted their increased self-esteem from weeks 1 to 3. We then examined whether actors' chronic

goals predicted change in their responsiveness from pretest to posttest, which then predicted simultaneous change in their self-esteem from pretest to posttest. As shown in the bottom of Figure 2, actors' chronic self-image goals predicted their decreased responsiveness and compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness from pretest

to posttest, which then predicted their increased self-esteem from pretest to posttest. Thus, these data support our hypothesis that students' self-image and compassionate goals predict changes in their own self-esteem and that responsiveness to roommates may be one pathway by which this occurs.

Again, because the process from actors' goals to their responsiveness and change in self-esteem might differ by gender, we tested whether gender moderated individual paths in Figure 1 that were not tested in previous analyses, again, treating gender as a fixed effect. Gender did not moderate any of the three paths unique to Figure 2 (all $pr \leq .1081$, ns).

Do Actors' Perceptions of Partners' Responsiveness Explain Associations Between Their Responsiveness and Self-Esteem?

Finally, we tested the possibility that it was actors' perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness, and not necessarily their own responsiveness, that led to their increased self-esteem in our path models. In weekly, lagged, and change from pretest to posttest analyses, we tested whether actors' perceptions of roommates' responsiveness predicted their self-esteem, controlling for their interpersonal goals.¹ If this association was significant, we then tested whether actors' perceptions of their partners' responsiveness accounted for the association between actors' responsiveness and self-esteem, controlling for actors' interpersonal goals, using analytic strategies described previously.

Across analyses, perceptions of roommates' responsiveness did not explain associations between actors' responsiveness and self-esteem. In within-week analyses, actors' weekly perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness did not predict their self-esteem that week ($pr = .07$, ns). In lagged analyses, actors' increased perceptions of their roommate's responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 predicted actors' increased self-esteem from weeks 1 to 3 ($pr = .18$, $p < .01$), but when we tested actors' increased responsiveness and perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 together in the same model predicting change in actors' self-esteem, actors' increased responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 predicted their increased self-esteem from weeks 1 to 3 ($pr = .11$, $p < .01$), actors' increased perceptions of roommates' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 did not ($pr = .07$, ns). In pretest and posttest analyses, actors' increased perceptions of roommate's responsiveness predicted actors' increased self-esteem from pretest to posttest ($pr = .14$, $p < .05$). However, when we tested actors' increased responsiveness and perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness from pretest to posttest together in the same model predicting change in their self-esteem, actors' increased responsiveness predicted their increased self-esteem ($pr = .18$, $p < .01$); actors' increased perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness did not ($pr = -.03$, ns).

In sum, the results from the analyses of actors' self-esteem support our hypothesis that actors' goals lead to a change in

their responsiveness, with consequences for their own self-esteem. Importantly, actors' perceptions of their partners' responsiveness did not explain why their own responsiveness led to their increased self-esteem. Further, these associations did not differ by gender.

DISCUSSION

People often adopt self-image goals in order to gain others' positive regard and to validate their ideal selves, boosting their self-esteem (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). But do these goals achieve their intended result? And do these outcomes endure over time? This study explored the consequences of self-image goals for self-esteem and others' regard for the self. We also explored the effectiveness of an alternative avenue of gaining self-esteem and others' regard—compassionate goals to support others (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Finally, we investigated responsiveness in close relationships (i.e., responsiveness and perceptions of partners' responsiveness) as one mechanism by which interpersonal goals lead to these outcomes. The results suggest that self-image goals, focused on getting others to recognize one's positive qualities, paradoxically lead to decreased regard from others and decreased self-esteem. In contrast, compassionate goals, focused on being supportive of others, lead to increased regard from others and increased self-esteem.

Interpersonal Goals Create Regard from Others

These results are generally consistent with the hypothesis that self-image goals thwart and compassionate goals enhance others' regard through responsiveness in the relationship. Within-week and change from pretest to posttest analyses showed that students' self-image goals led to their decreased responsiveness and compassionate goals led to their increased responsiveness to their roommates, which predicted roommates' increased perceptions of students' responsiveness, which, in turn, predicted roommates' increased regard for them. Thus, within a week and over the span of several months, people's self-image goals to increase others' regard for them backfire and lead others to have a decreased regard for them; people's compassionate goals to support others' well-being lead to others' increased regard for them.

Lagged-week analyses did not support our hypothesis in this specific time frame. Actors' week 1 self-image and compassionate goals led to a hypothesized change in actors' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 and change in roommates' perceptions of students' responsiveness from weeks 1 to 2 predicted their increased esteem for students over that same period. But, students' self-reported change in responsiveness from week to week was not corroborated by their roommates. This disconnect between students' responsiveness and their roommates' perceptions of students' responsiveness suggest a measurement issue—that weekly assessments of responsiveness may capture the salient or personally relevant experiences for each person, with each person reporting on different events (Canevello & Crocker, 2010).

¹We do not test whether actors' self-image and compassionate goals predict their perceptions of their partners' responsiveness in weekly, lagged, and pretest and posttest analyses because those results appear in Canevello and Crocker (2010), and tests of these associations are not critical to this specific investigation.

We did not find any direct associations between students' self-image and compassionate goals and their partners' regard for them. Combined with the results from path analyses, these findings suggest that students' goals do not lead to their roommates' regard for them unless we also account for students' responsiveness and roommates' perceptions of students' responsiveness. Responsiveness appears to be a necessary ingredient in how students' goals ultimately lead to their roommates' regard for them.

Interpersonal Goals Contribute to Self-Esteem

Self-image and compassionate goals have paradoxical consequences for self-esteem. Within-week, lagged-week, and change from pretest to posttest analyses all supported our prediction that students' self-image goals indirectly predict decreased self-esteem through their own decreased responsiveness, whereas students' compassionate goals, aimed toward supporting others, indirectly predict increased self-esteem, through their own increased responsiveness. Thus, goals aimed at portraying desired images of the self have unintended costs for self-esteem. However, goals aimed at supporting others' well-being have unintended benefits for self-esteem. Responsiveness appears to play a key role in these associations—people derive self-esteem from giving understanding, validation, and caring to others.

Importantly, associations between students' responsiveness and increased self-esteem are not a function of their perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness. Across the three types of analyses, perceptions of their roommates' responsiveness did not account for associations between responsiveness to roommates and increased self-esteem. Although responsiveness theorists and others have suggested that perceiving others as responsive may have implications for self-concept, including self-esteem (e.g., Bowlby, 1969; Gable & Reis, 2006), little research specifically addresses how being responsive to others may benefit the self. A growing body of work suggests unintended benefits of responding to and supporting others (e.g., Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003; Crocker et al., 2010; Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Scheiner, & Ryan, 2006; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008; Piferi & Lawler, 2006). The current study adds to this work by showing that people gain self-esteem from responding to others' needs, over perceiving that others are responding to them.

Interestingly, only 1 of 36 associations tested in this study was moderated by gender—in lagged-week analyses, the direct association between students' week 1 self-image goals and change in their roommates' regard for them from weeks 1 to 2 was significant for male roommate pairs but was nonsignificant for female pairs. Although this finding may be potentially informative and hints that self-image goals affect others' regard differently in male and female relationships, we hesitate to over-interpret this finding, given that we did not hypothesize it, it was not significant in weekly or in pretest and posttest analyses, and no other associations differed by gender. However, we do recommend that future research examine potential gender differences in closer detail.

Further, although previous research has linked approach and avoidance goals with self-esteem and responsiveness

(e.g., Coats et al., 1996; Impett et al., 2010), the approach-avoidance distinction did not explain associations with self-image and compassionate goals. Actors' compassionate goals predicted their increased responsiveness and self-esteem regardless of whether compassionate goal items were approach-oriented or avoidance-oriented. In general, actors' self-image goals also predicted their decreased responsiveness and self-esteem for both approach-oriented and avoidance-oriented items. In only one of the three sets of analyses (i.e., in lagged analyses) did actors' avoidance-oriented self-image goals predict self-esteem, whereas approach-oriented self-image goals did not. We hesitate to interpret these findings because they do not replicate in weekly or pretest to posttest analyses. Additionally, the scales were derived from relatively few items—the approach self-image goals scale was derived from only two items; the avoidance self-image goals scale included only four items. Thus, relatively low reliabilities may also complicate interpretation. Future work attempting to disentangle the effects of approach and avoidance motives from self-image and compassionate goals should develop scales containing an adequate number of items to construct more reliable approach-oriented and avoidance-oriented self-image and compassionate goal measures. Despite these limitations, the present analyses suggest that compassionate goals have positive consequences whether people aim to provide support or avoid harming others. In two of the three sets of analyses (i.e., weekly and pretest-to-posttest analyses), actors' approach-oriented self-image goals predicted their decreased responsiveness, but their avoidance-oriented self-image goals did not. These findings are difficult to interpret, particularly because previous research on approach and avoidance goals would make exactly the opposite prediction, but they suggest that the negative effects of self-image goals do not result from having an avoidance orientation.

These findings extend the impression management literature by demonstrating the consequences of impression management goals in close relationships over time. Much of the impression management literature focuses on brief laboratory interactions between strangers, but people differ in how they present themselves to strangers, compared with friends (Tice et al., 1995); they react differently to impression management attempts, depending on how much they know about the other person (Schlenker & Leary, 1982) and multiple interactions over time should have long-term consequences. Therefore, it is not surprising that the effectiveness of self-image goals and their consequences may differ depending on the nature of the relationship. Impression management can be successful in interactions with strangers if people possess ability, motivation, and self-efficacy (Schlenker, 2003), and impression management with strangers can lead to greater self-esteem (Jones et al., 1981). However, as our data demonstrate, in interactions with those who know them, people's self-image goals appear to create exactly the opposite of what they want—others' have poor regard for them and their own self-esteem suffers; furthermore, these consequences extend over time. In this investigation, we drew from the close relationships literature, which identifies responsiveness as a crucial component of close relationship function to predict these

effects, suggesting a potentially fruitful point of contact between the impression management and close relationships literatures.

People with self-image goals might try to appear responsive to others but are unlikely to succeed for at least two reasons. First, when people have self-image goals, they are less responsive because they focus on how they appear, not on what others need. Second, others are sensitive to people's intentions. For example, when people report having both compassionate and self-image goals, others perceive them as less supportive (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Similarly, close others may detect insincere responsive behaviors and interpret them as unresponsive, diminishing their regard.

Caveats

Because we did not manipulate goals, we cannot draw strong conclusions about causal relationships from this investigation. Self-image and compassionate goals and responsiveness consistently predicted change in others' regard for the self and own self-esteem across analyses, consistent with a causal effect, but only experimental research can establish the direction of causality.

Associations between interpersonal goals, others' regard, and self-esteem may also operate in the opposite direction. Indeed, increases in others' regard may lead people to be more responsive, decreasing self-image and increasing compassionate goals (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). Self-esteem may also foster responsiveness (Gable & Reis, 2006), which has been shown to decrease self-image and increase compassionate goals (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). However, our primary interests in this investigation were to determine whether self-image goals lead to others' increased regard and own increased self-esteem, posit an alternative pathway to these outcomes, and investigate the role of responsiveness in these associations. Future research should investigate these potentially reciprocating processes to gain a more comprehensive view of the interplay between self-esteem, others' regard, and close relationships.

The findings for same-sex roommate relationships among young adults investigated here might not generalize to other relationships, such as opposite-sex relationships, other peer friendships or romantic or parent-child relationships. Although we see no reason why the processes described here should not hold across different relationship types, future research is necessary to determine their generalizability.

Finally, although impression management may involve demonstrating either competence or warmth (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007), our measure of self-image goals focuses more closely on the former. Self-image goals to be seen as likeable might not have the same negative effects on self-esteem and others' regard, if they lead to increased, rather than decreased, responsiveness. Alternatively, self-image goals to appear likeable focus on how others view the self, not on what others need, so they, too, may reduce responsiveness to others and with it, self-esteem and others' regard. Future research should address this issue by employing measures of self-image goals to appear likeable.

CONCLUSION

The impression management literature suggests that people can attain goals aimed toward gaining others' regard and enhancing their own self-esteem in interactions with strangers. This research suggests that self-image goals lead to the exact opposite outcomes in close relationships. That is, when people attempt to make close others see them more positively, their attempts backfire because they interrupt a key process for building and maintaining close relationships (i.e., responsiveness) that is essential to both others' regard and own self-esteem. However, when people focus on supporting others' well-being, they are more responsive, and paradoxically, increase others' regard and own self-esteem. These data suggest that people can create positive regard from others' and increase their self-esteem by adopting an orientation toward supporting others.

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