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Complementarity of personality traits in romantic relationships :: opposites do attract.

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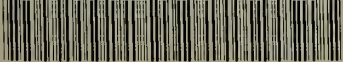
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IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: OPPOSITES DO ATTRACT

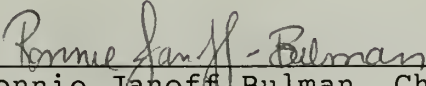A Thesis Presented

By

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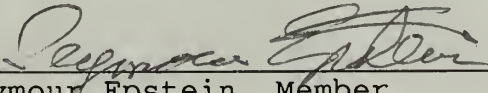
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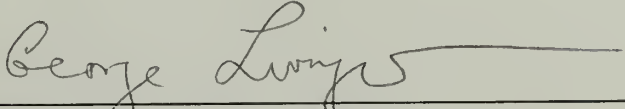
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ABSTRACT

COMPLEMENTARITY OF PERSONALITY TRAITS

IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: OPPOSITES DO ATTRACT

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The present study presents how the complementarity of
personality traits in a romantic partner is predictive of an
individual's levels of liking for a romantic partner, loving
for a the partner, and relationship satisfaction. Building
on the theoretical perspective of Theodor Reik (1949), the
idea was explored that individuals seek in significant
others the very things they feel they lack. In a study of
62 college students all involved in romantic relationships,
it was found that the more a partner resembled the
individual's ideal self, the more the individual liked and
loved that partner and the more satisfaction with the
relationship was reported. These patterns were found to be
especially strong for individuals with large discrepancies
between their actual self concept and their ideal self. For
these subjects, trait complementarity in the significant
other seemed to have central importance in feelings towards
the partner.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tell me whom you love and I
will tell you who you are, and
more especially, who you want
to be.

Theodor Reik

Of Love and Lust

The psychological study of close relationships has had
a long and checkered past. Questions related to topics
surrounding love and marriage probably are among the most
vexing asked by humankind. Why we love the people whom we
love is something that is pondered by every individual who
has ever fallen in love. The nature of love and romantic
relationships has been written about by artists and
philosophers through the ages. And, in the last century,
behavioral scientists have taken it upon themselves to try
and unravel the mysteries of intimate relations between men
and women. Psychological research, however, has not told us
a great deal more than that romantic relationships are
complicated and that we as psychologists have a lot to learn
before we even attempt to explain them.

In an attempt to better understand romantic
relationships, the present endeavor was undertaken to
examine a piece of the close relationship puzzle. We wish

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to better understand the dynamics of partner selection and perception. This is an exploratory inquiry into the self-concept of the individual and how that self-concept might be influential in the selection and the perception of romantic partners.

Complementarity Needs Hypothesis

The phrase "opposites attract" has long been a piece of conventional wisdom on romantic relationships. The complementarity of needs among partners in the context of relationship dyads was explored at some length in the 1950s. Simply stated, the hypothesis of complementary needs suggests that individuals select romantic partners on the basis of the partner possessing needs that complement their own (Knudson, 1985). Winch, Ktsanes and Ktsanes (1954) presented evidence to support this line of reasoning. They examined needs based on Murray's hierarchy of needs. In a study of 25 married couples, case-histories, interviews to determine nature of needs, and TAT results were compared for each dyad. Correlations led Winch and his associates to conclude that need complementarity did indeed impact mate selection in that individuals tended to select mates with needs complementary to their own. Winch noted the central role played by needs of dominance-submission and of nurturance-receptivity.

Further support for the hypothesis of complementary needs was found by Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) in their study

of dating couples. In this study, needs were measured with the FIRO-B, which is designed to determine the dimensions of an individual's interpersonal needs. Kerckhoff and Davis found that the couples who had complementary needs made greater "progress" in their relationship.

As compelling as these studies were to researchers in the area of close relationships, further support for the need complementarity hypothesis was not to be found. For whatever reasons, later studies did not replicate the findings of Winch and his associates or of Kerckhoff and Davis (Levinger, 1964; Rubin, 1973; Tharp, 1963). It was suggested by Tharp (1963) that the subjects used in the Winch studies were not a typical sample, that their mate-selection was uncommon in several ways, including that the couples were married at a young age and attending college on the GI bill. Such a conclusion would be a reasonable explanation for the lack of replication of results of need complementarity.

In spite of the lack of replication of the Winch results, the concept of complementarity within the context of romantic relationships still holds a great deal of intuitive appeal. It has been suggested by several authors that perhaps the absence of results supportive of the need complementarity hypothesis was not due to the absence of complementarity in relationships but to the absence of *need* complementarity in relationships (Knudson, 1985; Levinger,

1964; Levinger & Rands, 1985; Shaver & Hazan, 1985). It has been posed that a reframing of the notion of complementarity within relationships is necessary. Levinger (1964) suggested that the study of complementarity of roles in marriage would be a worthwhile avenue of study. Shaver and Hazan (1985) suggested that emotional complementarity within relationships might be the route to go with further research. A third possible path to explore would be the complementarity of personality traits.

While the idea of complementarity of roles makes intuitive sense, the fluid nature of role-taking within romantic relationships seems to make it difficult to study. The same can be said for examining the complementarity of emotions. However, if the personality or self is conceptualized as a fairly stable entity (Greenwald, 1980; Swann, 1983), the notion of romantic partner selection along complementary personality dimensions does hold some promise. Swann and his associates have explored the great lengths to which individuals go in order to preserve continuity and consistency between self and environmental feedback (Swann, 1983; 1987). Swann, Hixon, and De La Ronde (1992) found that people look for partners in marriage who see them as they see themselves, even if it means that the partner will have a negative view of them. Swann and Read (1981) found that people would even go to such lengths as spending their own money to obtain self consistent feedback in the lab. As

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Swann (1987, p. 1044) put it, "Considered together, these data suggest that it is inappropriate to assume that self-conceptions are frightfully frail cognitive structures that change at the drop of a hat." In light of these findings, the study of the personality dimensions that constitute the self-concept seems a reasonable domain in which to look for partner complementarity.

Similarity in Close Relationships

Of course, not all research in the area of close relationships has centered around the idea of complementarity of partners. Much of the research on the matching of romantic dyads has centered around the similarity between partners. Similarity certainly plays a role in partner selection. As the psychodynamic theorist Theodor Reik (1949) put it, "If there should be no differences, love could not come into existence. But if the differences are too great it cannot develop either." Studies of the role of similarity in the choice of spouse has supported the premise that individuals tend to affiliate with people similar to themselves in terms of cognitive ability, physical characteristics and personality traits (Buss, 1984; Caspi & Herbener, 1990). This is consistent with findings that indicate that individuals seek similarity in romantic partners, friends and other people with whom they associate (Deutsch & Mackesy, 1985; Hill, Rubin & Peplau, 1976; Kandel, 1978). It is clear that similarity

between the individual and others in the close social world serves to maintain consistency for the self. This drive for self-consistency is noted by many self theories to be a fundamental need (Epstein, 1980; Rogers, 1951; Snygg and Combs, 1949).

At first glance, it might appear that the research on similarity in romantic relationship partners contradicts a hypothesis of complementarity within romantic relationships. However, for several reasons we feel that this is not the case. Similarity measures may, in part, obscure the role of complementarity in partner choice and relationship satisfaction. The examination of similarity to the self-concept does not present the complete picture. Only with the inclusion of the ideal self can we begin to see the dynamics of how the relationship with the significant other operates in association with the individual's self.

Self-Schemata and the Perception of Others

The self has long been the subject of philosophical and psychological conjecture. The notion of the self as an subject of thought and cognition was suggested by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, who referred to the self as "the ultimate subject of thinking" (Kant, 1783/1988, p.100). The nature and content of the self as a structure has been debated by intellectuals for centuries with no clear consensus. While the literary, philosophical as well as the psychological idea of the self as a construct has

evolved throughout the course of Western society, one element has remained in place in most theories -- the self is the basic component of the individual (Baumeister, 1987).

Since Sigmund Freud made popular the notion of the personality consisting of the ego, the id, and the super-ego and the idea of conscious and unconscious processing, the concept of the self being made up of different types of systems working together has been prevalent in personality theory. One of the most prominent theories to emerge is the Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory of Epstein (1973; 1990). This theory describes how the individual operates in the world with the help of two systems. The first is the experiential system, which operates at a preconscious level in a holistic, categorical manner by using feelings. The second is the rational system, which is an analytical system that works in a logical and integrated manner. The operation and interaction of these two systems guide the behavior of the individual. The emotional side of behaviors originate in the experiential system, and the cognitive side of behaviors take place in the rational system. While the cognitive component of the self system has been stressed by most self theorists in recent literature, it is of the utmost importance that the experiential, or emotional, component of the self be considered in research. Without the emotional component, the self is not only an rather empty concept, but we are left without explanations for

motivations to maintain consistency in the self or to improve the self. With this compelling theory in mind, we move on to cognitive theories of the self.

Current cognitive research into the structure and nature of the self-concept follows from both the reasoning the self is an object of thought for the individual and that the self is the basic unit of the personality. The self has come to be thought of as an intrapsychic structure, or more specifically, a category of thought. For instance, with the personal construct theory of George Kelly (1955), the self became viewed as a cognitive construct that contained information connected with the self. According to Kelly, the individual used these constructs to better view and control the world around him or her.

This view of the self in terms of its cognitive function has been expanded in the course of recent research and theory. Social cognition and schemata have replaced Kelly's idea of "man-the-scientist" and personal constructs. Hazel Markus and her associates have developed a theory of self-schemata that looks at the self from an information processing point of view (Markus, 1977; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Sentis, 1982). Markus describes self-schemata as "structures of knowledge about the self that engage in a process of ongoing interpretive activity" (Markus & Sentis, 1982, p.45). Self-schemata are collections of knowledge that the individual acquires over

time about the characteristics and behaviors representative of the self. These self-schemata are used by the individual to interpret a wide variety of situations and over a multitude of different behaviors displayed by the individual and by others (Markus & Smith, 1981). It is his or her self-schemata that the individual uses to make judgements about others in the world, including others in the close social world of friends, family, and romantic partners. However, the self is not a unitary schema working in cognitive independence. There are other schemata at work in the processing information encountered by the individual.

The Ideal Self

Theorists have proposed several counterparts to the self that work to motivate and balance the functions of the self. Sullivan (1953) suggested a three-part configuration consisting of the good me, the bad me and the not me. Ogilvie (1987) posed the importance of the undesired self, that which the individual does not want to become. And Markus and Nurius (1986) spoke of possible selves, those selves that the person could potentially become. Probably the counterpart to the self that has been most written about is the ideal self. Stated simply, the ideal self is an image of what one would like to be. It is a concept brought up repeatedly in the self literature (Higgins, Klein & Strauman, 1985; James, 1890/1950; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Rogers, 1951). Most theories of an ideal self suggest that

the ideal self is unobtainable, or at least that the ideal self is adjusted to higher standards as it is approached by the actual self of the individual. The ideal self is usually considered in terms of the discrepancy between it and the actual self-concept. While it is thought that some discrepancy between the self and ideal self is appropriate or even necessary, such distance is only beneficial in moderate doses. The larger the difference in the ideal and the actual selves, the worse off the individual is emotionally (Epstein, 1973; Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Klein & Strauman, 1985; Rogers, 1961). Discrepancy between the self and the ideal self can be the cause of anxiety and depression (Higgins, 1987; Rogers, 1961). Speaking in general terms, the closer the individual is to his or her ideal self, the better off he or she is going to be in terms of emotional adjustment.

It has been suggested that the ideal self serves as a sort of guide for the individual, a person's goal in any self-enhancement or self-improvement endeavor. While self consistency is important to maintain, it makes intuitive sense that people do, in fact, make some changes in terms of personality. The idea of a completely stagnant self simply goes against that which we think of as development over the life span.

This goal role of the ideal self is important when considering the process of self-enhancement or self-

improvement that has been posited by theorists as a primary counterpart to the need for self consistency (Epstein, 1980; Higgins, 1987; Rogers, 1961). Rogers (1961) held that the unitary goal was to "maintain and enhance" the self. Epstein (1980) reframes these needs to be separate. He posited that while the self has a need to maintain consistency, there is also a need for enhancement of the self that operates simultaneously. Epstein concluded that both the need for self consistency and the need for self improvement should be considered when analyzing the behavior of the individual.

Relationship of Partner to Ideal Self

While acknowledging the immense importance of similarity in the individual's choice of romantic partner to support the need for self-consistency, we posit that the individual also takes into consideration certain dimensions of a romantic partner's personality that fill in some aspect of his or her own personality that is short of ideal. It is through this "filling in" of an aspect or of aspects of the self that the individual seeks to complete or to enhance the self. The significant other is in a singular position to facilitate this aspect of growth in the individual. One reason is that the relationship one has with a significant other is unique. This relationship is of a different quality and type than other relationships, even those in the close social world such as the relationship one has with a

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best friend. We feel the perceptions of one's significant other are more enmeshed in or more closely tied to one's self concept than perceptions of other persons in the close social world. And, this association between the significant other and the self gives the significant other a special and influential role in the psychological life of individual.

It is important to note that when we speak of the traits for which complementary traits are sought, we are not speaking of personality dimensions that the individual lacks. We are speaking of aspects of the personality that the person believes to be important and upon which he or she would like to improve, which logically would be a part of the individual's ideal self-schema. Through the traits that they perceive as part of their partner's personality, individuals are able to achieve a more balanced or fulfilled self. For instance, if an individual is shy and reserved but ideally would like to be otherwise, that person would seek a partner who is gregarious and talkative. A person satisfied with a reserved nature, however, would <u>not</u> seek a complementary partner on this dimension. If an individual views himself or herself as less organized and orderly than he or she would like to be, according to a trait complementarity viewpoint, it is likely that this person will be paired with a partner who he or she perceives to be very organized.

Such a theory of romantic partner complementarity was advanced by Reik (1949) earlier in this century. Reik held the position that people seek to fulfill their image of their own ego-ideal in their choice of romantic partners. It is the person's own drive for self-improvement that motivates the individual's search for a partner who lives up to his or her ideal. Reik said it in this way:

> And in the deepest sense we search for the perfection of ourselves, for the person who matches the demands we make on ourselves. We want to be loved by this person as we would be loved if we were ideal persons. Our love choice is not accidental. It is determined by the attitude we have toward ourselves (pp. 100-101).

Adopting this view that the individual's self-view drives the selection of romantic partners, we felt that the relationship of an individual with a significant other is unique in that it involves a schema that is the closest to the ideal self, particularly on traits that the individual would most like to change about himself or herself. Given this assumption, we felt that liking and loving of a partner and general relationship satisfaction would be associated with the similarity of the partner to the ideal self. Furthermore, we expected that the larger the discrepancy

that exists between the individual's self and ideal self, the more important the similarity of the partner to the ideal self will be in terms of liking and loving the partner.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 65 students, 23 men and 42 women, from upper-level undergraduate psychology classes. All had completed a pre-screening survey distributed earlier in the semester, and had indicated that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship. Individuals were contacted by phone and asked if they would be willing to participate in our study for experimental credit. Those who consented were mailed a questionnaire.

The average age of the subjects was 20.7 years. The average length of subjects' relationships was 17.3 months. Of the 65 initial subjects, two were dropped from the analyses because they completed the questionnaire incorrectly, and one subject was dropped because the romantic involvement was with a same-sex partner.

Measures

The questionnaire included demographic items as well as information concerning romantic relationships. The subjects also rated trait terms from a list derived from Goldberg's (1990) analysis of the Big-Five Factor Model (Appendix A). These traits combine to form indices of five factors: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. For each of the 78 items on the list, subjects were asked to indicate the

extent to which they believe the adjective is descriptive of their self. Subjects also completed three more of the trait adjective lists. On these lists subjects were asked to describe their significant other, their ideal self, and their ideal romantic partner. The rating scales were six point scales with endpoints "not at all descriptive" to "extremely descriptive". Negative items were reverse scored for the purpose of analyses. The trait description of the significant other was followed by the short form of the Rubin Liking and Loving Scales supplemented with six questions about relationship satisfaction (Appendix B). Reliabilities for the various scale measures used can be found in Table 1. The alphas reported for the Big-Five factor scales reflect the average reliability across the self descriptions.

At the end of the trait list describing the significant other, subjects were asked what aspects of the personalities of their significant other they most admired. At the end of the trait list for the self, subjects were asked to list the traits they liked most and least about themselves. And finally, the subjects were asked, if they could change any of their traits, what would they change.

Analyses

To determine the discrepancy between an individual's ratings across his or her description of self, partner, ideal self, and ideal partner, we turned to the

recommendations of Cronbach and Gleser (1953; see also Bernstein, 1988). Cronbach and Gleser point out that three elements could be considered when examining profile similarity: elevation, scatter, and shape. Elevation refers to the sum of the individual elements of each profile. Elevation provides a general index for the extremity of responses, but it tells nothing about specific elements of the profile or scale. Scatter is the standard deviation of an individual across the profile, relative to his or her own mean. After standardizing each profile in terms of elevation and scatter, residual information about the profile is left. This is the shape of the profile. Comparison of profile shape has the advantage of comparing patterns of responses to scale items.

The results of the present study rely on the comparison of shape information for each subject's set of four trait profiles. Each profile was ipsatized using the following steps:

1.) Scatter was calculated for each subject for each of his or her trait profiles. The equation used was Scatter = Square Root of $[\Sigma(x_i - \text{Profile Mean})^2]$.

2.) Shape was calculated for each subject using each element of their profiles. The equation used for this was Shape $x_i = (x_i - \text{Profile Mean})^2 / \text{Scatter}$.

3.) To compare one profile to another, such as in the comparison of self to ideal self, the shape of each element in the first profile was subtracted from the shape of its analogous element in the second profile and then squared. A sum was then taken of each squared difference. The equation used was Sum of Shape Differences = $\Sigma(\text{Shape } x_i - \text{Shape } y_i)^2$. The sum of these comparisons of each trait on the scale gave an index of the similarity, or dissimilarity, between profiles.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the average correlations among subjects' self ratings, partner ratings, ideal self ratings, and ideal partner ratings (i.e. not based on profile shape measures). These correlations are descriptive of the similarity between the characterizations of self, partner, ideal self, and ideal partner. The numbers reported represent the average correlations across the Big-Five Trait sub-scales. Possible values ranged from -1 (complete dissimilarity) to +1 (complete similarity). Ideal self-ideal partner ratings were most highly correlated (.69). Ideal self-partner ratings had the lowest correlation at (.38), but were very similar to self-partner ratings (.39).

These correlations give a general indication of the similarity of the profiles being compared, however, they are not sufficient to test the present hypotheses. In order to make a precise examination of the relationship between partner-ideal self similarity and satisfaction with relationship, it is necessary to scrutinize individual elements of the personality scale, not just the general factors as these correlations do by comparing scale dimension scores. Only through such attention to detail will it be possible to get an accurate picture of the association between partner-ideal self resemblance and feelings about partner and relationship.

The correlations among the relationship scales and the differences in shape between the various trait scales can be found in Table 3. The difference in profile shape between partner and ideal self was correlated with scores on the Rubin Liking Scale (-.53), the Rubin Loving Scale (-.30) and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (-.39). These correlations indicate that the more similar the partner was to the ideal self, the more the individual liked the partner, the more the individual loved the partner, and the more satisfied the individual was in the relationship with the partner.

Given these correlations, regressions were performed to further explore the associations among liking a partner, loving a partner, relationship satisfaction, and the differences in shape of the various trait rating profiles. Three hierarchical multiple regressions were performed using liking, loving, and relationship satisfaction as the criterion variables. Predictor variables were then entered in the following order: the difference between self and ideal self ($D_{S/IS}$), the difference between partner and ideal self ($D_{P/IS}$), and the difference between partner and self ($D_{P/S}$). Table 4 shows the results of these regression analyses. It should be noted that changing the order of entry of the variables did not change the outcome of the regressions. This is the case for all the regressions reported. The only significant predictor of liking was the

similarity of the partner to the individual's ideal self, which accounted for 26.11% of the variance. Similarity of the self to the ideal self and similarity of the partner to the self did not contribute significantly to the prediction of an individual's liking for the partner. The second hierarchical regression using loving as the criterion variable was performed to determine the relationship between love for a partner and differences on the various trait scales. Once again, the similarity of partner to ideal self was the only significant predictor variable, predicting 11.97% of the variance. A third hierarchical regression was run to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction and the discrepancies on the trait scales. Once again, the difference between partner and ideal self was the only significant predictor of the criterion variable, accounting for 19.37% of the variance.

For exploratory purposes, we looked more closely at the subjects who had the most extreme scores on the Rubin Liking Scale. The Rubin Liking Scale score, the difference in shape for self-ideal self, and the difference in shape for partner-ideal self are reported in Table 5 for each of the nine subjects who liked their partners most. Eight of the nine subjects' partners were more similar to their ideal self than they themselves were.[1] Table 6 shows the same information for the nine subjects who scored lowest on the Rubin Liking Scale. Of these subjects, all nine had a

smaller difference between self-ideal self than between partner-ideal self. Both of these patterns provide support of the proposed association between liking a partner and the partner's similarity to one's ideal self.

Responses to open-ended items asking subjects what they most liked about their partners and what they most wanted to change about themselves were also helpful in providing a better sense of how the partner completed an individual by filling in self-ideal traits (see Appendix C). Although most individuals admired generally positive characteristics possessed by their partner, they often mentioned admiring the traits they wanted to possess themselves. Take for example Subject 115 who wanted a greater level of motivation and admired his partner's motivation to succeed. Another example can be found with Subject 213 who wanted to be more outgoing and admired his partner for being outgoing and friendly.[2]

Both Higgins (1987) and Rogers (1961) predicted that the further an individual's actual self is from the ideal self, the more emotional discomfort that individual will experience. We hypothesized that those who are least satisfied with themselves might be particularly apt to like romantic partners who "fill in" unsatisfactory aspects of the self. To examine how similarity between partner and ideal self might differ based on the differences between the self and ideal self, we divided the sample into three groups

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according to $D_{S/IS}$: self-dissatisfied (n=21), moderately self-satisfied (n=20), and self-satisfied (n=21). One-way ANOVAs were performed to determine differences among the groups on the relationship scales and on the Big-Five Personality Factors. No significant differences emerged among the groups on the relationship scales. Differences were found on the Big-Five Factor scores for self ratings. As Table 7 shows, means for the self ratings were lower for the self-dissatisfied group compared to the moderately self-satisfied group and self-satisfied group on the dimensions of Conscientiousness, $F (2,59) = 9.38$, $p < .001$, and Emotional Stability, $F (2,59) = 16.023$, $p < .001$. The self-dissatisfied group was lower than the self-satisfied group on self ratings on Agreeableness, $F (2,59) = 11.68$, $p < .001$. Table 8 shows the pattern of means for ideal self ratings. There were no significant differences among the three groups on ideal self ratings. These results suggest that the individuals in the self-dissatisfied group saw their actual selves in a less positive light than did those in the more satisfied groups, but did not set their ideals higher.

Tables 9 to 11 present the average correlations among subjects' self ratings, partner ratings, ideal self ratings, and ideal partner ratings for the three self-satisfaction groups. Patterns for the self-satisfied group (Table 9) and the moderate self-satisfied group (Table 10) were quite

similar. However, the pattern of correlations was different for the self-dissatisfied group (Table 11). Specifically, correlations for the self-dissatisfied group were generally lower than those for the other two groups. Most conspicuous, the correlation between the partner and ideal self for the self-dissatisfied group (.19) was much lower than that for the moderate self-satisfied group (.46) and for the self-satisfied group (.49). Also of interest, the correlation between the ideal self and the ideal partner ratings for the self-dissatisfied group was lower (.52) than those for the moderate group (.73) and the self-satisfied group (.74).

Tables 12 to 14 show correlations among the differences in shape of trait scale profile and the relationship scales for the three self-satisfaction groups. The moderately self-satisfied group (Table 13) showed no significant correlations between the profile differences and the relationship scales. For this group, only partner-ideal self difference and liking showed a marginal negative correlation (-.39). As can be seen in Table 12, for the self-satisfied group, partner-ideal self difference was negatively correlated with liking (-.49), loving (-.39), and relationship satisfaction (-.55). Also, self-partner difference was correlated with liking (-.50), loving (-.42), and relationship satisfaction (-.45) for the self satisfied group. Table 14 shows the correlations for the self-

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dissatisfied group. Partner-ideal self difference was negatively correlated with liking (-.53), loving (-.60), and relationship satisfaction (-.57). Partner-self difference was not correlated with the relationship scales for self-dissatisfied group.

Given these patterns of correlations in the self-satisfaction groups, hierarchical multiple regressions were performed for the self-satisfied and self-dissatisfied groups to more clearly explore the prediction of the relationship variables by differences between partner and ideal self and between self and partner. The regression for the self-satisfied group can be found in Table 15. For liking of a significant other, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 23.98% of the variance and partner-self difference accounted for another 2.55% of the variance. For loving, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 15.55% of the variance, with self-partner difference accounting for 2.71%. And finally, for relationship satisfaction, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 30.14% of the variance, while self-partner difference accounted for only 0.27%.

Regressions for the self-dissatisfied group can be found in Table 16. For liking of a significant other, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 28.00% of the variance and partner-self difference accounted for another 5.93% of the variance. For loving, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 36.37% of the variance, and self-

partner difference accounted for 5.87% of the variance. And finally, for relationship satisfaction, partner-ideal self difference accounted for 32.88% of the variance, while self-partner difference accounted for only 0.90%. Once again, for all of the regressions mentioned here, the results do not change when the entry order of the variables is changed.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

As expected, the more a romantic partner resembled the ideal self, the more individuals reported loving the partner, liking the partner, and being satisfied with the relationship. This pattern of results was even stronger for individuals who were dissatisfied with their actual selves. If we assume that people who are most dissatisfied with themselves are going to be more motivated than satisfied individuals to improve themselves, it is logical to assume that one avenue towards self-improvement would be in choice of significant other. The significant other would be in a position to help "fill in" the missing pieces of the individual's personality because of the very close and intimate nature of romantic relationships. If the individual feels lacking in ambition, a partner who is viewed as determined and motivated would be admired for these traits; if a person feels lacking in self-confidence, a partner who is self-assured and independent would be loved for these traits. Through the romantic partner, an individual may get a sense of possession or ownership of the very attributes he or she lacks and desires. Although overall scale correlations suggested that these partners were least similar to their ideals selves (see Table 11), subjects in this group were most satisfied with their

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partner when that partner was close to the ideal self (Table 14).

For self-satisfied individuals, the similarity of the partner to the ideal self was predictive of liking and relationship satisfaction, not loving. Self-satisfied individuals would be less likely to be searching for partners on the basis of similarity to their ideal selves. Also, people who are relatively close to their ideal self have fewer personality traits on which they would feel deficient, so there would be fewer gaps for the significant other to fill. The need for complementarity of traits would presumably not be as critical to these romantic relationships.

Why has there been such a relative absence in the literature of findings of complementarity between romantic partners? One reason that past studies have failed to find complementarity has to do with measures of the self and of the difference between profiles of self, ideal self, and partner. If the self is measured across dimensions, described in terms of a sum of these components, and then compared to another profile measured in the same way, dissimilarity, or similarity as the case may be, can only be talked about in terms of the total score. Such a measure of dissimilarity does not say anything about the areas of personality on which the self and other profile are being measured. The self profile in question may have a very high

score on extroversion and a very low score on agreeableness while the ideal self it is compared to may have moderate scores on both dimensions. These two profiles would have very similar total scores even though they looked very different in terms of the components that comprised them. In the present study, using measures of profile shape, we were able to make a more precise analysis of the similarity between one profile and another on individual trait dimensions.

As noted earlier, similarity in romantic relationships has been the rule in most studies on the subject (Caspi & Herbener, 1990; Buss, 1984; Deutsch & Mackesy, 1985; Hill, Rubin & Peplau, 1976; Kandel, 1978). One reason is most certainly that past studies were not looking at subjects in terms of their ideal selves, only in terms of their actual selves in relation to their partners. Without the added dimension of where the individual feels lacking, there is no way to gauge what areas of the self the individual wishes to change. As a result, there is no basis to examine how the individual's partner looks in comparison to the ideal self, how the partner might complement the actual self.

Individual differences in the discrepancy between self and ideal self would also here influenced earlier findings of similarity. As was demonstrated by the present study, complementarity plays a greater role in the liking of a significant other for subjects who saw greater

discrepancies between their selves and ideal selves. This
fits not only with our own hypotheses, but also with the
theory of mate complementarity posed by Reik (1949). As he
put it when discussing the motivations for seeking
complementarity in a partner:

> The starting point is the feeling of ego-
> deficiency and the need for ego-completion or ego-
> improvement. There is an unconscious but powerful
> striving to complete our ego-ideal. The mate is
> chosen because he or she is needed for this aim,
> because [he or] she fulfills the image of our
> ideal. (p. 97)

By this reasoning, the larger ego-deficiency, the larger the
motivation will be to seek complementarity will be. Such
logic is also compatible with the theories of Higgins (1987)
and Rogers (1961).

We acknowledge the fact that the results of this study
are based on the self report of only one member of the
relationship dyads. While it would be interesting to have
information from subjects' partners, we do not feel it
limits the potential to answer the research questions raised
in this study. The questions being asked dealt with the
individual's self-concept and feelings about a romantic
partner. The objective reality of the state of the

relationship or the true nature of the partner's personality were not useful in answering questions about the individual's perceptions of self and partner. The intended focus was on the subject's perceptions.

We do not know from the results of this study whether importance of trait complementarity in liking and loving a partner and being satisfied with a relationship is true only for romantic involvements or if it is also true for other close relationships. It is possible that complementarity will be a factor in liking and loving of close friends. We believe the romantic partner plays a special role in completing the self. However, future research should examine whether this phenomenon also occurs in other important relationships in the life of the individual.

In conclusion, what can we conclude about the role of a person's self-concept in romantic relationships? Trait complementarity is important in terms of liking, loving, and relationship satisfaction, but this complementarity should be understood in terms of self-attributes with which the individual is dissatisfied. The more a partner resembles the ideal self, the more an individual will like and love that partner. This will be especially true for individuals who are dissatisfied with their own personality.

Table 1

Reliabilities of Measures

Scale	No. of Items	Alpha
Rubin Loving Scale	9	.80
Rubin Liking Scale	9	.79
Relationship Satisfaction	6	.80
Extroversion *	17	.67
Agreeableness *	21	.82
Conscientiousness *	20	.79
Emotional Stability *	11	.71
Openness to Experience *	10	.76

* Reliabilities reported for the Big-Five Factor scales are for the scales to describe actual self.

Table 2

Overall Correlations for Ratings of Self, Partner, Ideal
Self, and Ideal Partner

	Self	Partner	Ideal Self
Partner	.39 $p<.001$		
Ideal Self	.53 $p<.001$	.38 $p<.005$	
Ideal Partner	.48 $p<.001$	.46 $p<.001$	.69 $p<.001$

(N=62)

Table 3

Overall Correlations for Profile Differences and Relationship Scales

	Liking	Loving	Satisfaction
Self/Ideal Self Diff.	-.18 N.S	-.01 N.S.	-.02 N.S.
Partner/Ideal Self Diff.	-.53 $p<.001$	-.30 $p<.05$	-.39 $p<.005$
Self/Partner Diff.	-.34 $p<.01$	-.12 N.S.	-.21 N.S.
Partner/Ideal Partner Diff.	-.46 $p<.001$	-.16 N.S.	-.31 $p<.05$

(N=62)

Table 4

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Liking, Loving, and Relationship Satisfaction from Profile Differences for Overall Sample

Variable Order entered	Liking		Loving		Satisfaction	
	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2
$D_{S/IS}$	.081	.0331	.133	.0001	.218	.0003
$D_{P/IS}$	-.655	.2942	-.510	.1198	-.549	.1940
$D_{P/S}$	.106	.2982	.184	.1317	.067	.1955
	$p < .001$		$p < .05$		$p < .01$	

N=62

Table 5

Nine Subjects Scoring Highest on Rubin Liking Scale

Subject Number	Liking Score *	$D_{S/IS}$	$D_{P/IS}$
410	80.00	.65	.63
101	78.00	.67	.37
105	78.00	.78	.41
211	77.00	1.35	.62
307	77.00	.32	.23
102	76.00	.65	.64
111	76.00	.80	.75
215	76.00	.58	.79
411	75.00	.80	.42

* Possible scores range from 9 to 81.

Table 6

Nine Subjects Scoring Lowest on Rubin Liking Scale

Subject Number	Liking Score *	$D_{S/IS}$	$D_{P/IS}$
118	55.00	.48	1.88
403	52.00	1.15	1.53
203	52.00	.65	.71
213	52.00	.74	.76
405	52.00	1.01	2.19
117	50.00	1.22	1.72
116	45.00	.59	1.01
314	43.00	1.04	1.35
407	43.00	1.35	1.61

* Possible scores range from 9 to 81.

Table 7

Means for Big-Five Factor Self Ratings for Self-Satisfaction
Groups

Group	Extro	Agree	Cons	Emot	Open
Satisfied	69.33	99.81	83.62	47.62	41.19
Moderate	68.50	92.80	83.60	44.25	39.65
Dissatisfied	64.81	85.86*	72.29**	37.43**	39.10

* Significantly lower than self-satisfied group, $p < .05$,
Scheffé contrast.

** Significantly lower than self-satisfied group and
moderately self-satisfied group, $p < .05$, Scheffé contrasts.

Table 8

Means for Big-Five Factor Ideal Self Ratings for Self-
Satisfaction Groups

Group	Extro	Agree	Cons	Emot	Open
Satisfied	72.09	105.1	90.29	52.95	48.38
Moderate	72.35	104.5	92.70	51.60	51.30
Dissatisfied	73.43	98.2	90.67	52.14	51.67

Note. No means significantly different, Scheffé contrasts.

Table 9

Correlations for Ratings of Self, Partner, Ideal Self, and
Partner for Self-Satisfied Group

	Self	Partner	Ideal Self
Partner	.46		
	$p < .05$		
Ideal Self	.75	.49	
	$p < .001$	$p < .05$	
Ideal Partner	.64	.53	.74
	$p < .005$	$p < .05$	$p < .001$

(N=21)

Table 10

Correlations for Ratings of Self, Partner, Ideal Self, and
Partner for Moderately Self-Satisfied Group

	Self	Partner	Ideal Self
Partner	.39 N.S.		
Ideal Self	.61 *p*<.005	.46 *p*<.05	
Ideal Partner	.61 *p*<.005	.49 *p*<.05	.73 *p*<.001

(N=20)

Table 11

Correlations for Ratings of Self, Partner, Ideal Self, and Partner for Self-Dissatisfied Group

	Self	Partner	Ideal Self
Partner	.35 N.S.		
Ideal Self	.50 $p<.05$	.19 N.S.	
Ideal Partner	.39 N.S.	.32 N.S.	.52 $p<.05$

(N=21)

Table 12

Correlations for Self-Satisfied Group for Profile
Differences and Relationship Scales

	Liking	Loving	Satisfaction
Self/Ideal Self Diff.	-.02 N.S	.14 N.S.	.00 N.S.
Partner/Ideal Self Diff.	-.49 $p<.05$	-.39 N.S.	-.55 $p<.01$
Self/Partner Diff.	-.50 $p<.05$	-.42 $p<.05$	-.45 $p<.05$
Partner/Ideal Partner Diff.	-.53 $p<.01$	-.24 N.S.	-.42 $p<.05$

(N=21)

Table 13

Correlations for Moderately Self-Satisfied Group for Profile
Differences and Relationship Scales

	Liking	Loving	Satisfaction
Self/Ideal	-.07	.00	.00
Self Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Partner/Ideal	-.39	-.03	-.17
Self Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Self/Partner	-.26	.03	.00
Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Partner/Ideal	-.30	.11	-.06
Partner Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.

(N=20)

Table 14

Correlations for Self-Dissatisfied Group for Profile
Differences and Relationship Scales

	Liking	Loving	Satisfaction
Self/Ideal	.32	.25	.14
Self Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Partner/Ideal	-.53	-.60	-.57
Self Diff.	$p<.05$	$p<.005$	$p<.01$
Self/Partner	.02	-.01	-.31
Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Partner/Ideal	-.35	-.37	-.60
Partner Diff.	N.S.	N.S.	$p<.005$

(N=21)

Table 15

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Liking, Loving, and Relationship

Satisfaction from Profile Differences for Self-Satisfied Group

Variable	Liking		Loving		Satisfaction	
Order entered	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2
$D_{P/IS}$	-.214	.2398	-.111	.1555	-.638	.3014
$D_{P/S}$	-.318	.2653	-.328	.1826	.104	.3041
	$p < .07$		N.S.		$p < .05$	

N=21

46

Table 16

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Liking, Loving, and Relationship
Satisfaction from Profile Differences for Self-Dissatisfied Group

Variable	Liking		Loving		Satisfaction	
Order entered	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2	Beta Weight	Cum R^2
$D_{P/Is}$	-.631	.2800	-.705	.3637	-.533	.3288
$D_{P/s}$	.264	.3393	.263	.4224	-.103	.3378
	$p < .05$		$p < .01$		$p < .05$	

N=21

47

APPENDIX A
BIG-FIVE TRAIT PAIRS

Extroversion:

active, energetic

aloof, distant

brave, venturous

conceited, egotistical

humble, modest

impulsive, carefree

joyless, solemn

lethargic, apathetic

lively, peppy

nosey, indiscreet

passionate, sensual

quiet, untalkative

rowdy, loud

social, outgoing

tactless, unfriendly

talkative, verbose

vain, affected

Agreeableness:

affectionate, warm

belligerent, aggressive

biased, inflexible

caustic, sarcastic

contrary, argumentative

cooperative, agreeable

friendly, genial

generous, charitable

harsh, critical

insincere, devious

irritable, short-tempered

mistrustful, suspicious

moral, honest

stingy, selfish

tactful, polite

testy, crabby

tolerant, reasonable

trustful, unsuspicious

unselfish, helpful

vengeful, malicious

Conscientiousness:

ambitious, thorough

awkward, unrefined

changeable, erratic

conscientious, dependable

controlled, serious

crusading, zealous

cultured, refined

demure, chaste

devout, spiritual

dignified, genteel

economical, thrifty

excessive, self-indulgent

farseeing, progressive

formal, proud

impudent, rude

lazy, careless

mature

nonreligious, informal

orderly, tidy

predictable, rational

Emotional Stability:

calm, peaceful

fearful, nervous

frank, blunt

independent, resourceful

insensitive, cold

naive, childlike

submissive, pliant

timid, wary

tough, rugged

unconfident, self-critical

whiny, oversensitive

Openness to Experience:

artistic

clever, creative

informed, literate

intelligent

literary

musical

pensive, thoughtful

perceptive, logical

poetic

simple, dull

APPENDIX B

RELATIONSHIP MEASURES

<u>Rubin Loving Scale:</u>

I feel that I can confide in _____ about virtually
everything.

I would do almost anything for _____.

If I could never be with _____, I would feel miserable.

If I were lonely, my first thought would be to seek _____
out.

One of my primary concerns is _____'s welfare.

I would forgive _____ for practically anything.

I feel responsible for _____'s well-being.

I would greatly enjoy being confided in by _____.

It would be hard for me to get along without _____.

<u>Rubin Liking Scale:</u>

I think that _____ is unusually well adjusted.

I would highly recommend _____ for a responsible job.

In my opinion, _____ is an exceptionally mature person.

I have great confidence in _____'s good judgement.

Most people would react favorably to _____ after a brief
acquaintance.

I think that _____ is one of those people who quickly wins respect.

_____ is one of the most likable people I know.

_____ is the sort of person whom I myself would like to be. It seems to me that it is very easy for _____ to gain admiration.

Relationship Satisfaction Items:

I am extremely satisfied with my relationship with _____.

I am very contented with my relationship with _____.

I like _____ very much.

I can see my relationship with _____ continuing for many years.

I love _____ very much.

I feel concerned for _____'s well-being.

I can see myself married to _____.

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED ITEMS (PERTAINING TO WHAT SUBJECTS
MOST ADMIRED ABOUT PARTNER AND WHAT SUBJECTS MOST WANTED TO
CHANGE ABOUT THEMSELVES)

Self-Dissatisfied Group:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
103	independence, courage common sense, humor	moodiness, lack of self-confidence, flakiness
107	honesty, self-respect, understanding, patience, IQ affectionate	naivety, shyness, tactlessness, too blunt
115	motivated to succeed	level of motivation
117	warm, caring, affectionate	motivation, insensitivity
204	patience	jealousy, selfishness

Self-Dissatisfied Group continued:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
206	happy-go-lucky, carefree, doesn't worry and never anxious	shyness, self-critical, critical of others, undisciplined
208	thoughtful, charitable, friendly, considerate	stubbornness, bluntness
211	empathy, "human-ness", "outlook"	laziness, conceit, afraid to voice opinions
301	honesty, openness	too impulsive, addictive behavior (smoker)
302	friendliness, IQ, spirituality, calm, creativity, spontaneity	--------

Self-Dissatisfied Group continued:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
303	IQ, "goofiness"	less dependent, more assertive, less critical
304	sensitive, accessible, caring affectionate	too self-critical & analytical, more independent & assertive
311	generous, humor, caring, artistic	more trusting, secure, friendly
314	IQ, patience, artistic, devoted	more self-confident, less impulsive, less fearful
401	childlike, maturity, warmth, sensitivity	less introverted, friendly and self-confident

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
403	caring, warm, honest, trustworthy, dependable, IQ	less argumentative, egotistical, more ambitious and refined
404	friendliness, outgoing, cheerfulness, energetic	less sensitivity, laziness, and impatience
405	ambition, humor, interesting, exciting, devoted	less self-critical
407	talkative, outgoing, warm, friendly, confident, funny	less unambitious, short-tempered, oversensitive, more IQ, creative
413	caring, ambitious, determined	more motivated, more economical

Self-Dissatisfied Group continued:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
414	self-confidence, passion, drive	more self-confident, passionate

Moderately Self-Satisfied Group:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
101	sensitivity, openness self-confidence	self-critical, undependable, not socially adept
104	motivated, rational, loving, considerate	insecure, too sensitive, jealousy
105	accomplishes goals, determination, strength, self-reliance	lack of self-confidence, undependable
106	open, friendly, generous, dependable	self-critical, nervousness, shyness fearful
111	ambition, determination, innovative, creativity	stubborn, timid, shy
112	thoughtfulness, polite, caring, passionate, affectionate	more resourceful, energetic, proud, IQ

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
209	sense of humor, creative assertiveness	less submissive, more assertive
210	confident, brave, IQ, dependable, independent	more outgoing, less irritable, more musical
212	dependable, trustful, conscientious, IQ, self-confident	laziness, short-tempered, seriousness, more economical
213	outgoing, friendly, honest	more outgoing, socially aware, giving, too thrifty
214	------	--------
216	logic, outlook on life	short-temper

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
217	IQ, musical,	less unconfident, fearful, self-critical sensitive egotistical, more social
305	secure, trusting, self-confident	more trusting, more open
306	considerate, outgoing, friendly	more creative, musical, artistic, cultured
309	warmth, sensitive, creative, generous	more tolerant, impulsive, creative too self-critical
313	gentle, independence, resourcefulness	too short-tempered, vengeful

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
316	mature, independence, considerate, understanding	more aggressive, tactful, realistic conscientious
411	determined, independent, trustworthy	more socially aware, less proud, stubborn
412	humor, sensitivity, honesty, dependable	too selfish, more literate/educated

Self-Satisfied Group:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
102	selflessness, IQ friendliness, strength	irritable, not assertive enough procrastination
108	self-confidence, talkative, non-judgmental	want to be more comfortable with appearance, more sociable
109	friendliness	shyness
110	energetic, fun, exciting	-------
113	maturity, realistic, sensitivity, self-discipline	short temper, too suspicious, and too inconsiderate
116	outgoing, social light-hearted	-------

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
118	very helpful	too aloof, too sarcastic
203	resourceful, caring, IQ	more happy, worldly, optimistic
205	honesty, affection, sensitivity	too self-critical & too unconfident, more impulsive
207	caring, concerned, sensitive	self-critical, worry
215	honest, loving, caring outgoing	"nothing!"
307	mature, playful, energetic, determination	less worry, nervous less erratic

Self-Satisfied Group continued:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
308	ambitious	more charitable, aggressive, literary less self-critical
310	IQ, clever, passionate, dependable, ambitious, rugged, affectionate, frank, talkative, thoughtful, musical	oversensitive, more musical, argumentative
312	outgoing, friendly, social, kindness	too jealous, self-righteous, self-pitying
315	humor, caring, sweet, giving	too predictable, more thrifty & independent
317	optimism, cheerfulness, motivation, ambition	less defensive, procrastination

Self-Satisfied Group continued:

ID	Like About Partner	Change About Self
402	caring, sensitive	--------
406	honest, independent, generous, conscientious ambitious, IQ	ambitious, active, trustful, independent
409	fun to be with, humor, friendly	too trusting
410	carefree, honest, confident	too short-tempered, irritable

NOTES

1   It is interesting that the one subject with a high score on the Rubin Liking Scale and did not have a partner who resembled the ideal self more than the self resembled the ideal self had a relationship length of 50 months, more than 2.25 standard deviations above the mean. The long-term nature of this relationship might have resulted in the unique pattern of profile differences for this subject.

2   We acknowledge that it is easy to be theoretically biased when looking at qualitative data such as these. These data have been included as an illustration of the type of phenomenon we are exploring and are only meant to add depth to the quantitative findings.

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