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WHEN SOCIAL ALLERGIES FLARE UP IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS:
A RELATIONAL TURBULENCE MODEL EXPLANATION

by

NAOMI W. HOCHSTADT
B.A. Florida Atlantic University, 2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Romantic relationships commonly endure rough patches. The relational turbulence model and the social allergy phenomenon may account for such rough transitions. A social allergy is an idiosyncratic social behavior that involuntarily stirs up irritation in an individual, either with or without the intention of the transgressor. As the behavior is repeated, tolerance for the bothersome allergen dwindles. This paper investigates the connections between relational turbulence and social allergies. The relational turbulence model describes individuals' severe reactions to various turning points in an interpersonal relationship, and combines the effects of increased intimacy, relational uncertainty, and partner interference. Based on the turbulence model, the author predicted curvilinear relationships between intimacy and social allergen occurrence as well as between intimacy and negative emotional impact of social allergens. Based on the social allergen literature, the author predicted social allergen occurrence and repeated arguments about social allergens would both associate positively with relationship turbulence. Partial support was found for each prediction.

To my fiancé, William Michelin, whom I love despite the allergens

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I would like to thank my thesis chair for this fun topic idea, my super cool committee for interesting and valuable discussion, my family and friends for being lovely and reviewing my paper countless times, and, of course, my fiancé for tolerating MY allergens.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships commonly endure a rough patch or two. Perhaps, after being together for some time, excitement and spontaneity wane, and the couple must search for ways to reignite the spark. Perhaps a blossoming career generates stress and anxiety within a partner that then shifts to the relationship. Raising children might leave little time for leisurely activities, let alone a romantic night alone. Furthermore, persistent habits that may seem only slightly discomforting initially—such as forgetting an anniversary, betraying a secret, or even more minor, leaving laundry on the floor, squeezing the toothpaste tube from the top instead of the bottom—can eventually grow to provoke irritation and lead to conflicts, if not addressed early.

There may be a way to determine the circumstances that lead to these conflicts. Individuals can then recognize when their relationship is more inclined to be “rough” and learn to minimize or circumvent the problems before they start. Cunningham, Barbee, and Druen (1997) discuss the significance of analyzing not just the effectual, positive aspects of communication in relationships, but the negative aspects as well. Simple cognizance of existing problems and the behaviors that can sour communication might help to prevent perpetuating negativity and conflict, thus sustaining satisfaction in a relationship. Examining causes of harmful communication can advance the research on constructive communication, and ultimately expand the scope of what can be learned from human interaction.

One approach to understanding such potentially harmful periods in relationships is the relational turbulence model (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). The relational turbulence model focuses on the points in relationships when turbulence is likely to arise: during transitions in the status of the relationship. These transitions are characterized by feelings of uncertainty, regular interference from a partner, and a tendency for overreactions. The relationship turbulence model does not, however, account for the cumulative effects of consistent irritants within the relationship over time, or social allergens. A social allergy is an annoyance to a persistent idiosyncratic habit and can be damaging to a relationship. Most people know at least one person who grates on their nerves and gets under their skin, with little to no effort on the offender's part (Cunningham, Shamblen, Barbee & Ault, 2005). Therefore, it seems necessary to expand research on when allergy flare ups are most likely.

The purpose of this research is to determine if there is an increased likelihood of developing social allergies while undergoing changes in a relationship. Both social allergies and relational turbulence involve a degree of reactivity by definition; this paper explores whether those reactions are related. I suggest each concept may be made stronger and more theoretically complete with the incorporation of the other. Because this line of inquiry has yet to be examined, I also intend to open up and encourage a new path for original research.

I will review the current literature on relational turbulence model, its development, underlying mechanisms, and consequences. Next, I will examine the social allergy phenomenon, along with its characteristics, relational causes, and the four types of allergens. Then, I articulate my hypotheses and research questions, while speculating the

associations that exist between relational turbulence and social allergies. Next, I outline the methodologies behind the investigation, followed by a description of the results. Finally, a summary and discussion of the implications of the findings is presented.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relational Turbulence

The relational turbulence model explicates individuals' reactions to various turning points in an interpersonal relationship (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010). The model combines the effects of intimacy, relational uncertainty, and interference from a partner to help explain the proverbial "bumpy road" on which the relationship may travel during transitions. A relational transition describes a shift in the stage or status of a relationship. The transition is characterized by changes in the definition of the relationship, as well as the partners' patterns of behavior, and the partners' identities (Knobloch, 2007; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Solomon et al., 2010). For instance, couples electing to take their courtship to the next level and commit to monogamy are transitioning. A couple who just moved in together has entered into a new stage of their relationship.

Turbulence describes the tendency for tumultuous cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to these relationship transitions (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). For example, discovering a partner is neglecting his/her dirty dishes might be more distressing after moving in together than before when the couple lived apart. As they attempt to coordinate their new living arrangements, turbulence may arise from one partner having to clean up continually after the other around their home.

The model posits a potential for the most turmoil during moderate levels of intimacy (Knobloch, 2007). Sternberg (1986) defines intimacy as the depth of closeness, trust, transparency, connectedness, and bondedness in a relationship. Moderate-level

intimacy emerges when partners reside in between a low-intimacy state—when they are just getting to know each other—and a high-intimacy state—when they have fully incorporated each other into their lives. Solomon and Knobloch (2004) note that a particularly turbulent transition arises when romantic couples progress from a casual dating relationship to a more committed, invested, and interdependent relationship. Intimate touch, as well as open conflict, increases in this stage of moderate intimacy (Knobloch, 2007). Moreover, the frequency of arguments between couples peaks, and negative emotion and relational uncertainty also reach their highest levels during this stage (Knobloch, Miller, & Carpenter, 2007; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004).

The turbulence model suggests that moderate levels of intimacy influence turbulence in two ways. First, according to the model, turbulence develops when a partner questions the status of the relationship. Relational uncertainty arises out of self, partner, and relationship sources. Self-uncertainty is defined by the questions an individual has about his/her own commitment and attachment in a relationship. Partner uncertainty involves the doubts an individual has about his/her counterpart's level of commitment and involvement in the relationship. Relationship uncertainty describes the concerns people have about the nature of the relationship unit itself (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Solomon and Knobloch (2004) showed relational uncertainty can make individuals reactive to relationship situations by intensifying general emotional, cognitive, and communicative reactions. Thus, turbulence in a relationship has its roots in uncertainty within the dyad.

The second mechanism underlying relational turbulence is partner interference, which involves the development of interdependence (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). The

systematic coordination of patterns of behavior and actions between individuals drives interdependence (Berscheid, 1983). Individuals perform their daily routines independently with little overt cognitive thought. Routine sequences such as eating, sleeping, schooling, working, cleaning, and leisure time eventually become inveterate processes. A new romantic relationship or a new stage in the relationship can disrupt these processes. Berscheid (1983) noted that emotional intensity is at its greatest when romantic couples begin establishing interdependence.

Interference from a partner appears when couples struggle to coordinate their actions and disrupt each other's ability to accomplish everyday goals (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Solomon et al., 2010). This interference tends to frustrate and heighten reactivity to relationship circumstances (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). For example, partners adjusting to sharing their home together must learn to coordinate their morning schedules, such as who wakes up when, how to avoid awakening the other, how to share the bathroom, and who will start the coffee or make the bed. These adjustments take time and can be discomforting; they also heighten the awareness of the other's presence, as well as the changes within the relationship. For someone who is accustomed to getting ready alone and suddenly has to wake up 30 minutes earlier in order to account for the extra time to get ready, the new routine can become unpleasant and troublesome. Before full interdependence is established, the simple goal of arriving to work punctually can be disrupted. Small disruptions can evolve into larger, more considerable frustrations. As relationships progress, however, individuals gradually learn to incorporate their counterparts into their lifestyle, learning to resolve disruptions and other issues

cooperatively (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). As a result, partner interference, and possibly relational turbulence, may subside within more serious, long-term, interdependent relationships.

Consequences, Connections, and Correlations

Relational uncertainty and partner interference produce an atmosphere of reactivity, characterized by polarized cognitions, stronger emotions, increased negative emotions, and more extreme communication behaviors (Knobloch et al., 2007; McLaren, Solomon & Priem, 2011; Solomon et al., 2010). Turbulence in a relationship is marked by the tendency for reactivity. For example, a couple having recently moved in together might be undergoing turmoil in their relationship as they try to figure out how to coordinate the chores, make dinner, and socialize with friends. They may be seeing an increase in intimacy as they spend more time together and share more activities with each other. The couple may also see a rise in conflicts and negativity as they work out who pays what bills, whose family to visit during the holidays, how to find time alone to themselves, is the relationship leading to where they both want it to, and is one truly committed for the long haul like the other. These issues point to the many tensions stemming from a relationship of reactivity.

Solomon and Knobloch (2004) found evidence that self-uncertainty increased in one individual as the other partner's interference increased. In other words, partners whose goals are continuously interrupted become less certain of their feelings about their relationship. Knobloch et al. (2007) found increased relational uncertainty and partner interference predicted increased negative emotion, while facilitation, the opposite of interference, from a counterpart predicted decreased negative emotion. Solomon and

Theiss' (2008) study proved interference from a partner peaks at moderate levels of intimacy. Intimacy level also significantly predicts perceived relational uncertainty and partner interference. In short, evidence shows intimacy affects both underlying mechanisms of turmoil in the way the relational turbulence model prescribes. A new couple growing more intimately involved may see a rise in partner interference and relational uncertainty, and until they reach higher levels of intimacy do they begin to decrease.

Knobloch and Theiss (2010) studied the capacity for one individual's feelings of doubt to affect his/her counterpart's feelings of doubt. They claim that turbulence can arise from both the one's own experience or from one's experience of the partner. These researchers observed more uncertainty and interference from an individual if his/her counterpart reported more turmoil, anger, sadness, and fear in the previous week. Additionally, Knobloch and Theiss (2010) discovered tumultuous experiences contribute to increases in relational uncertainty and partner interference over time. Furthermore, individuals in a turbulent period of their relationship experience an increase in intense feelings of hurt, that is, they feel negative emotions more intensely, and tend to view aversive messages as intentionally hurtful (McLaren et al., 2011). Theiss, Knobloch, Checton, and Magsamen-Conrad (2009) found hurtful messages were more distressing when relational uncertainty is high because the partner's true motives are unclear. Similarly, hurtful messages can be more upsetting under conditions of partner interference because interfering with goal attainment can produce intense emotion (Theiss et al., 2009). Therefore, a dating couple who are newly cohabitating and undergoing turbulence may be

offended relatively easy in trivial disagreements, especially because they are more likely to assume the offense was deliberate (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). This reactivity can then transfer back to the other as moodiness or irritability and potentially perpetuate the negative feelings.

In sum, relational turbulence theory seeks to explain the reactivity and turmoil that can follow a transition, or a change in the relationship status. Two fundamental explanations for turbulence are relational uncertainty—when the nature of the relationship is in question—and interference from a partner—when routines are interrupted. Both represent a degree of hypersensitivity (Knobloch et al., 2007; Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; McLaren et al., 2011; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Solomon et al., 2010) at mid-stages of intimacy (Knobloch, 2007; Knobloch et al., 2007; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). This is particularly evident in relationships transitioning from casually to seriously dating, where moderate levels of intimacy are exhibited (Knobloch, 2007; Knobloch et al., 2007; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). The model has never been analyzed in light of the social allergy phenomena, yet both concepts may hold significant implications for one another: if the sensation of reactivity involved in relational turbulence winds up being tantamount to the reactivity characteristic of an allergy, another remedial means for turbulence, or, conversely, another source of allergy development may be discovered. The next section argues that social allergens form a third possible influence on the experience of relationship turbulence.

Social Allergens

A social allergy is a hypersensitive response of exasperation and dissatisfaction to a repeated unwanted behavior by another (Cunningham et al., 2005). For example, an individual likes to snap his/her chewing gum, which prompts an involuntary reaction of anger or annoyance from a friend who has always hated it. A coworker who routinely parks unreasonably close to another coworker's car can create an inordinate amount of negative affect. A partner who neglects his/her dirty dishes frequently may risk provoking a partner's displeasure from having to clean up afterwards.

Social allergens theoretically function in relationships the way physical allergens operate within the human body and immune system (Cunningham et al., 1997). The social allergen often looks relatively benign to outsiders but become an "...emotion- arousing behavior or situation created by another person that is seen as unpleasant, but not as unbearably aversive, by objective observers" (Cunningham et al., 2005, p. 274). Just as a physical allergen can appear harmless or even normal to non-allergic individuals, to the allergic, an allergen is unpleasant and annoying. The social allergen is the gum snapping, the constant double parking, or the kitchen neglecting behaviors. Although initial exposure to an allergen may not produce a violent reaction at first, over time, and as interactions with a partner increase in frequency and duration, exposure to the allergen increasingly sensitizes the allergic partner.

In fact, Cunningham et al. (2005) claim the primary direct cause of a behavior becoming increasingly aversive stems from repetition of the behavior. When someone commits an annoying act that s/he has done before, it may not only cause an immediate

emotional reaction, the act may evoke all the previous negative, annoyed emotions from when the act was first committed. The frustration can continue to build upon itself if the allergen continues. In other words, if an individual is trying to convince his/her partner to help wash dishes, every time the partner forgets or disregards a mess, it will stir up the negative emotions of the prior incidents, and the irritated individual will become that much more irritated. Thus, repeated exposure to the behavior decreases the tolerance, as well as increases the negative reactions, toward the bothersome act (Cunningham et al., 1997; Miller, 1997).

The social allergen tends to be relatively minor, but offensive or obnoxious to the allergic. By other people's standards, the behavior may be rather mundane or innocuous. However, the phenomenon is remarkably commonplace—when asked, most individuals could name at least one person who bothered them easily. Cunningham et al. (1997) surveyed 150 university student respondents about their socially allergenic companions. Among those who generated the strongest negative feelings for the respondents, 18% were their romantic partners, 30% were friends, 18% were coworkers, 17% were supervisors or teachers, and 14% were family members or other relatives. In response to who gets under their skin most, participants nominated an average of one relative and three non-relatives. Hence, social allergies are widespread enough to be found in many types of interpersonal relationships.

However, romantic relationships are of particular interest. In other workplace or familial relationships, separation is typically more difficult, whereas romantic partners can separate from one another with relative ease—albeit less so after marriage and when

children are involved. In a situation where a couple aggravate each other frequently, but neither has terminated the relationship, a social allergy may ultimately prove useful. Cunningham et al. (1997) suggest an adaptive function of social allergies within couples that may shed light on how relationships overcome, or succumb to, social allergies. If an allergen is extreme enough to threaten a relationship, it may be an indication of other problems. This will be discussed further in the next section. Cunningham et al. (2005) also propose several interpersonal processes that lead to social allergen development in romantic couples.

Likely Relational Initiators

Causes of both social allergens and allergies within the relationship dynamics include *disenchantment* and *de-romantization*. Early in a relationship, partners tend to idealize each other and overlook annoying habits and potential personality conflict (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1993). This idealization during the honeymoon phase can encourage overlooking personal faults and unpleasanties. Disenchantment emerges when a couple's intense thrill and romantic passion—characteristic of a new relationship—begins to decrease (Felmlee, 2001). This is when partners become sensitized to idiosyncrasies and may develop allergies. Repeated exposure to the allergen may eventually cause boredom, become obnoxious, produce polarization, or increase negativity and sensitivity (Cunningham et al., 1997, O'Conner, 2011).

De-romantization describes a partner's reduction in impression management over time. An individual may be less and less concerned about impressing his/her partner and put forth less effort to be romantically appealing (Felmlee, 2001). For instance, after being

together for a while, a couple going on a date may lack the interest and enthusiasm they once shared in their “honeymoon” phase. A partner may spend less time preparing his/her self. The other partner may perceive this as oversight or lacking cleanliness and, in time, become more willing to voice his/her opinion about that uncleanness. A decrease in self-control and even self-monitoring of judgment can contribute to allergenic behaviors (Cunningham et al., 2005; O’Conner, 2011). Similarly, de-romantization may also increase allergen manifestation; once romance wears off, individuals may start knowingly engaging in unpleasant behaviors.

Ending a relationship abruptly can be difficult, especially after putting in large amounts of time, effort, and resources. Emotional attachment and interdependence may have developed, making separation from a partner, who has been so incorporated into the other’s life, difficult. In such situations a social allergy might ultimately help to foster constructive communication about a relationship. Cunningham et al. (1997) views social allergens as a potential catalyst for change, and a method to resolve other latent conflicts. The sensitivity-to-repetition aspect of an allergen may have evolved to help a perpetually annoyed individual either finally sever ties with an agitator, or motivate him/her to seek positive change in the agitator. For example, an individual continually cleaning up after his/her partner’s mess may eventually exceed his/her personal limit of tolerance and demand help from the other even when s/he otherwise might not have. The annoyed individual will have finally reached a point where s/he could no longer endure the increasingly negative relationship and will confront the other about any unwanted behaviors. Or perhaps the allergen is more serious and aversive—the build-up of

frustration could be valuable in eventually bringing the partner to desire counseling, or even separation. Presuming the allergic individual is better-off without the offending partner, the growing hypersensitivity function of a social allergy can serve to benefit the allergy sufferers. A gradual increase in agitation from a vexing behavior may be necessary to ease an offended partner over the edge and finally take action to constructively rectify an issue.

Types of Allergens

Cunningham et al. (1997) identify two dimensions of social allergens: *personalism* and *intentionality*. Personalism describes the degree to which a behavior is personally-directed, that is, a behavior that focuses on the individual. Intentionality refers to whether a behavior is deliberately-enacted, as opposed to a behavior that is performed out of habit or one that is accidental. Crossing personalism and intentionality creates four categories of allergens (see Figure 1): uncouth behaviors, inconsiderate acts, intrusive behaviors, and norm violations. Uncouth behaviors include poor grooming habits or poor manners, such as chewing with the mouth open, and are neither intentional nor personally-imposing. Behaviors such as habitual tardiness and constant interrupting characterize an inconsiderate act. These are not intentional but are personally-focused on the individual. Intrusive behaviors involve threatening, excessively demanding, or overly criticizing behaviors, such as acting jealously possessive and controlling, which are perceived as both intentional and personally-imposing (Cunningham et al., 2005). Norm violations infringe on the other person's standard of social norms and appropriateness, such as taking drugs,

excessive drinking or gambling, or flirting with other people. Norm-violating behaviors are not personally-directed but are intentional.

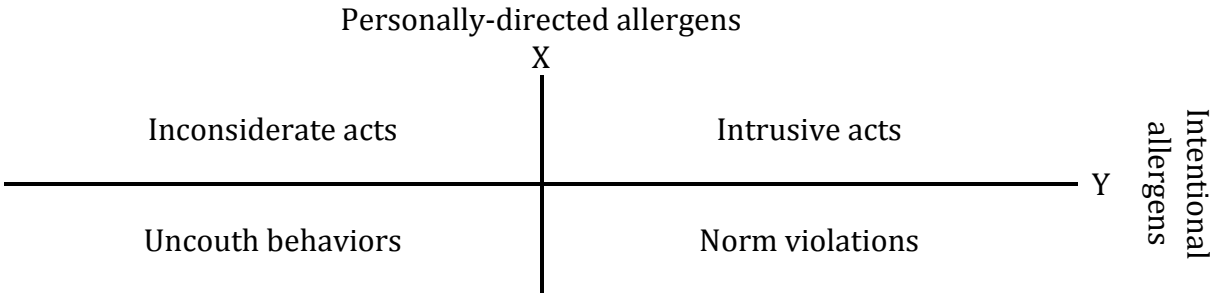


Figure 1: Social Allergen Types

In a study of 104 dating couples, Cunningham et al. (2005) found uncouth habits to be the most common of the four types of allergens, and these behaviors increased in frequency over time. Intrusive acts elicited more negative emotion than the others (Cunningham et al., 2005; Miller & Reznik, 2009).

In summary, a social allergy flares up in someone when s/he gradually grows more annoyed or disgusted by another person’s idiosyncrasies (Cunningham et al., 1997). Despite its commonness, allergens tend to be less overtly repellent to outsiders. However, with repetition, even a moderate quirk can become exceedingly bothersome. Disenchantment, or reduced passions, and de-romantization cause social allergens to appear and allergies to form within romantic relationships. The four types of allergens are uncouth habits, inconsiderate acts, intrusive behaviors, and norm violations. Additional

research on social allergies and their impacts on close relationships would be useful. For instance, it has never been studied in the context of the relational turbulence model.

Social Allergies In The Midst Of Relational Turbulence

Relational turbulence theory describes variables associated with individuals' tendencies to be reactive to relationship situations (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010). This sounds strikingly similar to Cunningham et al.'s (1997) conceptualization of a social allergy developed as a reactive response to repeated exposure to a partner's irritating behavior. Reactivity is defined as a severe or intense response to normally mundane stimuli. Perhaps during turbulent phases of a relationship, partners would see an increase in the frequency or development of social allergies. Turbulence could result in individuals' being more prone to reactivity, or annoyance, by a peculiar behavior, especially if the behavior persists.

Like partner interference and relationship uncertainty in the model of relationship turbulence, social allergies may result from peoples' tendencies to be reactive to the development of intimacy in relationships (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010). Once relationships evolve to a point where partners begin integrating each other into one another's routines, they may also begin noticing each other's idiosyncrasies, making allergenic behavior both more noticeable and annoying. As the relationship continues to progress, social allergies might decrease as the allergens become relatively less important features of the other person's personality.

Several other behaviors appear tied to relationship transitions, moderate levels of intimacy, relational uncertainty, and partner interference such as topic avoidance (Theiss et al., 2009), verbal aggression (Billingham & Sack, 1987), sadness, jealousy, and anger

(Knobloch et al., 2007). I might also consider these behaviors social allergens. For example, partner interference could be classified as intrusiveness or inconsiderateness; Cunningham et al. (2005) already discuss behaving in a threatening or jealously possessive manner as intrusiveness (p. 276). An irritating behavior or situation, such as persistent topic avoidance or verbal aggression, may cause stronger negative emotions or hurt during times of turmoil. Therefore, consistent with the logic of the relationship turbulence model, my first hypothesis predicts a curvilinear relationship between relationship intimacy and reports of a partner's social allergens:

H1: Romantic partners at moderate levels of relationship intimacy will report social allergens most frequently.

Turbulence research suggests moderate levels of intimacy might help produce allergies that never before existed, as well as amplify negative emotions in response to the partner's annoying behaviors. A bothersome behavior may seem more prevalent, even if in actuality, it is not. Consequently, the increased reactivity in people experiencing uncertainty and goal disruption might sensitize them to additional allergens or unpleasant behaviors in their partner.

Theiss et al.'s (2009) study revealed that hurtful messages are more upsetting to partners under conditions of relational turbulence, in particular, under conditions of relational uncertainty and partner interference. The researchers suggested uncertainty may affect perception of the message because the offending partner's motives are unclear. Interference from a partner may influence perception of hurtful messages because goal disruptions prompt strong emotion (Theiss et al., 2009). Theiss and Solomon (2006) also

discovered relational uncertainty and interference from partners are associated with perceived negativity to potentially irritating situation. Solomon and Knobloch (2004) found individuals attribute more severity and more relationship threat to relational irritations.

For instance, glancing at a mobile phone during small talk may seem inconsiderate to someone, who is, perhaps, going through a rough patch at work and wants to vent. Since motives are unclear, the distressed individual may perceive the behavior as intentional—an indication the other does not want to listen or would prefer to do something else—as opposed to assuming s/he is just checking the time. Research by Holtzworth-Munroe and Jacobson (1985) found that distressed couples tend to perceive their partner's negative behavior to be intentional. So, unintentional uncouth behaviors may *seem* intentional. It is possible the hypersensitive individual would not have such an intense or harsh response to the allergen under ordinary, non-turbulent relationship circumstances. Likewise, others uninvolved in the relationship might not see the behavior as quite that frustrating.

However, turbulence research also suggests that if partners can grow to integrate one another other's lifestyle, the relationship can endure past the reactive phase of moderate intimacy (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). Reactivity to the social allergens may decrease as one finds ways to accommodate the other's eccentricities or until one becomes desensitized to them. Like perceived interference and relationship uncertainty, it is predicted that social allergens will be perceived to be most annoying at moderate levels of intimacy:

H2: Perception of social allergen negativity will have an inverted U curvilinear relationship with intimacy, such that, allergen negativity will be highest at moderate levels of intimacy.

The occurrence of social allergens negatively impacts interpersonal relationships. Couples with higher allergen impact scores tended to report lower relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the higher the frequency of allergenic behaviors, the greater the negative emotions associated with them (Cunningham et al., 2005). Miller and Reznik (2009) discovered similar results in their research on allergens' impact in the workplace relationships of undergraduate students. When the students perceived the allergen as intentional and personally-directed, they were more likely to confront their coworker about the allergen. Similarly, as the allergenic behavior increased anger, Miller and Reznik (2009) discovered an increased likelihood the allergic individual initiated arguments about the behavior. In short, social allergies have a detrimental emotional effect on the distressed individuals, increasing negative emotion and decreasing relationship satisfaction. It is suggested that allergens also play a role in the experience of relationship turbulence in romantic relationships such that the occurrence of social allergens will increase the perception of relationship turbulence.

H3: The occurrence of social allergens will be positively associated with relationship turbulence.

The first research question focuses specifically on which group of allergens—uncouth behaviors, inconsiderate acts, intrusive behaviors, and norm violations—is most affected by turbulence:

RQ1: Which allergens are most related to perceptions of turbulence?

Mentioned earlier, as partners grow more interdependent and intimate, they may learn to resolve small disruptions before they can evolve into larger, more considerable frustrations. Perhaps any issues that do not get resolved at this point might come up later as social allergens, because certain ones take a long time to reappear. The last research question examines the effect of unresolved allergies:

RQ2: Is allergen persistence associated with turbulence?

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Participants and Procedures

The initial group of participants consisted of undergraduate students (n=405) in an introductory communication class at a large Southeastern university. Students were recruited for the study and offered course extra credit upon completion of the questionnaire. Because the study focused on on-going romantic relationships, I eliminated people who reported on a cross-sex friendship (n= 141), a friends-with-benefits relationship (n = 39), or who did not answer the relationship status item (n = 19). Finally, I embedded three items from Jackson's (1974) infrequency index to eliminate participants responding randomly or mindlessly. Participants answering "agree" or "strongly agree" to the items, "I make most of my own clothes and shoes," or "I can run a mile in under four minutes," and participants answering "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to "I sometimes get hungry or thirsty" were eliminated from the sample (n = 24). This left 185 participants' data for analysis.

The sample consisted of 13 African Americans, 5 Asians, 6 Caribbean Islanders, 30 Hispanic/Latinos, 2 Pacific Islanders, 120 White/Caucasians, and 8 indicating "other". Participants ages ranged from 18 to 52 (M=20.06, SD = 3.90) and was composed of 50 males and 135 females. The majority of participants reported being in an exclusive dating relationship (n = 119), with 53 casually dating (going out on a regular basis but free to date others), 9 of the participants were engaged, and 4 were married. The mean length of romantic relationships was 1.97 years (SD=1.8). The self-assessment questionnaire

administered through the survey software Qualtrics™ included measures of the participant's perception of relationship intimacy, relational turbulence, social allergens, frequency of arguing about each allergen, along with other measures not relevant to this investigation.

Undergraduate participants are an ideal population in which to observe the effects of the relationship turbulence model, as their romantic relationships are more likely to be in the early stages of development. Early transitions may be where I find the most turbulence.

Measures

Intimacy

Participants were evaluated based on a composite measure of intimacy. Since intimacy is a complex state of being, a two-component composite measure was calculated, utilizing a version of Solomon and Knobloch's (2004) strategy. Using Rubin's (1970) Love Scale, the survey asked participants to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding their current romantic partner (*I would do anything for my partner; If I could never be with my partner, I would feel miserable; I feel responsible for my partner's well-being; I would greatly enjoy being confided in by my partner; It would be hard for me to get along without my partner*) on a five point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree).

The second component of intimacy gauged closeness with a partner (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). Respondents rated their agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree) in response to five statements (*My*

relationship with this person is very close; I am very connected to this person; My relationship with this person is not very close; My relationship with this person is very intimate. Please refer to page 45 in Appendix B for the full question). The overall reliability across all items appears to be strong ($\alpha=.90$). The overall mean across all items served as the intimacy scale in my analyses.

Partner Interference

The survey asked a series of questions relating to turbulence and its underlying mechanisms. Seven items were used to evaluate the participant's interference from a partner. I used Solomon and Knobloch's (2001, 2004) scale which asked respondents to rate their agreement with several statements about their current romantic partner (i.e., *My partner interferes with my plans to attend parties or other social events; My partner interferes with the things I need to do each day.* Please refer to page 45 in Appendix B for the full question.) on a five-point Likert-type scale (*1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree*).

Relationship Turbulence

I used Knobloch's (2007) measure of relationship turbulence. Knobloch's (2007) procedure presents participants the sentence stem "*At the present time, this relationship is...*" and asks participants to rate their agreement with eight given adjectives (i.e., *turbulent, chaotic, in turmoil, tumultuous, hectic, frenzied, overwhelming, and stressful*) on a five-point Likert-type scale (*1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale is strong: $\alpha=.95$.

Relational Uncertainty

A variety of measures formed the self, partner, and relationship uncertainty scale used in Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) work, however, the relationship uncertainty measure (concerns people have about the nature of the relationship unit itself) was more relevant and sufficient for the purposes of this paper. Participants read 16 statements (e.g., *I know the norms for this relationship; I know whether or not this relationship will end soon; I know whether or not my partner and I feel the same way about each other.* Please refer to page 54 in Appendix B for all the statements.) and then answered two questions about each statement. The first question asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the aforementioned statement (*1= agree; 2= disagree*), and the second determined how confident they were in their answer of agree/disagree (*1= totally certain; 2= somewhat certain; 3= somewhat uncertain; 4= totally uncertain*).

Social Allergens

Both the full and the abbreviated version of Cunningham and his colleagues' (e.g., Cunningham et al., 1997) Romantic Relationship Act Inventory (RRAI) were deemed too long to use in this investigation (42 items for the RRAI, and 280 items for the version in Shamblen, 1994) because I wanted to ask several questions about the occurrence of each allergen. The use of these scales in multiple studies suggests that four underlying dimensions of allergens seem to exist: uncouth behavior, inconsiderate acts, intrusive acts, and norm violations. Rather than ask for judgments about very specific behaviors, I took a macro approach by asking about each of the four underlying types of allergens that included a definition of the allergen type along with a few specific examples.

For example, I asked participants about their partners' uncouth behavior using the following item, "*We will define an 'uncouth behavior' as rude or impolite behavior that is often unintentional and not personally directed toward you. Examples include belching noisily, showing a lack of concern for hygiene, using a lot of profanity, wearing old tattered, or soiled clothing, using poor manners, and so on.*" I then asked participants to report how often the behavior was enacted by the partner on a five point scale (*1= never; 2= rarely; 3= occasionally; 4= often; 5= almost constantly*). I measured the occurrence of inconsiderate acts, intrusive acts, and norm violations in the same way.

Negativity of Social Allergy Perception

To measure a participant's experience of their partner's allergen enactment, I asked participants to indicate how pleased or displeased they were about each of the four allergenic behaviors enacted by their partners using a seven-point scale (*1= very pleased; 7= very displeased*).

Social Allergen Compliance

The survey asked participants to indicate whether their partner had terminated the allergenic behavior upon request. For each of the four allergen types, participants were asked "*In an average week, how often have you asked your partner to stop engaging in uncouth behaviors (or inconsiderate behaviors and so on)*" and then presented with six response choices (*1= never; 2 = less than once a week; 3 = once a week; 4 = 2 to 3 times per week; 5 = 4 to 5 times per week; 6 = daily or almost daily*).

Finally, they were presented with the statement "*I have asked my partner to stop engaging in uncouth behaviors (or inconsiderate behavior and so on), and s/he did stop*

engaging in those behaviors" and asked to rate their agreement with a six-point scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree; 6= I have not asked my partner to stop engaging in these kinds of behaviors).

Additional Measures

Some questions on the survey dealt with topics that were ultimately superfluous in my final analysis including social allergen argument frequency and perceptions of serial arguing.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 predicted that allergens would be reported most frequently at moderate levels of relationship intimacy, indicating a curvilinear U-shaped relationship with intimacy. To test this hypothesis, I followed Cohen and Cohen's (1983) procedure for testing quadratic effects using hierarchical linear regression. I began by testing the linear effect of intimacy by entering it as the first step followed by intimacy squared as the test of the quadratic effect on the second step with each of the social allergens as the criterion variables. The significance of the change in R^2 on the second step serves as the test of the quadratic effect. The results indicate no linear effect of intimacy on uncouth behavior, $F(1, 183) = .93, p = .34$, but entering the quadratic term on the second step significantly improved the fit of the model, $R^2\Delta = .03, F\Delta(1, 182) = 6.05, p = .02$. In addition, the unstandardized coefficient ($b = -.20, p = .02$) is negative indicating an inverted U-shaped curvilinear association (Cohen & Cohen, 1984). An inspection of the graph in Figure 2 suggests that rather than being a fully inverted U shaped quadratic relationship, the report of uncouth behaviors appears to peak at upper levels of intimacy and decline slightly at the highest level of intimacy, but not to levels associated with the lowest levels of intimacy. Adding the quadratic term for equations predicting inconsiderate acts, $R^2\Delta = .02, F\Delta(1, 182) = 2.72, p = .10$, intrusive acts, $R^2\Delta = .00, F\Delta(1, 182) = 2.52, p = .11$, and norm violations, $R^2\Delta = .01, F\Delta(1, 182) = 2.67, p = .10$, produced no significant improvement in the fit of any of the regression models. No significant linear effects for intimacy were found in any of the models either. Thus, the hypothesis was partially supported.

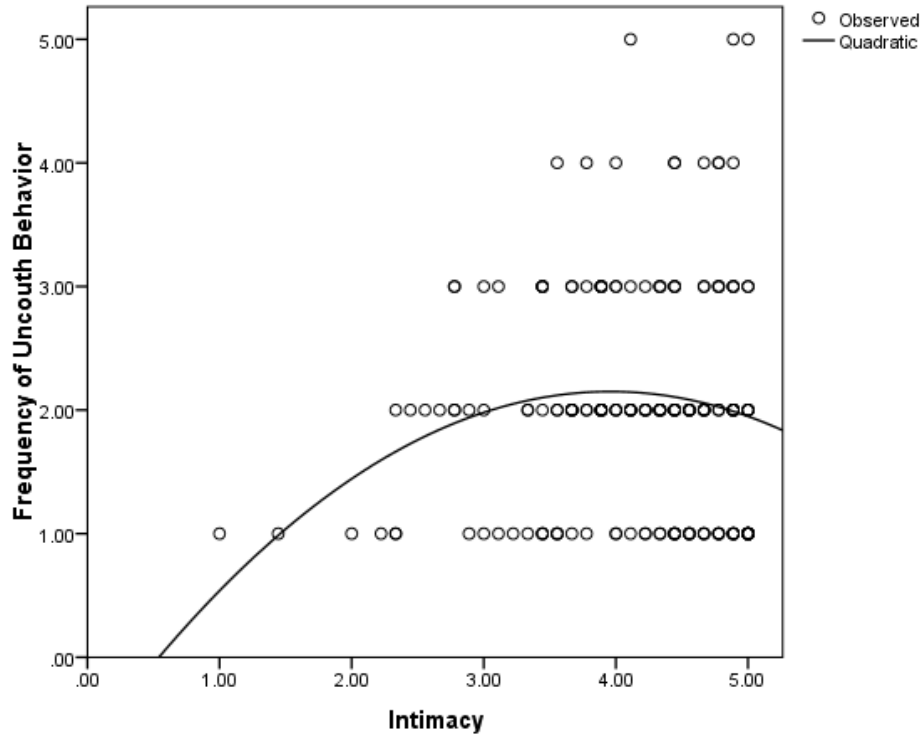


Figure 2: Graphic Representation of Quadratic Relationship between Uncouth Behaviors and Intimacy

Hypothesis 2 predicted that allergen perception would have a curvilinear relationship with intimacy. I tested H2 in the same way as H1: the negativity of allergen perceptions served as the criterion variable with the linear and quadratic effects of intimacy serving as predictors. The regression models predicting perceptions of uncouth behaviors, $R^2\Delta = .00$, $F\Delta(1,182) = .21$, $p = .65$, and the perceptions of norm violations, $R^2\Delta = .00$, $F\Delta(1, 182)=.26$, $p = .61$, were not significantly improved by the addition of the quadratic effect of intimacy (nor were there significant linear effects). The addition of the quadratic term significantly improved the fit of both the perception of inconsiderate acts,

$R^2\Delta=.03$, $F\Delta(1,182) = 5.33$, $p = .02$, and the perception of intrusive acts, $R^2\Delta = .02$, $F\Delta(1, 182) = 1.99$, $p = .05$, regression models. Inspection of the regression coefficients (perception of inconsiderate acts, $b = -.26$, perception of intrusive acts, $b = -.27$) indicate an inverted U-shaped curve which is consistent with my prediction. However, an examination of the graph in figures 3 and 4 indicate an asymptotic relationship in which the curve peaks at upper levels of intimacy but again does not appear to decline very rapidly at the highest level of intimacy. H2, therefore, was partially supported.

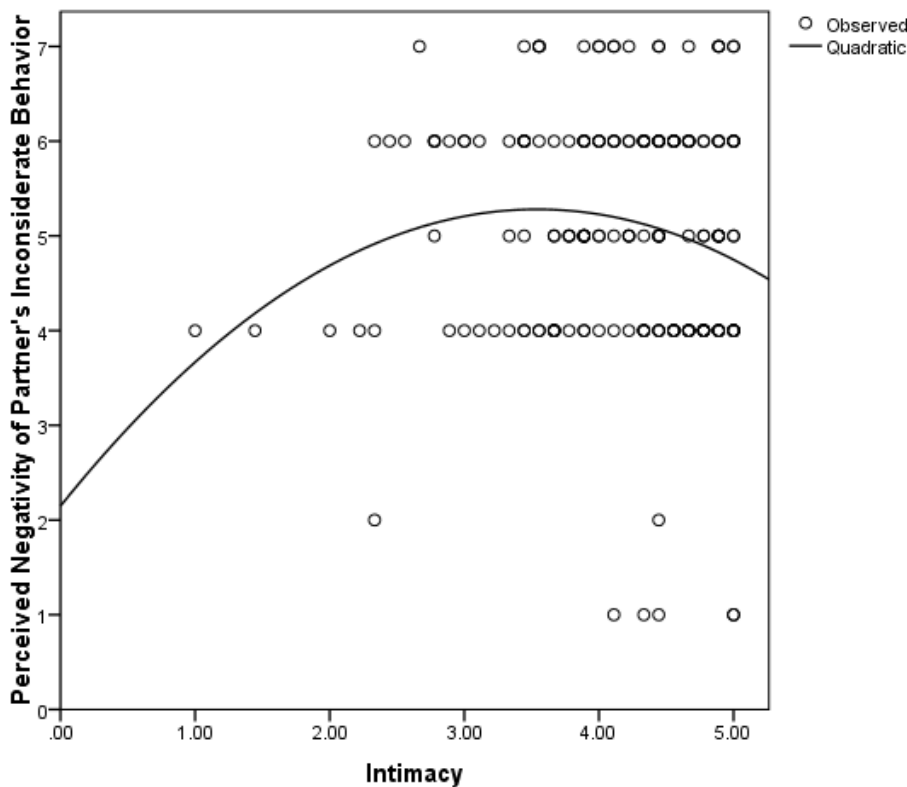


Figure 3: Graphic Depiction of the Quadratic Relationship between Perceived Negativity of Partner's Inconsiderate Behavior and Intimacy

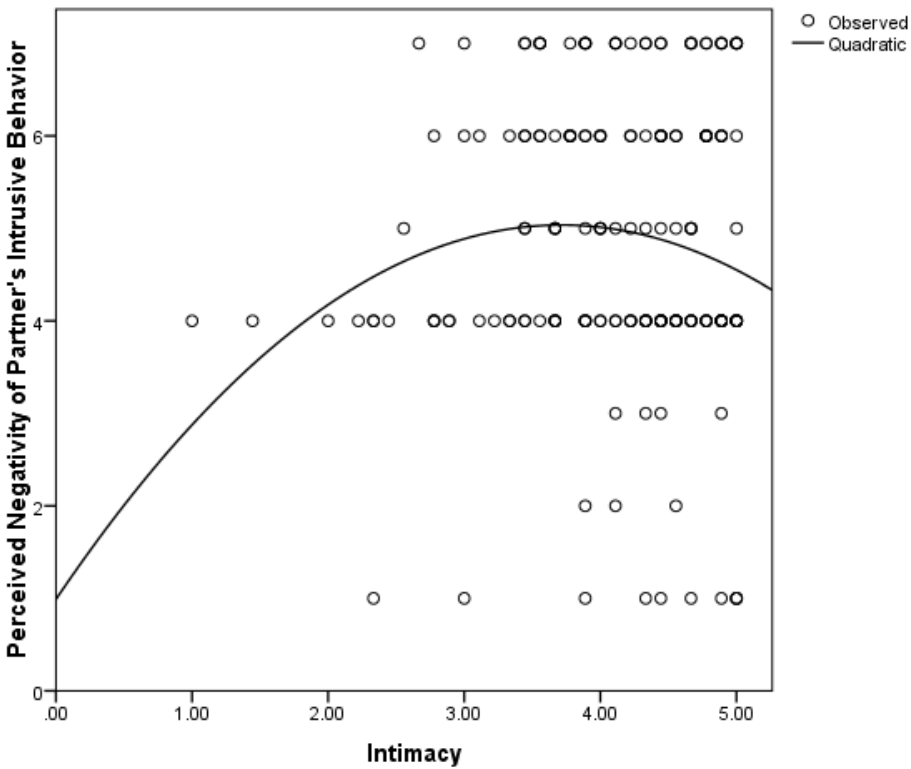


Figure 4: Graphic Depiction of the Quadratic Relationship between Perceived Negativity of a Partner’s Intrusive Behavior and Intimacy

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the frequency of social allergens would be positively associated with relationship turbulence. Pearson correlations for turbulence and each allergen are presented in Table 1. There were significant positive correlations between turbulence and all of the four allergies. This indicates that as all of the allergens increase, the experience of turbulence also increases. In order to determine the unique association between each allergen and relationship turbulence, I computed a regression analysis with turbulence as the criterion and all four allergens as predictors. The overall fit of the regression model was good, $R^2=.34$, $F(4, 179) = 22.93$, $p < .001$. Inconsiderate acts ($b = .26$,

$p < .001$), intrusive acts ($b = .27, p < .001$), and norm violations ($b = .17, p = .005$) all emerged as unique predictors of relationship turbulence. Only uncouth behaviors ($b = -.05, p = .48$) did not uniquely predict turbulence. Thus, H3 was also partially supported.

Table 1: Pearson Correlations for Turbulence and Allergens

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Turbulence	--	0.22 _a ***	0.49 _b ***	0.46 _b ***	0.41 _b ***
2. Uncouth behaviors		--	0.40	0.27	0.40
3. Inconsiderate behaviors			--	0.43	0.48
4. Intrusive behaviors				--	0.30
5. Norm violations					--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Note: Correlations with different subscripts in the first row differ at the $p < .05$ level using Williams T_2 statistic.

Research question 1 asked which allergen would be most related to perceptions of turbulence. Cronbach's alpha for turbulence was .95. In H3, I found significant positive correlations between turbulence and all of the four allergies, with the strongest correlation coming from inconsiderate acts. Williams' T_2 (e.g., Steiger, 1980) statistic was used to compute differences between correlations. Results indicate that the associations between turbulence and inconsiderate acts, norm violations, and intrusive acts were all significantly

stronger than the correlation between turbulence and uncouth behaviors (see Table 1). No other pairs of correlations were significantly different.

The second research question asked if persistence among each allergen was associated with turbulence. Results showed significant negative relationships between perceived relational turbulence and asking a partner to stop their allergenic behaviors: uncouth behaviors ($r = -.27, p < .001$), inconsiderate acts ($r = -.31, p < .001$), intrusive behaviors ($r = -.37, p < .001$), and norm violations ($r = -.38, p < .001$). The negative correlations mean that when the participant reported their partner not stopping the behaviors upon request, the more turbulence there was in the relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This paper set out to determine what relationship circumstances could lead to an increase in social allergies. I examined the possibility that the relationship turbulence model might help clarify the occurrence of social allergies and that I might add social allergens as a contributing factor to the experience of relationship turbulence.

The model of relationship turbulence depicts volatility during relationship changes, most notably in the progression from casual dating to serious courtship. Moderate levels of intimacy, partner interference, and relational uncertainty, according to the model, typify this relationship change. This paper argues that turbulent relationship changes causes people to notice, and be irritated by, a partner's annoying habits and interaction patterns to a greater degree when the couple reaches moderate levels of intimacy. It was hypothesized that social allergies, ultra-sensitive reactions to certain repeated behaviors, would surface more, and be perceived with more displeasure, in moderately intimate relationships.

Data from survey participants only partially confirmed this contention. The predicted inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship was found between relationship intimacy and reported frequency of a partner's uncouth tendencies. However, inconsiderate, intrusive, and norm violating behaviors did not reveal the same relationship (Hypothesis One). Nor did I find any linear relationships between intimacy and the reported frequency of social allergens. This suggests that only the more ill-mannered allergenic behaviors appear most often at mid-levels of intimacy in the relationship and are resolved or dissipate during the later, more intimate stages.

I also found an inverted U-shaped relationship between intimacy and negative perceptions of intrusive and inconsiderate behavior, but not for intimacy and uncouth or norm-violating behavior (Hypothesis Two). Again, no linear relationships emerged. Thus, couples at mid-levels of intimacy reported being most displeased with their partners' intrusive and inconsiderate acts.

In addition, the graphs in Figures 2, 3, and 4 indicate that reports of uncouth behavior, negative perceptions of intrusiveness, and negative perceptions of inconsiderateness peak at upper levels of intimacy and decline somewhat at the highest levels of intimacy but do not fully reverse themselves as expected. So these allergen occurrences still ultimately decrease as time goes on, but less rapidly than anticipated.

There was a significant positive association between the reports of allergen frequency and the reports of turbulence between partners (Hypothesis Three). All but uncouth behaviors appeared as unique predictors of turbulence, while the strongest predictor was inconsiderate acts (Hypothesis Three and Research Question One). It makes sense that the strongest predictor of turbulence is inconsiderate acts. If turbulence occurs because of interference in daily activities, a partner's inconsiderate behavior is what will be most noticed at this point and will be most associated with feelings of the other person encroaching on one's space. Additionally, when the individual reported their partner ceasing the behaviors upon request, the less turbulence there was in the relationship (Research Question Two). Therefore, individuals do report their relationship as more tumultuous, chaotic, overwhelming, and so on, when their partner repeated the allergenic behavior after requests to stop.

These findings in some ways mirror previous research, in some ways contradict earlier studies, and ultimately open up additional questions. My results did not show a distinct curvilinear relationship as predicted by the turbulence model, and there are several possible explanations.

Reaching Interdependence

First, it seems possible that some couples have yet to achieve interdependence, and that the sample includes a mix of individuals from two types of couples: those who have reached interdependence and those who have not.

The curvilinear relationship predicted in the turbulence model may only apply to couples who experience the *transformation of motivation* described by interdependence theory (e.g., Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001). The transformation involves cooperation and mutual coordination, and going from a singular individual-centered state of mind to an interdependent dyadic unit where an individual's outcome is influenced or defined by his/her partner. Without the ability to transform personal motivation to relationship motivation, a couple may ultimately end up struggling to resolve the allergenic issues or separating. In these situations, a partner's allergenic behavior can seem more irritating rather than less as the relationship progresses,

Couples who do experience the transformation of motivation can adapt emotionally, psychologically, or in some other way that diminishes the negativity of their partner's behavior over time. As partners grow more interdependent, offending behaviors that arise may be brought up with the offender and thus rectified, as opposed to just letting them fester. My sample likely includes both types of couples. A transformation of motivation

might be necessary for increased intimacy to allow for the resolution of these allergenic idiosyncrasies.

Issues with Intimacy

A second possible explanation is that intimacy does not clearly or consistently coincide with relationship length. A post hoc analysis of intimacy and relationship length showed no significant correlation ($r = .164, p = .18$). The average length of romantic relationships in the sample was 1.97 years ($SD = 1.8$), and they ranged from 6 months to 17 years. What could be happening is that intimacy increases rapidly in a relatively short period of time compared to the overall length of the relationship. This lack of a linear relationship could mean that small irritants can build more allergenic potential as time goes on, even though the relationship remains at a high level of intimacy.

Previous researchers of the turbulence model claim turbulence, partner interference, and relational uncertainty all decrease after time has passed and the couple has learned to resolve issues themselves. However, Solomon and Theiss (2008) found that partner interference increased more rapidly at moderate levels of intimacy but then remained relatively high during deeper levels of intimacy. This is parallel to my findings. Couples appear to report closer, more intimate relationships earlier on. However, they still seem unable to resolve the turbulence caused by increasing interdependence. Additionally, earlier research on social allergens finds a more linear relationship with allergens and relationship duration—these behaviors become more noticeable and more unpleasant over time (Cunningham et al., 1997; Cunningham et al., 2001). Incorporating intimacy into the

equation, and how it rapidly increases initially and levels off over time, may complement what appear to be contradictory findings.

Conversely, if the couple has not experienced a transformation of motivation as noted above, intimacy could even decrease after the honeymoon phase ends or after a period of time, causing a decrease in allergen frequency. Assuming the relationship survives the transition and reaches a deeper level of intimacy and commitment, couples can learn to resolve issues cooperatively.

A third explanation is a possible lack of relationships with enough allergens. Previous studies (e.g. Cunningham et al., 2005) found that uncouth habits were the most common forms of allergens in couples. My results show uncouth behaviors as the only allergen that conforms to a curvilinear relationship with intimacy. It may be possible that the participants in my sample did not experience—or did not report—the other allergens enough to reveal this desired association with intimacy. Prior studies also observed intrusive acts as being the most negatively perceived. My findings also show partners perceive intrusive acts as well as inconsiderate acts with negativity during mid-level intimacy. Perhaps the other allergens were not present enough in the couples surveyed to be accurately reflected in the results.

The waning of passionate romance and the increasingly lax impression management—normally the means by which social allergies develop (Cunningham et al., 2005)—may also be characteristic of turbulence. Perhaps disenchantment materializes during transitions from casual dating to serious dating when turbulence is virtually expected. As the thrill and passion of being in a new relationship dwindles, couples can

ultimately transition to a more stable, interdependent relationship. However, through this oftentimes unstable process, social allergies flare up. The sample might be capturing more couples still undergoing this process.

Final Thoughts

During non-turbulent periods in the relationship, allergy development may be avoided by addressing the offending behavior promptly and effectively. In fact, my study found that relationships in which partners stop engaging in allergenic behaviors after being asked to had less turbulence. Roloff and Reznik (2008) put forth several more suggestions: avoid the automatic impulse at the beginning to be negative and hostile; discuss the issues, the allergens, or other relational troubles before an argument arises again, when the couple is less likely to become upset; find more constructive ways to express frustration; and finally, determine which specific behaviors are bothersome and try to break up the pattern. If an irritating behavior is not successfully corrected, it could then form into a full-blown allergy for the other partner, which could be worsened by periods of relational turbulence. If an annoying behavior flares up during a non-transitional period, partners may correct the offense with more ease and effectiveness than would allow when treating a flare-up during turbulence. Allergy progression may also depend more on how one handles an allergen with a partner during transitions, than on the actual frequency of allergen enactment.

Although researchers have examined the link between reporting social allergens and negative relationship perceptions, no one has looked at how repeated arguments about social allergens affect relationships. All in all, I found uncouth acts as well as negativity

toward intrusive and inconsiderate behaviors were reported more at moderate levels of intimacy.

Immediate implications are that there will be some increase in reactivity and inclinations for annoyance by a peculiar behavior, especially if that behavior persists, during turbulence phases of a relationship. An irritating behavior or situation can cause emotions that are more negative and hurtful during times of turmoil (Knobloch et al., 2007; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Theiss & Solomon, 2006).

Studying the negative communicative strategies of interpersonal relationships is beneficial to the study of communication as a whole. Recognizing irritating habits as just minor idiosyncrasies can be addressed and resolved. Cognizance of instability during relationship transitions and fluctuating intimacy might lessen reactivity and volatility. By analyzing turbulence and social allergens, individuals might learn to smooth over unwanted rough patches in a relationship.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study has important implications for understanding social allergens and the relationship turbulence model, results should be interpreted with some caution. First, some of my measures were condensed in order to avoid overwhelming the participants with the amount of questions. I measured allergies in the survey on a macro scale—excluding the full explanations of each allergen type and giving only a definition and several examples. If survey length were not a concern, researchers can reduce the possibility of mistakenly overlapping allergen categories by providing numerous specific questions about each allergen. Future research may benefit from using this approach, one

more original to the studies done by Cunningham and his associates, or by conducting a small preliminary method study to determine if the macro approach can truthfully serve as a proxy for the full blown scales. Second, the composite measure of intimacy in my study included a Love Scale and a Closeness Scale. Solomon and Knobloch's (2004) research incorporated a Commitment Scale as a third dimension. In the future, studies can measure the commitment and long-term orientation of individuals in relationships.

Third, the participants were largely young and dating. It is likely that transitions to what seem like intimate relationships at the age of 20 have a different character than transitions to marriage and family life. It is possible that social allergens and other contributions to relationship turbulence take on a different character when the stakes are that much higher. Then again, the average age of prior participants in both relational turbulence studies and social allergy studies was 20 years old, which is no different than mine. Still, future research would benefit from looking at older, more committed, and more culturally diverse samples.

**APPENDIX A:
UCF IRB APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Naomi W. Hochstadt and Co-PI: Harry Weger**

Date: **November 16, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/16/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: When Social Allergies Flare Up in Close Relationships: A
Relational Turbulence Model Explanation
Investigator: Naomi W Hochstadt
IRB Number: SBE-12-08860
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 11/16/2012 02:28:05 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

**APPENDIX B:
QUALTRICS SURVEY**

When Social Allergies Flare Up in Close Relationships
Explanation of Research

Principal Investigator: Naomi Hochstadt

Faculty Supervisor: Harry Weger, Jr., PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you. The purpose of this study is to investigate how individuals communicate in romantic relationships and in friendships between people of the opposite sex. The data collected from this survey will help elucidate the effects of certain behaviors on partners. You will be asked to answer questions on a survey administered on a computer using the online survey software, Qualtrics. Your responsibility is to respond to each question as honestly as you can. Data collection will end one year from start of the study. You will complete this survey outside of class. You may use a computer on campus or your personal computer. We expect that you will be in this research study for about 20 minutes, the length of time it will take to complete the survey. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to Naomi Hochstadt, Graduate Student, Communication MA Program, College of Sciences, (954) 560-5300 or by email at NHochstadt@knights.ucf.edu, or Dr. Weger, Faculty Supervisor, Nicholson School of Communication, (407) 823-2859 or by email at Harry.Weger@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

By clicking "agree" below, you consent to participate in this research study, and you confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

Agree



Survey Completion
0% 100%

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study. Please do your best to answer all the questions even though some questions might seem repetitive or strange. We appreciate your help in learning more about communication in different types of relationships.

Please think of either a current romantic relationship or about a friendship you have with a person of the opposite sex. Please think about this person and your relationship with this person as you complete the survey. To begin, please define the status of the relationship you are reporting on:

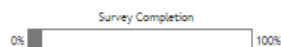
- Casually dating (going out on a regular basis but free to date others)
- Dating exclusively (going out on a regular basis and both agree not to date others)
- Engaged
- Married
- Friends-with-benefits (sexual relationship with no commitment beyond friendship)
- We are friends only with no romantic relationship

About how long (in years - if less than a year, decimals are OK) have you been friends, or in a romantic relationship, with this person?

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the relationship between you and your current partner:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would do anything for my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could never be with my partner, I would feel miserable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel responsible for my partner's well-being.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would greatly enjoy being confided in by my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It would be hard for me to get along without my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with this person is very close.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very connected to this person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can run a mile in under one minute.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with my partner is not very close.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with this person is very intimate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>



Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current partner:

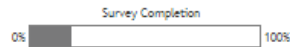
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My partner interferes with the plans I make.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner interferes with my plans to attend parties or other social events.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner interferes with the amount of time I spend with my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I get hungry or thirsty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner interferes with the things I need to do each day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner disrupts my daily routine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My person interferes with how much time I devote to my school work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner interferes with whether I achieve the goals I set for myself (e.g., goals for exercise, diet, studying, entertainment).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following phrases about your current relationship:

At the present time, this relationship is...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Turbulent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chaotic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In turmoil	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tumultuous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hectic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frenzied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overwhelming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stressful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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We would now like to ask you about some unpleasant or annoying behaviors that friends and romantic partners sometimes engage in.

We will define an "uncouth behavior" as rude or impolite behavior that is often unintentional and not personally directed toward you. Examples include belching noisily, showing a lack of concern for hygiene, using a lot of profanity, wearing old tattered, or soiled clothing, using poor manners, and so on.

In an average week, about how often does your partner engage in uncouth behaviors?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Often
- Almost constantly

How do you feel about your partner's uncouth behaviors?

- Very Displeased
- Displeased
- Somewhat Displeased
- Neutral
- Somewhat Pleased
- Pleased
- Very Pleased

In an average week, how often have you argued about uncouth behaviors?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

In an average week, how often have you asked your partner to stop engaging in uncouth behaviors?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

I have asked my partner to stop engaging in uncouth behaviors, and s/he did stop engaging in those behaviors.

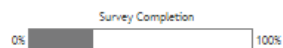
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I have not asked my partner to stop engaging in these kinds of behaviors

A serial argument occurs when individuals argue, or engage in conflict, about the same topic at least twice (but possibly more times) over the entire time you have been together.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that uncouth behaviors have become the topic of a serial argument?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

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Next we would like to ask about inconsiderate behaviors. We will define an "inconsiderate act" as selfish or insensitive behavior that is often not intentional but is personally imposing. Examples include bothering you about your appearance, taking too many things when traveling, keeping you out shopping too long, expressing excessive needs for emotional support, being late and not calling to let you know, and so on.

In an average week, about how often does your partner engage in inconsiderate acts?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Often
- Almost constantly

How do you feel about your partner's inconsiderate acts?

- Very Displeased
- Displeased
- Somewhat Displeased
- Neutral
- Somewhat Pleased
- Pleased
- Very Pleased

In an average week, how often have you argued about inconsiderate acts?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

In an average week, how often have you asked your partner to stop engaging in inconsiderate acts?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

I have asked my partner to stop engaging in inconsiderate behaviors, and s/he did stop engaging in those behaviors.

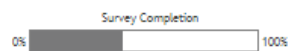
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I have not asked my partner to stop engaging in these kinds of behaviors

A serial argument occurs when individuals argue, or engage in conflict, about the same topic at least twice (but possibly more times) over the entire time you have been together.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that inconsiderate acts have become the topic of a serial argument?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

>>



Next we want to know about intrusive behaviors. We will define an "intrusive behavior" as interfering or meddlesome behavior that is often intentional and personally directed toward you. Examples include being overly demanding, complaining about things that happened in the past, being rude, threatening, insulting, impolite, or disrespectful to you.

In an average week, about how often does your partner engage in intrusive behaviors?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Often
- Almost constantly

How do you feel about your partner's intrusive behaviors?

- Very Displeased
- Displeased
- Somewhat Displeased
- Neutral
- Somewhat Pleased
- Pleased
- Very Pleased

In an average week, how often have you argued about intrusive behaviors?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

In an average week, how often have you asked your partner to stop engaging in intrusive behaviors?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

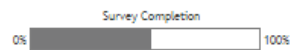
I have asked my partner to stop engaging in intrusive behaviors, and s/he did stop engaging in those behaviors.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I have not asked my partner to stop engaging in these kinds of behaviors

A serial argument occurs when individuals argue, or engage in conflict, about the same topic at least twice (but possibly more times) over the entire time you have been together.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that intrusive behaviors have become the topic of a serial argument?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



Finally we want to ask you about norm violations. We will define a "norm violation" as behavior that breaks common social customs. The behavior is often intentional but not personally directed toward you. Examples include not working hard at a job or school, gambling, using/abusing drugs, excessive drinking, flirting with people s/he shouldn't, breaking promises, being untruthful, and so on.

In an average week, about how often does your partner engage in norm violations?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Often
- Almost constantly

How do you feel about your partner's norm violations?

- Very Displeased
- Displeased
- Somewhat Displeased
- Neutral
- Somewhat Pleased
- Pleased
- Very Pleased

In an average week, how often have you argued about norm violations?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

In an average week, how often have you asked your partner to stop engaging in norm violations?

- Never
- Less than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- 4-5 Times a Week
- Daily or Almost Daily

I have asked my partner to stop engaging in norm violations, and s/he did stop engaging in those behaviors.

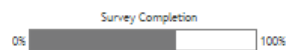
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I have not asked my partner to stop engaging in these kinds of behaviors

A serial argument occurs when individuals argue, or engage in conflict, about the same topic at least twice (but possibly more times) over the entire time you have been together.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that norm violations have become the topic of a serial argument?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

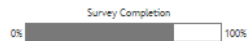
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We would like to know how certain you are about some aspects of your relationship. First, indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Next, indicate how certain or uncertain you are about whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Do you agree or disagree with the statement?		How confident are you about your answer?			
	Agree	Disagree	Totally Certain	Somewhat Certain	Somewhat Uncertain	Totally Uncertain
I know the definition of this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whether or not my partner and I feel the same way about each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whether or not my partner and I will stay together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner and I would describe this relationship the same way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the future of the relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what we can or cannot say to each other in this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the boundaries for appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior in this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whether or not this relationship will end soon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how my partner and I view this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whether or not my partner likes me as much as I like him or her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the current status of this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whether or not this is a romantic or platonic relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the norms for this relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make my own clothes and shoes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know where this relationship is going.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how I can and cannot behave around my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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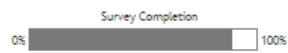
Last few questions! Please indicate you and your partner's gender:

	Male	Female	Prefer not to answer
I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How old are you in years?

What is your ethnicity?

- White/Caucasian
- African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Caribbean Islander
- Other



Thank you very much for completing the survey! We need your name so we know to whom we should give extra credit, if your instructor has agreed to give extra credit for completing the previous survey. This survey is COMPLETELY SEPARATE from the last one so your name cannot be matched to the data you provided.

In the space below, please write your LAST name:

In the space below, please write your FIRST name:

In the space below, please write the LAST name of your instructor:



We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

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