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Liking the Same Things, but Doing Things Differently: Outcome Versus Compatibility in Partner Preferences for Joint Tasks

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Abstract

We propose a distinction between two types of interpersonal compatibility in determining partner preferences for joint tasks: outcome compatibility and strategic compatibility. We argue that these two types of compatibility correspond to preferences for similar and complementary task partners, respectively. Five studies support this distinction. A pilot study demonstrates that established scales for measuring attitudes and values (variables associated with similarity effects) capture more information about desired outcomes, whereas established scales for measuring dominance (the variable most widely associated with complementarity effects) capture more information about desired strategies. Studies 1a and 1b demonstrate that framing the same variable as either an outcome variable or a strategic variable can predict partner preference (i.e., similar or complementary). Finally, Studies 2a and 2b address why complementarity may offer a strategic advantage over similarity in task pursuit: complementarity allows two individuals with contrasting strategic preferences to "divide and conquer" tasks that require multiple strategies.

Keywords

compatibility, outcome, partner preferences, joint tasks

Disciplines

Labor Relations | Organizational Behavior and Theory | Social Psychology and Interaction

Comments

Suggested Citation

LIKING THE SAME THINGS, BUT DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY: OUTCOME VERSUS STRATEGIC COMPATIBILITY IN PARTNER PREFERENCES FOR JOINT TASKS

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We propose a distinction between two types of interpersonal compatibility in determining partner preferences for joint tasks: outcome compatibility and strategic compatibility. We argue that these two types of compatibility correspond to preferences for similar and complementary task partners, respectively. Five studies support this distinction. A pilot study demonstrates that established scales for measuring attitudes and values (variables associated with similarity effects) capture more information about desired outcomes, whereas established scales for measuring dominance (the variable most widely associated with complementarity effects) capture more information about desired strategies. Studies 1a and 1b demonstrate that framing the same variable as either an outcome variable or a strategic variable can predict partner preference (i.e., similar or complementary). Finally, Studies 2a and 2b address why complementarity may offer a strategic advantage over similarity in task pursuit: complementarity allows two individuals with contrasting strategic preferences to "divide and conquer" tasks that require multiple strategies.

Research on justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992), decision-making (Pennington & Hastie, 1988; Tetlock, 1991; Tversky & Shafir, 1992), and self-regulation (Higgins & Molden, 2003; Molden & Higgins, 2005) all stress the importance

of distinguishing between outcomes and strategies (or process). In this article, we propose and test a theoretical framework for applying this distinction to partner preferences for joint tasks. Specifically, we propose a distinction between two types of interpersonal compatibility: outcome compatibility and strategic compatibility. We suggest that outcome compatibility reflects agreement over *what* goals two individuals would like to pursue together in a task, whereas strategic compatibility refers to agreement about *how* two people will work together in pursuit of their joint goals in a task.

The distinction between outcome and strategic compatibility may help to resolve a familiar paradox. Similarity effects (i.e., "birds of a feather flock together") seem to consistently occur on some variables, while complementarity effects (i.e., "opposites attract") regularly occur on others. Numerous studies have found robust preferences for similarity between individuals on variables such as *attitudes* and *values* (Berscheid, 1985; Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Brewer & Brewer, 1968; Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Blaylock, 1963; Coombs, 1966; Newcomb, 1961). However, analyses of interpersonal behaviors have repeatedly found preferences for complementarity[1] on the variable of *dominance* (Benjamin, 1996; Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Locke & Sadler, 2007; Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003; Sadler & Woody, 2003; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003; Tracey, 1994). Applying the distinction between outcomes and strategies, we suggest that similarity effects may be more strongly related to outcome compatibility (i.e., agreement about *what* two people would like to do together), while complementarity effects may be more strongly related to strategic compatibility (i.e., agreement about *how* two people will work together).

STRATEGIES VERSUS OUTCOMES

Many research traditions make an important distinction between value that is derived from the achievement of specific goals and value that is derived from pursuing one's goals in a preferred manner (Higgins, 2000; Pennington & Hastie, 1988; Tetlock, 1991; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tversky & Shafir, 1992; Tyler & Lind, 1992). While it obviously feels good to achieve a desired outcome, studies have shown that it also feels good to pursue a goal using "proper means," independent of the end result. This concept is captured colloquially in expressions such as, "It's not whether you win or lose; it's how you play the game that counts," and "The ends do not justify the means." Similar distinctions are made by a wide range of literatures: in justice research, procedural justice is distinguished from distributive justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992); in the field of decision-making, decision process is considered separately from decision outcomes (Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Herek, Janis, & Huth, 1987); and in self-regulation, a distinction is made between preferred goals and preferred strategies or means (Higgins & Molden, 2003; Kruglanski, Shah, Fishbach, Friedman, Chun, & Sleeth-Keppler, 2002; Molden & Higgins, 2005). In essence, the difference between outcomes and strategies can be described as a distinction between *what* a person prefers and *how* a person prefers to do something.

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1. The term "complementarity" can mean different things depending on the research tradition. To be clear, we are defining complementarity as contrast in strategic preferences.

STRATEGIC COMPATIBILITY VERSUS OUTCOME COMPATIBILITY

We propose that a similar distinction can be made for interpersonal compatibility in joint task pursuit. Two individuals can be compatible with regard to the desired outcomes they wish to pursue together (i.e., *what* they both want to pursue), and, independently, they can be compatible with regard to the strategies they prefer to use to pursue those desired outcomes (i.e., *how* they prefer to behave strategically in pursuit of what they want). We argue that outcome compatibility typically derives from *similarity* in outcome preferences, which reflects the potential for consensus regarding two individuals' desired outcomes. In contrast, strategic compatibility typically derives from *complementarity* in strategic preferences, which reflects the potential for two individuals to divide up different strategic roles so that each member of the dyad is able to use the strategy he or she prefers.

The benefits of similarity for outcome compatibility are relatively straightforward. When two individuals attempt to negotiate *what* they should do together (e.g., what they should bake for dessert), similar preferences will likely make the negotiation easier and more pleasant (e.g., there is little to argue about if both individuals' favorite dessert is chocolate soufflé). In fact, this prediction is in line with one of the fundamental tenets of classic similarity-attraction theories, such as Byrne's (1971) reinforcement theory of similarity: it is unpleasant to be around someone with whom there is frequent conflict. (See Craddock, 1991 and Hojjat, 1997 for more recent arguments describing the benefits of similarity for establishing agreement.)

The benefits of complementarity for strategic compatibility, on the other hand, are somewhat less straightforward, so we will describe them in more detail here. Once two individuals have established outcome compatibility (e.g., chosen what they will bake), they must then begin the process of deciding *how* they will pursue their agreed upon goal in tandem. The joint pursuit of a goal with another person typically involves the negotiation of multiple strategies that may require the individuals to take on different strategic roles. For example, in the baking scenario, one person may need to be more strategically cautious (e.g., by carefully checking the time and temperature to ensure that the soufflé doesn't fall) or more strategically eager (e.g., by coming up with a creative garnish for the soufflé). In these cases, similarity in strategic preferences would only lead to conflicts; for example, if both individuals want to be in charge of ensuring that the soufflé doesn't fall or designing the garnish, or, conversely, if neither do. However, if the individuals instead had contrasting strategic preferences, this would allow each individual to behave in his or her preferred manner; for example, the more strategically cautious individual would get to focus on monitoring the soufflé while the more strategically eager individual would be able to focus on designing a creative garnish.

In sum, similarity in desired outcomes may be preferable for establishing *outcome compatibility* between task partners because it makes agreement more likely. Conversely, complementary strategic preferences may be optimal for establishing *strategic compatibility* because contrasting strategies allow a dyad to create a "division of labor" that allows each individual to behave in his or her preferred manner while simultaneously benefitting from the other's area of expertise.

SUPPORT FOR SIMILARITY AS OUTCOME COMPATIBILITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY AS STRATEGIC COMPATIBILITY

Previous research supports this distinction between outcome and strategic compatibility in two key ways: First, the specific types of variables that have consistently been shown to elicit similarity effects—*attitudes and values* (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Griffith, 1973; Coombs, 1966; Jamieson, Lyndon, & Zanna, 1987; Luo & Klohnen, 2005; Michinov & Michinov, 2001; Murstein, 1970)—generally provide information about desired outcomes, while the variable most consistently associated with complementarity effects— *dominance* (Benjamin, 1996; Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Locke & Sadler, 2007; Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003; Sadler & Woody, 2003; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003; Tracey, 1994)—generally provides information about the strategies a person would prefer to use in order to obtain their desired outcomes. Rather than take this categorization at face value, in a pilot study we test directly whether attitudes and values are viewed to be more associated with outcomes than strategies whereas the opposite is true for dominance. Second, empirical evidence has established boundary conditions for both similarity and complementarity that supports the distinction between outcome and strategic compatibility, as we discuss next.

The Conditional Nature of Similarity Effects. If similarity effects indeed derive from two individuals' agreeing on their desired outcomes or goals (a reflection of *outcome compatibility*), as we have suggested, similarity effects should only be seen in situations where a common goal has yet to be established. Once a common goal is established and two individuals begin the process of working toward that common goal, the advantage of similarity should decrease because agreement on desired outcomes has already been established. At this point, strategic compatibility should become more important as a determinant of attraction. Although this prediction has rarely been tested, a study of group cohesion by Anderson (1975) provides some support. In that study, groups that were high and low on value similarity were created and then the groups engaged in two tasks. For the first task, the groups were asked simply to "get to know" one another; that is, they were not assigned a group goal. In this task, groups with high value similarity reported greater group cohesion, demonstrating a classic similarity-attraction effect. However, for the second task the groups were given a specific project to complete and were consequently assigned a group goal. In the assigned-goal condition, the study found that similarity *no longer* predicted group cohesion, no longer showing a similarity-attraction effect. That is, when outcome compatibility was established through external means (i.e., through the experimental condition), value similarity no longer predicted group cohesion.

The Conditional Nature of Complementarity Effects. An analogous argument can be made for complementarity effects. That is, if complementarity reflects *strategic compatibility*, it should only occur in conditions where two people have already established a joint goal and have begun to pursue it; that is, in situations where strategic preferences are applicable. Prior to this point, while two individuals are still in the process of negotiating a joint goal, similarity should continue to be the main predictor of attraction. In support of this claim, while dominance complementarity effects have been found for dyads working on joint tasks with a clear common

purpose (Billings, 1979; Sadler & Woody, 2003; Tiedens, Unzueta, & Young, 2007; Tracey, 2004), studies have failed to find complementarity when participants engage in an unstructured task; that is, a task without a clear goal (Markey et al., 2003; Shannon & Guerney, 1973). Similarly, Moskowitz, Ho, and Turcotte-Tremblay (2007) found complementarity effects amongst dyads at work, but not in nonwork settings. Indeed, in discussing their findings, Moskowitz and colleagues explicitly noted that, "individuals in a social interaction must have some shared goal, purpose, or task to engender reciprocal patterns of dominance and submissiveness" (Moskowitz et al., 2007, p. 1060). This pattern of results is consistent with the argument that complementarity reflects a *strategic compatibility*; contrasting strategies seem only to be beneficial in conditions where two people are pursuing a joint goal; that is, in conditions where task partners' strategic preferences would now be relevant.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

We present five studies that attempt to test more directly the distinction between outcome and strategic compatibility and its link to preferences for similar versus complementary task partners. These studies provide evidence that: (1) established scales for measuring variables that have been highlighted in previous research on interpersonal compatibility (attitudes and values; dominance) can be classified according to their emphasis on outcome versus strategic information; (2) framing the same variable as either a strategic or an outcome variable can predict preference for a similar versus a complementary partner; and (3) complementarity is specifically advantageous for strategic purposes because it allows two individuals to create a "division of labor" in a given situation.

   In an initial pilot study, naive raters were randomly presented with items taken from established scales for assessing attitudes and values (variables associated with similarity effects) and dominance (the variable most associated with complementarity/contrast effects), and were asked to rate the extent to which these items were associated with *what* people like to do (i.e., outcomes) or *how* people like to do things (i.e., strategies). We predicted that participants would rate the attitude and value items as more related to *what* people like to do, and would rate the dominance items as more related to *how* people like to do things. In Studies 1a and 1b, the same personality variable was framed as an outcome ("what") variable or a strategic ("how") variable and participants indicated their preference for a partner who was similar to or different from them on that variable. We predicted that participants would be more likely to exhibit a preference for a similar partner in the outcome ("what") framing conditions than in the strategic ("how") framing conditions. Finally, in Studies 2a and 2b, participants were asked to indicate their preference for a strategically similar or strategically different partner for a task that had divisible roles and a task that did not have divisible roles. We predicted that participants would prefer a complementary partner (i.e., a partner with contrasting strategic preferences) only for tasks with separate and divisible roles that would allow for a strategic "division of labor."

PILOT STUDY

A pilot study explored the extent to which established scales for measuring attitudes and values and for measuring dominance capture, respectively, outcome versus strategic information. Naive raters were provided with a distinction between outcomes ("what" people like to do) and strategies ("how" people like to do things). They were then randomly presented with 40 items taken from established scales for assessing attitudes and values (variables traditionally associated with similarity effects) and for assessing dominance (the variable most commonly associated with complementarity effects). Participants were asked to rate each of the items on the degree to which they believed it was associated with the *outcomes* a person might typically prefer or the *strategies* a person might typically prefer to use. We hypothesized that if similarity is important for establishing outcome compatibility and complementarity is important for establishing strategic compatibility, variables that have traditionally produced similarity effects, namely, attitudes and values, would be rated as capturing more information about desired outcomes, whereas variables that have traditionally produced complementarity effects, that is, dominance, would be rated as capturing more information about desired strategies.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Fifty-three participants (43 Female, M_{Age} = 31.6) completed an online questionnaire in exchange for entry into a lottery to win one of four $25 Amazon.com gift certificates. Participants responded to ads that were posted under "Jobs" on the Craigslist.com websites covering eight major U.S. cities (e.g., New York, Chicago, San Francisco). The online ads ("Participants Wanted for Psychology Study") directed respondents to a link to the online survey. Three participants were excluded from the analyses because they scored more than 2 standard deviations above the mean on six "lie detector" items (e.g., "I believe one should never engage in leisure activities"). The analyses reported here are based on the remaining 50 participants.

PROCEDURE

Participants were told that they would be presented with 40 sample items taken from a variety of different personality scales, some of which were concerned with *what* people like to do (i.e., "what outcomes or goals are important to a person") and others that were concerned with *how* people like to do things (i.e., "the strategies people prefer to use when they are pursuing a goal or engaging in an activity"). For each item, they were asked to rank on two separate 7-point scales ranging from "Not at all" to "To a great extent" the degree to which they thought the item was concerned with *what* people like to do, and the extent to which it was

concerned with *how* people like to do things. For example, a participant would be presented with the following: "Sample Item 1. 'Do you control others more than they control you?'" The participant would then answer two questions in randomized order: "To what extent do you think this question is concerned with *what* people like to do?" and "To what extent do you think this question is concerned with *how* people like to do things?"

SCALE ITEMS

The items presented to participants were selected from eight established scales. Four of these scales measured attitudes and values: "Survey of Attitudes" (Byrne, 1971); "Rokeach Value Survey, Instrumental Value Scale" (Rokeach, 1973); "Rokeach Value Survey, Terminal Value Scale" (Rokeach, 1973); "Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values" (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1970). The remaining four scales measured dominance: "General Population Dominance Scale" (Ray, 1981); "California Psychological Inventory, Dominance Scale" (Gough, 1957); "The Trait Dominance-Submissiveness Scale" (Mehrabian & Hines, 1978); "Revised Interpersonal Adjectives Scale" (Wiggins, Trapnell, & Phillips, 1988). The first five items were chosen from each scale, compiled, and randomly presented.[2] The complete list of the 40 items used in this study can be found in Table 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We predicted that the items from scales used to measure variables that have traditionally been associated with similarity (value and attitude scales) would be rated as having more to do with outcomes (or *what* people like to do) than strategies. Conversely, we predicted that the items from scales used to measure variables traditionally associated with complementarity (dominance scales) would be rated as having more to do with strategies (or *how* people like to do things) than outcomes. These predictions were confirmed (see Figure 1). Participants rated the attitude and value items as having more to do with "what" people like to do ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .77$) than "how" ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .98$) people like to do things, $F(1, 49) = 7.90$, $p = .007$ (and as having more to do with "what" people like to do than the dominance items, $F(1, 49) = 9.94$, $p = .003$.) On the other hand, participants rated the dominance items as more related to "how" people like to do things ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.17$) than "what" people like to do ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .98$), $F(1, 49) = 5.18$, $p = .03$ (and more related to "how" people like to do things than the attitude and value items, $F(1, 49) = 7.10$, $p = .01$). The interaction between the two repeated-measures factors was highly significant, $F(1, 49) = 26.06$, $p < .001$.

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2. Comparisons of the individual scales are not presented here because only the first five items of each scale were used in this study.

TABLE 1. Items from Value/Attitude Scales and Dominance Scales in the Pilot Study

Scale	First 5 Items
Dominance Scales	
General Population Dominance Scale (Ray, 1981)	1. Are you the sort of person who always likes to get their way?
	2. Do you tend to boss people around?
	3. Do you dislike having to tell others what to do?
	4. If you are told to take charge in a situation, does this make you feel uncomfortable?
	5. Would you rather take orders than give them?
California Psychological Inventory, dominance scale (Gough, 1957)	1. (I…) Try to surpass others' accomplishments.
	2. Try to outdo others.
	3. Am quick to correct others.
	4. Impose my will on others.
	5. Demand explanations from others.
The Trait Dominance-Submissiveness Scale (Mehrabian & Hines, 1978)	1. I usually win arguments.
	2. I control others more than they control me.
	3. Others recognize me as an authority on some things.
	4. I avoid talking about touchy subjects.
	5. I am passive in my dealings with others.
Revised Interpersonal Adjectives Scale (IAS-R; Wiggins, Trapnell, & Phillips, 1988)	1. (To what extent would you describe yourself as…) Meek
	2. Domineering
	3. Persistent
	4. Timid
	5. Firm

Attitude and Value Scales

Survey of Attitudes (Byrne, 1971)

1. To what extent are you in favor or against fraternities or sororities as they usually function?
2. To what extent do you enjoy or dislike Western movies and television programs?
3. To what extent are you for or against undergraduates getting married?
4. To what extent do you enjoy or dislike situation comedies?
5. How strongly do you believe there is a God?

Rokeach Value Survey, Instrumental Values Scale (Rokeach, 1973)

1. (How important to you is being…) Ambitious (hardworking and aspiring)
2. Broad-minded (open-minded)
3. Capable (competent; effective)
4. Clean (neat and tidy)
5. Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)

Rokeach Value Survey, Terminal Values Scale (Rokeach, 1973)

1. (How important to you is…) A comfortable life (a prosperous life)
2. Equality (brotherhood and equal opportunity for all)
3. An Exciting Life (a stimulating, active life)
4. Family Security (taking care of loved ones)
5. Freedom (independence and free choice)

Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1970)

1. The main objective of scientific research should be the discovery of truth rather than its practical implications. (Yes or No)
2. Taking the Bible as a whole, one should regard it from the point of view of its beautiful mythology and literary style rather than as a spiritual revelation. (Yes or No)
3. Which of the following men do you think should be judged as contributing more to the progress of mankind? (Aristotle or Abraham Lincoln)
4. Assuming that you have sufficient ability, would you prefer to be: (a banker or a politician)?
5. Do you think it is justifiable for great artists, such as Beethoven, Wagner and Byron to be selfish and negligent of the feelings of others? (Yes or No)
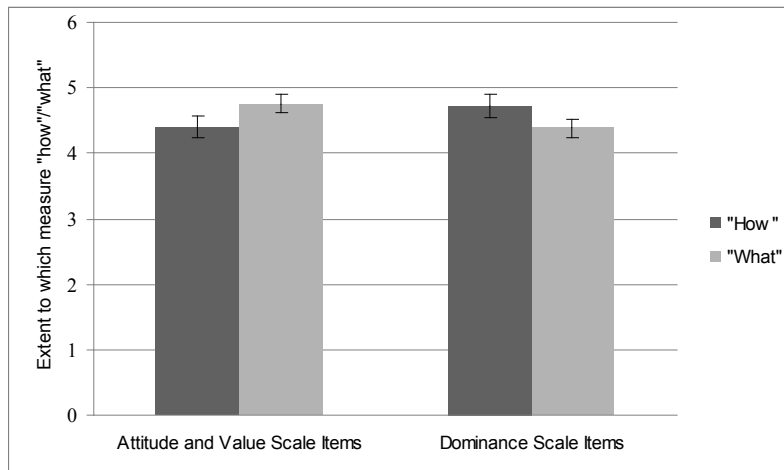
FIGURE 1. Naïve raters' impressions of randomly presented items from attitude/value scales (associated with similarity effects) and dominance scales (associated with complementarity effects) as concerning strategies ("how") versus outcomes ("what") in the Pilot Study.

DISCUSSION

These results suggest that previous research that has found similarity effects on variables such as attitudes and values using the measures described above may have been tapping into outcome compatibility between participants (or the potential for agreement about *what* two individuals would prefer to do together). Conversely, previous research that has found complementarity (i.e., contrast) effects on the variable of dominance using the above described dominance measures may have been tapping into strategic compatibility (or congruence regarding *how* two individuals would prefer to work together).

STUDY 1A

Our pilot study revealed that different types of variables could be classified as outcome or strategic variables in predictable ways based on previous research on interpersonal attraction. In Study 1a, we explored whether the *same* variable could be framed so as to produce similarity effects in one condition and complementarity effects in another. In a between-subjects design, the same variable (dominance) was framed as either a strategic (how) variable or as an outcome (what) variable. Participants were then asked to rate themselves and their preferred partner on this variable. We predicted that a variable framed as an outcome (what) variable would produce stronger similarity effects than a variable framed as a strategic (how) variable. Notably, although we chose dominance as our test variable in the current study given its importance in the literature, we would make the same prediction for any variable that was given a "how" or a "what" framing—a point which we will revisit in Study 1b.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Sixty-six participants (49 Female) completed an online survey for entry in a lottery to win one of ten $10 Amazon.com gift certificates. As in our Pilot Study, participants responded to ads posted under "Jobs" on Craigslist.com. The ads directed respondents to a link to the online survey. Age information was not collected in this sample. One participant was excluded for falling more than 2 standard deviations above the mean on the "lie" items, leaving 65 participants in the analyses.

PROCEDURE

At the beginning of the study, participants were told they would be reading a description of a personality variable and would be asked to indicate their preference for a partner based on this description. All participants read an overview statement explaining that "personality variables typically measure one of two things: *what* people like to do, or *how* people like to do things." Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a "how" condition, or a "what" condition and provided with a description of dominance as a strategic or an outcome variable respectively. In the "how" condition, participants were told that dominance and submissiveness "correspond to different strategies for doing things," and in the "what" condition they were told that dominance and submissiveness "correspond to different outcomes (i.e., choices and preferences)." (See Appendix B for complete framing manipulation provided to participants.)

Following the "how" or "what" manipulation in which participants read these definitions of "dominant" and "submissive," participants were asked to indicate on two separate 7-point scales the extent to which they would describe themselves as "dominant" and the extent to which they would describe themselves as "submissive." They were then asked to indicate, once again on two separate scales, the extent to which they would prefer a partner for an undefined task who was "dominant" and the extent to which they would prefer a partner who was "submissive." A difference score of dominance minus submissiveness was then calculated for both self-perceptions of dominance and partner preference and used in the subsequent analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We predicted an interaction of self-perception of dominance with condition in predicting preference for a dominant partner. Specifically, we expected to find more evidence for similarity in the "what" condition than the "how" condition. This pattern of results would support our argument that similarity is more important for establishing outcome compatibility (i.e., agreement about *what* two people want), while complementarity is more important for establishing strategic compatibility
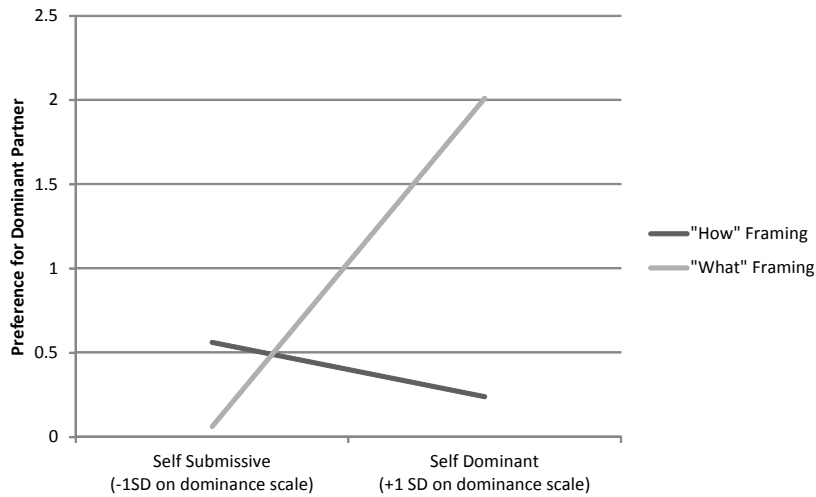
FIGURE 2. Preference for a dominant partner by self-reported dominance and "how"/"what" framing in Study 1a. (Positive slope indicates similarity; negative slope indicates complementarity.)

(i.e., determining *how* two individuals will best work together to achieve some desired outcome).

In order to test our hypothesis, we created an interaction term of condition (dummy-coded as 0 = "how," 1 = "what") multiplied by self-perceived dominance. We then regressed condition, self-perceived dominance, and the interaction term (self-perceived dominance × "how"/"what" condition) on partner preference. The only significant effect to emerge from the regression was the interaction term, β = .43, $t(62)$ = 2.01, $p < .05$. This interaction indicates that while there was a positive relationship between self-perceived dominance and preference for a dominant partner when dominance was framed as a "what" variable, β = .37, $t(26)$ = 2.60, $p < .02$, there was a nonsignificant reversal of the relationship when dominance was framed as a "how" variable, β = -.06, $t(36) < 1$ (see Figure 2). In other words, a similarity effect only emerged in the "what" condition.

DISCUSSION

These results indicate that the same variable can be manipulated to convey information about outcome compatibility or strategic compatibility. When a variable is thought to contain information about a person's preferred outcomes (i.e., "what" information), a preference for a similar partner is elicited; however, when a variable is thought to contain information about a person's preferred strategies (i.e., "how" information), this similarity effect is eliminated. We were, however, surprised by the lack of evidence for complementarity in the "how" condition (although the coefficient in the "how" condition was negative, indicating complementarity, the relationship was quite weak). We offer a potential explanation for why this may have been the case in Studies 2a and 2b.

STUDY 1B

To further highlight the point that the finding reported in Study 1a is not specific to the particular variable of dominance and would be elicited by any variable given a "what" or a "how" framing, Study 1a was replicated using a different variable. For this replication, we selected a variable that our participants would presumably be unfamiliar with and would therefore have no preconceptions about (which may not have been the case with dominance). However, rather than create a nonsense variable, we wanted to use an established variable that could be used legitimately to describe a person's strategic behavior. To this end, we decided to use the strategic variable known as regulatory mode (Kruglanski, Thompson, Higgins, Atash, Pierro, Shah, & Spiegel, 2000). Like the distinction between dominance and submissiveness, regulatory mode differentiates between two types of orientations that are associated with strategic preferences: assessment and locomotion. Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated that complementary regulatory mode orientations are advantageous in group settings (Mauro, Pierro, Mannetti, Higgins, & Kruglanski, 2009). Assessment involves a strategic preference for making repeated comparisons to ensure one "does the right thing"; conversely, locomotion refers to a strategic preference for moving on, being decisive, and "just doing something." Once again, however, the content of the specific variable was not essential to our predictions.

In Study 1b, we used an identical procedure to that described in Study 1a. In a between-subjects design, the same variable (in this case, assessment vs. locomotion) was framed as either a strategic (how) variable or an outcome (what) variable. Participants then rated themselves and their preferred partner on this variable. We predicted that regardless of the actual variable, a variable framed as an outcome (what) variable would once again produce stronger similarity effects than a variable framed as a strategic (how) variable.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Sixty-eight participants completed an online survey for entry in a lottery to win one of seven $10 Amazon.com gift certificates. Once again, participants responded to ads posted on Craigslist.com and were directed to a link to an online survey. Demographic data was not collected in this sample. All of the lie detector items were at acceptable levels, therefore no participants were excluded from the analyses.

PROCEDURE

As in Study 1a, participants were told they would be reading a description of a personality variable and would be asked to indicate their preference for a partner based on this description. All participants read an overview statement explaining

that, "personality variables typically measure one of two things: what people like to do, or how people like to do things." Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a "how" condition, or a "what" condition and provided with a description of assessment and locomotion as either strategic or outcome variables respectively. In the "how" condition, participants were told that assessment and locomotion "correspond to different strategies for doing things," and in the "what" condition they were told that assessment and locomotion "correspond to different outcomes (i.e., choices and preferences)." (See Appendix C for complete framing manipulation provided to participants.)

Following the "how" or "what" manipulation in which participants read these descriptions of "assessment" and "locomotion," participants were asked to indicate on two separate 7-point scales the extent to which they would describe themselves as "high in assessment" and the extent to which they would describe themselves as "high in locomotion." They were then asked to indicate, once again on two separate scales, the extent to which they would prefer a partner for an undefined task who was "high in assessment" and the extent to which they would prefer a partner who was "high in locomotion." A difference score of assessment minus locomotion, that is, a measure of predominant assessment, was then calculated for both self-perceptions of assessment and partner preference and used in the subsequent analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We expected to replicate our findings from Study 1a and thus predicted an interaction of self-perception of predominant assessment with condition in predicting preference for a high-assessment partner. Specifically, we expected to find more evidence for similarity in the "what" condition than the "how" condition, which would again support the hypothesis that similarity is more important for establishing outcome compatibility while complementarity is more important for establishing strategic compatibility.

As in Study 1a, in order to test this hypothesis, we created an interaction term of condition (dummy-coded as 0 = "how," 1 = "what") multiplied by self-perception (in this case, self-perceived predominant assessment). We then regressed condition, self-perceived assessment, and the interaction term (self-perceived assessment × "how"/"what" condition) on partner preference. As in Study 1a, the only significant effect to emerge from the regression was the interaction term, β = .74, $t(67)$ = 3.35, p = .001. This interaction indicates that while there was a positive relationship between self-perceived predominant assessment and preference for a predominant assessment partner when assessment was framed as a "what" variable, β = .64, $t(31)$ = 4.70, p < .001, there was once again a nonsignificant reversal of the relationship when assessment was framed as a "how" variable, β = -.10, $t(35)$ < 1 (see Figure 3). In other words, a similarity effect once again emerged in the "what" condition, but not in the "how" condition.
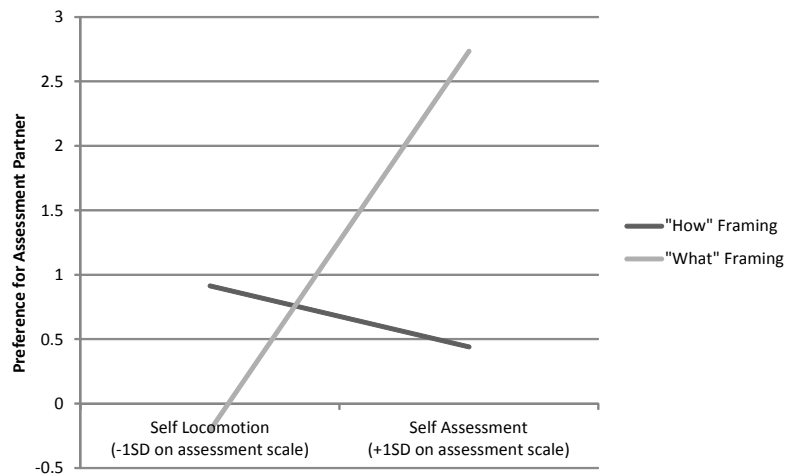
FIGURE 3. Preference for an assessment partner by self-reported assessment and "how"/"what" framing in Study 1b. (Positive slope indicates similarity; negative slope indicates complementarity.)

DISCUSSION

We again found that framing a variable as an outcome (what) variable elicited a preference for a similar partner, whereas framing the same variable as a strategic (how) variable eliminated this similarity effect. The fact that we replicated this finding using a variable other than dominance suggests that the driving element of this effect is whether an individual believes they are receiving information about a person's desired *outcomes* or *strategies*, rather than the specific variable itself. Once again, we did not find strong support for complementarity in the "how" condition (although the coefficient was once again negative, as in Study 1a it did not approach conventional levels of significance). We return to this point in Studies 2a and 2b, described below.

STUDIES 2A AND 2B

The preceding studies have provided evidence that a preference for similar others is more strongly associated with outcome (what) information than strategic (how) information. However, the complementarity effects found in our strategic (how) conditions in Studies 1a and 1b were relatively weak compared to the similarity effects we found in those same studies. In Studies 2a and 2b, we explore a potential explanation for the weakness of the complementarity effects in Studies 1a and 1b in addition to testing our hypothesis about the strategic advantages of complementarity. More precisely, we delineate the specific situations in which we would expect to find complementarity and those where we would not. This context-dependent characteristic of complementarity may provide one potential explanation

for the weakness of our prior complementarity findings in Studies 1a and 1b since the tasks participants were responding to in these studies were left ambiguous.

We have argued that when two people have complementary strategic preferences, each person benefits from being able to take on his or her own preferred role in a situation. However, there is a caveat to this prediction. What about situations in which distinguishable, separate roles are not possible? Steiner (1972) has made the distinction between *divisible* tasks—tasks that can be accomplished through a division of labor, and *unitary* tasks, in which everyone involved must perform all of the components of the task. To take an example relevant to interpersonal attraction, when two people watch a movie together, they cannot divide up this activity so that one person watches some scenes, and the other person watches other scenes; typically, both people watch the entire movie together. According to our argument, complementarity only enhances compatibility so long as it has the benefit of allowing both members of a dyad to take on different roles. Thus, in cases where circumstances do not allow two individuals to take on separate roles, as is the case with unitary activities like watching a movie, we would not expect to see a preference for complementarity. We tested these predictions in Studies 2a and 2b.

In order to test our hypothesis, we used well-established strategic variables: the strategies associated with the regulatory focus orientations of promotion and prevention (Higgins, 1997). Regulatory focus theory describes two basic orientations to goal pursuit: a *promotion* orientation concerned with growth and advancement that creates preferences for *eager* strategies of goal pursuit, and a *prevention* orientation concerned with security and responsibilities that creates preferences for *vigilant* strategies of goal pursuit (Higgins, 1997; Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008). It is common for individuals to have a predominant focus on either promotion or prevention; hence, these motivations can be treated as chronic individual differences (Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Tyalor, 2001). Moreover, many tasks people encounter in their daily lives can be categorized as typically requiring an eager strategy (e.g., brainstorming) or as typically requiring a more vigilant strategy (e.g., proofreading). Thus, strategic compatibility in a task such as "writing a paper" could be achieved if one partner was predominantly promotion-focused and could take on the eager role while the other partner was prevention-focused and could take on the vigilant role.

In both Studies 2a and 2b, we first measured participants' preferred regulatory focus strategies using a standard measure of regulatory focus. We then had participants choose between a promotion-focused and a prevention-focused partner for a particular type of task: either a unitary task in which there were no separable roles, or a divisible task in which there were separable roles. We altered our descriptions of the potential partners and of the tasks across the two studies, but in both cases we expected to find more evidence for complementarity for divisible tasks than for unitary tasks.

STUDY 2A

In Study 2a we conducted an initial test of our hypothesis using common tasks of daily life that one might perform with a partner. We first piloted a list of common joint activities in order to identify a task that participants would view as divisible and a task they would view as unitary. From these pilot data, we selected two tasks

(cooking and watching a movie) and asked our participants to indicate which of two potential partners (one strategically similar to and one strategically different from the participant) with whom they would prefer to perform each task.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Eighty-eight Columbia University students came into the lab to participate in the study for course credit. Participants were recruited through the Introductory Psychology subject pool. Demographic data was not collected in this sample, but the Introductory Psychology participant pool at Columbia is predominantly female and participants typically range from 18-20 years of age.

PROCEDURE

Among a larger battery of unrelated questionnaires, participants completed the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001; described in more detail below) and a partner-preference questionnaire. In the partner-preference questionnaire, participants were asked to imagine that they were going to be doing two different activities, each with a different partner. The two activities were "watching a movie" (a unitary activity) and "cooking" (a divisible activity). These particular activities were chosen as examples of unitary and divisible activities based on pilot testing described below. Participants were then asked to choose a hypothetical partner for each activity from two descriptions. One person was described as "generally eager and enthusiastic," which are promotion-oriented strategic preferences, and the other person was described as "generally vigilant and careful," which are prevention-oriented strategic preferences (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008). This was the only information participants were given about their potential partners. Participants then made a single forced-choice by assigning each partner to one of the two activities. That is, participants chose whether they preferred to interact with the vigilant partner while watching a movie (the unitary activity) and the eager partner while cooking (the divisible activity) or whether they preferred to interact with the vigilant partner while cooking (the divisible activity) and the eager partner while watching a movie (the unitary activity). All of the information was presented to participants in counterbalanced order.

REGULATORY FOCUS QUESTIONNAIRE (RFQ)

The RFQ (Higgins et al., 2001) is an 11-item measure on which participants rate their history of success using eager, promotion-focused and vigilant, prevention-focused strategies on 1 to 5 Likert-type scales (see Higgins et al., 2001 for a discussion of the validity and reliability of the RFQ; see also Grant & Higgins, 2003). Six items comprise the promotion subscale ($\alpha = .81$), and five items comprise the prevention subscale ($\alpha = .85$).

Although people can vary in the strength of both their promotion and preven-
tion motivations, the current research concerns individuals' *predominant* focus on
one motivational orientation over the other in a given situation. In everyday life,
individuals constantly encounter situations in which they must decide whether to
adopt an eager or a vigilant strategy. For example, when driving a person can-
not simultaneously apply the brakes when a traffic light turns yellow (a vigilant
strategy) *and* try to beat the light by stepping on the accelerator (an eager strategy).
While individuals may have varying levels of both eager and vigilant inclinations
in these situations, it is the relative strength of these inclinations that will ultimately
decide how they behave in a particular situation. Thus, whatever people's level of
promotion-focused eagerness, if they possess a higher level of prevention-focused
vigilance (and thus are classified as categorically prevention-focused), they would
be more likely to, and experience more personal satisfaction from (Higgins, 2000),
adopting a vigilant strategy of stopping at the yellow light than they would by
adopting an eager strategy of accelerating through it. Our theory regarding the
functionality of complementarity is based on this very premise—an individual
cannot behave both eagerly and vigilantly in the same moment; therefore, is it ad-
vantageous to have a partner who will adopt the complementary strategy when
necessary.

For these reasons, we used a difference score of promotion minus prevention
to classify individuals as predominantly promotion or predominantly preven-
tion focus in the current research. Positive scores indicate a predominant focus on
promotion, and negative scores indicate a predominant focus on prevention. This
index has also served as a standard measure of predominant regulatory focus in
numerous published studies (e.g., Appelt, Zou, Arora, & Higgins, 2009; Cama-
cho, Higgins, & Luger, 2003; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Cesario & Higgins,
2008; Higgins et al., 2001; Hong & Lee, 2008; Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008), and a
more extensive explanation of this theoretical rationale is provided in Higgins et
al. (2001).

ACTIVITY PILOT TEST

Prior to the study, an independent sample of students ($N = 40$) completed a pilot
questionnaire asking them to rate a list of activities on the extent to which they
thought each activity was *divisible* and the extent to which they thought each ac-
tivity was *indivisible (unitary)* on separate 1 to 7 Likert-type scales. A "divisible"
task was defined as: "A task that can be divided up into separate subtasks. The
individual parts of a divisible task can be performed by different people indepen-
dently. That is, there are distinct responsibilities that can be delegated to at least
two different people so that each person has their own separate role to play in
the task." An "indivisible (unitary)" task was defined as: "A task that cannot be
clearly divided up into separate components. There are no clearly differentiated
roles or responsibilities that can be delegated out to two different people. Rather,
two people who are working on an indivisible task must work together interde-
pendently." Based on these ratings, we chose two activities to use in Study 2a: (1)
cooking, which was rated significantly higher on divisibility ($M = 5.68$; $SD = 1.2$)
than on indivisibility ($M = 2.83$; $SD = 1.3$), $F(1, 39) = 59.5$, $p < .001$, and (2) *watching
a movie*, which was rated significantly higher on indivisibility ($M = 5.91$; $SD = 1.4$)
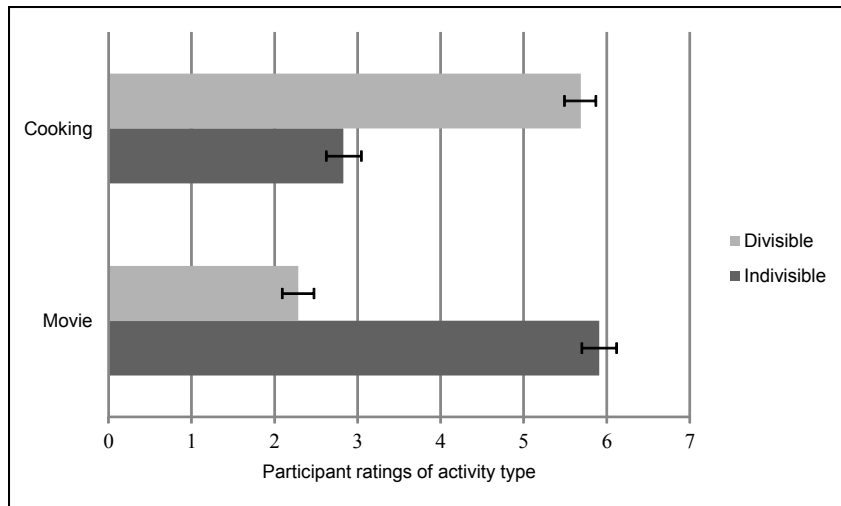
FIGURE 4. Pilot data indicating that "cooking" is considered to be more divisible than "watching a movie" in Study 2a.

than on divisibility ($M = 2.28$; $SD = 1.6$), $F(1, 39) = 63.79$, $p < .001$. The two activities (cooking and watching a movie) were rated as significantly different from one another on both divisibility, $F(1, 39) = 95.11$, $p < .001$, and indivisibility, $F(1, 39) = 88.45$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 4).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For our initial analysis, participants' partner choices (between an eager and a vigilant partner) were reclassified in terms of whether they represented a preference for a similar or a complementary partner. This classification was accomplished by using participants' scores on the RFQ to create a predominant regulatory focus index by subtracting their prevention subscale ratings from their promotion subscale ratings (as explained above). Participants were then divided into those who were predominantly promotion-focused (i.e., scored above 0 on the regulatory focus index) or predominantly prevention-focused (i.e., scored below 0 on the regulatory focus index). (None of the participants in this sample scored a "0.") Participants' choice of partner for both the unitary and the divisible tasks were classified as a preference for *similarity* when either promotion-focused individuals selected to work with the promotion-focused (eager) partner or prevention-focused individuals selected to work with the prevention-focused (vigilant) partner, or as a preference for *complementarity* when either promotion-focused individuals selected to work with the prevention-focused (vigilant) partner or prevention-focused individuals selected to work with the promotion-focused (eager) partner.

Participants made a single forced-choice, so these data were analyzed with a single Chi-square test. Analysis of these forced choices was consistent with our predictions. Fifty-four of our 88 participants (61.4%) chose the complementary partner for the divisible task (i.e., cooking) and the similar partner for the unitary

task (i.e., watching a movie), while the remaining 34 participants (38.6%) chose the opposite arrangement, $\chi^2(N = 88) = 4.06$, $p = .04$.

To illuminate the nature of these findings, we also looked at the data by orientation and choice (within the divisible task of "cooking"; the forced-choice nature of the design means that the choices are necessarily flipped for the indivisible task of "watching a movie"). Sixteen (44.4%) of our 36 predominant prevention-focused participants chose a vigilant partner, while 20 (55.6%) chose an eager partner, a nonsignificant difference, $\chi^2(N = 36) < 1$, *ns*. However, 34 (65.4%) of our 52 predominant promotion-focused participants chose a vigilant partner, while the remaining 18 (34.6%) chose an eager partner with whom to cook. The difference for promotion-focused participants was significant, $\chi^2(N = 52) = 4.92$, $p = .03$.

DISCUSSION

These findings provide some initial evidence that complementarity is more desirable than similarity in circumstances where there is the possibility to adopt separate roles within divisible tasks—that is, in situations where complementarity would be strategically advantageous. However, because participants in this initial study engaged in a single forced-choice, we cannot determine whether a differential preference for similarity versus a differential preference for complementarity is driving this effect. We attempt to remedy this confound in Study 2b by having participants make two separate task-partner choices.

STUDY 2B

Study 2b was intended to replicate and extend the findings of Study 2a. Once again, we looked at whether participants preferred to interact with a partner who was complementary or similar to them on the dimension of regulatory focus when engaged in a divisible activity versus a unitary activity. However, in this study, rather than using the specific activities of watching a movie and cooking, which likely differ on multiple dimensions in addition to their degree of divisibility, we used an idiographic approach. Further, in order to disentangle the extent to which preferences for complementarity versus preferences for similarity in a given task were driving the effect, in this study we had participants make two choices rather than a single forced choice. Participants first generated their own examples of unitary and divisible tasks, and then chose between a stereotypically promotion-focused and a stereotypically prevention-focused hypothetical partner for each task. We predicted that participants would choose a partner with a regulatory focus complementary to their own for the divisible tasks, but not for the unitary tasks.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Seventy-four Columbia University students (51 Female) came into the lab to participate in the study for course credit. Participants were recruited through the In-

troductory Psychology subject pool. Age information was not collected for this sample, but the majority of Introductory Psychology students at Columbia are between the ages of 18 and 20.

PROCEDURE

Upon arrival to the study, participants were told that they would be participating in two unrelated studies, both involving paper-and-pen questionnaires. The first set of questionnaires was a packet of individual difference measures, which included the same measure of regulatory focus used in Study 2a (the RFQ; Higgins et al., 2001). The second packet of questionnaires asked participants to generate examples of different types of activities and to choose a hypothetical partner for each activity type.

Before beginning the second packet of questionnaires, participants were told that they would be reading definitions of some terms that can be used to describe different types of activities. They were then provided with definitions of "independent (divisible)" and "interdependent (unitary)" tasks, as well as definitions for "eager" tasks and "vigilant" tasks. Independent (divisible) tasks were defined as, ". . . activities that allow two partners to work independently. That is, two people on a team may divide the individual tasks of the activity so that each person is working separately and each person is individually responsible for his or her own task." Interdependent (unitary) tasks were defined as, ". . . activities that require two partners to work closely together throughout the entire activity. That is, two people on a team are not able to divide the activity into separate tasks. Instead, both partners must be closely involved throughout the entire activity and the two partners are jointly responsible for all outcomes." The eager and vigilant definitions were drawn from previous work outlining the eager and vigilant components of regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008; see Appendix A for complete definitions of "eager" and "vigilant" tasks provided to participants).

Participants were then asked, in counterbalanced order, to list as many activities as they could think of where each activity included both eager and vigilant components and in which two partners performed the task *interdependently* (unitary tasks), and as many activities as they could think of where each activity included both eager and vigilant components and in which two partners performed the task *independently* (divisible tasks). Participants were asked to generate these lists in order to prime the general idea of a divisible or a unitary task before they made their partner choice. In this way, they would not be too focused on one specific type of task (although later we did ask them to keep a specific activity from their lists in mind).

Immediately after generating each list (the list of divisible tasks, or the list of unitary tasks), participants turned the page and were asked to rewrite the first activity they had selected on the previous page. They were told to imagine that they were about to perform this activity with another person and were asked to indicate which of two potential partners they would choose for the activity. Their options (presented in counterbalanced order) were: (1) Sally, a skydiver, and (2) Helen, a housewife. Previous research (Plaks & Higgins, 2000) has found that skydivers are generally perceived as promotion-focused, while housewives are generally perceived to be prevention-focused (see below for a description of this

research). This was the only information participants were given about their hypothetical partners. All participants indicated which of these two individuals they would prefer as a partner for both the divisible task they had generated and the unitary task they had generated.

HOUSEWIFE/SKYDIVER DISTINCTION

The classification of skydivers as promotion-focused and housewives as prevention-focused is based on a study by Plaks and Higgins (2000) in which participants were asked to rate 30 different social categories (including the categories of "skydiver" and "housewife") on the extent to which each group tended to focus on promotion concerns (i.e., "personal achievement, accomplishment, and self-fulfillment"), and the extent to which they tended to focus on prevention concerns (i.e., "security, safety, and the performance of duties and obligations"). From this list, Plaks and Higgins found that the two social categories that exhibited the largest difference between the promotion ratings and the prevention ratings (i.e., they were rated high on one and low on the other) were *housewives* (the most highly prevention category) and *skydivers* (the most highly promotion category).

RESULTS

As in Study 2a, participants' partner choices (between Helen the housewife, and Sally the skydiver) were once again reclassified in terms of whether they represented a preference for a similar or a complementary partner. Participants were again divided into those who were predominantly promotion-focused (i.e., scored above 0 on the regulatory focus index) or predominantly prevention-focused (i.e., scored below 0 on the regulatory focus index). (None of the participants in this sample scored a "0.") Participants' choice of partner for both the unitary and the divisible tasks were then classified as a preference for *similarity* when either promotion-focused individuals selected to work with the promotion-focused skydiver or prevention-focused individuals selected to work with the prevention-focused housewife, or as a preference for *complementarity* when either promotion-focused individuals selected to work with the prevention-focused housewife or prevention-focused individuals selected to work with the promotion-focused skydiver.

Analyses of the similarity and complementarity indices revealed that when choosing a partner for the divisible task, there was a significant preference for a complementary partner, $\chi^2(N = 74) = 8.56$, $p < .01$. Forty-eight out of our 74 participants (64.9%) chose the complementary partner for the divisible task. In contrast, when choosing a partner for the unitary task this preference for complementarity was not found, $\chi^2(N = 74) = 2.65$, $p = .10$. In fact, only 29 of our 74 participants (39.2%) chose the complementary partner for the unitary task, suggesting a trend toward a preference for a similar partner. Thus, as in Study 2a, complementarity effects were only observed in circumstances in which there was the possibility to adopt separate roles within divisible tasks—in situations in which complementarity would be strategically advantageous. When this possibility did not exist within the unitary tasks, complementarity was no longer preferred; indeed, there was some preference for similarity.

TABLE 2. Number of Participants Choosing a Promotion or Prevention Partner by Predominant Regulatory Focus and Activity Type (Unitary or Divisible) in Study 2b

		Divisible Task Partner Choice		Unitary Task Partner Choice	
		Promotion Skydiver	Prevention Housewife	Promotion Skydiver	Prevention Housewife
Participant's Predominant Regulatory Focus	Promotion	13	38	29	22
	Prevention	10	13	7	16

To further illuminate the nature of these findings, in Table 2 we present the data broken down by orientation and choice. As illustrated in the table, 38 (74.5%) of our 51 predominant promotion-focus participants chose the prevention partner for the divisible task, compared to 13 (25.5%) who chose the promotion partner, $\chi^2(N = 51) = 12.26$, $p < .001$. For the unitary task, this pattern was (not significantly) reversed with 29 (56.9%) of the promotion-focused participants selecting a promotion partner, and 22 (43.1%) selecting a prevention partner, $\chi^2(N = 51) < 1$, *ns*. For our prevention-focused participants, 13 of 23 (56.5%) chose the prevention partner for the divisible task, and 10 out of 23 (43.5%) chose the promotion partner, $\chi^2(N = 23) < 1$, *ns*. But for the unitary task, 16 (69.6%) of the prevention-focused participants chose the prevention partner, while only 7 (30.4%) chose the promotion partner, $\chi^2(N = 23) = 3.52$, $p = .06$.

DISCUSSION

In summary, in Studies 2a and 2b complementarity effects were observed primarily in situations where complementarity would be strategically advantageous. Specifically, participants demonstrated a preference for a complementary partner only in the context of divisible activities; that is, activities in which two people can take on separate roles. Preferences for complementary partners were not observed for unitary activities; that is, activities for which there is no strategic advantage to having a partner with a complementary regulatory focus because both people will have to be involved in all aspects of the task. Indeed, in Study 2b, participants even showed some evidence of preferring a similar partner for unitary activities. In addition to providing evidence for our general hypothesis regarding the strategic advantages that complementarity may offer, this finding also provides an additional explanation for the weakness of our complementarity effects in Studies 1a and 1b. Specifically, the strategic advantages of complementarity may not be universal but rather may emerge only for particular kinds of activities.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We have proposed a distinction between outcome and strategic compatibility in joint task pursuit and suggested that these two types of interpersonal compatibility may correspond to preferences for similar and complementary task partners,

respectively. Specifically, similarity may be preferable for establishing outcome compatibility because it makes goal consensus more likely, while complementarity may be optimal for establishing strategic compatibility because complementary strategies allow a dyad to create a "division of labor" regarding strategic roles. The current studies have supported our hypotheses by providing evidence that: (1) scales that measure variables corresponding to similarity effects (attitudes and values) capture more information about people's desired outcomes, while scales that measure variables corresponding to complementarity effects (dominance) capture more information about people's desired strategies; (2) framing a variable as an outcome variable (as opposed to a strategic variable) leads to a greater preference for similarity; and (3) preferences for complementarity emerge more strongly in situations in which partners with contrasting strategic preferences can each assume separate roles (i.e., for *divisible* tasks) than in situations where both partners have to adopt the same role (i.e., for *unitary* tasks).

The current findings contribute to previous research in several ways. First, we believe that applying the distinction between outcome compatibility and strategic compatibility—akin to the distinction between outcomes and strategies (or process) made by many other areas of psychology—to the field of interpersonal compatibility in joint task pursuit may help to shed new light on why certain variables consistently produce similarity effects while others produce the opposite. In essence, people may ask two questions about a potential task partner: (1) "Are we going to agree on *what* we want to do?" and (2) "*How* are we going to work together?" The current studies suggest that information conveying how similar two people are in their values and attitudes may help to answer the first question. On the other hand, information about dominance and other strategic variables, such as those associated with regulatory mode (Kruglanski et al., 2000) or regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997), may help to answer the second question. For these strategic variables, complementarity may lead to greater compatibility.

Second, the present research suggests that preferences for complementarity may be more common than has previously been thought because there may be at least two constraints on the manifestation of such preferences. Our findings suggest that complementarity is specifically beneficial for variables that describe individuals' *strategic* orientations. Thus, complementarity effects may be relatively rare in past research (with the exception of complementarity in dominant or submissive interpersonal styles) because previous research on interpersonal attraction has generally focused on attributes that are related to individuals' outcome preferences (e.g., attitudes and values). Second, the current research suggests that complementarity may be beneficial within a restricted range of contexts. Specifically, complementarity may be uniquely advantageous for tasks with divisible components that allow a dyad to "divide and conquer" different strategic roles.

To take the latter point a step further, not only does a task need to be comprised of divisible components for complementarity to prevail, but the task must also be divisible on a dimension that is relevant for the two individuals involved. For example, consider two students working on a class project who have different strategic orientations toward completing the assignment: one student prefers to complete the project early, while the other student would rather wait until the last minute. Clearly, in this situation, the divisibility of the task into eager and vigilant or dominant and submissive components would not predict the students' degree of compatibility. However, the divisibility of the project into "early-phase"

and "late-phase" components would be relevant to this question. Task divisibility along this dimension would allow the student who prefers to wait until the last minute to delegate the tasks that need to be done early to his or her partner, while the student who prefers to avoid a frantic rush at the last minute will likewise be able to delegate any last-minute details to his or her partner. Consequently, as a team, the two students would be able to make continuous progress on their project throughout the semester while both individuals use their preferred strategies to do so.

   Finally, the distinction we have made between outcome compatibility and strategic compatibility is related to a distinction made by close relationship theorists between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal coordination (see Finkel, Campbell, Brunell, Dalton, Scarbeck, & Chartrand, 2006; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Interpersonal conflict refers to situations in which two individuals have different and opposing preferences. An example of interpersonal conflict used by Rusbult and Van Lange (2003) to illustrate this distinction is a situation in which a couple is deciding where to go on vacation, but "John wants to go to a beach resort, and Mary wants to go to Rome" (Finkel et al., 2006, p. 457). In contrast, interpersonal coordination refers to the process by which two individuals who share the same preference must coordinate with one another in order to achieve some mutually desired outcome (e.g., "John and Mary both want to go to Rome"). In essence, we believe that in the domain of close relationships information about two individuals' outcome compatibility may better predict the level of interpersonal conflict a couple may experience. Thus, similarity may lead to lower levels of conflict. Alternatively, information about two individuals' strategic compatibility should better predict how well a couple is likely to coordinate in pursuit of their joint goals, and complementarity may therefore be optimal for interpersonal coordination.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Attempting to propose a theoretical framework that could synthesize the many seemingly disparate findings from the various literatures related to interpersonal compatibility would be an admittedly ambitious pursuit. Our model is not this ambitious; rather, we are primarily interested in the specific question of how two individuals pursue joint tasks in tandem. Even so, a number of questions remain. In particular, the distinction between "how" and "what" is not always straightforward in a given situation. For example, a number of theories of self-regulation distinguish not only between outcomes and strategies, but further delineate different levels of self-regulation. According to goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002), high level goals (e.g., losing weight) are often linked to lower level sub-goals (e.g., dieting, exercising) that are then linked to a variety of even lower level attainment means (e.g., stocking the house with vegetables, keeping a careful food log). It is relatively easy to imagine that similarly valuing the high level goal of losing weight would be advantageous for a couple (i.e., similarity would be beneficial in deciding *what* higher level goal to pursue). Equally straightforward are the benefits of dividing attainment means in such a way that allows one partner (e.g., the promotion partner) to eagerly stock up on healthy foods, while the other partner (e.g., the prevention partner) carefully records daily meals (i.e., complementarity would be beneficial in determining *how* to pursue the higher level goal). However,

it is less clear whether similarity or complementarity would be advantageous for mid-level goals. Are these sub-goals about *what* outcome is being pursued or *how* the outcome is being pursued? The simplicity of the current studies did not allow us to differentiate between these different levels of self-regulation. Thus, replicating these findings in more naturalistic settings may help to shed light on some of these complexities.

Another valid concern that may limit the generalizability of the present results is that there are likely strategies that do *not* lend themselves as easily to the advantages of complementarity as do the variables we have explored here (i.e., dominance, regulatory mode, and regulatory focus). There exist many different strategies of goal pursuit, yet it is likely that only a subset of these strategies will actually work together in such a complementary way that their joint presence will serve to facilitate joint goal pursuit. For example, "sanitary" and "unsanitary" are two alternative means by which an individual can approach the task of cooking. However, cooking partners who differ along this dimension are *not* likely to reap any benefits from their differences; in fact, such differences would likely present little more than conflict and distress during the joint activity. Thus, we do not mean to suggest that difference alone can provide the advantages of complementarity. Differences should be preferred by an interaction partner only so long as each different strategy serves to add value to the pursuit of a shared goal (cf. Mauro et al., 2009).

It is also worth noting that the current studies do not directly address the role of consciousness in determining partner preference. Both preferences for desired strategies and preferences for desired outcomes can be communicated through a variety of explicit and implicit means. For example, a person may explicitly state that she likes a particular movie (an outcome preference) or that she likes to take control in situations (a strategic preference). On the other hand, a person's nonverbal behavior may convey her preferred outcomes (e.g., smiling at the mention of a particular movie) or preferred strategies (e.g., an expansive, commanding posture as in Tiedens & Fragale, 2003; see also Cesario & Higgins, 2008, for nonverbal eager vs. vigilant expressions). We believe that it is not the *mode of communication* (for example, whether the information is conveyed consciously or unconsciously) that is important for establishing outcome or strategic compatibility, but rather a person's interpretation of the *type* of information that is being conveyed (i.e., whether it is information about outcomes or strategies). In the current studies, participants typically indicated their explicit preferences; thus, additional methods to help clarify the role of consciousness in determining strategic versus outcome compatibility may be valuable in future research.

Further, while we have focused primarily on chronic individual differences in outcome and strategic preferences in the current research, it is also important to note that preferences for both outcomes and strategies can manifest themselves as *either* traits or states. States are described as concrete, reactive, short-lived, responses to a given situation or prime, while traits are considered to be more abstract, continuous, long-standing qualities of the person (Fridhandler, 1986). Almost all of the variables described in the current research (e.g., dominance, regulatory focus, attitudes) have the capacity to be temporarily induced; i.e., they can be brought about situationally as states. Thus, just as outcome and strategic preferences can be situationally primed, it is likely that outcome and strategic compatibility could also be primed.

Finally, there surely exist some variables that will convey more than one type of information. For example, many stereotypes contain both outcome and strategic information. For some Northeasterners, for example, learning that someone is from Texas may conjure up images of someone with whom one agrees or disagrees on a number of attitude and value dimensions (e.g., politics, religion), and with whom one may be strategically compatible or not (e.g., dominant, fast-talking, cowboy). In these cases, the *situation* may determine which components of the variable (e.g., the outcome or strategy information conveyed in the stereotype) will be applied. For example, if agreement has already been established on desired outcomes, a person may focus more on the *strategic* information conveyed by the stereotype and feel positively about an individual whom one thinks of as complementary to oneself. Alternatively, if agreement on desired outcomes has yet to be established, an individual may focus on the *outcome* information that is conveyed by such a stereotype and feel negatively about someone whom one assumes holds a different attitude than oneself. A strength of the current research is the fact that it can account for this kind of situational variability in predicting partner preference, thereby supporting previous discussions of the value of "Person × Other × Situation" approaches (see Holmes, 2002; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

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APPENDIX A

Eager and vigilant definitions provided to participants in Study 2b:

Eager - Some activities are typically performed in an eager and enthusiastic manner. These activities are usually performed in order to attain advancement, growth, and accomplishment. The goals that are pursued in these types of activities are typically considered to be hopes, aspirations, or ideals. These activities tend to be fairly risky. We will call activities that are approached in such a manner "eager" activities.

Vigilant - Some activities are typically performed in a vigilant and careful manner. These activities are usually performed in order to attain security, safety, and to fulfill responsibilities. The goals that are pursued in these types of activities are typically considered to be duties, obligations, or oughts. These activities tend to be fairly conservative. We will call activities that are approached in such a manner "vigilant" activities.

APPENDIX B

"What" and "How" dominance-submissiveness framings provided to participants in Study 1a:

Personality variables typically measure one of two things: WHAT people like to do, or HOW people like to do things. That is, some personality variables are concerned with WHAT people like to do (i.e., what outcomes or goals are important to a person). Others are concerned with HOW people like to do things (i.e., what strategies people prefer to use when they are pursuing a goal or engaging in an activity).

In this survey, you will be asked to read about a personality variable that is concerned with WHAT[HOW] people like to do things. You will then be asked to indicate how you think of yourself in terms of this personality trait and with whom you would prefer to interact based on this trait information.

"What" Frame
Dominance and submissiveness are WHAT variables that correspond to different outcomes (i.e., choices and preferences):

A DOMINANT person tends to prefer more assertive, demanding outcomes. A SUBMISSIVE person tends prefer more modest, compliant outcomes.

You might say that the philosophy of a dominant person is "you CAN always get what you want," while the philosophy of a submissive person is "be flexible." Clearly, these different philosophies lead to different preferences and choices. Thus, dominance and submissiveness are considered "WHAT" variables.

"How" Frame
Dominance and submissiveness are HOW personality variables that correspond to different strategies:

A DOMINANT person tends to behave in a more assertive and demanding manner. A SUBMISSIVE person tends to behave in a more modest and compliant manner.

You might say that the philosophy of a dominant person is "you CAN always get what you want," while the philosophy of a submissive person is "be flexible." Clearly, these different philosophies correspond to different strategies for doing things. Thus, dominance and submissiveness are considered "HOW" variables.

APPENDIX C

"What" and "How" locomotion-assessment framings provided to participants in Study 1b:

Personality variables typically measure one of two things: WHAT people like to do, or HOW people like to do things. That is, some personality variables are concerned with WHAT people like to do (i.e., what outcomes or goals are important to a person). Others are concerned with HOW people like to do things (i.e., what strategies people prefer to use when they are pursuing a goal or engaging in an activity).

In this survey, you will be asked to read about a personality variable that is concerned with WHAT[HOW] people like to do things. You will then be asked to indicate how you think of yourself in terms of this personality trait and with whom you would prefer to interact based on this trait information.

"What" Frame
Locomotion and assessment are WHAT personality variables that correspond to different outcomes (choices and preferences):

LOCOMOTION decisions involve movement from state to state and are associated with a preference for getting started on a task and maintaining momentum. ASSESSMENT decisions involve a concern with comparison and are associated with critically evaluating all possible choices before choosing the best choice.

You might say that the philosophy of a person who is high in assessment is "do the right thing," while the philosophy of someone who is locomotion is "just do it." Clearly, these different philosophies tend to lead to different preferences and choices. Thus, locomotion and assessment are considered "WHAT" variables.

"How" Frame
Locomotion and assessment are HOW personality variables that correspond to different strategies:

LOCOMOTION is a concern with movement from state to state and is associated with a preference for getting started on a task and maintaining momentum. ASSESSMENT is a concern with making comparisons and is associated with critically evaluating all possible choices before choosing the best choice.

You might say that the philosophy of a person who is high in assessment is "do the right thing," while the philosophy of someone who is locomotion is "just do it." Clearly, these different philosophies correspond to different strategies for doing things. Thus, locomotion and assessment are considered "HOW" variables.