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# Tactical Differences in Coping With Rejection Sensitivity: The Role of Prevention Pride

Ozlem Ayduk  
Danielle May  
Geraldine Downey  
E. Tory Higgins  
*Columbia University*

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*Prevention pride reflects a person's subjective history of success in preventing negative outcomes, leading to a strategic avoidance of errors of commission (e.g., explicit mistakes) in new situations. Two studies examined the impact of prevention pride on the strategies that highly rejection sensitive (HRS) people use to cope with the anxiety of anticipated rejection and the negative feelings elicited by perceived rejection. It was hypothesized that prevention pride orientation would lead HRS people toward covert and passive rather than overt and active forms of negative coping. Results indicated that HRS individuals who were also high in prevention pride reported increased use of self-silencing, presumably to prevent rejection. When rejection was perceived, however, they expressed hostility passively, by reducing positive behavior (e.g., withdrawing love and support) while inhibiting direct, active acts of hostility (e.g., yelling).*

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**R**ejection and social exclusion violate a fundamental human motivation to belong (Leary & Baumeister, 1995) and might thus instigate defensive, aggressive coping behavior in general (e.g., Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). There is growing evidence, however, that negative coping with interpersonal difficulties is moderated by people's preexisting schemas about security of relationships. Specifically, research suggests that people who fear and expect rejection employ to a greater degree both overt (i.e., verbal aggression) and covert (i.e., withdrawal, avoidance) negative coping strategies that ultimately undermine their significant relationships and their mental health (e.g., Ayduk, Downey, & Kim, 2001; Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998; Dutton, Saunders, Staromski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Gaines et al., 1997; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). For example, research on rejection sensitivity (RS), a cognitive-affective approach to internal working models

(Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994), has shown that people high in RS (i.e., those who anxiously expect rejection) cope with their sensitivity with overt physical, verbal, and nonverbal aggression, as well as with self-silencing, social avoidance, and passive hostility in the form of love withdrawal (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999; Downey et al., 1998; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). The bulk of prior research has focused on the processes linking RS with overt hostility and such negative consequences as breakup. Because covert forms of negative coping have equivalent costs (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986), it is important to understand the psychological mechanisms that contribute to their use among individuals high in RS.

Regulatory focus theory provides one explanation for why some high RS people may be particularly likely to use covert rather than overt forms of maladaptive coping with relationship-related anxiety. The theory proposes two motivational systems that serve to regulate people's goal-directed behavior. One of these systems, the prevention orientation, termed "prevention pride"

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(Higgins et al., 2001), is particularly relevant to explaining the use of covert coping strategies among high RS people. Prevention pride develops from a subjective history of success in preventing negative outcomes through vigilance, leading to a strategic avoidance of errors of commission (i.e., explicit mistakes and false alarms) (Higgins et al., 2001). We hypothesized that prevention pride would orient high RS people away from overt expressions of negativity, including disagreement and verbal hostility, because such behavior runs the risk of committing errors of commission and bringing about negative outcomes. Rather, prevention pride should motivate individuals to covert, indirect, and passive coping tactics that minimize explicit mistakes and negative outcomes. In testing these hypotheses, we examined high RS people's coping strategies in dealing with both the anticipation and the perception of rejection.

#### *Conceptualizing Rejection Sensitivity (RS)*

Drawing on attachment (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and attributional (e.g., Dodge, 1980) theories of relationships, Downey and Feldman (1996) conceptualized RS as the disposition to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to social rejection. RS is operationalized by the anxious expectations component of this conceptualization. Thus, individuals high in RS (HRS) are characterized by both concern about the possibility of rejection and expectations that others will indeed reject them. In contrast, those low in RS (LRS) are not concerned with the prospect of rejection and expect acceptance.

RS is thought to develop from rejection experiences (Feldman & Downey, 1994). Once formed, it leads people to organize their interpersonal behavior around the assumption that when they seek acceptance from significant others, they will be rejected (Feldman & Downey, 1994). In rejection-relevant situations, these expectations get automatically activated, preparing HRS people to detect the occurrence of rejection in the negative or ambiguous behaviors of others and to react with a fight-or-flight response when rejection is perceived (Ayduk et al., 1999, 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996, Study 2). Such defensive reactions in turn undermine HRS people's relationships and well-being (Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey et al., 1998).

#### *Coping With RS*

The strategies that high RS people use to cope with their sensitivity fall into two general categories: One involves the use of overt strategies such as direct, explicit expressions of one's thoughts and feelings, as well as a more confrontational style, putting people at higher risk for using verbal and physical aggression to deal with experiences of rejection (Ayduk et al., 1999; Downey

et al., 2000). These negative behaviors, in turn, undermine partner commitment and ultimately the relationships, inadvertently bringing about the very rejection that HRS people fear (Downey et al., 1998). The other orientation involves the use of passive, indirect, and avoidant behaviors. In dealing with the fear of rejection this orientation can emerge in self-silencing—avoiding confronting differences with the partner and suppressing one's true feelings to secure love and prevent rejection. For example, adolescent girls high in RS indicate that they would go along with their boyfriends' wishes to maintain their relationships, even if they knew those behaviors were wrong and would get them into trouble (Purdie & Downey, 2000). More broadly, self-silencing has been linked with depression (Jack, 1991) and a failure to address relationship difficulties, which may breed resentment and ultimately undermine relationship satisfaction and commitment. In expressing hurt and anger in response to perceived rejection, this passive, covert orientation can emerge in withdrawal of love and support, acting cold and distant, and giving the partner the silent treatment—behaviors that are likely to undermine relationship satisfaction. Indeed, Downey and Feldman (1986) found that in the case of HRS women, perceived lack of supportiveness contributed to their partner's heightened relationship dissatisfaction.

#### *Regulatory Pride and Strategic Inclinations*

Regulatory focus theory (see Higgins, 1997) would posit that the use of covert rather than overt maladaptive coping strategies among HRS people could be explained by a prevention orientation, involving the regulation of one's goal-relevant behavior in relation to responsibilities and security. The prevention system is sensitive to the presence and absence of negative outcomes and functions by focusing individuals' efforts on using vigilance strategies to avoid losses and attain non-losses. In contrast, the promotion system, which concerns self-regulation in the service of accomplishments and growth, is sensitive to the presence and absence of positive outcomes and focuses regulatory efforts on using eagerness strategies to maximize gains and minimize non-gains.

Recent research shows that individuals vary in the pride that they take in each of these regulatory systems (Higgins et al., 2001). Whereas some individuals perceive themselves as having an extensive history of successfully avoiding negative outcomes (i.e., high prevention pride), others perceive themselves as having successfully attained positive outcomes (i.e., high promotion pride). This personal history of success elicits feelings of achievement pride, which in turn, produces anticipatory goal reactions that energize and direct behavior in new situations using those means that the individual believes have been effective in the past (e.g.,

Atkinson, 1964; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). Thus, individuals high in prevention pride are motivated to use vigilance strategies, showing a conservative bias in signal detection terms (e.g., Tanner & Swets, 1954), trying to avoid errors of commission and false alarms. They value being careful and inhibiting their impulses. Individuals with high promotion pride are strongly motivated to use eagerness strategies, showing a risky bias, trying to ensure hits and avoid errors of omission (Higgins et al., 2001; Idson & Higgins, 2000). They value the pursuit of new opportunities and the use of all available means to attain them.

### *Tactical Differences in Coping With Sensitivity to Rejection*

Because rejection is particularly negative for HRS people, we hypothesized that differences in prevention pride—with its inclination toward strategies to prevent negative outcomes—would be particularly relevant to tactical differences in coping with RS. In coping with anticipatory rejection anxiety, prevention pride (“high prevention” for short) may accentuate HRS people’s already high tendency to self-silence. That is, because high prevention implies a preference for minimizing errors of commission, and because self-silencing would ensure that an individual does not commit errors that would potentially lead to rejection, HRS-high prevention individuals may be even more likely to self-silence than HRS-low prevention individuals.

In coping with conflicts, overt expressions of hostility—yelling, insulting, highlighting past failures—also may reflect errors of commission and could potentially increase the likelihood of further rejection. Thus, HRS-high prevention pride individuals should be inclined to display relatively less expressive hostility. Because withdrawal hostility—withdrawal of love, acting cold and distant—can be conceptualized as an error of omission, HRS-high prevention individuals should instead prefer to express their feelings through withholding positivity.

We view self-silencing and withdrawal hostility as being distinct constructs. Whereas self-silencing is a strategy for preventing conflicts and rejection (Jack, 1991), withdrawal hostility is a strategy for retaliating against a perceived rejector (Williams & Zadro, 2000), without explicitly and directly acknowledging the retaliatory goal. As such, this strategy leaves open the possibility of a more benign reinterpretation of the motivation for one’s behavior.

### *Present Studies*

These hypotheses were examined in two studies. Study 1 was an experiment in which participants evaluated a potential partner on positive traits after being led to believe that the partner had rejected them. The effect

of prevention pride on HRS individuals’ reactions to rejection was examined via these evaluations, with less positive partner ratings indicating a tactical preference for withdrawal hostility. Study 2 was a daily diary study of people’s ongoing romantic relationships. This study assessed use of self-silencing and examined expressive versus withdrawal hostility tactics both during and after conflicts with romantic partners.

We did not expect promotion pride, given its association with strategies to attain positive outcomes, to relate to how HRS individuals respond to the negative outcome of rejection or to the use of self-silencing as a rejection prevention tactic. We controlled for promotion pride in all of our analyses, however, to show that our findings are specific to prevention pride rather than general to a subjective history of regulatory success in any domain.

### STUDY 1

Participants exchanged biographical sketches with an opposite-sex potential dating partner (who was in actuality fictitious) with whom they expected to interact over the Internet. To induce feelings of rejection, following the exchange of biographical sketches, participants in the experimental condition learned that the partner did not want to continue with the rest of the study. Participants in the control condition were given a situational explanation (equipment failure) for why the interaction would not occur.

Participants then had the opportunity to rate the partner’s positive qualities based on the partner’s biosketch. We hypothesized that the reduction in the positivity of the evaluation would be sharpest among HRS-high prevention individuals, indexing their proclivity to use withdrawal hostility in response to rejection.

### METHOD

#### *Sample and Procedures*

Participants were undergraduates ( $N = 76$ , 36 women) recruited either through advertisements posted around campus ( $n = 23$ ) or from the introductory psychology subject pool ( $n = 53$ ). They received either \$10 or two credits for completing the study (age:  $M = 20$  years and 11 months,  $SD = 3$  years and 11 months).

Participants took part in two ostensibly separate studies. The first phase involved completing a questionnaire battery that included the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ) (Higgins et al., 2001). The second phase followed the paradigm used by Ayduk et al. (1999, Study 2) to induce feelings of rejection. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to

increase understanding of the formation and maintenance of relationships on Internet “chat rooms” and online dating services. They were led to believe they would chat via the computer with someone of the opposite sex (i.e., the partner) who was participating in the study from another room. A third person (i.e., the observer) would (supposedly) watch the couple interact through a video camera that was connected to a monitor in a separate room where the observer sat and read the messages that they exchanged on his computer monitor. The cover story about the observer was added because pilot testing indicated that rejection in the presence of a spectator peer increased the impact of the rejection.

Participants were asked to spend 5 min writing a short biosketch about themselves to be exchanged with the partner’s biosketch to facilitate the upcoming online interaction. The experimenter then exchanged the biosketches. All participants received the same partner biosketch, which was based on essays written by college students in pilot testing. After participants read their partner’s biosketch, baseline expectations about how positively they expected the upcoming interaction to go were obtained. Subsequently, in the presence of the participant, the experimenter received a phone call from a confederate informing her of a problem. In the control condition, the experimenter told the participants that they would be unable to complete the computer interaction because of a technical computer problem (situational explanation). In the experimental condition, participants were told that their partner did not want to continue with the experiment and had left (rejection explanation). Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. There were 38 participants in each condition.

After the manipulation, the experimenter asked participants to complete a second short questionnaire (partner evaluation measure) and said that that it was designed to assess their impressions of the partner solely based on the partner’s biosketch. Following this questionnaire, participants were thoroughly debriefed and compensated for their participation.

#### *Background Measures*

*RSQ.* The RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) assesses the anxious expectations component of RS. It consists of 18 hypothetical situations in which rejection by a significant other is possible (e.g., “You ask your friend to do you a big favor”). For each situation, people indicate (a) their degree of concern or anxiety about the outcome of each situation (1 = *very unconcerned*, 6 = *very concerned*) and (b) the likelihood that the other person(s) would respond in an accepting fashion (1 = *very unlikely*, 6 = *very likely*). High likelihood of this outcome represents

expectations of acceptance and low likelihood represents expectations of rejection.

To calculate RS according to an expectancy-value model (Bandura, 1986) of anxious expectations of rejection, the score for each acceptance expectancy was reversed to index rejection expectancy. The rejection expectancy was then multiplied by the degree of anxiety or concern over the possibility of rejection for each scenario. Finally, a total (cross-situational) RS score for each participant was computed by averaging the Expectation  $\times$  Value scores across all situations. Scores on the RSQ show good internal reliability and stability across time as well as strong convergent, divergent, and predictive validity (see Downey & Feldman, 1996, for details). In this sample, the mean RSQ score was 9.61 ( $SD = 2.87$ ; range: 4.72-16.83), with no significant sex differences in the distribution ( $t < 1$ ).

*RFQ.* The RFQ (Higgins et al., 2001) consists of two orthogonal scales that assess individuals’ subjective histories of success or failure in promotion and prevention self-regulation. The prevention pride scale consists of five items that assess individuals’ subjective history of successfully attaining safety and security (e.g., “Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times” [reverse-scored]). The promotion pride scale consists of six items that assess peoples’ subjective history of successfully attaining their hopes and aspirations (e.g., “How often have you accomplished things that got you psyched to try even harder?”). These items are rated on a scale from 1 (*never or seldom*) to 5 (*very often*) and the ratings are averaged to compute separate prevention pride and promotion pride scores. The measure shows strong test-retest reliability and good discriminant, convergent, and predictive validity (see Higgins et al., 2001, for details).

The mean scores on the prevention ( $\alpha = .76$ ) and promotion ( $\alpha = .79$ ) pride scales in this study were 3.31 ( $SD = .79$ ; range: 1.8-4.8) and 3.76 ( $SD = .72$ ; range: 2.17-5.00) and did not differ significantly by sex ( $t < 1$ ). Scores on the two factors were independent,  $r(74) = .16$ ,  $p > .14$ .

#### *Experiment Measures*

*Baseline expectations about the interaction.* Participants indicated their level of agreement with the statement “I think the interaction will go well” (1 = *I don’t agree at all*, 6 = *I agree strongly*) ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) immediately after reading their partner’s biosketch and prior to the experimental manipulation. Expectations did not differ as a function of experimental condition or promotion pride. However, RS was negatively related to positive expectations about the interaction,  $r(74) = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$ , whereas prevention pride was positively related to these expectations,  $r(74) = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ . Analyses reported below control for these expectancy ratings.

*Positive partner evaluation.* Participants indicated their agreement (1 = *I don't agree at all*, 6 = *I agree strongly*) with whether the following personality attributes described their partner based on his or her biosketch: "intelligent," "popular," "friendly," "fun to be with," "kind," "well-liked by others," "charismatic," "resourceful," and "interesting." Ratings were averaged to create a composite index of partner evaluation ( $\alpha = .83$ ;  $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = .50$ ).

*Mood assessment.* Participants rated their current mood on the following items (0 = *not at all*, 3 = *very much*) during the background questionnaire assessment and again after the experimental manipulation: "nervous," "confident," "relaxed," "sad," "tense," "anxious," "happy," "comfortable," "angry," "calm," "irritable," "rejected," and "enthusiastic." These ratings were averaged after reverse-scoring for positive mood terms to index general negative mood (premanipulation:  $\alpha = .75$ ; postmanipulation  $\alpha = .83$ ).

Premanipulation mood was not related to experimental condition ( $r = .00$ ,  $ns$ ) but was significantly related to RS,  $r(74) = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ , prevention pride,  $r(74) = -.28$ ,  $p < .05$ , and promotion pride,  $r(74) = -.39$ ,  $p < .001$ . Because RS is associated with social anxiety, its relation with negative mood was expected. Similarly, we expected prevention and promotion pride to be positively related to positive mood because previous research indicates that prevention success is associated with feeling relaxed and promotion success is associated with feeling happy (Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997). Premanipulation mood ratings were included as covariates in the analyses below.

### *Manipulation Check*

Prior research indicates that the rejection manipulation used in this paradigm (i.e., partner leaving right after having read the participant's personal biosketch) leads both HRS and LRS people to experience heightened feelings of rejection and that this rejected mood is distinct from general anxiety (Ayduk et al., 1999). We found the same pattern of results in this study. Participants in the experimental condition expressed higher levels of postmanipulation rejected mood (assessed by ratings on the item "rejected" in the mood questionnaire) than participants in the control condition (rejection:  $M = .79$ ,  $SD = .96$ ; control:  $M = .31$ ,  $SD = .53$ ),  $t(70) = 3.43$ ,  $p < .001$ , controlling for their premanipulation rejected mood. Postmanipulation rejected mood was not significantly related to RS, prevention pride, or promotion pride (or their interactions). A similar effect of experimental condition on general anxiety composite comprising items such as nervous, tense, and anxious was not found. Overall, these results indicated that the rejection manipulation induced feelings of rejection that were distinct from feelings of general anxiety.

### *Construct Validation for Measurement of Withdrawal Hostility*

Withdrawal hostility was operationalized as reduced positivity of participants' evaluations of their partner based on his or her biosketch. To validate that reduced positive evaluations reflect covert, withdrawal hostility, an independent sample of participants ( $N = 28$ ) read a hypothetical scenario analogous to the experimental procedure: A prospective partner cancels a blind date that has been set up by a dating service after reading the protagonist's biosketch. The protagonist then tells a staff member of the dating service that the impression that the prospective partner's biosketch left was one of not being particularly high on some of the positive qualities (e.g., charismatic, kind, entertaining, intelligent) that the protagonist was looking for. Pilot participants rated the degree to which this reduced positive evaluation reflected retaliatory-hostile rejection as well as passive-aggressive behavior (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). The mean for both items (hostile retaliation:  $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = .74$ ; passive-aggression:  $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) was significantly different from 4, the midpoint of the rating scale ( $t = 11.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $t = 6.07$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Thus, even though there was no opportunity for future interaction with the rejector in this paradigm, the results supported our assumption that reduced positive evaluations reflected passive but hostile behavior.

### *Rationale and Overview for Data Analyses*

Our model predicts that prevention pride but not promotion pride will be related to reduction of positive attitudes and behavior toward rejecting others in HRS individuals. Thus, the rationale underlying our data analyses was to specifically examine the effect of the RS  $\times$  Prevention Pride  $\times$  Experimental Condition interaction and the effect of the RS  $\times$  Promotion Pride  $\times$  Experimental Condition on the outcome variables simultaneously, hypothesizing a significant effect of the former but not of the latter.

To test for these hypotheses, General Linear Models (GLM) analyses were conducted on partner evaluation ratings with RS, prevention pride, promotion pride, and experimental condition (0 = control, 1 = rejection) as predictor variables as well as relevant two- and three-way interaction terms. The terms that included Prevention Pride  $\times$  Promotion Pride interactions, for which we did not have a priori hypotheses, were not included to retain power. Premanipulation expectancies about the interaction and premanipulation mood indices were entered as covariates. All continuous predictors were centered on their means to aid the interpretation of the parameter estimates obtained from linear modeling techniques by making the 0 value of each predictor meaningful (i.e., the mean of each distribution) (Aiken & West, 1991).

When the hypothesized interaction was significant, simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) were conducted to examine the effect of experimental condition for participants with high versus low levels of RS and prevention. The finding reported below did not change as a function of sex. Therefore, sex was included only as a covariate in all analyses. Parameter estimates and significance levels obtained for all of the predictors in the main analysis reported below can be found in the Notes section of Figure 1.

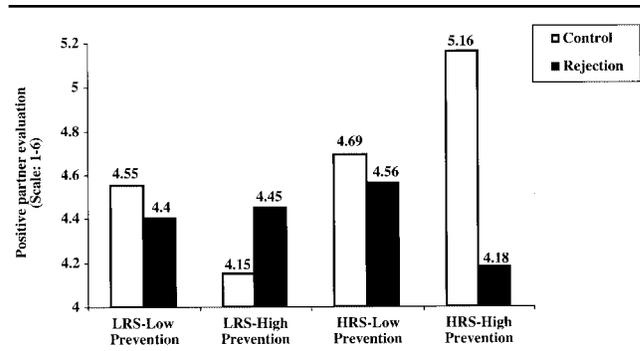
## RESULTS

GLM analyses conducted on positive partner evaluation revealed an Experimental Condition  $\times$  RS  $\times$  Prevention Pride interaction for positive partner evaluation,  $F(1, 61) = 6.37, p = .01$ , controlling for premanipulation negative mood (Experimental Condition  $\times$  RS  $\times$  Promotion Pride:  $F < 1$ ). This interaction term stayed significant when postmanipulation rejection ratings,  $F(1, 60) = 5.74, p < .02$ , or when postmanipulation anxious mood ratings,  $F(1, 60) = 6.30, p < .02$ , were controlled.

Figure 1 illustrates the results based on the parameter estimates from the GLM analysis for individuals 1 *SD* below and above the mean on the RS ( $-2.87$  and  $2.87$ ) and prevention pride ( $-.80$  and  $.80$ ) distributions. The figure shows that, overall, participants evaluated their partners less positively in the rejection condition than in the control condition. Simple slope analyses indicated that this difference was mainly driven by HRS-high prevention participants who reported significantly lower levels of positive evaluation in the rejection condition than in the control condition ( $b = -.97, p < .001$ ). Experimental condition did not significantly affect partner evaluation for HRS-low prevention participants ( $b = -.15, ns$ ), LRS-high prevention ( $b = .29, ns$ ), and LRS-low prevention ( $b = -.15, ns$ ) individuals. Moreover, the effect of the rejection manipulation was significantly stronger for HRS-high prevention than for HRS-low prevention individuals ( $t = 2.46, p < .02$ ).

### Summary of Study 1

Study 1 results revealed that HRS-high prevention individuals showed the greatest decline in positive partner evaluations in the face of rejection relative to their highly favorable evaluations in the control condition. This pattern of findings suggests that HRS-high prevention individuals may be strategically fine-tuning their positive behavior to express hostility, keeping it at relatively high levels in the absence of rejection and reducing it to punish those who hurt them. However, because we did not measure overt, expressive hostility in this study, the results are silent on our hypothesis that HRS-high prevention individuals also would avoid more active forms of expressing their anger.



**Figure 1** Positive partner evaluation as a function of rejection sensitivity (RS), prevention pride, and experimental manipulation.

NOTE: Predicted values were computed using the following equation derived from the General Linear Models analysis:  $Positive\ partner\ evaluation = 4.64^{***} + .30(\text{baseline expectations})^{***} - .24(\text{baseline negative mood}) - .05(\text{sex}) + .18(\text{promotion}) + .02(\text{prevention}) + .10(\text{RS})^{**} - .24(\text{experimental condition})^* + .09(\text{Prevention} \times \text{RS})^* - .02(\text{Promotion} \times \text{RS}) - .11(\text{Experimental Condition} \times \text{RS})^{**} - .12(\text{Experimental Condition} \times \text{Prevention}) - .32(\text{Experimental Condition} \times \text{Promotion}) - .14(\text{Experimental Condition} \times \text{Prevention} \times \text{RS})^{**} + .03(\text{Experimental Condition} \times \text{Promotion} \times \text{RS})$ .

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

Why did the HRS-high prevention participants use passive-aggressive tactics to retaliate against the partner despite no opportunity for future interaction? From an individual differences approach, reducing positive evaluation as a way of expressing hostility should be chronically accessible to high prevention people. This, in turn, should lead them to habitually and automatically use such strategies even where there is no possibility of exposure to further partner negativity.

Our prior research shows that HRS people respond to rejection with greater hostility (Ayduk et al., 1999). In the present study, however, partner evaluations following rejection were not significantly different for HRS and LRS people even though the differences were in the expected direction. It is possible that rejection experienced in the presence of a peer created a strong psychological situation that overrode the effect of relevant chronic individual differences, leading most participants to feel hostile toward the rejector.

## STUDY 2

Study 1 provided initial support for the hypothesized interactions between RS and prevention pride using an experimental design that eliminated characteristics of an ongoing relationship as an explanation for hostility toward partners. In contrast, Study 2 was conducted to test these hypotheses in people's ongoing important relationships using a couples' daily-diary study design. Furthermore, Study 2 sought to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1.

First, we extended our focus to examine how HRS-high prevention individuals coped with the anticipation

of rejection. Prior research shows that RS is related to self-silencing (Downey & Kim, 2001); thus, people who anxiously expect rejection tend to suppress thoughts and feelings that can potentially lead to conflicts. Regulatory focus theory suggests that prevention pride also should be related to increased self-silencing because the purpose of this behavior is to avoid mistakes that would otherwise lead to negative outcomes. Thus, we hypothesized that HRS people who are also high in prevention would use self-silencing even more than their low prevention counterparts.

Second, we examined both passive and active expressions of hostility toward rejecting partners during and after conflicts. Rejection experiences were operationalized as partner conflicts based on prior research indicating that such conflicts induce feelings of rejection in HRS women (Downey et al., 1998). Similar to Study 1, we examined withdrawal of positive behavior in HRS-high prevention people during conflicts (e.g., acting cold and distant) and after conflicts (e.g., reducing expressions of love). We also extended the Study 1 findings by directly testing whether HRS-high prevention individuals tend to avoid active expressions of hostility. We hypothesized that HRS people high in prevention would engage in explicitly hostile behavior during (e.g., yelling) and after conflicts (e.g., increasing overt hostile behavior toward the partner) to a lesser extent than HSR people low in prevention.

These hypotheses were tested using a daily-diary methodology. This design allowed us to examine participants' behavior on a day-to-day basis rather than retrospectively. Furthermore, the within-subject methodology of a diary study design lends itself to hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis. HLM allows an examination of between-subject differences (e.g., RS, prevention pride) in within-subject processes at the daily level (e.g., relationship between occurrence of conflicts and withdrawal of positive behavior toward romantic partners). In addition, because in diary designs participants serve as their own controls, the resulting statistical tests are more powerful than those in conventional between-subject designs. Finally, the prospective, longitudinal methodology allows for more confident causal inferences than would be possible with cross-sectional data (e.g., Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998).

## METHOD

### *Sample and Procedure*

Dating couples were recruited by way of posters placed around the Columbia University campus to participate for pay in a study on romantic relationships. At least one member of each couple was a university student and both members of each couple had to live in New

York City. The study was restricted to couples who were in a monogamous dating (non-married) relationship for at least 2 months.

Participating couples came to the laboratory to complete a background questionnaire. At the end of this session, each member of the couple received an envelope containing three packets of questionnaires and three return envelopes. Each packet contained seven identical, structured questionnaires to be completed at the end of each day for a total of 21 days. Participants were asked to complete the diary questionnaires separately from their partner and to refrain from discussing their responses until the study ended. They also were asked to return each week's set of diaries on completion. Upon receipt of all three sets of weekly diaries, couples were paid \$50.

Sixty-two heterosexual couples completed the background questionnaire. The mean relationship length was 16.83 months ( $SD = 17.18$ ; range: 2-96 months). The women's mean age was 20.37 ( $SD = 3.42$ ) and the men's mean age was 21.15 ( $SD = 4.44$ ). Of these 62 couples, 1 couple broke up during the 2nd week of the study. In addition, 4 couples withdrew from the study during the 1st week without returning any daily-diary data and another couple withdrew by the end of the 1st week due to time constraints. Fifty-six couples returned all the diaries and the analyses reported below are based on this data. Neither RS nor RFQ scores were related to attrition. In the final sample of 56 couples, female partners completed the diaries on 99.4% of the diary days and the male partners completed the diaries on 99.6% of the diary days.

### *Background Measures*

The background measures included the RSQ, the RFQ, global measures of relationship satisfaction and commitment, and several questionnaires unrelated to the purposes of this study.

*RSQ.* Participants completed the RSQ described in Study 1. In this sample, the mean and the median RSQ scores were 8.22 ( $SD = 2.98$ ; range: 1.00-17.39). There were no significant sex differences in the RSQ scores (paired-sample  $t < 1$ , *ns*) and partners' RSQ scores were not significantly correlated,  $r(54) = -.07$ , *ns*.

*RFQ.* Participants completed the RFQ described in Study 1. Promotion ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = .44$ ; range: 1.00-4.80) and prevention ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .85$ ; range: 2.50-4.80) pride scores did not differ as a function of sex (paired-sample  $t < 1.48$ ). Partners' scores were not significantly correlated for either scale (paired  $t < 1$ ). The relationship between the scores on the two factors was not significant ( $t < 1$ ).

*Silencing the Self Scale.* Silencing the Self-Scale (STSS) (Jack & Dill, 1992) consists of four subscales measuring self-silencing (i.e., inhibiting self-expression and action to avoid conflict and possible loss of relationships), externalized self-perceptions (i.e., judging oneself by external standards), care as self-sacrifice (i.e., putting the needs of other before the self to secure attachments), and divided self (i.e., outer compliance to social role imperatives while feeling angry inside). Theoretically, only the self-silencing subscale was directly relevant to the hypothesis that HSR-high prevention individuals will inhibit active expressions of disagreement to avoid conflict, and thus, the analysis was done on this subscale.

The self-silencing subscale consists of nine items (e.g., "I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause disagreement," "I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble in my relationships") and shows good internal reliability (sample  $\alpha = .79$ ). Participants rated themselves on these items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The sample mean was 2.31 ( $SD = .66$ ) and men reported higher levels of self-silencing ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) than women ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = .64$ ), paired-sample  $t(54) = 3.62$ ,  $p < .001$ . Partner's scores were not significantly correlated,  $r(54) = .21$ ,  $p > .10$ .

#### *Diary Measures*

The structured daily diary included questions on thoughts and feelings about the couple's relationships, partner behavior, negative interpersonal interactions, and daily mood measurements.

*Withdrawal and expressive hostility during conflicts.* Each diary day, participants indicated whether they had experienced a conflict or disagreement with their partners (yes = 1, no = 0). Of the 56 couples, 50 reported having at least one conflict with their partners during the diary period (range = 0-10). Members of a couple agreed about whether conflict had occurred on 91.5% of days.<sup>1</sup>

Consistent with prior research (Downey et al., 1998), conflict rates over the diary period were not significantly related to RS. This result is expected because HRS people, especially in relatively committed relationships, are motivated to avoid conflicts due to their fears of rejection. Conflict rates also did not differ as a function of prevention pride, promotion pride, or their interactions with RS (all  $F$ 's  $< 1.75$ ). Finally, there was no significant relationship between conflict rates and the day of the week (i.e., weekdays vs. weekend). The results reported below for negative conflict behavior were not a function of the day of the week on which conflicts occurred.

Items conceptually related to expressive hostility and withdrawal hostility were created a priori and are included in this questionnaire. Specifically, expressive

hostility was indexed by ratings on three items: "insulted or swore at the other person," "yelled at the other person," and "threatened to get back at the other person" ( $\alpha = .64$ ;  $M = 1.62$ ,  $SD = .81$ ). Withdrawal hostility was indexed by the item "I acted cold and distant" ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). Partners' reports (averaged across multiple conflicts for each individual) were not significantly correlated; expressive:  $r(48) = .23$ ,  $p > .10$ ; withdrawal:  $r(48) = -.09$ , *ns*, and no significant sex differences were found for either index (paired  $t$ 's  $< 1$ ).

*Withdrawal and expressive hostility at the daily level.* Each day, participants rated their daily negative (i.e., "I behaved and felt in hostile ways toward my partner today,"  $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) and positive (i.e., "I tried to make my partner happy today,"  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) behavior toward their partner (1 = *not true at all*, 5 = *completely true*). Increase in negative behavior was used to index expressive hostility and decrease in positive behavior was used to index withdrawal hostility. There were no sex differences for either measure (paired  $t$ 's  $< 1$ ). Partners' reports (averaged across multiple daily ratings for each individual) were significantly correlated for both indices; negative behavior:  $r(54) = .26$ ,  $p < .06$ ; positive behavior:  $r(54) = .60$ ,  $p < .001$ .

#### *Construct Validation for Measurement of Hostility*

In pilot studies, each item comprising the withdrawal and expressive hostility indices was rated on the degree to which it expressed hostility (1 = *very little*, 9 = *very much*). In one sample ( $N = 43$ ) participants indicated how much they believed each behavior would express their hostility if they were to engage in it during or after a conflict with a significant other (own behavior). A second sample ( $N = 23$ ) reported how much hostility they would perceive if their significant other were to behave in these ways toward them (partner behavior). Finally, a third sample ( $N = 36$ ) rated each item on a passive/indirect behavior (1) versus explicit/direct behavior (9) dimension. The item assessing daily expressive hostile behavior (i.e., "I felt and behaved in hostile ways") was not included in these pilots because of its high face validity.

With respect to conflict behavior, both withdrawal (acting cold and distant) and expressive hostility (yelling, threatening, insulting) were rated high on hostility for own ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 2.45$ ; and  $M = 7.12$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ , respectively) as well as for partner's behavior ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ; and  $M = 7.27$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ , respectively). Moreover, withdrawal hostility was rated as more indirect/passive ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 2.26$ ) than the expressive hostility ( $M = 7.43$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ),  $t = 11.30$ ,  $p < .001$ . All means differed significantly from the midpoint of the rating scale ( $t$ 's  $\geq 2.64$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ).

With respect to daily behavior toward the partner, withdrawal hostility (withdrawing support and not behaving as lovingly or friendly) was rated as highly passive/indirect ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ) as well as highly hostile whether enacted by the self ( $M = 5.93$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ) or by the partner ( $M = 6.13$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ). These means were all significantly different from the midpoint of the 9-point scale ( $t \geq 3.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

These results validated our assumption that the items used to assess withdrawal and expressive hostility indices were indeed assessing hostility. They also confirmed that withdrawal communicated hostility indirectly and passively, whereas expressive behaviors did so more directly and actively.

### *Diary-Data Analyses*

The diary data involved a hierarchical structure where participants were nested within couples, and days of assessment were nested within participants. For each couple, this structure represented a two-level model and required the simultaneous analysis of within-person and between-person levels that are hierarchically organized. For each member of a couple, the lower level within-person analysis was used to generate independent estimates of a person's average level of a dependent variable over the diary period or to estimate the relationship among constructs. The higher-level between-person analyses were then used to examine whether these within-person processes were a function of between-subjects variables such as RS and prevention pride.

Two basic types of questions were addressed using these analyses. Question 1 was whether mean levels of withdrawal versus expressive hostility during conflicts differed as a function of RS and prevention pride (or promotion pride). Question 2 was whether the relationship between variables measured at the daily level (i.e., relation between having a conflict and hostility toward partner) differed as a function of RS and prevention pride (or promotion pride). To reduce ambiguity about the causal direction of effects with respect to this question, we focused on longitudinal associations, specifically those with a 1-day lag (e.g., today's hostility following yesterday's conflict). The lagged value of each variable was included in the model to rule out the possibility that any lagged effect of conflict on today's hostile behavior might be an artifact of previous day's hostility. Thus, we assessed whether the effect of the previous day's conflict on change in the level of the dependent variable was contingent on the between-subject predictors.

The analyses were conducted using the mixed procedure in the SAS statistical package (SAS Institute, 1989), which is based on a hierarchical linear model approach and permits the simultaneous analysis of within- and

between-person variation (Kenny et al., 1998). These analyses assumed an error structure allowing for contemporaneous (same-day) dependence between the errors within a couple and a first-order autoregressive structure within a person in a couple. In addition, variances were allowed to differ between men and women. We also took a conservative approach to significance testing and used the number of couples as the unit of analysis in computing degrees of freedom in all analyses.

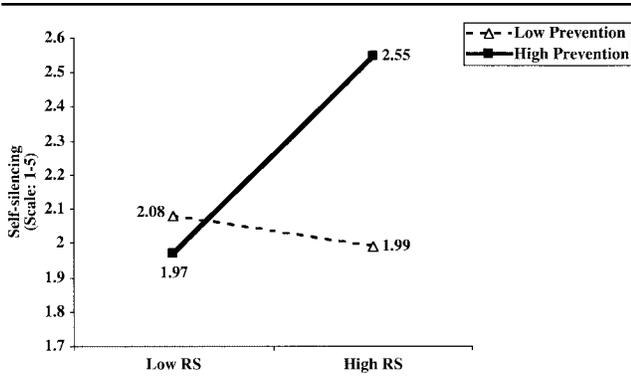
As in Study 1, our specific goal was to explore the unique effects of prevention and promotion pride and their interactions with RS. Thus, the interaction terms (e.g., Prevention  $\times$  Promotion or Prevention  $\times$  Promotion  $\times$  Yesterday's Conflict) for which we did not have a priori hypotheses were not entered into the analysis to retain power. The appendix summarizes the within- and between-subject equations used in these analyses, which were computed using centered scores on the RSQ and the RFQ. In cases where the hypothesized interaction terms were significant, simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) were conducted to examine whether a predictor variable had a significant effect on the outcome variable at certain levels of the other predictor variables (i.e., does RS predict negative behavior toward partners on days following conflicts among participants high in prevention pride?). Because preliminary analyses indicated that participants' sex did not interact with other predictors, sex was included only as a covariate. Parameter estimates and significance levels obtained for all of the predictors in the main analyses reported below can be found in the Notes sections of Figures 2 through 4.

## RESULTS

### *Silencing the Self as a Tactic to Prevent Conflicts*

Because self-silencing was a trait-level (and not a daily diary level) measure and couples' data were uncorrelated for the dependent and predictor variables, we conducted general linear models procedure in SAS on the self-silencing data at the individual level. RS, prevention pride, promotion pride, and the relevant interaction terms were entered as predictors and sex was included as a covariate. Consistent with expectations, the RS  $\times$  Prevention Pride interaction was significant,  $F(1, 105) = 6.99$ ,  $b = .064$ ,  $p < .01$ ; RS  $\times$  Promotion Pride:  $F < 1$ .<sup>2</sup>

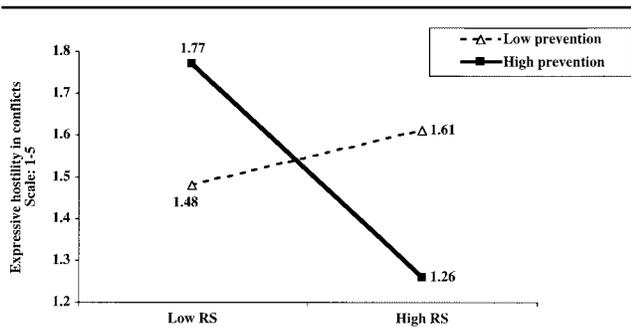
Figure 2 illustrates the predicted self-silencing values for participants scoring at 1  $SD$  below and above on RS ( $-2.98$  and  $2.98$ ) and prevention pride ( $-.86$  and  $.86$ ). Simple slope analyses indicated that RS was significantly, positively related to self-silencing among people high in prevention pride ( $b = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) but not among those with low in prevention pride ( $b = -.01$ ,  $ns$ ). Indeed, as Figure 2



**Figure 2** Self-silencing as a function of rejection sensitivity (RS) and prevention pride.

NOTE: Predicted values were computed using the following equation derived from the mixed procedure analysis:  $Self-silencing = 2.15^{***} + .21(sex)^{***} + .04(RS)^* + .13(prevention)^* - .31(promotion)^* + .065(Prevention \times RS)^{**} + .034(Promotion \times RS)$ .

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .



**Figure 3a** Expressive hostility during conflicts as a function of rejection sensitivity (RS) and prevention pride.

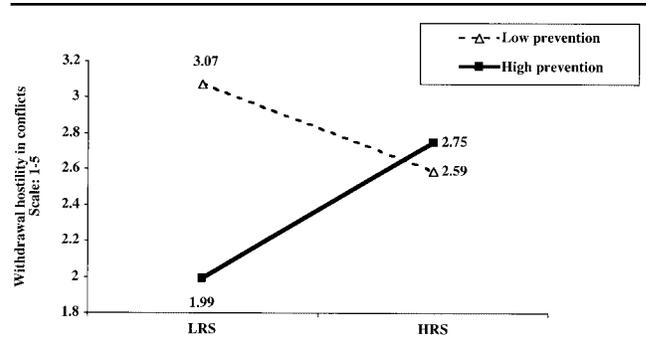
NOTE: Predicted values were computed using the following equation derived from the mixed procedure analysis:  $Expressive\ hostility = 1.53^{***} + .02(sex) - .04(RS) - .10(prevention) - .03(promotion) - .063(Prevention \times RS)^* - .007(Promotion \times RS)$ .

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

shows, HRS-high prevention individuals showed the highest levels of self-silencing.

*Conflict Behavior: Withdrawal Versus Expressive Hostility*

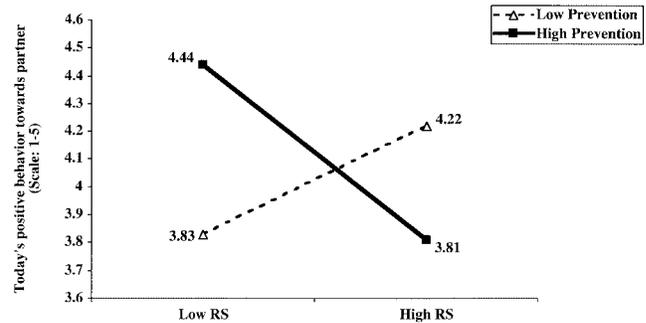
During conflicts, we expected RS to be negatively related to expressive hostility but positively to withdrawal hostility among individuals high in prevention pride. Among low prevention individuals, we expected these relationships to be either reversed or insignificant. We conducted hierarchical linear models analyses separately on withdrawal and expressive hostility as described in Question 1 above. The results revealed a significant RS  $\times$  Prevention interaction for both expressive hostility,  $F(1, 44) = 4.61, p < .04$ , and withdrawal hostility,  $F(1, 44) = 5.27, p < .03$ . In both cases, the RS  $\times$  Promotion interactions were insignificant ( $F_s < 1$ ). These findings did not



**Figure 3b** Withdrawal hostility during conflicts as a function of rejection sensitivity (RS) and prevention pride.

NOTE: Predicted values were computed using the following equation derived from the mixed procedure analysis:  $Withdrawal\ hostility = 2.60^{***} - .08(sex) + .02(RS) - .27(prevention)^* + .01(promotion) + .12(Prevention \times RS)^* - .07(Promotion \times RS)$ .

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .



**Figure 4** Today's positive behavior toward partner as a function of rejection sensitivity (RS) and prevention pride on days following conflict.

NOTE: Predicted values were computed using the following equation derived from the mixed procedure analysis:  $Today's\ positive\ behavior = 3.78^{***} + .01(yesterday's\ positive\ behavior) + .05(sex) - .14(promotion) - .03(prevention) - .03(RS)^* + .25(yesterday's\ conflict)^{**} - .006(Prevention \times RS) - .037(Promotion \times RS) + .013(Yesterday's\ Conflict \times RS) + .09(Yesterday's\ Conflict \times Prevention) + .03(Yesterday's\ Conflict \times Promotion) - .09(Yesterday's\ Conflict \times Prevention \times RS)^{**} + .08(Yesterday's\ Conflict \times Promotion \times RS)$ .

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

change when partners' RS, prevention pride, and their own conflict behavior were statistically controlled.

For the RS  $\times$  Prevention interaction, simple slope analyses indicated that among those high in prevention pride, being HRS was marginally related to decreased expressive hostility ( $b = -.057, p = .09$ ) and significantly related to increased withdrawal hostility ( $b = .13, p = .03$ ). As hypothesized, these relationships were reversed among those low in prevention even though they were not significantly different from zero (expressive:  $b = .048, ns$ ; withdrawal:  $b = -.077, ns$ ). Figure 3a and 3b illustrate the predicted values of expressive and withdrawal hostility, respectively, for participants scoring at 1 SD below and above on RS and prevention pride.

*Daily Behavior: Withdrawal Versus Expressive Hostility the Day After Conflict*

Separate analyses were conducted on daily positive and negative behavior toward partners as described in Question 2 above. First, there was a main effect of yesterday's conflict such that positive behavior increased ( $b = .25, p < .01$ ) and negative behavior decreased ( $b = -.22, p < .08$ ) on days following conflicts relative to days following no conflicts. Together, these results are consistent with prior evidence that conflicts benefit relationship satisfaction (e.g., Downey et al., 1998).

Furthermore, the  $RS \times Prevention \times Yesterday's Conflict$  interaction was significant for withdrawal hostility (i.e., reduction in positive partner behavior),  $b = -.093, F(1, 50) = 8.07, p < .01$  ( $RS \times Promotion \times Yesterday's Conflict$ ),  $F(1, 50) = 2.89, ns$ . For expressive hostile behavior (i.e., increase in negative behavior), neither the  $RS \times Prevention \times Yesterday's Conflict$  interaction nor the  $RS \times Promotion \times Yesterday's Conflict$  interaction was significant ( $F_s < 2.40, p_s > .12$ ).

Simple slope analyses were conducted to unpack the significant  $RS \times Prevention \times Yesterday's Conflict$  interaction. The results revealed that for high prevention participants, RS was related to lower levels of positive behavior toward partners on days following conflicts ( $b = -.10, p < .02$ ). For low prevention participants, RS was not significantly related to positive behavior toward partners the day after a conflict, even though this relationship was in the expected direction ( $b = .04, ns$ ). On days that did not follow conflicts, RS was not significantly related to behaving in a loving and accepting way toward partners either among those high ( $b = -.04, ns$ ) or low ( $b = -.03, ns$ ) in prevention pride. Together with the pattern of findings for days following conflicts, these results suggest that HRS-high prevention individuals' withdrawal hostility is specifically elicited by conflict. The predicted values for positive behavior on days following conflicts are illustrated in Figure 4 for participants 1 *SD* below and above on RS and prevention pride.

*Summary of Study 2*

Study 2 replicated and extended Study 1 by showing that prevention pride influences the tactics HRS individuals use to cope with the possibility of rejection (i.e., by self-silencing) and the degree to which they use active negative behavior versus more passive reductions in positive behavior to express hostility during and after conflicts with romantic partners. As predicted, compared to HRS-low prevention individuals, HRS-high prevention individuals engaged in more withdrawal of positive behavior while at the same time displaying less negative behavior during conflicts. Similarly, they were less loving toward their partners following conflicts.

Expected differences for the HRS-high prevention individuals with respect to expressive hostility at the daily level following conflicts were not found. Because there was a significant general decrease in hostility following conflicts, a floor effect may have masked the expected differences. In addition, the item indexing daily hostile behavior asked whether participants felt and acted in hostile ways toward their partners. Because we would expect HRS-high prevention individuals to feel hostile but not to enact overt hostility, the confounding of feelings and action in this particular item may explain the absence of expected findings.

An unexpected finding was that during conflicts low prevention individuals reported significantly higher overall levels of withdrawal hostility than high prevention individuals (see Figure 3b). This suggests that for high prevention people in general, any negative behavior, including withdrawal hostility, may be perceived as a potential mistake and, thus, avoided. However, our results also indicate that RS moderates this tendency such that high prevention individuals who are also high in RS use withdrawal hostility to a greater degree than their low RS counterparts. Indeed, post hoc analysis comparing withdrawal to expressive hostility showed that HRS-high prevention individuals used significantly more withdrawal than expressive hostility during conflicts compared to LRS-high prevention individuals,  $t(44) = 2.06, p < .05$ .

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Two studies supported the hypothesis that HRS individuals with high prevention pride would use more covert and less overt strategies in coping with rejection. Consistent with expectations, Study 1, a laboratory experiment, showed that HRS-high prevention people (compared to HRS-low prevention people) displayed hostility by adjusting their positive, accepting behavior toward others. In the absence of rejection, they evaluated a potential dating partner more favorably than others and showed the sharpest reduction in the positivity of their evaluation of the partner when led to believe that the partner had rejected them.

In Study 2, a daily-diary study of dating couples, HRS-high prevention individuals reported higher levels of self-silencing, suggesting that they try to prevent conflicts and thus conflict-related rejection by subjugating their needs and desires to those of their partners. Study 2 also showed that when conflicts with partners did happen, HRS-high prevention individuals displayed less overt hostility that risks potentially escalating the conflict and increasing the likelihood of rejection from partners. Rather, they expressed their anger by acting cold and distant; they withdrew positive behavior, replicating the results of Study 1. HRS-high prevention people's ten-

dency to engage in withdrawal hostility also was evident on days following conflict. Among high prevention participants, RS was associated with lower levels of positive, loving, and accepting behavior toward partners on days after conflict. Because the results held when controlling for promotion pride, the data suggest that the specific tactics used by HRS individuals were influenced by the strategic inclination toward vigilance associated with prevention pride rather than having a subjective history of any type of regulatory effectiveness or high motivation in general.

These findings are a first step in understanding the psychological dynamics that lead to tactical differences in how individuals cope with RS. However, because of our reliance on self-report measures of withdrawal versus expressive hostility, corroboration of the present results with observational data is necessary. Furthermore, the individual differences approach we have taken in operationalizing prevention pride does not allow us to make strong causal inferences about its impact on how HRS individuals cope with rejection. Future studies that experimentally manipulate beliefs about one's effectiveness in prevention self-regulation are needed to more unequivocally establish such a link.

#### *State Versus Chronic Differences in Prevention Pride and RS*

In this research, prevention pride was operationalized as a chronic individual differences dimension, but it also can be operationalized as a situationally activated state. Context can influence whether one will be in a state of high or low prevention pride by altering the accessibility of specific past histories of regulatory success. Thus, even individuals who do not have chronically high levels of prevention pride will favor vigilance-related tactics when a situation makes prevention pride momentarily accessible (Higgins et al., 2001; Idson & Higgins, 2000). Similarly, the RS dynamic and associated hostility can be situationally induced even in LRS individuals, for example, by making them recall hurtful rejection experiences (Ayduk, Mischel, & Downey, 2002). Thus, anybody—not just dispositionally HRS-high prevention individuals—may encounter situations where these states are activated, making the findings of this research relevant to our understanding of relationship behavior in general.

#### *Implications and Future Research*

The findings suggest that weakening the link between RS and hostility requires understanding sources of the variability among HRS people in how they cope with and express their vulnerability. For example, whereas HRS-high prevention pride individuals show heightened risk for withdrawal hostility, self-silencing, and perhaps even

indirect, relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), the same individuals seem to be protected against direct expressions of hostility. Thus, interventions should target withdrawal hostility and internalizing behavior for HRS-high prevention individuals and direct and overt aggressive behavior for HRS people low in prevention pride.

What are the implications of withdrawal and expressive hostility for the well-being of the relationship and of the individual? There is some evidence showing that both active and passive hostility undermine relationships (e.g., Downey et al., 1998; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Rusbult et al., 1986; Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). Thus, despite their efforts, HRS-high prevention individuals may do no better at preserving their interpersonal relationships than HRS individuals who do engage in direct negative behavior when they feel rejected. In fact, conflict engagement, criticism, disagreement, and expression of anger may benefit relationships in the long run (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), presumably because conflicts bring out important issues and force couples to actively deal with problems. HRS-high prevention individuals' behavior may heighten their risk for long-term relationship instability and dissatisfaction because their indirect style and avoidance of conflicts prevent them from confronting problems while communicating hostility.

Independent of their impact on the relationship, prevention-focused strategies also may undermine the well-being of the individual who uses them. Self-silencing in anticipation of conflicts is associated with depression (Jack, 1991). Thus, HRS-high prevention individuals may be trying to save their relationships at the expense of their own functioning. These possibilities have direct implications for our understanding of the processes that underlie interpersonal and personal adjustment and are important directions for future research to pursue.

## APPENDIX

### *Question 1*

The within-person equation specifies that a person's level of a dependent variable (DV), such as expressive hostility during conflicts on a given day,  $DV_t$ , is a function of a person's mean level across all days,  $a_0$ , plus a residual component specific to each day,  $q_t$ , such that

$$DV_t = a_0 + q_t \quad (1)$$

The between-person equation specifies mean differences across all days as a function of RS, prevention pride, and promotion pride.

$$a_{0i} = b_0 + b_1 RS_i + b_2 Prevention_i + b_3 Promotion_i + b_4 (RS \times Prevention)_i + b_5 (RS \times Promotion)_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Substituting equation 2 for  $a_0$  in equation 1, we get

$$DV_t = b_0 + b_1RS_t + b_2Prevention_t + b_3Promotion_t + b_4(RS \times Prevention)_t + b_5(RS \times Promotion)_t + \epsilon_t + r_t \quad (3)$$

### Question 2

The within-person equation specifies that the value of the dependent variable (e.g., positive behavior toward partner) on a given day,  $DV_t$ , is predicted by the level of the DV on the previous day,  $DV_{t-1}$ , the level of the independent variable (e.g., conflict) on the previous day,  $C_{t-1}$ , and a residual component of the DV, specific to each day,  $r_t$ . The variable  $r_t$  is assumed to have a mean of zero and a constant variance across persons and days. The equation is as follows:

$$DV_t = a_0 + a_1DV_{t-1} + a_2C_{t-1} + r_t \quad (4)$$

Estimates of  $a_0$ ,  $a_1$ , and  $a_2$  are obtained for both members of each couple in the sample.

The between-person equation specifies that for each person  $i$  the effect ( $a_{2i}$ ) of the independent variable ( $C_{t-1}$ ) on the DV ( $DV_t$ ) is a function of individual  $i$ 's  $RS_i$ ,  $Prevention_i$ ,  $Promotion_i$ , and the interactions between them ( $RS \times Prevention$ ) $_i$  ( $RS \times Promotion$ ) $_i$  as follows:

$$a_{2i} = c_0 + c_1RS_i + c_2Prevention_i + c_3Promotion_i + c_4(RS \times Prevention)_i + c_5(RS \times Promotion)_i + f_i \quad (5)$$

If we substitute Equation 5 for  $a_2$  and Equation 2 for  $a_0$  in Equation 4, this yields the following combined equation:

$$DV_t = b_0 + b_1RS_t + b_2Prevention_t + b_3Promotion_t + b_4(RS \times Prevention)_t + b_5(RS \times Promotion)_t + a_1DV_{t-1} + c_0C_{t-1} + c_1(C_{t-1} \times RS_t) + c_2(C_{t-1} \times Prevention_t) + c_3(C_{t-1} \times Promotion_t) + c_4(C_{t-1} \times RS_t \times Prevention_t) + c_5(C_{t-1} \times RS_t \times Promotion_t) + f_tC_{t-1} + \epsilon_t + r_t \quad (6)$$

### NOTES

1. Because conflicts occurred infrequently (10% of all diary days), the high rate of agreement between couples might have been driven mostly by agreement about when conflicts did not occur. We thus also examined agreement on days when one member of a couple indicated that a conflict did occur. This analysis revealed that of all the days women reported a conflict, their partners also reported a conflict 54.78% of the time. Of all the days men reported a conflict, female partners agreed 62.38% of the time. Thus, agreement for occurrence of conflicts was much lower than agreement for non-occurrence of conflicts. This, however, does not directly affect our findings because our conceptualization and analysis are mainly concerned with the subjective perception of conflict for each individual.

2. The interaction effect between rejection sensitivity (RS)  $\times$  Prevention Pride did not change as a function of sex, indicating that the results were the same for members of a couple ( $t < 1$ ). However, there was a three-way interaction between sex, RS, and promotion pride,  $F(1, 100) = 6.19, p = .01$ . To understand the nature of this interaction further we conducted General Linear Models (GLM) analysis on self-silencing separately for men and women with RS, prevention pride, and promotion pride and their interactions as the predictors.

Although low (high) promotion pride was associated with higher (lower) levels of silencing in both men and women, among men, RS was related to higher self-silencing only among low promotion men ( $b = .08, p < .05$ ). Thus, it was the high RS-low promotion group that was the most vulnerable to self-silencing compared to the other groups. Among women, on the other hand, RS was positively related to self-silencing only among those high in promotion ( $b = .13, p < .01$ ). This pattern indicated that low RS-high promotion women were the least vulnerable to self-silencing compared to the other three groups.

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