

Preliminary Development and Validation of a Measure of Relationship Authenticity

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The authors describe the preliminary development and validation of the Authenticity in Relationships Scale. An initial pool of 37 items addressing various elements of the proposed definition of “relationship authenticity” was administered to 2 independent samples of undergraduates ($N = 487$) who acknowledged being in a current romantic relationship. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses revealed that 2 interpretable factors (Unacceptability of Deception, Intimate Risk Taking) effectively represented the data in both samples. Retest data over a 3-month interval were also gathered from a separate independent sample of 121 participants. Subscale scores composed of factor-unique items demonstrated good reliability and test–retest stability, correlated in expected directions with scores on several measures used to establish construct validity, and made unique contributions to the prediction of relationship satisfaction after gender, self-esteem, commitment level, and adult attachment orientations were controlled.

Keywords: intimacy, honesty, interpersonal relationships, measurement, authenticity

Although the virtues of expressing oneself openly and honestly (i.e., authentically) to others have been extolled since ancient times (Harbus, 2002) and are claimed as a key characteristic of healthy personal and relationship functioning in several prominent theories of personality, counseling, and human development (Horney, 1950; Kohut, 1971; Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1951; Winnicott, 1960, Harter (2002) lamented that “there is no single, coherent body of literature on authentic self-behavior, no bedrock of knowledge (p. 382).” Hence, the construct of authenticity in the psychological literature remains both compelling and elusive. The meager empirical research on authenticity (reviewed in the Research on Authenticity section) may be in part explained by theoretical ambiguity as to whether authenticity is more appropriately conceptualized as an individual-differences variable (i.e., a stable internal structure representing the core, real self) or as a relational construct (i.e., a unique experience of self with a particular “other”). This ambiguity may also have contributed to the virtual absence of available measures of the construct, thus further inhibiting research activity.

Although most theoretical references to authenticity emphasize a person-centered view that focuses attention on critical features of the self-structure, they concurrently call attention to features of relationship contexts that can either facilitate or retard the devel-

opment of the core, real self. For example, Winnicott (1960), an object relations theorist, distinguished between true- and false-self experiences and argued that when early caregiving fails to affirm and support the child’s unique needs and feelings, he or she becomes alienated from these authentic self-experiences and develops a *false self* on the basis of compliance with parental wishes or threats of disapproval. In short, actual self-experiences that are considered unacceptable to significant others become “split off” from one’s formative self-image, and this protective strategy is likely to generalize to other relationships to avoid similar threats. Elsewhere, Rogers (1951) posited that the child’s experiences of “conditions of self-worth” in early relationships with caregivers directly obstruct the normative unfolding of a positive, authentic, and congruent self. For Rogers, this unfortunate retardation in authentic self-experiencing can only be undone within the context of a relationship that provides the person with “unconditional positive regard.”

Other “self theorists” (Gergen, 1991; Mitchell, 1992) have rejected the notion that an obdurate, core self exists and instead emphasized a temporal rather than a spatial view wherein the self is the subjective organization of meanings a person creates as he or she moves through time; experiences affective states; and engages in cognitive, dialogic, and reflective processes. As Mitchell (1992) observed, “Speaking of authenticity versus inauthenticity or true or false *experience* frees us from the spatial metaphor in a way that speaking of a true or false *self* or a ‘core’ or ‘real’ *self* does not” (p. 9).

Eschewing the use of a spatial metaphor to define the real self enabled Mitchell (1992) to conceptualize authenticity as a relationship-specific phenomenon that likely reflects the interpersonal goals of each participant. Given these likely distinctions, intimate adult relationships represent a unique (and especially compelling) context for the study of authenticity, as participants in these relationships are presumably enjoined in the shared enter-

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prise of deepening each other's accurate knowledge of and appreciation for their most personal and private self-views and self-understandings (Aron, 2003).

Recently, Kernis (2003), although continuing to favor an individual-differences view of the construct, proposed that authenticity incorporates awareness, unbiased processing, action, and a *relational* (italics added) orientation. Regarding the latter component, he argued that

relational authenticity involves endorsing the importance for close others to see the real you, good and bad. Toward that end, authentic relations involve a selective process of self-disclosure and the development of mutual intimacy and trust. In short, relational authenticity means being genuine and not "fake" in one's relationships with others. (p. 15)

Goldman and Kernis (2002) sought to measure relational authenticity by way of a six-item subscale of their Authenticity Inventory (AI). Unfortunately, however, the AI is not a relationship-specific measure of authenticity; in addition, scores on this particular subscale did not demonstrate adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .32$). In the interest of improving construct assessment that is in line with a contextual view of the self, the present article advances research on authenticity by describing the development and preliminary validation of a novel, relationship-specific self-report measure of authenticity (the *Authenticity in Relationships Scale* [AIRS]). Prior to offering our definition of this construct and describing our item and scale development work, we turn now to consideration of empirical literature on authenticity that, although limited, also influenced our definitional and scale validation decisions.

Research on Authenticity

Despite her lament over the paucity of empirical research on authenticity, Harter and her associates have made some preliminary forays into this arena. For instance, in a study of middle-school adolescents, Harter, Marold, Whitesell, and Cobbs (1996) operationalized authenticity as "acting in ways that reflect the real me or my true self" versus "acting in ways that are *not* the real me or my true self." Participants were asked to report on their parents' and peers' behavior as well as on the extent they themselves engaged in true-self versus false-self behavior. As hypothesized, adolescents who reported the highest level of true-self behavior correspondingly reported the highest levels of unconditional support from parents and peers. Moreover, relative to their less authentic peers, they reported higher self-esteem, more positive affect, and greater optimism. When asked why they engaged in false-self behavior, many participants acknowledged that they did so because they perceived that their true selves were not liked by parents and peers and because they believed that by suppressing their authentic thoughts and feelings, they could obtain desired support and approval from these figures. In another study involving adolescents, the vast majority of participants affirmed that the failure to express oneself represented false-self behavior (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1997).

The above findings suggest that an orientation toward inauthenticity in one's intimate relationships likely reflects an overconcern with the importance of maintaining partner approval and an inclination to avoid truthful exchanges when such exchanges may risk

conflict. Indeed, in her more recent studies (Neff & Harter, 2002a, 2002b), Harter found that persons who were preoccupied with maintaining connection with their partners and who resolved conflicts by acceding to their partners' needs were more likely to evaluate their own relationship behavior as inauthentic. Relatedly, independent studies of deception in close relationships (Cole, 2001; Metts, 1989; Peterson, 1996) have found that participants acknowledged using deception to avoid conflict or partner anger; taken together, these findings further underscore the value of studying authenticity as a relational schema that incorporates a cost-benefit appraisal of the value and risks of accurate and truthful exchanges of self-experiences with one's partner.

Elsewhere, in two studies of college students, Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, and Ilardi (1997) found that students evidenced differing levels of the "Big Five" personality traits when engaged in different social roles, observing that within-subject variations along these personality dimensions were significantly related to participants' "felt psychological authenticity" in these different roles. These findings lend additional support to a social-contextualist view of authenticity. More recently, Leak and Cooney (2001) found significant associations among levels of "felt authenticity"/self-determination, secure adult attachment styles, and measures of psychological well-being within a college sample. Goldman and Kernis (2002) found that relational authenticity scores only weakly correlated with a global measure of self-esteem but were more significantly correlated with negative affect among 79 undergraduate psychology students. As noted earlier, however, their measure of relational authenticity lacked adequate reliability, underscoring the desirability of reexamining these relationships with our novel measure.

Although meager, the available research suggests that persons can acknowledge, differentiate, and report when they are behaving authentically or inauthentically with others; that they can feel authentic in some relationships and not in others; and that these distinct response modes are associated with different relationship experiences, conflict management strategies, and outcomes. Power inequalities and perceptions of relationship threat or expectations of partner disapproval appear to predict inauthentic behavior and self-experience, and inauthenticity has been negatively linked to measures of well-being. Lastly, authentic self-behavior is more commonplace in the context of emotionally significant relationships (e.g., family, intimates, close friends) than among acquaintances, suggesting that an orientation toward authenticity may be an especially vital feature of intimate relationships wherein participants typically desire to exchange and validate each other's real self-experiences (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). Unfortunately, the one existing measure of relational authenticity does not provide either a reliable or a relationship-specific assessment of the construct.

These provocative early findings underscore the need for continued study of authenticity as a relational schema because this focus may hold promise in illuminating the interpersonal conditions and processes that promote or inhibit real self-experience and expression. The development of a reliable, valid, and relationship-specific self-report measure of authenticity is especially crucial to such research progress, as it would permit exploration of several central questions regarding the construct. For instance, to what extent do persons experience themselves as authentic in the context of a current intimate relationship? Is relationship authenticity a unidimensional or multidimensional construct? Are there gender

differences in the degree to which persons are disposed to being authentic in their intimate relationships? Is variability in relationship authenticity relatively stable within an ongoing partnership, and is it related to satisfaction with partners, and to important participant and relationship characteristics such as self-esteem, self-image coherence, self-concealment, depression, and adult attachment security?

Toward a Definition of Authenticity in Relationships

We contend that the available evidence supports the following provisional definition of *authenticity in relationships*: A relational schema that favors the benefits of mutual and accurate exchanges of real self-experiences with one's intimate partner over the attendant risks of personal discomfort, partner disapproval, or relationship instability.

As preliminary empirical evidence cited earlier indicates, authentic self-behavior is often inhibited or constrained by fears of partner rejection, lack of understanding, or disapproval, or by expectations that truthful disclosures will lead to conflict the person wishes to avoid. Accordingly, persons with a strong orientation toward relationship authenticity should acknowledge that the benefits of honest self-presentations with an intimate partner clearly outweigh their potential risks and costs. By contrast, under conditions of relationship threat, persons acknowledging weaker relationship authenticity orientations should be disposed toward "false self" behaviors, such as incongruent or deceptive communications, and be more likely to condone or even prefer similar behavior from their partners. Persons with a clear orientation toward authenticity in relationships, however, should consciously avoid misrepresenting themselves to their partners, endorse a willingness to act on the relationship to correct inaccurate partner understandings of the self, and should encourage and invite open and honest partner disclosures.

Expected Correlates of Authentic Relationship Orientation

Given our provisional definition of the authenticity construct, we expected that, as a relational schema, authenticity beliefs within the context of a particular relationship should be relatively stable, only weakly related to scores on a global measure of self-esteem, and more robustly correlated with relationship satisfaction and commitment levels as well as with attachment insecurity (i.e., attachment avoidance and anxiety) and experiences of self-disorganization, self-concealment, and current emotional distress. We also hoped that scores on our novel measure of relationship authenticity would make unique contributions to the prediction of relationship satisfaction after self-esteem, relationship commitment level, and adult attachment orientations were controlled.

Study 1

Study 1 sought to recruit a sufficiently large sample of participants to permit both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses of the initial item pool and to conduct a preliminary assessment of the concurrent validity of obtained factors.

Method

Development of Item Pool

In advance of developing the item pool, Frederick G. Lopez and one of his research assistants reviewed the above literature and discussed their emergent ideas regarding construct definition with one another and with the five other doctoral student members of Frederick G. Lopez's research team. Early feedback from group members regarding the proposed construct definition was also solicited. Following these consultations, Frederick G. Lopez then assumed primary responsibility for drafting an initial set of 40 items that captured the perceived costs and benefits of authentic exchanges with one's intimate partner. These items were shared with research team members, and their feedback was again solicited. Three items were deemed ambiguous and thus deleted; minor word changes were made to a few of the remaining items to improve clarity as well as correspondence with the proposed definition. This final pool of 37 items, which formed our AIRS, contained both positively and negatively worded statements that variously addressed such experiences as strategic deception (e.g., "To avoid conflict in our relationship, I will sometimes tell my partner what I think he or she wants to hear even if it's not true") and experiences of deep and uninhibited self-disclosure that are unfettered by evaluative concerns (e.g., "I disclose my deepest feelings to my partner even if there's a chance that he or she may not share them"). Instructions directed respondents to consider their current (and most important) intimate relationship and to use a 9-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all descriptive*) to 9 (*very descriptive*) to indicate how well each item described their experience of their relationship with this individual.

Participants and Procedures

A total of 487 participants (313 women, 174 men) who acknowledged being in a current dating or marital relationship were recruited from undergraduate classes in psychology, education, and human development/family studies at a major urban university in the Southwest to participate in a "study of close relationships." Prospective participants were scheduled to attend one of several available survey sessions held in reserved classroom space on campus during which time they read and signed informed consent documents prior to completing the packet of survey measures described below. With the exception of the demographic questionnaire (which always appeared first), survey packets represented several different sequencings of the key measures under investigation as a means of controlling for possible order effects. Surveys were typically completed within 35–45 min, and all participants received partial course credit for their research involvement.

The mean age of the full sample was 22.01 years ($SD = 5.10$), and its racial/ethnic composition was as follows: White (35%); Black (19.5%); Asian/Pacific Islander (19.9%); Hispanic/Latino (19%); Native American (1.9%); multiracial (3.9%); and "other" (< 1%). Class representation was also diverse and as follows: first year (15.2%); sophomore (32.9%); junior (31%); and senior (20.7%). Participants were predominately single (87.7%). They also indicated that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship of moderate duration (mean relationship length = 31 months).

Measures

In addition to the initial pool of 37 items used for constructing the AIRS, the measures below were included in the survey packet.

Demographic questionnaire. This brief form solicited information on participants' age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational level, dating/marital status, and relationship length, as well as brief ratings of relationship satisfaction, expected persistence, and partner support.

Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECRS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The short form of the ECRS is a 36-item measure that assesses each of two dimensions that theoretically underlie the construct of

adult attachment. The Avoidance scale (18 items) taps discomfort with closeness in one's intimate relationship, and the Anxiety scale (18 items) assesses fear of abandonment and rejection. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*) in terms of their general experience of romantic relationships. Brennan et al. (1998) reported Cronbach's alphas of .94 and .91 for the Avoidance and Anxiety scales, respectively, and that scale scores were correlated in expected directions with scores on measures of touch aversion and post-coital emotions. In the present study, observed Cronbach's coefficient alphas were .90 (Avoidance) and .91 (Anxiety).

Self-Concealment Scale (SCS; Larson & Chastain, 1990). The SCS is a 10-item scale that assesses the predisposition to consciously conceal personal information that is highly intimate and negative. Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Larson and Chastain reported a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .83 for SCS scores in an adult sample of human service workers and counseling graduate students, and that factor analysis of these scores indicated that the SCS essentially measures a unidimensional construct. They also reported that SCS scores were significantly related to physical and psychological symptoms, even after controlling for self-reported trauma experience and trauma disclosure; in addition, SCS scores were related to, although non-redundant with, scores on an independent measure of self-disclosure. In the present study, SCS scores yielded a coefficient alpha of .89.

The Splitting Index (SI; Gould, Prentice, & Ainslie, 1996). The SI is a 24-item self-report instrument that assesses dispositions to use splitting, a form of ego defense characterized by a tendency to see oneself or others as all good or all bad and by acknowledged experiences of internal disorganization and fragmentation. The SI contains three factor analytically derived subscales, each containing eight items, and each respectively measuring *self-splitting* (e.g., "The different parts of my personality are difficult to put together"), *other-splitting* (e.g., "I have doubts about my closest friends"), and *family splitting* (e.g., "I have extremely mixed feelings about my mother"). Scale scores can be summed to produce a total splitting score. Gould et al. reported that SI total scores (a) produced an alpha coefficient of .90 in a large sample of undergraduates and (b) were significantly correlated with independent measures of borderline and narcissistic personality disorders, self-image stability, and depression. In the present study, SI scores produced a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .89.

The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). The CES-D is a 20-item self-report scale used to measure current depressive symptoms in the general population. Using a 4-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (*rarely*) to 4 (*most or all of the time*), respondents indicate how frequently they experienced each item over the past week. Following rekeying of reverse-scored items, item ratings are summed to produce a total score. Radloff (1977) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .85 for CES-D scores in a nonclinical sample, that these scores discriminated well between nonclinical and psychiatric samples, and that they were moderately to strongly correlated with clinician ratings of depression among participants in the latter sample. In the present study, CES-D scores obtained a coefficient alpha of .87.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). The RSE is a widely used 10-item measure of global self-worth and self-acceptance. Respondents rate each item (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") using a 4-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Obtained Cronbach's alpha reliabilities have varied from study to study but have typically been in the acceptable to high range. Fleming and Courtney (1984) reported that RSE scores were significantly correlated in expected directions with measures of anxiety, depression, and anomie, while unrelated to gender, age, or marital status. RSE scores in the present study produced a Cronbach's alpha of .87.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is a 7-item scale designed to serve as a brief, generic self-report measure of relationship satisfaction. Respondents answer item questions (e.g., "How well does your partner meet your needs?") on 5-point rating scales.

Following rekeying of reverse-scored items, ratings are summed to produce a total satisfaction score. Hendrick (1988) reported a Cronbach coefficient alpha of .86 for RAS scores in an undergraduate sample and that RAS scores were correlated in expected directions with scores on independent measures of love attitudes, intimate self-disclosure, dyadic adjustment, and relationship commitment. In the present study, RAS scores produced a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .87.

Results

Random Sampling

The full sample was split into two random samples stratified by gender ($N_1 = 244$; $N_2 = 243$) for exploratory and subsequent cross-validation, confirmatory analyses.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The PRELIS/LISREL 8.54 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2003) program was used to generate a polychoric correlation matrix for the factor analyses. Polychoric correlations are recommended when analyzing item-level data because the distributional properties of item data are more likely to be ordinal and skewed than continuous and normally distributed (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Polychoric correlations are estimates of what the correlations among variables would be if the variables were continuous and normally distributed (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, p. 127). On the basis of polychoric correlation data from the first random sample, communalities ranged from .47 to .83, which indicated that all of the items should be retained for an initial principal-axis common factor analysis. Common factor analysis was selected on the basis of the recommendations of Gorsuch (1997) when using factor analysis for item analyses in scale development. The data and sample size appeared to be adequate for this analysis according to Bartlett's (1954) test of sphericity, $\chi^2(435, N = 244) = 5,612.23, p < .001$, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) measure of sampling adequacy (.858). This analysis revealed nine factors, with eigenvalues ranging from 1.05 to 13.47. However, a scree test suggested that two factors appeared to be the best solution (initial eigenvalues of 13.47 and 3.13, remaining eigenvalues were 1.66 and less). According to Reise, Waller, and Comrey (2000, p. 290), decisions regarding how many factors to extract and retain for rotation can be informed by a parallel analysis. A parallel analysis generates random datasets on the basis of the same sample size and number of scale items used in the actual study. Where the scree plot derived from the actual study crosses the scree plot from the simulated data provides guidance as to the maximum number of factors to extract. According to Reise et al. (2000, p. 290), factors with smaller eigenvalues in the actual data than those evident in the simulated data should not be extracted. The parallel analysis was based on 100 simulations of random data specifying a sample size of 244 and 37 variables. The simulated eigenvalues for the first five factors were 1.82, 1.72, 1.64, 1.574, and 1.52, whereas the actual eigenvalues for the first five factors from the analysis of actual data were 13.47, 3.13, 1.66, 1.577, and 1.34. Although these results suggested that a four-factor structure may be reasonable, additional analyses revealed that the latter two factors comprised few items with amorphous pattern coefficients (low to moderate loadings on multiple factors). Therefore, a two-factor solution was adopted.

The two retained factors, before rotation, accounted for approximately 45% of the variance. Oblique rotation with the Promax procedure ($\kappa = 4$) was conducted to help refine the factor solution and help clarify meanings of the factors (Ford, MacCallum, & Tait, 1986). Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, and Strahan (1999) and Russell (2002) recommend the Promax procedure because it initially tests an orthogonal solution then permits any factors to correlate to determine whether doing so permits a better fit for the data structure. After rotation, the two factors collectively accounted for approximately 42% of the interitem variance (Factor 1 eigenvalue = 12.95, 35%; Factor 2 eigenvalue = 2.61, 7%). The 37 items and their respective pattern coefficients are presented in Table 1.

To help refine item-factor associations, only those items that correlated .40 or higher on one factor and .20 or less with the other were considered as uniquely representative of each factor. This decision rule resulted in the exclusion of 11 items from the scale. The remaining 26 items were reanalyzed, resulting in two factors that accounted for approximately 51% of the variance (eigenvalues = 10.47, 2.82). A total of 14 items loaded on Factor 1, and 12 items loaded on Factor 2, with no change in item-to-factor matching after the removal of the 11 items. There was minimal change in prior pattern coefficients from the earlier factor analysis, with coefficients for the first factor ranging from .45 to .82 and for the second factor ranging from .44 to .94.

An examination of the unique item-factor loadings indicated that Factor 1 items appeared to tap a willingness to engage in and accept deceptive and inaccurate self- and partner representations (e.g., "Sometimes I find myself trying to impress my partner into believing something about me that isn't really true" and "I'd rather think the best of my partner than to know the whole truth about him or her"). Given the consistent negative item loadings on this factor, these items were reverse-keyed (i.e., scored toward an authentic orientation), and the factor was labeled *Unacceptability of Deception*, or UOD. By contrast, items loading uniquely on Factor 2 appeared to capture preferences for or dispositions toward uninhibited, intimate self-disclosure and risk taking with one's partner ("I share my deepest thoughts with my partner even if there's a chance that he or she won't understand them" and "I feel free to reveal the most intimate parts of myself to my partner") and was thus labeled *Intimate Risk Taking*, or IRT. The correlation between these two factors was .59.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using the LISREL 8.54 program (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2003). Because initial model tests involved item-level data, the polychoric correlation matrices and the asymptotic covariance matrices were analyzed, and maximum likelihood was the estimation method. Fit for models examined was evaluated with the comparative fit index (CFI), the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), the average difference in residuals based on comparing the observed covariance with the covariance explained by the model, and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). There is a rich and regularly developing literature regarding fit indices and decision rules regarding models. A generally accepted guideline, albeit one that ignores the potential for error around the estimate (Quintana & Maxwell, 1999), is that the CFI should be greater than .90. A

good-fitting model is indicated when the SRMR is .08 or less (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values of the RMSEA of .05 or less indicate a close fit, and values from .05 to .08 indicate a fair fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) recommended joint consideration of the SRMR and RMSEA as the best approach for managing Type I and Type II errors; for example, they found that the combination of an RMSEA of .06 or less with an SRMR of .10 or less resulted in the least sum of Type I and II errors in their simulation studies. Although model fit was deemed important, we were primarily interested in the adequacy of the AIRS items to perform as indicators of an underlying relationship authenticity construct, and therefore we scrutinized factor loadings and factor correlations in our measurement and model refinement efforts.

The CFA was conducted on the data from the second random sample. This analysis constrained 26 items to load on two factors on the basis of the item-to-factor findings from the exploratory factor analysis of the first random sample's data. This model provided a good fit for the data (CFI = .93, SRMR = .072, and RMSEA = .058; 90% confidence interval [CI] was .050–.066). However, item pattern coefficients (loadings) from the completely standardized solution suggested that some further elimination of items could be in order. For example, one of the items loading on the UOD factor had a coefficient of .24 (the remaining coefficients ranged from .54 to .80). Internal consistency reliability analysis indicated that dropping that item would improve the reliability of scores, albeit modestly, whereas dropping any of the other items would decrease the reliability estimate. On the IRT factor, one coefficient was also somewhat low (.35). Remaining coefficients for that factor ranged from .47 to .78. A check of reliability indicated that excluding this item would also moderately improve reliability, whereas excluding any of the other items would be detrimental to reliability. Therefore, both of the problematic items were deleted, and the CFA was conducted again. Model fit was very similar to the fit observed prior to excluding the additional two items (i.e., CFI = .94; RMSEA = .06; 90% CI was .051–.068; SRMR = .071). Pattern coefficients ranged from .53 to .80 for the UOD factor and from .46 to .75 for the IRT factor. The correlation between the two factors was .59. Subscales were created by summing AIRS items loading onto each dimension. For the combined sample, these scores evidenced substantial internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's coefficient $\alpha = .88$ and .85 for the UOD and IRT scores, respectively).

Relations of AIRS Subscale Scores to Gender, Ethnicity, and to Scores on Concurrent Validity Measures

Having identified a two-factor structure underlying our AIRS items that was interpretable, reliable, and stable across both samples, we then reconstituted the randomly split samples to explore gender and racial/ethnic differences in AIRS subscale scores and to examine correlations of AIRS subscale scores with scores on our concurrent validity measures. A 2×4 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to explore gender and ethnicity differences in AIRS scores among participants in the four most represented racial/ethnic groups (i.e., White: $n = 168$; Black: $n = 94$; Asian: $n = 96$; Hispanic: $n = 91$). These results indicated a significant multivariate effect for participants' gender (Wilks's $\Lambda = .92$), $F(2, 440) = 19.34$, $p < .001$, but not for ethnicity or its interaction with gender. Follow-up univariate analyses of variance

Table 1
Exploratory Factor Analysis of AIRS Items: Promax Rotated Factor Loadings for the Two-Factor Solution

Item and number	h^2	Factor	
		1	2
23. I would rather be the person my partner wants me to be than who I really am.	0.70	0.85	-0.07
34. I'd rather think the best of my partner than to know the whole truth about him or her.	0.82	0.82	-0.18
12. I'd rather my partner have a positive view of me than a completely accurate one.	0.50	0.79	-0.17
26. To avoid conflict in our relationship, I will sometimes tell my partner what I think he or she wants to hear even if it's not true.	0.66	0.78	-0.02
21. Sometimes I find myself trying to impress my partner into believing something about me that isn't really true.	0.56	0.78	-0.07
27. I suspect that what my partner likes best about me is not really part of who I am.	0.64	0.72	0.04
22. If my partner knew the real me, he or she would probably be surprised and disappointed.	0.60	0.66	0.20
36. I'd rather my partner keep certain thoughts and feelings to him/herself if this will help us avoid an argument.	0.62	0.65	-0.05
31. There are certain things about my partner I'd rather not know much about.	0.50	0.64	-0.03
19. I purposefully hide my true feelings about some things in order to avoid upsetting my partner.	0.72	0.63	0.10
32. If I knew my partner's true feelings about some things, I'd probably be disappointed or hurt.	0.59	0.62	0.01
16. I'm willing to tell a "white lie" about myself if it will keep my partner happy.	0.67	0.60	0.07
18. I avoid raising certain topics for discussion with my partner.	0.75	0.54	0.11
30. There are times I find myself calculating the risks of expressing my true feelings to my partner.	0.55	0.52	0.21
4. When talking with my partner about serious matters in our relationship, I feel like I'm not being who I really am.	0.53	0.51	0.22
29. Sometimes I feel like I am two different people—one when I am with my partner, and another when I am by myself.	0.64	0.51	0.26
3. I hesitate saying things to my partner when he or she may not want to hear them.	0.72	0.48	-0.10
8. There are times when I feel like I'm being a "fake" with my partner.	0.57	0.36	0.35
25. I would rather upset my partner than be someone who I am not.	0.71	0.36	0.18
15. I'm careful how I talk with my partner about my relationships with other people.	0.61	0.35	0.06
33. I expect that my partner will always tell me the truth before trying to protect my feelings.	0.73	0.20	0.13
2. I share my deepest thoughts with my partner even if there's a chance he/she won't understand them.	0.81	-0.11	0.91
28. I feel free to reveal the most intimate parts of myself to my partner.	0.77	-0.13	0.88
13. My life is an "open book" for my partner to read.	0.72	0.08	0.76
10. I openly share my thoughts and feelings about other people to my partner.	0.60	-0.06	0.71
6. I disclose my deepest feelings to my partner even if there's a chance he/she may not share them.	0.79	-0.09	0.69
1. I am totally myself when I am with my partner.	0.73	0.13	0.66
11. I consistently tell my partner the real reasons and motivations behind doing the things that I do.	0.83	0.01	0.66
24. There are no topics that are "off limits" between my partner and me.	0.80	0.15	0.58
17. It is necessary for me that my partner know me as I know myself.	0.68	0.21	0.57
7. When I am hurt by something my partner said, I will let him or her know about it.	0.67	0.05	0.55
5. I answer my partner's questions about me honestly and fully.	0.67	0.20	0.52
35. I will confront my partner if I suspect that he or she is not being completely open with me.	0.47	0.10	0.49
37. I expect that my partner will first consider my feelings before telling me things that I might find hurtful.	0.68	0.49	-0.49
20. If my partner has a positive but inaccurate understanding of me, I correct it, even if this action may lower his or her opinion of me.	0.56	0.01	0.49
14. I am basically the same person with my partner as I am with other people I care about.	0.58	0.20	0.36
9. I would rather have my partner leave me than not know who I really am.	0.47	-0.09	0.19

Note. AIRS = Authenticity in Relationships Scale.

(ANOVAs) indicated that women scored significantly higher than did men on each of the two AIRS subscale scores.

Intercorrelations of AIRS scores with scores on our independent measures of self-esteem, depression, self-concealment, splitting, attachment insecurity, and relationship satisfaction are presented in Table 2. All intercorrelations were significant at $p < .001$, and the pattern of intercorrelations largely conformed to expectations. For instance, both UOD and IRT scores were only modestly related to self-esteem (both $r_s = .25$) and more substantially correlated (negatively) with dispositions toward self-concealment ($r_s = -.49$ and $-.35$, respectively) and self-disorganization or “splitting” ($r_s = -.35$ and $-.31$, respectively). It is of interest to note that, whereas UOD scores were moderately and comparably correlated (negatively) with scores on both the interpersonal measures of attachment anxiety ($r_s = -.40$) and attachment avoidance ($r_s = -.43$), IRT scores were more prominently related to attachment avoidance ($r = -.59$) than to attachment anxiety ($r = -.17$). Last, as anticipated, each AIRS subscale score was significantly and positively correlated with relationship satisfaction ($r_s = .33$ and $.56$, respectively).

Study 2

Study 2 sought to (a) assess the 3-month stability of AIRS scores within an independent sample and (b) examine whether AIRS scores uniquely predicted relationship satisfaction across participants in both the Study 1 scale validation sample and Study 2 test–retest sample.

Method

An independent sample of 121 college students (82 women, 39 men) who acknowledged being involved in a current romantic relationship were recruited from the same undergraduate classes as in Study 1 to participate in a separate study of close relationships. This study followed the same procedures and also included several measures in common with Study 1, including the AIRS. However, unlike Study 1, Study 2 participants were recontacted 3 months after their initial survey administrations and asked to retake the AIRS. The mean age of the sample was 20.50 years ($SD = 4.26$), and participants were predominantly single (88.4%). The ethnic representation of Study 2 participants was similar to that observed in Study 1 (31%

White; 21% Black; 28% Asian; 17% Hispanic). Ninety-six percent of the original sample ($n = 116$; 78 women, 38 men) was successfully recontacted and readministered the AIRS.

Results

Test–Retest Stability

Subscale scores for the AIRS were constructed on the basis of the previously reported factor analysis results. Scores were simple sums of item responses corresponding to each factor. That is, the UOD scale contained 13 items, and the IRT scale contained 11 items. At Time 1, the internal consistency (Cronbach’s alphas) of these scores was .87 and .86, respectively. At Time 2, Cronbach’s coefficient alphas were both .90. The test–retest correlation between Times 1 and 2 UOD scores was .70 ($p < .001$) and between Times 1 and 2 IRT scores was .76 ($p < .001$).

Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Relationship Satisfaction Scores

For these analyses, Study 2 participants were combined with Study 1 participants. In this regression model, gender and self-esteem were entered as a block at the first step. At the second step, we controlled for differences in relationship commitment levels within our sample by classifying participants into either “low” or “high” commitment subgroups on the basis of their responses to the demographic item on their current relationship status. Persons indicating that they were dating one or multiple partners with no commitment were designated as “low” commitment, whereas participants indicating that they were engaged, married, or in an exclusive and committed dating relationship were classified as “high” commitment. The two measures of attachment orientation (anxiety, avoidance) were entered as a block at the third step. Last, the two AIRS subscales were entered as a block at the final step to assess their unique contribution to the prediction of relationship satisfaction scores. These findings are presented in Table 3.

Gender and self-esteem explained a significant, albeit modest, amount of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .05$, $p < .001$), whereas the subsequent entry of commitment level ex-

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Scores on Key Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
1. Self-esteem	—	-.49	-.34	-.57	-.26	-.45	.18	.26	.25	33.80	5.13
2. Depression		—	.36	.46	.29	.46	-.28	-.37	-.25	33.17	9.27
3. Self-concealment			—	.39	.30	.38	-.23	-.49	-.35	23.81	9.79
4. Splitting				—	.36	.51	-.20	-.35	-.31	51.04	14.77
5. Avoid					—	.25	-.52	-.43	-.59	44.32	18.34
6. Anxiety						—	-.23	-.40	-.17	59.75	22.51
7. Satisfaction							—	.33	.56	27.99	4.31
8. UOD								—	.47	6.63	1.59
9. IRT									—	7.12	1.36

Note. On the basis of listwise deletion of data ($N = 480$), absolute values of correlations exceeding .14 were significant at $p < .001$. Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale total score; Depression = Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale; Self-concealment = Self-Concealment Scale total score; Splitting = Splitting Index total score; Avoid = Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECRS) Avoidance score; Anxiety = ECRS Anxiety score; Satisfaction = Relationship Assessment Scale total score; UOD = Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS) Unacceptability of Deception score; IRT = AIRS Intimate Risk Taking score.

Table 3
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting
Relationship Satisfaction Scores Within Combined Sample

Variable	B	SEB	β
Step 1			
Gender	-.08	.06	-.05
Self-esteem	.29	.06	.21***
Step 2			
Gender	-.04	.06	-.03
Self-esteem	.23	.05	.16***
Commitment level	.65	.06	.37***
Step 3			
Gender	.12	.05	.08
Self-esteem	.01	.05	.01
Commitment level	.44	.06	.26***
Avoidance	-.27	.03	-.40***
Anxiety	-.08	.02	-.14***
Step 4			
Gender	.12	.05	.08*
Self-esteem	-.06	.05	-.04
Commitment level	.36	.06	.21***
Avoidance	-.13	.03	-.19***
Anxiety	-.08	.02	-.14***
UOD	.00	.00	.02
IRT	.02	.00	.39***

Note. For Step 1, $F(2, 603) = 14.15, R^2 = .05 (p < .001)$; for Step 2, $\Delta F(1, 602) = 101.06, \Delta R^2 = .14 (p < .001)$; for Step 3, $\Delta F(2, 600) = 73.84, \Delta R^2 = .16 (p < .001)$; for Step 4, $\Delta F(2, 598) = 49.59, \Delta R^2 = .09 (p < .001)$. Avoidance = Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECRS) Avoidance score; Anxiety = ECRS Anxiety score; UOD = Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS) Unacceptability of Deception score; IRT = AIRS Intimate Risk Taking score.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

plained a more substantial amount ($\Delta R^2 = .14, p < .001$). When entered at the next step, attachment avoidance and anxiety scores also made substantial incremental contributions to relationship satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .16, p < .001$). Finally, when added at the last step, the two AIRS subscale scores uniquely and significantly explained an additional 9% of the variance in satisfaction scores ($\Delta R^2 = .09, p < .001$). With all predictors entered, the model collectively accounted for 44% of the variance in relationship satisfaction scores, with gender, commitment level, attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, and IRT scores making significant independent contributions.

General Discussion

Taken together, our findings lend preliminary psychometric support for the AIRS and shed some valuable light on the nature of relationship authenticity. Our exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses across two independent samples of participants resulted in the retention of a set of 24 items that strongly represented two reliable, interpretable, and moderately correlated factors (Unacceptability of Deception [UOD] and Intimate Risk Taking [IRT]). Indeed, this two-factor structure of relationship authenticity yielded impressive fit indices. These findings suggest that a strong endorsement of the value of accurate and nondeceptive exchanges with one's partner along with high levels of reported intimate disclosure risk taking may function as critical contextual features for the experience of relationship authenticity. By the same token,

our two AIRS factors, although moderately correlated, are clearly not completely overlapping or redundant constructs. Whereas UOD scores may tap more person-centered motivations for engaging in accurate self-disclosure and honest relational exchanges, IRT scores may reflect more relationship-based appraisals of safety and trust with a specific partner. It is important to recognize here that, although we sought to create items that closely corresponded to the proposed definition of relationship authenticity, our scale development work was predicated on a modest initial pool of items. It is therefore possible that other dimensions of authenticity may have been identified if a substantially larger and more heterogeneous pool of items had been initially generated. Such possibilities may indeed emerge with continued scale development efforts.

Our other validity-related analyses also yielded valuable preliminary support for the AIRS. As expected, scores on each AIRS subscale were modestly correlated with self-esteem and more substantially correlated (negatively) with self-concealment, splitting, and adult attachment orientations. These findings are compatible with the view that inauthentic self-behavior in intimate relationships is conceptually linked to experiences of shame, self-disorganization, and attachment insecurity. The especially robust (negative) correlations of both AIRS subscale scores with scores on attachment avoidance and the noteworthy correlations of UOD scores with both attachment anxiety and avoidance are also consistent with prior findings linking inauthentic behavior with partner mistrust (i.e., attachment avoidance) and with fears of partner rejection and abandonment (i.e., attachment anxiety). The weaker (although still significant) negative correlation between IRT and attachment anxiety scores suggests the presence of a more complex relationship. Previous research (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991) has found that, although they are as likely as their more secure counterparts to engage in self-disclosure, the disclosure patterns of anxiously attached persons demonstrate a lack of flexibility and topical reciprocity, suggesting that their motivations to self-disclose may be more mixed and may include both authenticity-seeking and rejection-avoiding interpersonal goals.

Although we did not speculate about gender or racial/ethnic differences in relationship authenticity, our finding that women scored significantly higher than men on each of the two AIRS subscales is not altogether surprising. Gender socialization pressures likely contribute to gender differences in the experience of intimacy and, in particular, may differentially orient women more so than men to view relationships as an important medium for authentic interpersonal exchanges and deep emotional expression (Hook, Gerstein, Deterich, & Gridley, 2003). Additional research is needed to explore whether gender role beliefs and expectations account for observed gender differences in AIRS scores. Although the absence of significant racial/ethnic group differences (or interactions of racial/ethnic group membership and gender) in AIRS scores within our diverse sample of college students strengthens the generalizability of our findings, some interpretive caution here is still warranted. For instance, it is possible that cultural factors not measured in this study may be related to norms and expectations regarding relationship authenticity. To explore these possibilities, future studies would do well to examine the influence of cultural variables such as acculturation (and, as noted earlier, gender roles) on AIRS scores. It is indeed plausible that among members of traditional "collectivist" cultures, there are cultural

constraints affecting the tolerance of accurate representational exchanges as well as the depth of self-disclosures among participants in intimate relationships.

The findings of Study 2 supported our hypothesis that, within the context of a particular relationship, AIRS scores are indicative of a relatively stable relational schema over a 3-month period. Still, future research should track the AIRS scores of both relationship participants over a longer interval. In this regard, it is important to recall that the present study's validation sample largely consisted of unmarried college students in relatively long-term dating relationships. Furthermore, we did not inquire about our participants' sexual orientation. It thus remains to be explored whether AIRS scores are similarly stable across participants in heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual relationships and whether similar associations between AIRS scores and indexes of relationship satisfaction and adjustment exist among individuals in more nascent dating relationships or in long-term marriages. It is plausible that, as a given relationship progresses from casual dating to a shared and exclusive commitment, participants' expressed orientations toward greater authenticity may strengthen (Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994).

Study 2 also provided compelling evidence of the unique contribution of AIRS subscale scores to the prediction of relationship satisfaction. Controlling for gender, self-esteem, relationship commitment, and adult attachment orientations, the subsequent inclusion of the two AIRS subscale scores explained significant incremental variance in relationship satisfaction within the combined sample of scale validation and test-retest participants. These findings suggest that a positive orientation toward the exchange of accurate and undistorted self- and other-representations along with the experienced freedom to engage in uninhibited self-disclosure with one's partner (i.e., qualities of persons' interpersonal orientations presumably captured by the AIRS subscales but not fully by the earlier-entered variables) makes significant incremental contributions to the prediction of relationship satisfaction. In this regard, the AIRS may have potential utility as an assessment tool in clinical settings serving clients in distressed relationships by identifying those individuals who are disposed to engage in deceptive and inauthentic interactions with their partners. In a similar vein, the AIRS may serve as a viable outcome measure of therapeutic efforts at couple conflict resolution and relationship enhancement.

Although the AIRS subscale scores demonstrated strong internal consistency, noteworthy test-retest stability, and expected relationships with independent self-report measures of personal and relationship functioning, it remains unclear whether AIRS scores are functionally related to distinct patterns of relationship communication and problem solving. The present study's correlational design and its exclusive reliance on self-report measures of the variables of interest preclude this determination. Studies in which experimental and observational designs are used that manipulate the potential threat level of self-disclosures and that examine associations between AIRS subscale scores and the subsequent communication behavior of relationship participants are needed to address this issue. In this regard, future research should consider using prospective and observational designs capable of examining the behavioral impacts of AIRS subscale scores.

Despite the above limitations and noted areas for further exploration, our findings affirm that the AIRS possesses strong psycho-

metric properties and demonstrates promise as a relatively brief and convenient-to-use measure of relational authenticity. In light of renewed scholarly interest in authenticity (Harter, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2005), it is hoped that the availability of this measure will promote empirical study of this compelling and elusive construct.

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