

Trait and goal similarity and discrepancy in romantic couples

Jacob S. Gray and Jennifer V. Coons
University of California, Riverside



INTRODUCTION

- Romantic partners tend to be similar on a variety of psychological attributes (Buss, 1985)
- Similarity in personality traits tend to be associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Gaunt, 2006)
- The correlates of personal goal similarity are less known
- The relationship between similarity in traits and goals is also unknown

METHOD & PARTICIPANTS

- 125 undergraduates at the University of California, Riverside were recruited
- 125 romantic partners were then recruited for the study
- Traits were assessed using the BFI-2 (Soto & John, 2016)
- Personal goals were assessed using the 65-item Personal Goals Questionnaire (Reisz, Boudreaux, & Ozer, 2013)
- Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988)
- Scores were centered before calculating profile correlations
- Profile correlations were created for the 15 facets of the BFI-II and the 65 goals of the PGQ
- Mean differences between couple members were calculated, then compared to randomize mean differences using a paired samples t-test

RESULTS

- Similarity in traits and goals were significantly related ($r=.23$, 95% CI[.06, .39])
- Personal goal similarity was not related to relationship satisfaction for men or women
- Trait similarity was related to relationship satisfaction for men but not for women
- Personal goal discrepancy was also not related to relationship satisfaction
- Trait discrepancy was related to relationship satisfaction for women but not for men

RESULTS (Continued)

Goal	Observed Mean Difference	Randomized Mean Difference	t-value	d
Be more organized	1.10	1.20	.79	.10
Get more sleep	1.20	1.22	.14	.02
Enjoy thrilling activities	1.21	1.79	4.56***	.59
Achieve meaningful career goal	.98	1.03	.35	.05
Be more self-sufficient	.93	.98	.44	.06
Get married	1.27	1.60	2.33*	.30
Do good for my community	1.18	1.56	2.99**	.39
Be less dependent or influence by others	1.31	1.52	1.35	.17
Observe the tenets of my religion	1.07	1.69	3.99***	.52
End romantic relationship	.64	.66	.13	.02
Maintain or improve romantic relationship	.68	.78	1.01	.13
Find a romantic partner	1.16	1.19	-.16	.02
Have children	1.28	1.43	.88	.11
Improve relationship with friends	1.03	1.20	1.50	.19
Experience spiritual growth	1.23	1.74	3.61***	.47
Do things for myself	1.03	1.07	.31	.04
Travel to new places	1.46	1.44	-.14	-.02
Do well in school	.73	.72	-.07	-.01
Reduce stress in my life	1.13	1.15	.14	.02
Be less shy, more talkative	1.45	1.46	.07	.01
Pursue financially lucrative career	1.21	1.30	.67	.09
Be more assertive or self-confident	1.22	1.25	.22	.03
Participate in social community	1.18	1.34	1.26	.16
Find direction or meaning in life	1.32	1.63	1.99*	.26
Maintain or strengthen religious beliefs	1.21	1.60	2.62**	.34
Help romantic partner	.76	.92	1.41	.18

CONTACT

For more information please email Jacob Gray at jgray009@ucr.edu

RESULTS (Continued)

Trait	Observed Difference	Randomized Difference	t-value	d effect size
Assertiveness	.85	.88	.35	.04
Sociability	1.09	1.13	.35	.04
Energy	.80	.85	.71	.09
Compassion	.86	.80	-.85	.11
Respectfulness	.74	.77	.42	.05
Trust	.83	.89	.65	.08
Organization	1.10	1.04	-.83	.11
Productiveness	.80	.93	1.80 ⁺	.23
Responsibility	.53	.51	-.35	.04
Depression	1.00	1.05	.54	.07
Emotional Volatility	1.09	1.00	-.98	.13
Anxiety	.94	.99	.59	.08
Curiosity	.54	.59	.88	.11
Aesthetic Sensitivity	.93	1.03	1.01	.13
Imagination	.90	.95	.51	.07

CONCLUSION

- There was no similarity in personality traits, and little in personal goals
- Significant similarity in spiritual/religious goals
- Similarity in personal goals did not predict relationship satisfaction
- Similarity in traits was only weakly related to relationship satisfaction

REFERENCES

- Buss, D. M. (1985). Human mate selection: Opposites are sometimes said to attract, but in fact we are likely to marry someone who is similar to us in almost every variable. *American Scientist*, 73(1), 47-51.
- Gaunt, R. (2006). Couple similarity and marital satisfaction: Are similar spouses happier?. *Journal of Personality*, 74(5), 1401-1420.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 93-98.
- Reisz, Z., Boudreaux, M. J., & Ozer, D. J. (2013). Personality traits and the prediction of personal goals. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55(6), 699-704.
- Soto, C. J., & John, O. P. (2016). The Next Big Five Inventory (BFI-2): Developing and Assessing a Hierarchical Model With 15 Facets to Enhance Bandwidth, Fidelity, and Predictive Power.