



Trait and goal similarity and discrepancy in romantic couples[☆]



Jacob S. Gray^{*}, Jennifer V. Coons

University of California, Riverside, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 September 2016
Received in revised form 9 November 2016
Accepted 10 November 2016
Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Similarity
Personal goals
Personality traits
Relationship satisfaction
Discrepancy

ABSTRACT

Past research has suggested that romantic partners tend to be more similar than expected by chance and similarity in certain personality variables has been associated with relationship satisfaction. The present study investigated the existence of similarity and the association of similarity among romantic partners with relationship satisfaction ($N = 125$ couples). Couples who were similar in traits also showed higher levels of similarity in personal goals. Similarity and discrepancy in personality traits were associated with relationship satisfaction in females (positively) and males (negatively) respectively. Similarity and discrepancy in personal goals were not significantly related to relationship satisfaction. Facets of the Big Five assessed did not show any evidence of greater or lesser discrepancy than would be expected by chance. Personal goals that related to religion and spirituality showed lower levels of discrepancy than by chance, but the results were inconsistent for other personal goals. Implications for relationship satisfaction are discussed.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

1. Introduction

The importance of social relationships has led to researchers to consider the role personality plays in affecting intimate relationships. The personality traits of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness have been consistently related to romantic relationship satisfaction (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). Setting intimacy goals has also been associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). The interdependence created by studying romantic relationships has led to research not only on how one's own personality variables, but how the personality of one's partner influences one's own relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010). This dyadic approach to personality has led researchers to examine the association that personality similarity and discrepancy have with relationship outcomes. The present study adds to the extant literature by utilizing both traits and goals in the study of dyadic similarity, discrepancy, and relationship satisfaction.

1.1. Similarity and relationship satisfaction

The importance of individual effects of personality traits on social relationships have been studied in depth (i.e. Dyrenforth et al., 2010; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). The traits of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism have been shown to have the most robust relationship with relationship satisfaction (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010). Relationship researchers have begun to expand the

focus of relationship research beyond the effect the individual has on relationship outcomes and have started to consider the dyadic effects personality has on relationship outcomes. One such method by which personality at the dyad level has been examined as a predictor of relationship satisfaction has been similarity between partners.

Previous research has shown there is some degree of similarity on personality variables for the members of a romantic couple. Married couples tend to be more similar than chance on the Neuroticism, Psychoticism, and Lie subscales of Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (Russell & Wells, 1991). Discrepancy in Extraversion and Psychoticism also predicts less satisfying marriages (Russell & Wells, 1991). There is also a significant relationship between similarity on the Big Five personality traits and marital satisfaction (Gaunt, 2006). Luo et al. (2008) found similar results in their study of married couples. Profile correlations of participants' personality traits positively predicted marital satisfaction of both husbands and wives, however, the absolute difference score did not predict marital satisfaction. Considering past research on personality similarity and relationship satisfaction, we expected that not only would couples show greater than chance similarity on traits, but that this similarity would predict relationship satisfaction.

The content and similarity of personal goals have been examined as predictors of relationship functioning, albeit to a lesser degree than traits. Intimacy goals tend to not be related across romantic partners (Sanderson & Evans, 2001). However, some research has found that couples tend to be more similar than chance in their intimacy goals, but show no evidence of similarity in identity goals (Zimmer-Gembeck, Arnhold, & Connolly, 2014). Given mixed results concerning the similarity of personal goals among dating couples, one purpose of the present study was to identify which, if any, goals show evidence of similarity in romantic couples.

[☆] The authors would like to thank Daniel J. Ozer for his help in data collection. The authors declare no conflict of interest with the results reported in this study.

^{*} Corresponding author at: 900 University Ave., Riverside, CA 92521, United States.
E-mail address: jgray009@ucr.edu (J.S. Gray).

Past research on the relationship between goal similarity and relationship outcomes has been lacking, but there is reason to think that goal similarity would be related to relationship satisfaction. First, similarity is expected to occur across a wide range of different variables (i.e. personal values; Buss, 1985). Similarity between partners, including similarity on personality variables, has been shown to have consequences for relationship functioning (Luo et al., 2008). Second, the perception that one's partners share similar goals is positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Avivi, Laurenceau, & Carver, 2009) and being able to engage in activities that support the goals of both partners has been associated with greater amounts of closeness to one's partner (Gere, Schimmack, Pinkus, & Lockwood, 2011).

1.2. Similarity and discrepancy

The methods used to assess how similar two members of a dyad are have fallen broadly into the two categories of similarity and discrepancy. Similarity between two members of a dyad usually proceeds with an assessment of profile correlations, where a correlation is calculated for each couple on the target variable. Discrepancy is often assessed as difference scores (or the absolute value) between the two members on the target variable. What makes these two approaches different lies in what the "null" value of zero represents. Measures of similarity (such as a profile correlation) begin with the assumption that the members of the dyad have no amount of similarity (an $r = 0.00$) and increases based on the similarity of the two members (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Measures of discrepancy begins with the assumption of perfect similarity (a difference score of zero) and assess the extent to which a given dyad deviates from this assumed value.

The forms of measurement are also related to the issue of how similarity is conceptualized. Following Cronbach and Gleser's (1953) distinction, the measures of similarity and discrepancy mentioned assess different facets of profile similarity. Similarity measures are typically influenced by the shape of the profile. Similarity in shape indicates whether the two dyad members "rise and fall" together (i.e. high on Sociability and low on Organization, etc.). The discrepancy measure reflects differences in the level of a given variable. Differences in level reflect the raw distance between two scores on the target variable. The absolute value is typically used since which member is higher on the target variable is not of particular interest (Griffin, Murray, & Gonzalez, 1999).

1.3. Present study

The present study utilized a sample of romantic couples in which at least one member was an undergraduate university student. Both similarity and discrepancy measures were used in the present study for traits and goals. Consideration of previous literature has led to four specific research questions. First we examined the degree to which trait and goal similarity in romantic couples are related. Considering past research that has identified a weak relationship between traits and goals (Reisz, Boudreaux, & Ozer, 2013; Roberts & Robins, 2000) a strong correlation between trait and goal similarity was not expected. Second, we examined the extent profile similarity for both goals and traits are related to relationship satisfaction. The third research question involved the extent to which discrepancy scores for goals and traits are related to relationship satisfaction. Finally, we examined which traits and goals, if any, were more similar among romantic partners than would be expected by chance.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of both members of a heterosexual dating couple used in a previous study (see Study Three in Gray & Ozer, in preparation; $N = 125$ couples). One member of the couple was

recruited as part of a class requirement at a Southern California university. Participants also consented to and provided the contact information of their current romantic partner. The romantic partner was then contacted to complete the same survey. One member of the couple received course credit while the other member of the couple received \$15 for participation. The mean age of the sample was 19.46 ($SD = 1.96$ years). As the sample was restricted to heterosexual couples, there are an equal number of males and females that participated in the study. The mean length of relationship was 1.56 years ($SD = 1.44$ years). The majority of participants identified as Asian-American (44%) or Latino/a-American (33.5%) and the remainder identified as European-American (13.5%) or were of another ethnicity/declined to state (9.5%).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Personal Goals Questionnaire

To assess participants' goals, the Personal Goals Questionnaire (PGQ) was used. The PGQ consists of 65 personal goals such as "Be more self-sufficient", "Get married", and "Observe the tenets of my religion." Participants rate on a five-point scale the extent to which they value each goal, from "Not of my goals currently" to "Among my most important goals currently" (Stauner, Stimson, & Ozer, 2009).

2.2.2. BFI-II

To assess personality traits the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2) was used. The BFI-2 consists of 60 personality items to assess the Big Five and the more specific facets (Soto & John, 2016). The facets are "Sociability", "Assertiveness", and "Energy Level" for Extraversion; "Compassion", "Respectfulness", and "Trust" for Agreeableness; "Intellectual Curiosity", "Aesthetic Sensitivity", and "Creative Imagination" for Openness to Experience; "Emotional Volatility", "Anxiety", and "Depression" for Neuroticism; and "Productiveness", "Organization", and "Responsibility" for Conscientiousness. The facets of the BFI-2 form the unit of the present analysis. Reliabilities for the facets range from $\alpha = 0.65$ for Assertiveness to $\alpha = 0.87$ for Productiveness.

2.2.3. Relationship Assessment Scale

Relationship satisfaction was assessed with the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS assesses relationship satisfaction with seven items on a five-point scale with items such as "My partner meets my needs well" ($\alpha = 0.74$). Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction with one's relationship.

2.3. Assessing similarity and discrepancy

Similarity and discrepancy are often assessed using different methodologies such as profile correlation (similarity) and absolute difference scores (discrepancy). Profile correlations were created for each couple for both the 65 items of the PGQ and the 60 items of the BFI-2. The profile correlations represented the measure of similarity between couples. Discrepancy was assessed using the methodology of difference scores. The absolute value of difference scores was computed for each of the 65 goals of the PGQ, and the 15 facets of the BFI-2. A mean difference score was calculated for each couple and this was the aggregate discrepancy score used for each couple.

An analytic issue arose when assessing which goals are systematically most or least dissimilar among the members of the romantic couple. For discrepancy the typical null value of zero represents no discrepancy among the members of a couple. This means that testing against zero in this case does not represent testing against chance values. A more useful comparison value than zero is what difference score would be expected if there was no systematic discrepancy occurring. For this reason, pseudo-couples were created that paired a male and female who were not in a relationship, and this pairing was done until every male-female combination was exhausted (Corsini, 1956). This randomized difference would represent the "chance" value of discrepancy, and significant

differences from this value would be indicative of greater or lesser discrepancy than would be expected by chance. Only one gender was randomly assigned to ensure that each person would be paired with a member of the opposite sex. This technique was performed for both the trait and goal difference scores.

3. Results

3.1. Trait and goal similarity

Profile correlations were calculated for the 65 items of the PGQ and the 60 items of the BFI-2. To eliminate the influence of normativeness on profile scores, the mean for each item of the BFI-II and the PGQ were subtracted from each score (Kenny & Acitelli, 1994). The mean profile correlation for goals was $r = 0.08$ ($SD = 0.18$), the mean profile correlation for traits was slightly lower, mean $r = -0.03$ ($SD = 0.32$). There was a significant association between the profile scores for goals and for traits ($r = 0.23$, 95% CI[0.06, 0.39], $p = 0.0099$). This indicates that couples who have similar goals also show similarity in their traits as well. Profile correlations of goals was not significantly related to relationship satisfaction for males ($r = 0.04$, 95% CI[−0.14, 0.24], $p = 0.66$) or females ($r = 0.11$, 95% CI[−0.07, 0.28], $p = 0.22$). Profile similarity in traits was also not related to relationship satisfaction for males ($r = 0.01$, 95% CI[−0.17, 0.19], $p = 0.91$), but was significantly related to relationship satisfaction for females ($r = 0.24$, 95% CI[0.07, 0.40], $p = 0.0070$). The correlation between goal similarity and relationship satisfaction was significantly greater for females than males (95% confidence intervals for the difference between correlations: [0.04, 0.42]). Similarity was not related to the average age of couple members or the length of the relationship (p 's > 0.33).

A separate subgroup of goals was created based on their relevance to romantic relationships. The goals “Get married”, “Improve my romantic relationship”, “End a romantic relationship”, “Find a romantic partner”, and “Help my romantic partner” were used as relationship relevant goals. The average profile correlation was only slightly for relationship goals ($M = 0.12$, $SD = 0.54$). This subset of romantic goals was also not associated with relationship satisfaction in males ($r = 0.12$, $p = 0.18$) or females ($r = 0.14$, $p = 0.12$).

3.2. Trait and goal discrepancy

Table 1 shows the results of the comparison between observed difference scores and randomized difference scores. The mean difference score across all 65 goals was $M = 1.16$, $SD = 0.28$. The mean randomized difference score was slightly higher, $M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.26$. A paired samples t -test on the 65 goals revealed that across all goals, the observed difference scores tended to be lower than the randomized scores, $t(64) = 5.39$, $p < 0.0001$. Comparing the observed difference with randomized difference scores for each goal allowed the analysis of which goals demonstrated significantly higher or lower levels of similarity. The fourth column of Table 1 shows the significance test of the difference between observed mean difference scores and randomized difference scores. Religious goals showed the most consistent differences between the observed and randomized scores. The goals “Observe the tenets of my religion”, “Experience spiritual growth”, and “Maintain or strengthen religious beliefs” all showed significantly lower levels of discrepancy than would be expected by chance. Also of note, the goal “Get married” showed significantly lower mean levels of discrepancy than expected by chance. There were no goals in which discrepancy was greater for couples than would be expected by chance.

Table 2 shows the results of comparing observed difference scores from the facets of the BFI-2 with randomized scores. The mean difference scores on the BFI-2 facets was $M = 0.87$ ($SD = 0.26$). The mean randomized difference was $M = 0.89$ ($SD = 0.17$). There were no significant differences between the observed mean difference scores and the randomized difference scores ($t(14) = 0.87$, $p = 0.39$). There was a

marginal difference between observed and random scores for Productivity ($t(124) = 1.80$, $p = 0.074$). Like the discrepancy in goals, there were no traits that were significantly more dissimilar than expected by chance. As with similarity, discrepancy was not related to relationship length and age of couple members (p 's > 0.20).

Unlike the profile scores, there was not a significant relationship between the mean difference scores of traits and goals ($r = 0.12$, 95% CI[−0.06, 0.30], $p = 0.18$). Mean difference scores were highly negatively related to profile scores for both goals ($r = -0.67$, 95% CI[−0.66, −0.41], $p < 0.0001$) and personality traits ($r = -0.62$, 95% CI[−0.72, −0.49], $p < 0.0001$). These strong correlations support the intuitive notion that goal similarity and discrepancy have a strong negative relationship to one another, although not to the extent that would suggest singularity between the two concepts (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). There was not a significant correlation between the profile scores for goals and the mean difference scores on the BFI-2 ($r = 0.03$, 95% CI[−0.15, 0.21], $p = 0.73$). However the mean difference scores on goals and profile scores of personality traits showed a negative, significant correlation ($r = -0.22$, 95% CI[−0.39, −0.04], $p = 0.017$). The average difference scores for the PGQ were not related to relationship satisfaction for either males ($r = 0.00$, 95% CI[−0.18, 0.18], $p = 0.99$) or females ($r = -0.07$, 95% CI[−0.25, 0.11], $p = 0.45$). Finally, correlations between relationship satisfaction and the average mean difference scores for the BFI-2 scores were trending towards significance for males ($r = 0.18$, 95% CI[0.00, 0.35], $p = 0.056$) but not females ($r = 0.04$, 95% CI[−0.14, 0.22], $p = 0.65$).

The same subset of relationship relevant goals that were used for profile correlations were also used to create discrepancy scores. The average discrepancy score for this subset of goals was $M = 0.92$, $SD = 0.26$. Mean discrepancy levels for this subset of goals was also not significantly related to relationship satisfaction in males ($r = 0.07$, $p = 0.43$) or females ($r = 0.05$, $p = 0.58$).

4. Discussion

The present research sought to extend current research on personality similarity in romantic couples. Couples who were similar in personality traits also tended to be similar in the goals they value. Trait similarity was related to relationship satisfaction for females, but not for males. Goal similarity was not related to relationship satisfaction. Somewhat surprisingly, couples were no less discrepant than chance in their personality traits. Couples did show similarity in certain goals, most notably goals related to religion and spirituality. Like similarity, there were no effects of goal discrepancy on relationship satisfaction and only marginal effects of discrepant traits were found.

The present study builds on previous research concerning similarity in romantic relationships in a number of ways. First, there has been little research on which goals show greater levels of similarity than would be expected by chance. Previous research has focused on similarity concerning relationship specific goals (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2014). There was little evidence in the present study for lower than chance level discrepancy for relationship goals. The couples assessed showed significantly less discrepancy for religious and spiritual goals. This finding supports previous research which has found that romantic partners tend to be similar in their religious affiliation and beliefs (Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, & Moorman-Eavers, 2006).

The present research failed to replicate past research that found significant similarity in personality traits (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). One possible explanation for this finding is whereas past research has typically focused on similarity and discrepancy in the Big Five, the current study examined the facets of the Big Five. Regardless of the specification of personality traits, it appears as if there are only low levels of similarity in personality traits among the member of romantic couples. What may be more important than actual similarity is the perception that one's traits are similar to the traits of one's partners (Decuyper, De Bolle, & De Fruyt, 2012).

Table 1
Mean goal difference score comparisons.

Goal	Observed mean difference	Randomized mean difference	t-Value	d effect size
Spend more time studying	1.01	1.17	1.13	0.15
Be more organized	1.10	1.20	0.79	0.10
Get more sleep	1.20	1.22	0.14	0.02
Improve relationship with parents or siblings	1.14	1.14	0.00	0.00
Enjoy thrilling activities	1.21	1.79	4.56***	0.59
Find or improve short-term employment	1.41	1.31	−0.71	0.09
Achieve meaningful career goal	0.98	1.03	0.35	0.05
Be respected or well-known in community	1.42	1.40	−0.16	0.02
Be more self-sufficient	0.93	0.98	0.44	0.06
Play a sport or improve sports ability	1.50	1.53	0.19	0.02
Get married	1.27	1.60	2.33*	0.30
Take care of specific or chronic health problem	1.51	1.43	0.47	0.06
Do good for my community	1.18	1.56	2.99**	0.39
Plan my academic future	0.86	1.02	1.26	0.16
Be less dependent or influence by others	1.31	1.52	1.35	0.17
Observe the tenets of my religion	1.07	1.69	3.99***	0.52
End romantic relationship	0.64	0.66	0.13	0.02
Have a better diet	1.16	1.25	0.71	0.09
Make new friends	1.19	1.31	0.94	0.12
Afford to purchase a desired item	1.53	1.64	0.71	0.09
Maintain or improve romantic relationship	0.68	0.78	1.01	0.13
Maintain or improve appearance	1.29	1.28	−0.08	0.01
Be a better (i.e. more moral or ethical) person	0.97	1.02	0.39	0.05
Complete specific household task	1.25	1.34	0.67	0.09
Get into graduate school or pursue advanced degree	1.47	1.59	0.65	0.08
Find a romantic partner	1.16	1.19	−0.16	0.02
Increase my current income	1.44	1.59	0.88	0.11
Graduate and finish education	0.83	0.70	0.84	0.11
Help friends	1.03	1.28	2.21*	0.29
Be punctual	1.12	1.17	0.39	0.05
Provide financial assistance to friend or community	1.31	1.45	0.99	0.13
Lose weight	1.73	1.68	0.29	0.04
Enjoy learning something new	1.01	1.16	1.33	0.17
Have children	1.28	1.43	0.88	0.11
Improve relationship with friends	1.03	1.20	1.50	0.19
Budget money better	1.11	1.20	0.71	0.09
Participate more in sports, recreation, or hobbies	1.34	1.18	−1.26	−0.16
Save money	0.62	0.75	1.31	0.17
Experience spiritual growth	1.23	1.74	3.61***	0.47
Get in better shape	1.01	0.98	0.22	0.03
Improve academic skills	0.83	1.07	1.70†	0.22
Use time more effectively	0.73	0.78	0.44	0.06
Have more fun in life	1.01	1.07	0.47	0.06
Do things for myself	1.03	1.07	0.31	0.04
Travel to new places	1.46	1.44	−0.14	−0.02
Do well in school	0.73	0.72	−0.07	−0.01
Reduce stress in my life	1.13	1.15	0.14	0.02
Reduce consumption of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs	1.42	1.41	0.06	0.01
Help parents or siblings	1.24	1.41	1.34	0.17
Spend more time relaxing	1.31	1.33	0.16	0.02
Be less shy, more talkative	1.45	1.46	0.07	0.01
Pursue financially lucrative career	1.21	1.30	0.67	0.09
Be more assertive or self-confident	1.22	1.25	0.22	0.03
Stop worrying so much	1.27	1.46	1.22	0.16
Finish a course assignment	1.28	1.31	0.19	0.02
Financially assist parents or siblings	1.58	1.50	−0.51	0.07
Participate in social community	1.18	1.34	1.26	0.16
Find direction or meaning in life	1.32	1.63	1.99*	0.26
Be able to support future family	0.99	1.23	1.70†	0.22
Live independently from parents	1.36	1.32	0.24	0.03
Control temper	1.48	1.53	0.35	0.05
Improve current financial situation	1.20	1.14	−0.42	−0.05
Maintain or strengthen religious beliefs	1.21	1.60	2.62**	0.34
Help romantic partner	0.76	0.92	1.41	0.18
Figure out what my goals are	1.22	1.23	0.06	0.01

Note. $N = 125$ couples. Randomized scores based on 124 pairings with opposite-sex partner.

† $p < 0.10$.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

There is a growing literature that has closely linked self-regulation and goal processes to romantic relationships (Fitzsimons, Finkel, & Vandellen, 2015; Gere & Schimmack, 2013). Several theorists have

hypothesized that goal similarity among the members of a romantic couple should be related to more positive relationship functioning (e.g. Fitzsimons et al., 2015), so it was somewhat surprising to find

Table 2
Mean trait difference score comparisons.

Trait	Observed mean difference	Randomized mean difference	t-Value	d effect size
Assertiveness	0.85	0.88	0.35	0.04
Sociability	1.09	1.13	0.35	0.04
Energy	0.80	0.85	0.71	0.09
Compassion	0.86	0.80	−0.85	0.11
Respectfulness	0.74	0.77	0.42	0.05
Trust	0.83	0.89	0.65	0.08
Organization	1.10	1.04	−0.83	0.11
Productiveness	0.80	0.93	1.80 [†]	0.23
Responsibility	0.53	0.51	−0.35	0.04
Depression	1.00	1.05	0.54	0.07
Emotional Volatility	1.09	1.00	−0.98	0.13
Anxiety	0.94	0.99	0.59	0.08
Curiosity	0.54	0.59	0.88	0.11
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.93	1.03	1.01	0.13
Imagination	0.90	0.95	0.51	0.07

Note. $N = 125$ couples. Randomized scores based on 124 pairings with opposite-sex partner.

[†] $p < 0.10$.

that goal similarity had no association with relationship satisfaction. Given the results of the present study it seems that an examination of the ways in which the goals of romantic couples interact is needed. For example, recent research has found a negative association of goal conflict between couple members and relationship satisfaction (Gere & Schimmack, 2013; Gray & Ozer, in preparation).

It is plausible that goal similarity as such is less important than other forms of sharing goal processes in romantic relationships. For example, the perception that one's relationship goals are shared with one's partner has been related to the quality of relationships (Avivi et al., 2009). Similarly, when couples are able to make progress on their goals together they report more positive feelings about their relationship (Gere et al., 2011). The similarity of the goals romantic partners share may be less important for the quality of a relationship than the ways goals are shared and pursued in a relationship context. Future research should continue to address how goals are shared and pursued in romantic relationships.

4.1. Limitations and conclusions

The current study is not without limitations. First, the current study used data from undergraduate university students and dating couples. The effect of similarity in goals may be amplified or attenuated for couples who have a greater degree of interdependence of goals (Fitzsimons et al., 2015). Second, the variables assessed for similarity were relatively specific. For example, the traits used were facets of the Big Five instead of the broader dimensions. Likewise, the goals used in the PGQ were fairly specific (i.e. the goal "Manage a chronic health problem"). Broader dimensions may evidence greater effects of goal similarity. Another limitation concerned the procedure of assessment. The variables all consisted of self-report variables, as mentioned above previous research has suggested that the perception of similarity with one's partner may be of greater importance than actual similarity.

The current study examined the existence and effect of trait and similarity in a sample of romantic couples. The goals that showed the lowest discrepancy from chance between couples had to do with religion and spirituality. There was no evidence that traits were less discrepant than expected by chance alone. Similarity and discrepancy in personal goals was not related to relationship satisfaction regardless of partner gender. Similarity in traits was related to relationship satisfaction for females, but there was only a marginal association of trait discrepancy and relationship satisfaction in males. The present study helps to clarify the role that both traits and goals play in intimate relationships and can help

target research aimed at understanding what predicts relationship functioning.

References

- Avivi, Y. E., Laurenceau, J. P., & Carver, C. S. (2009). Linking relationship quality to perceived mutuality of relationship goals and perceived goal progress. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 28*(2), 137–164.
- 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.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). In Mahwah, & N. J. Erlbaum (Eds.), *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.).
- Corsini, R. J. (1956). Understanding and similarity in marriage. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 52*(3), 327–332. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0043556>.
- Cronbach, L. J., & Gleser, G. C. (1953). Assessing similarity between profiles. *Psychological Bulletin, 50*(6), 456–473.
- Decuyper, M., De Bolle, M., & De Fruyt, F. (2012). Personality similarity, perceptual accuracy, and relationship satisfaction in dating and married couples. *Personal Relationships, 19*(1), 128–145.
- Dyrenforth, P. S., Kashy, D. A., Donnellan, M. B., & Lucas, R. E. (2010). Predicting relationship and life satisfaction from personality in nationally representative samples from three countries: The relative importance of actor, partner, and similarity effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*(4), 690–702.
- Fitzsimons, G. M., Finkel, E. J., & Vandellen, M. R. (2015). Transactive goal dynamics. *Psychological Review, 122*(4), 648–673.
- Gaunt, R. (2006). Couple similarity and marital satisfaction: Are similar spouses happier? *Journal of Personality, 74*(5), 1401–1420.
- Gere, J., & Schimmack, U. (2013). When romantic partners' goals conflict: Effects on relationship quality and subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*(1), 37–49.
- Gere, J., Schimmack, U., Pinkus, R. T., & Lockwood, P. (2011). The effects of romantic partners' goal congruence on affective well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality, 45*(6), 549–559.
- Gray, J. S. & Ozer, D. J. A scale for assessing interpersonal goal conflict. (in preparation).
- Griffin, D., Murray, S., & Gonzalez, R. (1999). Difference score correlations in relationship research: A conceptual primer. *Personal Relationships, 6*(4), 505–518.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*(1), 93–98.
- Kenny, D. A., & Acitelli, L. K. (1994). Measuring similarity in couples. *Journal of Family Psychology, 8*(4), 417–431.
- Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (2006). *Dyadic data analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Lopes, P. N., Salovey, P., & Straus, R. (2003). Emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences, 35*(3), 641–658.
- Luo, S., & Klohnen, E. C. (2005). Assortative mating and marital quality in newlyweds: A couple-centered approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(2), 304–326.
- Luo, S., Chen, H., Yue, G., Zhang, G., Zhaoyang, R., & Xu, D. (2008). Predicting marital satisfaction from self, partner, and couple characteristics: Is it me, you, or us? *Journal of Personality, 76*(5), 1231–1266.
- Lutz-Zois, C. J., Bradley, A. C., Mihalik, J. L., & Moorman-Eavers, E. R. (2006). Perceived similarity and relationship success among dating couples: An idiographic approach. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*(6), 865–880.
- Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The five-factor model of personality and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality, 44*(1), 124–127.
- Ozer, D. J., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2006). Personality and the prediction of consequential outcomes. *Annual Review of Psychology, 57*, 401–421. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190127>.
- 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.
- Roberts, B. W., & Robins, R. W. (2000). Broad dispositions, broad aspirations: The intersection of personality traits and major life goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*(10), 1284–1296.
- Russell, R. J., & Wells, P. A. (1991). Personality similarity and quality of marriage. *Personality and Individual Differences, 12*(5), 407–412.
- Sanderson, C. A., & Evans, S. M. (2001). Seeing one's partner through intimacy-colored glasses: An examination of the processes underlying the intimacy goals-relationship satisfaction link. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(4), 463–473.
- 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. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- Stauner, N., Stimson, T. S., & Ozer, D. J. (2009). *The factor structure of personal goals in an undergraduate population*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Tampa, FL.
- Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Petherick, J. (2006). Intimacy dating goals and relationship satisfaction during adolescence and emerging adulthood: Identity formation, age and sex as moderators. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 30*(2), 167–177. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0165025406063636>.
- Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., Arnold, V., & Connolly, J. (2014). Intercorrelations of intimacy and identity dating goals with relationship behaviors and satisfaction among young heterosexual couples. *Social Sciences, 3*(1), 44–59.