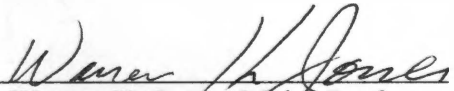
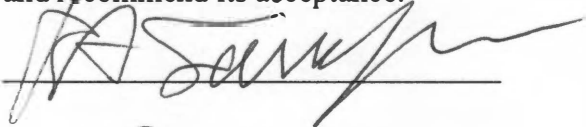


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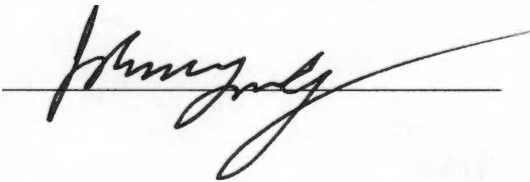
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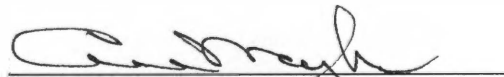
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Value Similarity and Satisfaction in Interpersonal Relationships

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Lauriann Lowe Hebb

May, 2005

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my parents; throughout my life you have always taught and encouraged me to reach for my dreams. By doing this, you have made me realize that I can achieve anything I strive for. You were never lacking in support or words of encouragement. It is because of you that I am who and where I am today. For this, I thank you. To my husband, Jimmy; you have been a wonderful friend, supporter and always my frustration outlet. You always remembered to tell me that 'it would all work out in the end' and you made me believe it. I love you.

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Abstract

Rokeach (1960) proposed that similarity of values, that is characterization of people based on the level of congruency or incongruency of their beliefs to our own is more important in determining relationships than other variables, such as socioeconomic status or education. However, not much research has attempted to explore this proposal and the studies have been reported have yielded inconsistent results. Therefore, the present study (a) determined whether relationship dyads are more similar on values than random pairs, (b) examined differences between actual and perceived similarity, and (c) investigated the correlation between value similarity and satisfaction.

The sample consisted of two groups. The first group was made up of 176 students who participated with a partner for nominal course credit. Dyads were categorized by type of relationship; female/female friends, male/male friends, romantic partners and male/female friends. Participants completed demographic items, items pertaining to their relationship, a standard measure of values for themselves as well as their partner, and a measure of relationship satisfaction. The second group was comprised of 200 students who participated individually and were randomly paired to form 100 dyads. This group only completed demographic items and a standard measure of values.

Results indicated that actual relationship pairs were more similar than random pairs on values. Additionally, perceived similarity was found to be greater than actual similarity. This finding was more frequently observed for female participants. When examining similarity and satisfaction, results were more complex. Specifically, results depended on which aspect of similarity was being investigated as well as which type of

relationship was being tested. Overall, these findings suggest that value similarity is indeed important in ongoing relationships.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Complementarity.....	1
Similarity: Strangers and Hypothetical Others	3
Similarity: Actual Relationship Pairs	5
Attitude Similarity	5
Value Similarity	8
Actual vs. Perceived Similarity	11
Similarity and Satisfaction	13
Summary.....	15
Chapter 2: Method	16
Participants.....	16
Procedure.....	17
Measures	17
Chapter 3: Results.....	20
Actual Pairs vs. Random Pairs	20
Actual Similarity vs. Perceived Similarity.....	21
Similarity and Satisfaction.....	25
Actual Similarity and Satisfaction	26
Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction	27
Dyadic Satisfaction	27
Individual Satisfaction	28

Understanding and Satisfaction.....	30
Dyadic Satisfaction	30
Individual Satisfaction	30
Similarity and Satisfaction by Length of the Relationship.....	30
Chapter 4: Discussion	35
Actual Pairs vs. Random Pairs.....	35
Actual Similarity vs. Perceived Similarity.....	37
Similarity and Satisfaction.....	38
Actual Similarity and Satisfaction	38
Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction	41
Understanding and Satisfaction	42
Similarity and Satisfaction by Length of the Relationship	43
Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research.....	45
List of References.....	49
Vita	54

List of Tables

Table 1: Actual Similarity Correlations among Relationship and Random Pairs	20
Table 2: Correlations between Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity	22
Table 3: Between Group Comparisons for Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity	23
Table 4: Average Correlations for Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity for Terminal Values	24
Table 5: Average Correlations for Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity for Instrumental Values.....	25
Table 6: Correlations between Actual Similarity and Dyadic Satisfaction	27
Table 7: Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Dyadic Satisfaction	28
Table 8: Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Individual Satisfaction	29
Table 9: Correlations between Understanding and Dyadic Satisfaction	31
Table 10: Correlations between Understanding and Individual Satisfaction	32
Table 11: Correlations between Actual Similarity and Satisfaction by Relationship Length	34
Table 12: Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction by Relationship Length	34
Table 13: Correlations between Understanding and Satisfaction by Relationship Length	34

List of Figures

Figure 1: Illustration of Similarity and its Components	21
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The old adage ‘birds of a feather flock together’ is as common as its counterpart ‘opposites attract’. But with respect to close relationships, which one is more accurate? Empirical research has tested both assumptions. Previous results have favored the similarity, rather than the complementary argument. In most cases, it is found that people who are similar on a variety of variables (i.e. demographics, attitudes, personality) tend to have a higher level of attraction (Newcomb, 1954; Byrne, 1971), form closer relationships, and even report higher levels of satisfaction (e.g. Bentler & Newcomb, 1978) than those who complement each other.

The main focus of early research was primarily on attraction during the acquaintance process. Whereas there were some alternate viewpoints, the research strongly supported the idea of similarity. However, the utility of the early attraction literature was limited because it assessed attraction to strangers and was not necessarily applicable to actual relationships. Researchers began investigating these prior findings to see if, in fact, those in relationships prefer similarity in their friends and romantic partners to the same degree as previous results suggested.

Complementarity

The theory of complementarity proposed by Winch (1952), was based on Murray’s theory of needs. The theory postulates that within a field of eligibles (which necessitates a certain level of similarity) an individual will seek out the person who can offer maximum need-gratification. Specifically, Winch suggests that the need patterns of A will be complementary, rather than similar to the need patterns of B. By

complementary he means that the needs of A will be different in kind from those in B (Type I Complementarity) or they will be different in intensity (Type II Complementarity) from the needs that are met for B. In one of the first studies, (Winch, Ktsanes & Ktsanes, 1954) findings suggested that for a sample of married couples, individuals tend to select mates whose needs are complementary rather than similar to their own.

Subsequently, Winch (1954) attempted to explore additional evidence of complementary needs while also taking into account the contradictory viewpoint of similarity of needs. By examining the correlations between husbands and wives, results showed husband-wife correlations were lower on average than the correlations of randomly paired dyads. Since these findings failed to support the idea of similarity, Winch argued that they supported complementarity theory.

There have been several studies that have tried to replicate Winch's findings, but most research has failed to do so. For example, Bowerman & Day (1956) attempted to replicate Winch's findings of need complementarity of married couples. Sixty college couples who were engaged or going steady filled out the Edwards Personal Preference Scale. Results suggest a pattern of similarity rather than complementary.

Another study also attempted to address Winch's theory of complementary needs by examining data from standardized psychological tests, to determine whether married couples are characterized by complementarity of needs, as well as to determine whether there is a positive relationship between the degree of complementarity and marital happiness (Blazer, 1963). Fifty married couples who were emotionally well-adjusted (i.e. neither partner had history of mental illness) completed the Wallace Marital Happiness

Scale and Edwards Personal Preference Scale. Results do not support the complementary needs model, rather they suggest a pattern of similarity. In other words, people who have similar relative strengths on the same needs tend to marry (or become more similar during marriage) and there is a modest association between increasing similarity of need patterns and greater marital happiness.

Some observers criticized Winch's theory of complementary needs citing that certain needs are included whereas others are excluded and with respect to whether needs are independent of each other. Also, the theory fails to explain what happens if needs are neither different in intensity nor in kind. By contrast, Murstein (1976) argued that many researchers did not examine complementarity as Winch had intended. Because the studies that attempted to replicate Winch's findings failed to do so however, the theory of complementarity has been largely discarded and therefore little research has been conducted in an effort to examine this position.

Similarity: Strangers and Hypothetical Others

Newcomb (1954) conducted research with previously unacquainted participants in order to better understand the development of stable interpersonal relationships. Over a period of one semester, strangers lived together and periodically completed questionnaires about their own attitudes and liking for the other participants. Results suggested that the stronger the individual's attraction to another individual, the greater likelihood that two people perceived agreement concerning objects that are important and relevant. These and several other subsequent studies conducted by Newcomb led to his development of the AB-X model of cognitive behavior. It implies that attitudinal agreement between two people (A and B) on some factor (X) will lead to attraction

between A and B. Similarly, if A and B are attracted to each other and A perceives B as liking X, then A will feel compelled to like X as well. If A likes both B and X, then A will perceive B as liking X also.

In a similar vein, Curry & Kenny (1974) conducted a longitudinal study involving eight-person living arrangements. One goal of the study was to examine personality and value similarity and determine whether perceived similarity occurs more frequently than actual similarity. Participants rank-ordered Spranger's (1928) six values for themselves and then for each of their fellow group members. Spranger's values consist of six dimensions (Economic, Aesthetic, Theoretical, Social, Political, and Religious) that represent underlying motives. Personality was measured by an abbreviated form of the Edward's Personal Preference Scale (1954). Findings showed an increase in perceived value similarity as well as perceived personality similarity over the eight week period. Additional findings indicated that perceived similarity is always greater than actual similarity in both domains.

In an effort to expand upon Newcomb's work, Byrne (1971) conducted numerous studies examining the relationship between attitude similarity and attraction. In an initial study participants were asked to complete a 26-item attitude scale and then placed into either one of four experimental groups: (a) exposed to a stranger who agreed with them on all 26 items, (b) exposed to a stranger who disagreed with them on all 26 items, (c) exposed to a stranger who agreed on the 13 most important and disagreed on 13 least important, or (d) exposed to a stranger who disagreed on the 13 most important and agreed on the 13 least important. These strangers were hypothetical, but the participants were led to believe they were real. Experimenters manipulated the extent to which each

stranger would appear to be similar to the participants. Participants then indicated their attraction toward the stranger using a standardized scale. Results indicated that a higher level of similarity leads to a higher level of attraction. In subsequent studies, after completing the attitude scale, the participants were exposed to a hypothetical other who had a proportion of attitudes similar to them. The proportions were 100%, 67%, 50%, and 33%. These results showed that the participants were not responding to a specific number of similar attitudes, but rather the proportion of similar attitudes. These early studies along with numerous others that followed suggested that attraction is a linear function of proportion of weighted positive affect. Byrne proposed that this equation would not be limited to similarity and attraction but is generalizable to any stimulus that elicits an affective response.

Similarity: Actual Relationship Pairs

Attitude Similarity

Most of the research that examines similarity of attitudes has been confined to the assessment of attraction (e.g. Byrne, 1971; Newcomb, 1954). The basic paradigm of these studies involves a fictitious stranger that the participant never meets and assesses the impact of similarity on attraction to the stranger by manipulating the degree of similarity. In other words, these are controlled laboratory experiments that do not include real people involved in an actual relationship. Compared to the abundance of literature on attitude similarity and attraction for hypothetical others, there is relatively little that examines the role of attitude similarity in on-going relationships.

However, a few studies have examined attitude similarity within actual relationship pairs. For example, Erwin (1985) found similarity to be significantly higher

for reciprocated friendship pairs than non-reciprocated pairs among students ages 7-10. Byrne and Blaylock (1963) found similar results for married couples. There was a significant amount of similarity for 36 couples on measures of political attitudes. These results suggest that for both friendships and romantic relationships, attitudinal similarity is present in relationships.

The results of one study emphasize the limitations of the laboratory paradigm for assessing similarity and attraction. Buunk and Bosman (1986) examined on-going relationships and similarity on a highly salient attitude. Specifically, 69 married couples, where both partners had engaged in an extramarital affair, answered a questionnaire that elicited four attitudes toward extramarital sexual relations. Each partner answered the same questions twice, once in regard to the husband's affair and once for the wife's affair. Results showed that only one of the four attitude correlations for actual similarity was significant, thus leaving the generalizability of attraction and similarity in the lab to real life relationships in question.

Other studies have also found results that differ from those found in the manipulated lab studies. McCarthy and Duck (1976) examined three groups of dyads: established friends (those who had been friends for more than 6 months), tentative friends (those who had been friends 6 months or less) and strangers. Each participant was asked to complete a 20-item attitude checklist, and then was given a checklist that they were led to believe was from either their friend or a stranger. Upon receiving the checklist, participants then indicated the degree of attraction toward the other. Findings indicated that although both the stranger and established friend groups were more attracted to the similar other, the tentative friend group preferred dissimilar partners. Examining this

finding further, the tentative group was divided into early tentative (1-3 months) and late tentative (4-6 months). Established friends remained the same and the stranger group was eliminated. Again, the results for the established friends indicated a preference for similarity whereas the tentative friends preferred dissimilarity. More specifically, early tentative showed a preference for mild dissimilarity and late friends preferred a higher degree of dissimilarity. Therefore the previously mentioned 'linear relationship' of the "attraction paradigm" may not accurately characterize real life relationships experienced over time.

A study that analyzed romantically attached couples reported similar results (Duyssen & Teske, 1993). Twenty-two couples completed a questionnaire about attitudes that could be considered controversial in a relationship. First they rated the attitudes and then ranked them in order of priority. The Relationship Closeness Scale was used as the dependent measure. The majority of the couples showed a high degree of similarity to one another. However, further analyses found that the more dissimilar couples were with respect to the top five ranked attitudes, the closer they rated themselves to be. Therefore it seems that some degree of dissimilarity or friction may be beneficial in emotional relationships.

Whereas the association between attitude similarity and attraction seems to be positive and linear in the early lab studies, studies involving actual relationship partners do not always reflect this association. Even though attitude similarity is more frequent in reciprocated relationship partners than in non-reciprocated relationship, there is evidence that dissimilarity of partners is sometimes preferred. For established friendships, similarity is preferred, but for friendships in the early stages, the preference was for

dissimilarity. Also for couples, dissimilarity of the most important attitudes was positively related to relationship closeness. Perhaps in the process of relationship formation the association between similarity and attraction is not as linear as once believed.

Value Similarity

Rokeach (1960) provided a theoretical framework relating interpersonal attraction to similarity at the values level. He claimed that categorization of people based on the congruency or incongruency of their beliefs to our own is more important in determining relationships than categorizing based on other variables such as race or ethnicity.

Rokeach divided values into two groups, instrumental and terminal. Instrumental values are those that guide conduct, leading an individual to choose appropriate behaviors that are socially and personally acceptable (e.g. honest, cheerful, forgiving). Terminal values are considered to be end-states of existence and are something to strive for (e.g. independent, salvation, mature love). Instrumental and terminal values are related.

Rokeach postulated that everyone is concerned with the same values; it is the order in which they are organized that is associated with different behavior among individuals in the same situation. The Rokeach Value Survey (RVS; Rokeach, 1973) lists the instrumental values and terminal values separately and asks participants to rank each list in order of importance with respect to the guiding principles in their own lives.

Curiously, having such a strong theoretical framework as well as agreement among theorists for the role of value similarity in interpersonal attraction, there have been relatively few studies examining value similarity in relationships. Furthermore, various measures have been used with a variety of samples. Not surprisingly then,

inconsistencies can be found with regard to results. For example, in the examination of friendships, Reilly, Commins and Stefic (1960) found that friends were not significantly similar on values as measured by the Study of Values (SV; Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1951). Allport, et al. (1951) adopted Spranger's (1928) concept of value types and developed the Study of Values (SV). This instrument was developed to ascertain the degree to which an individual actually subscribes to each of these value orientations. Lea and Duck (1982) also used the SV and found friendships of varying lengths tend to be more similar than random pairs. Marsden (1966) suggested that perhaps the SV was not assessing what is considered to be important in a friendship. Using the friendship values inventory as well as the general values inventory, it was found that friends showed no more similarity than did randomly paired individuals on either measure. However, Marsden provided no evidence of reliability or validity to indicate that the scales used were in fact adequate measures of values. With respect to roommates, Hill and Stull (1982) found that female pairs who chose to live together were more similar on the SV than roommates who had been assigned to live together. They also found that female students who shared values were more likely to like their roommate during the following semester. The results for male respondents were not significantly different from zero.

Researchers have also found it difficult to determine when value consensus is most relevant. Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) attempted to examine the relationship between progress in the mate selection process in 94 couples during premarital courtship. Participants completed Farber's index of consensus (similarity) for which they were asked to rank ten standards that family success might be measured by as well as a measure of need complementarity, the FIRO-B (Schultz) which represents three needs;

inclusion, control and affection. These needs are concerned with either the desire to have one's partner act toward them or the desire to act in some way toward others. A few months later, they were asked to indicate whether or not they considered their relationship to be more permanent than when they first participated. It was found that value consensus was related to progress in the development of the relationship. To examine the results further, participants were divided into two groups: short-term couples (those who had been dating less than 18 months) and long-term couples (those who were dating 18 months or more). After this separation by length of relationship, the results presented a somewhat different picture. Short-term couples showed value consensus to be related to progress in the relationship, but the same was not true for long-term couples. In fact, long-term couples' progress was related to complementarity of needs, rather than similarity. These results led them to conclude that a type of 'filtering' mechanism operates in mate selection at different stages. Particularly, social status variables (religion, education) are the first 'filter' and operate in early stages, the second 'filter' is consensus on values and is exhibited somewhat later, followed by need complementary - which acts as a third 'filter'.

Schellenberg (1969) compared married couples, pre-married couples and randomly paired individuals on the SV and found an effect for similarity of values. Specifically, married and pre-married couples showed significantly more similarity than randomly paired individuals and married couples were moderately more similar than pre-married couples. These results are inconsistent with Kerckhoff and Davis' (1962) filter theory which would predict pre-married couples to be more similar on the SV than married couples.

The research on value consensus does not provide conclusive evidence for the theory of similarity. Results using the same instrument have found conflicting results for the same type of sample (e.g. Reilly et al, 1960; Lea and Duck, 1982). Additionally, gender differences have also been observed (Hill and Stull, 1982). One study showed that value consensus is relevant in the early stages of a relationship, but not in the later stages (Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962).

Actual vs. Perceived Similarity

There have been several investigations into differences between actual similarities and perceived (assumed) similarity among dyads. Actual similarity refers to the congruence between partners' beliefs and perceived similarity is the congruence between an individual's beliefs and perceptions of his or her partners' beliefs on the same issues.

Comparisons of similarities have led researchers to suggest that perceived similarities are more prevalent than actual similarities and can be beneficial to a relationship. For example, Byrne & Blaylock (1963) found for 36 married couples, assumed similarity on political attitudes was significantly greater than actual similarity. Levinger & Breedlove (1966) further examined this effect in a sample of 60 married couples. Similarity was assessed for attitudes toward family life (i.e. marriage goals, communication topics). Results supported previous findings with assumed similarity being significantly greater than actual similarity. Furthermore, Levinger & Breedlove examined the relationships between similarity and marital satisfaction, finding that assumed similarity and not actual similarity was positively related to marital satisfaction. Rhodes (1994) assessed couples prior to marriage and again one year into marriage. He found that actual similarity of attitudes and beliefs were unrelated to marital satisfaction

but perceived similarity was significantly and positively related to marital satisfaction one year into the marriage.

A similar pattern of findings has been reported for constructs other than attitudes. Murstein & Beck (1972) examined married couples degree of similarity on personality and found that perceived similarity was greater than actual similarity, but not significantly so. Curry and Kenny (1974) also looked at personality similarity as well as value similarity but in college roommates who were previously unacquainted. Over the period of eight weeks, participants were periodically assessed with regard to their own personality and values as well as perceptions of their roommates' personality and values. Findings showed an increase in perceived similarity for both personality and values over the eight week period. However, the same pattern was not found for actual similarity. In addition to these findings, it was also found that perceived similarity was always greater than actual similarity for both personality and values.

Another study using roommates was reported by Hill and Stull (1981). Unlike the previously mentioned study where all participants were unacquainted at the start of the semester, Hill and Stull used some pairs of roommates who had chosen to live together as well as those who had been assigned to live together. Similarity of values was assessed by ranking Spranger's six values with an additional value – physical-athlete. For both males and females, perceived similarity predicted whether or not roommates continued to room together the following semester. Among women, it was found that actual similarity of values predicted choosing to continue as roommates, but the same was not true for male participants. Also, women who had chosen to be roommates had more actual similarity among values than roommates who were assigned to live together.

To summarize, it appears that across constructs, perceived similarity is more prevalent than actual similarity and may be more strongly associated with relationship satisfaction. These findings do not imply that actual similarity has no importance in relationships but that perceived similarity may be of greater relevance. In fact, actual similarity was greater for female roommates who had chosen to live together than roommate dyads who had been assigned to live together.

Similarity and Satisfaction

Researchers believe that similarity is important to marital satisfaction (e.g. Dymond, 1954; Levinger and Breedlove, 1966). However, the similarity literature has mostly focused on attraction, rather than satisfaction. Examining the empirical research on value similarity, results are scattered and inconclusive. Reasons for this may include the fewer studies of value similarity and differences among methodologies used.

Theorists of marital adjustment emphasize the importance of shared values between partners and its effect on the relationship (Klemer & Smith, 1975). It is believed that value consensus is necessary for a successful marriage (Fishbein & Burgess, 1963). The empirical literature generally supports this expectation. The first study that examined value similarity and its association with marital satisfaction had participants read value profiles for hypothetical couples (Kindelan and McCarrey, 1979). These profiles were constructed using the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) and the degree of similarity for couples was set at 22%, 50% and 77% agreement. After examining the value profiles, participants were instructed to rate them on marital adjustment. A positive association between the two variables was found, suggesting that similarity of values was related to perceived marital satisfaction.

Two additional studies found a positive relationship between actual value similarity and marital satisfaction, but used different measures than the previous studies. Acitelli, Kenny and Weiner (2001) used a set of eleven values based on Farber's (1957) measure of marital integration. These 11 values were considered to be important in a marriage (i.e. having enough money, talking about important things, etc.) and participants responded using a Likert-point scale followed by ranking the values. Not only was similarity of values related to marital satisfaction, but married couples showed more similarity than dating couples, and within the married couples only, longer relationships were associated with greater similarity.

Another study with comparable results (Vaitkus, 1999) used the Life Values Inventory (LVI; Crace & Brown, 1995) to determine value consensus. This is a self-report measure that yields scores on ten values (e.g. affiliation, financial prosperity, solitude) and shows moderate internal consistency ($\alpha = .67$ to $.87$) as well as test-retest reliability and with some support for construct validity. In addition to the examination of the correlation between value consensus and marital satisfaction, it was hypothesized that scores on the LVI would significantly predict marital satisfaction above that of a measure of personality (Vocational Preference Inventory, Holland, 1985). It was found that similarity of the LVI was significantly and positively associated with marital satisfaction. Additionally, results supported the hypothesis that value consensus would contribute uniquely to the explanation of marital satisfaction above and beyond personality.

However, examining this relationship within the context of actual relationships, Medling and McCarrey (1981) found that value similarity is inconsistently related to marital satisfaction over the lifecycle. Specifically, a positive association was observed

only for those couples who had been married for twenty-five or more years. Again, these results do not support the 'filter effect' which proposes that values are more important in the earlier years of a relationship.

Summary

Although the research conducted on value similarity and attraction seems to provide evidence that values are indeed important, the research regarding value similarity and relationships thus far seems to focus on different elements of the process and yields inconsistent results. Inconsistent results may be attributable to differences in the measures used (e.g. SV, RVS, friendship value inventory), the methods used (e.g. rating, ranking, hypothetical persons) and the variety of samples (e.g. couples, roommates, friends and married couples). Also, most of these studies explore different aspects of similarity. Whereas most focus on actual similarity without including perceived similarity, some have only looked at perceived similarity. Thus, a more comprehensive examination of value consensus that captures many different aspects of similarity across different types of relationships as well as its association with marital satisfaction is needed.

Chapter 2: Method

Because the value similarity literature has used differing measures and methods, results have been inconsistent and inconclusive. Because of this, the present research focused on (a) determining whether relationship dyads (friends and romantic partners) are more similar on a standardized measure of values than randomly paired individuals, (b) the differences between actual similarity and perceived similarity and the correlation of value similarity (actual and perceived) with relationship satisfaction in relationship pairs across types of relationships (friendships vs. romantic relationships), type of friendship (same-sex vs. cross-sex) and gender.

Participants

The sample consisted of two groups of college students. Both groups volunteered to participate in this study in exchange for course credit. The first group consisted of 200 college students (67 males and 133 females) who participated as individuals. Ages of these participants ranged from 18 to 56 years old with a mean age of 21.96 years. These participants were randomly paired to form three types of dyads; female/female dyads ($n = 53$), male/male dyads ($n = 20$), and male/female dyads ($n = 27$).

The second group of participants was comprised of 176 college students who were requested to sign-up with a current relationship partner. These 176 pairs fell into four types of dyads; female/female friends (FF; $n = 67$), male/male friends (MM; $n = 32$), romantic partners (RP; $n = 39$), and male/female friends (MF; $n = 38$). Ages of these participants ranged from 17 to 59 years old with a mean of 19.41 years. Approximately 87% of participants were white, 8.5% were black and 4% identified themselves as

another ethnicity. Eighty-four percent indicated they had graduated from high school in the state of Tennessee, 14.5 % reported they were from out-of-state and fewer than one percent were international students. Length of the relationships ranged from one month to 16 years with an average length of 29.82 months for the total sample. Mean length for each of the relationship types was 29.00 months for FF, 39.10 months for MM, 26.09 months for RP and 27.95 months for MF friendship pairs.

Procedure

Upon signing up for this study, students were given a date, time and location to complete a questionnaire. Those volunteers who participated as individuals were given a questionnaire that contained demographic items and the Rokeach Value Survey. Those participants who had signed up with a partner were instructed to sit apart from each other and were given a identical questionnaires to complete. The questionnaire was comprised of demographic items, items about their current relationship, and two copies of the RVS: first as it pertained to the participant and second as the participant believed his or her partner would complete it, and the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988).

Measures

Rokeach Value Survey (RVS). The Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973) measures the ordered preferences among two types of values, instrumental and terminal. Instrumental values are defined as those that guide conduct, leading an individual to choose appropriate behaviors that are socially and personally acceptable (e.g. honest, cheerful, forgiving). Rokeach further divides this set into two sub-categories, moral values (e.g. honesty) and competence (e.g. intelligence) values. Terminal values are

considered to be strived for goals or end-states of existence. These are also divided into sub-categories, personal values (e.g. salvation) and social values (e.g. a world at peace). The Rokeach Value Survey lists the instrumental values and terminal values separately and alphabetically and asks participants to rank each list in order of importance with respect to the guiding principles in their lives.

Test-retest reliability for the RVS was reported to be .70 for both sets of values after seven weeks (Rokeach, 1973). Validity has also been demonstrated by examining the correlation between the RVS and the SV (Hebb, 2004). The two measures were found to be moderately correlated. Specifically, at least two of the RVS values significantly correlated with each value type indicated by the SV. For example, the RVS values of salvation and loving were correlated with the SV value type of religious.

Additionally, the RVS has been useful in demonstrating that people with different specific attitudes endorse different value priorities (e.g. Eiser, 1987). For example, students who were in favor of abortion placed a higher value on freedom, a comfortable life, and pleasure than those who opposed abortion (Kristianson & Zanna, 1988). Similarly, participants who were opposed to abortion regarded salvation as more important than those in favor of abortion. Also, attitudes toward political policies differentiate value priorities (Feather, 1979). Persons who subscribed to politically conservative policies also supported certain values (e.g. national security, cleanliness, obedience, salvation) as compared to other values (e.g. equality, freedom, love, pleasure).

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1988) is a 7-item Likert-type scale that assesses relationship satisfaction. It was designed to provide a shorter measure of satisfaction as well as one

that could be used across relationships. Alpha reliability has been reported to be .86 and test-retest reliability after 6-7 weeks is .87. It has been shown to have a strong association with other measures of satisfaction (e.g. .80 to .88 with Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Spanier, 1978) as well as discriminate between couples who stayed together and those who ended their relationship.

Chapter 3: Results

Actual Pairs vs. Random Pairs

Since the RVS requires ranking of values, Spearman's coefficient for ranked correlations was used to quantify the degree of convergence between the value profiles of two persons (dyads). Correlations of similarity for each dyad were assessed (both relationship dyads and randomly paired dyads), and average correlations for actual similarity for each group was obtained by using Fisher's r to z transformation. This procedure yielded two correlation coefficients (one for terminal values and one for instrumental values) for both the actual relationship pairs and the random pairs. As may be seen in Table 1, both sets of values were found to be significantly different from zero for both the actual pairs as well as the random pairs. Next, these average correlations were tested to determine if the difference in average correlations between groups was significant. Results of these analyses are also presented in Table 1. As indicated, actual relationship pairs were significantly more similar on terminal values than were random pairs. The difference for instrumental values was non-significant.

Table 1

Actual Similarity Correlations among Relationship and Random Pairs

	Relationship Pairs (n = 176)	Random Pairs (n = 100)	z	p
Terminal Values	.43**	.30*	2.09	<.05
Instrumental Values	.30*	.27*	.53	ns

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

female or male participant from their partner. Therefore, when discussing perceived similarity and understanding for these two relationship types, they will be referred to as a dyadic variable only. This distinction allowed for comparisons of perceived similarity, satisfaction and understanding at both the dyadic level as well as the individual level.

Spearman's coefficient for rank correlations was used to assess both actual similarity and perceived similarity. Results are presented in Table 2. Findings show that overall, actual similarity and perceived similarity are related to each other for terminal values as well as for instrumental values. For FF, actual similarity was associated with perceived similarity for instrumental values only. The MM relationship type showed a significant correlation between actual and perceived similarity for terminal values only.

Table 2

Correlations between Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Total Sample (dyadic)	.38**	.32**
F/F (dyadic)	.20	.36**
M/M (dyadic)	.38*	.24
RP (dyadic)	.48**	.27
RP (men)	.46**	.39*
RP (women)	.41**	-.03
M/F (dyadic)	.39*	.39*
M/F (men)	.02	.25
M/F (women)	.34*	.35*

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

At the dyadic level, actual similarity of RP's was only associated with perceived similarity for terminal values. At the individual level, actual similarity was correlated with male perceived similarity for terminal and instrumental values, but for female participants, actual similarity was only correlated with perceived similarity of terminal values. For MF relationship pairs, both value categories showed a significant correlation between actual similarity and perceived similarity at the dyadic level. At the individual level however, the correlation between actual and perceived similarity was not significantly different from zero for men, whereas female participants showed significant correlations for both terminal and instrumental values.

Additional analyses examined whether one type of relationship pair showed more actual or perceived similarity than any of the other types of relationship pairs. As may be seen in Table 3, none of the between-group comparisons was significant.

Table 3

Between Group Comparisons for Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity

	Actual Similarity		Perceived Similarity	
	z	p	z	p
FF and MM	.21	.84	.49	.63
FF and RP	.35	.73	.36	.72
FF and MF	.66	.51	.51	.61
MM and RP	.10	.92	.13	.89
MM and MF	.36	.72	.00	1.00
RP and MF	.28	.78	.14	.89

Next, analyses investigated whether actual similarity and perceived similarity differed from each other overall and within relationship types. As may be seen in Tables 4 and 5, for the total sample and within groups, the average correlations for perceived similarity are greater than average correlations for actual similarity in every instance. Consequently, for the total sample of 176 dyads, the average perceived similarity correlation was greater than the average actual similarity correlation for terminal values, as well as instrumental values.

However, among relationship types, this difference was not significant in every case. For example, although among FF relationship pairs, perceived similarity was greater than actual similarity for both terminal values and instrumental values,

Table 4
Average Correlations for Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity for Terminal Values

	Actual Similarity	Perceived Similarity	z	p
Total (dyadic)	.43	.64	3.86	< .001
FF (dyadic)	.49	.68	2.24	.03
MM (dyadic)	.44	.59	.92	.36
RP (dyadic)	.41	.62	.87	.39
RP (men)	.41	.64	1.77	.08
RP (women)	.41	.60	1.38	.17
MF (dyadic)	.33	.59	.99	.32
MF (men)	.33	.56	1.54	.12
MF (women)	.33	.63	2.19	.03

Table 5

**Average Correlations for Actual Similarity and
Perceived Similarity for Instrumental Values**

	Actual Similarity	Perceived Similarity	z	p
Total (dyadic)	.30	.48	2.74	<.01
FF (dyadic)	.32	.56	2.30	.02
MM (dyadic)	.26	.42	.79	.43
RP (dyadic)	.30	.39	.27	.78
RP (men)	.30	.37	.31	.76
RP (women)	.30	.41	.59	.56
MF (dyadic)	.29	.42	.44	.66
MF (men)	.29	.49	1.24	.22
MF (women)	.29	.36	.29	.77

among MM and RP relationship pairs the difference between actual and perceived similarity was not significant for both instrumental and terminal values. The MF relationship pairs did not show a significant difference between actual similarity and perceived similarity at the dyadic level. However, at the individual level, women showed greater perceived similarity than actual similarity on terminal values whereas men did not. Comparisons between actual and perceived similarity among MF relationship pairs were not reliable at either the dyadic or individual levels.

Similarity and Satisfaction

As was the case with perceived similarity, satisfaction can be examined at both the dyadic level as well as the individual level. For the total sample as well as FF and

MM groups, it will be discussed as a dyadic variable only and for the RP and the MF relationship pairs it will be discussed as both a dyadic variable as well as an individual variable.

Satisfaction scores on the RAS ranged from 14.5 to 35 with a mean score of 29. Romantic partners reported themselves to be more satisfied ($M = 30.32$) than the three friendship groups ($M = 28.54$) combined, ($t(174) = 2.99, p < .01$) and the FF relationship pairs reported more satisfaction ($M = 29.48$) than the MM relationship pairs ($M = 27.92$), ($t(98) = 2.29, p < .05$). For the MM relationship pairs only, length of relationship was significantly correlated with level of satisfaction, ($r(31) = .56, p < .001$) whereas this analysis yielded non-significant results for the remaining groups.

Actual Similarity and Satisfaction

Correlational analyses revealed a positive significant association between actual similarity and dyadic satisfaction for both terminal values and instrumental values for the total sample (see Table 6). Relationship pairs were divided by relationship type and the same analyses were conducted. For the MM relationship pairs, there was a significant correlation between dyadic satisfaction and actual similarity of terminal values but not for instrumental values. Actual similarity of instrumental values was significantly correlated with dyadic satisfaction for RP relationship pairs but the corresponding analysis for terminal values was not significant. For both the FF and the MF relationship pairs, the relationships between actual similarity of both terminal and instrumental values and dyadic satisfaction were unreliable.

The association between actual similarity and individual satisfaction was examined for both male and female participants for the RP and the MF relationship pairs.

Table 6
Correlations between Actual Similarity and Dyadic Satisfaction

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Total (dyadic)	.22**	.16*
FF (dyadic)	.08	.03
MM (dyadic)	.40*	.15
RP (dyadic)	.27	.42**
RP (men)	.16	.34*
RP (women)	.27	.31
MF (dyadic)	.20	.12
MF (men)	.29	.16
MF (women)	.10	.06

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 6 shows that the only significant finding was observed for RP male participants.

That is, actual similarity of terminal values was correlated with male satisfaction.

Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction

Dyadic Satisfaction. Overall, a positive significant association between perceived similarity and dyadic satisfaction for both terminal values and instrumental values was observed as is indicated in Table 7. However, analyses by relationship type yielded significant results for the FF and the MM relationship pairs only. For FF relationship pairs a significant correlation between perceived similarity and dyadic satisfaction for terminal values was only observed whereas both sets of values

Table 7
Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Dyadic Satisfaction

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Total (dyadic)	.30**	.23**
FF (dyadic)	.28*	.17
MM (dyadic)	.44*	.48*
RP (dyadic)	.27	.16
RP (men)	.29	.19
RP (women)	.14	.02
MF (dyadic)	.24	.26
MF (men)	.23	.09
MF (women)	.17	.29

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

were significantly correlated with dyadic satisfaction for the MM relationship pairs.

Individual Satisfaction. Next, analyses were conducted at the individual level for the RP and the MF relationship pairs. As presented in Table 8, the RP relationship pairs showed no significant correlations between perceived similarity and satisfaction for either men or women. For the MF relationship pairs, perceived similarity of terminal values from the male participant's perspective was related to reported female satisfaction and perceived similarity of instrumental values from the female participant's perspective was associated with reported male satisfaction.

Table 8

Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Individual Satisfaction

	Terminal (men)	Terminal (women)	Instrumental (men)	Instrumental (women)
Satisfaction				
RP (men)	.15	.00	.17	.01
RP (women)	.31	.22	.13	.02
MF (men)	.08	.29	.08	.38*
MF (women)	.32*	.04	.08	.16

* $p < .05$

Understanding and Satisfaction

Understanding was operationalized by comparing participant's rankings of their partner's values with the partner's self-rankings. Again, for each relationship pair, there was both an individual level of understanding as well as a dyadic level of understanding. When referring to the total sample and the FF and MM relationship pairs, understanding will be viewed as a dyadic variable and when referring to the RP and the MF relationship pairs, understanding will be viewed as both a dyadic and an individual variable.

Dyadic Satisfaction. As may be seen in Table 9, findings revealed a significant positive association between understanding and satisfaction for both sets of values for the total sample. Examining this association further, relationship pairs were divided by type of relationship. FF and MM relationship pairs did not yield significant correlations between understanding and satisfaction. For RP relationship pairs, the male understanding of his female partner's instrumental values was significantly associated with the level of dyadic satisfaction. Dyadic understanding of terminal values was associated with dyadic level of satisfaction for MF relationship pairs.

Individual Satisfaction. Additionally, at the individual level, male understanding of his female friend's terminal values was significantly correlated with dyadic, male and female levels of satisfaction. Also, male understanding of his female friend's instrumental values was associated with his own level of satisfaction (see Table 10).

Similarity and Satisfaction by Length of the Relationship

According to Kerckhoff and Davis's (1962) filter effect model, value similarity should be important in the earlier stages of a relationship. In contrast to these findings,

Table 9

Correlations between Understanding and Dyadic Satisfaction

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Total (dyadic)	.31**	.27**
FF (dyadic)	.21	.15
MM (dyadic)	.31	.31
RP (dyadic)	.30	.29
RP (men)	.23	.34*
RP (women)	.24	.16
MF (dyadic)	.48**	.31
MF (men)	.48**	.30
MF (women)	.25	.18

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

Table 10

Correlations between Understanding and Individual Satisfaction

	Terminal (men)	Terminal (women)	Instrumental (men)	Instrumental (women)
Satisfaction				
RP (men)	.15	.16	.24	.24
RP (women)	.22	.22	.29	.01
MF (men)	.52**	.26	.37*	.16
MF (women)	.36*	.19	.18	.17

* $p < .05$

Medling and McCarrey (1979) found that value similarity was only related to marital satisfaction after being married 25 or more years. Therefore, the relationship between actual similarity and satisfaction was explored in relation to the length of the relationship. Participants were divided by length of their relationship into three groups, those who were in the lowest 25% (those who had been in the relationship less than 3.5 months; $n = 43$; FF = 21; MM = 8; RP = 4; MF = 10), those who were in the highest 25% (those who had been in the relationship more than 40.5 months; $n = 44$; FF = 14; MM = 12; RP = 7; MF = 10) and those in the middle 50% ($n = 90$; FF = 32; MM = 12; RP = 28; MF = 18). Dividing participants based upon type of relationship in addition to relationship length yielded groups that were too small for adequate comparisons. Next, analyses examined the association between satisfaction and actual similarity, perceived similarity and understanding for each of these three groups. As may be seen in Table 11, none of the groups showed a significant association between actual similarity and satisfaction.

Subsequent analyses examining the association between satisfaction and perceived similarity and understanding were also conducted. Both of these analyses revealed a positive association for perceived similarity and satisfaction as well as understanding and satisfaction among relationships of short and intermediate duration for the both instrumental and terminal values (see Tables 12 and 13). For those in the longest relationship group, the findings were not significantly different from zero for all comparisons.

Table 11
Correlations between Actual Similarity and Satisfaction by Relationship Length

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Length of Relationship		
Low	.17	.24
Medium	.20	.16
High	.25	.08

Table 12
Correlations between Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction by Relationship Length

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Length of Relationship		
Low	.36*	.43*
Medium	.37**	.27**
High	.06	.01

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 13
Correlations between Understanding and Satisfaction by Relationship Length

	Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
Length of Relationship		
Low	.39**	.32*
Medium	.26**	.31**
High	.27	.06

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Chapter 4: Discussion

The goal of the present research was to investigate the role of value similarity among actual ongoing relationships. Research suggests that similarity is related to relationship satisfaction (e.g. Dymond, 1954; Murstein & Beck, 1972). However, most of the research to date has focused on similarity of attitudes and personality. Some studies have attempted to examine the role of value similarity within the context of relationships (e.g. Kindelen & McCarrey, 1979; Acitelli, Kenny & Weiner, 2001), but differing methodologies have yielded inconsistent results. This study attempted to improve on past research by utilizing a standard measure of values, examining different aspects of similarity as well as investigating the correlation between value similarity and satisfaction across different types of relationships.

Actual Pairs vs. Random Pairs

The purpose of the first phase of the study was to determine whether actual relationship pairs were more similar on values than randomly paired individuals. Although both actual relationship pairs and randomly matched pairs yielded a significant level of value similarity, actual relationship pairs show greater similarity than random pairs on terminal values. Actual pairs were not found to be more similar than random pairs on instrumental values however. These results are consistent with representative findings in this area. For example, Schellenberg found friends to be more similar on values (as measured by the SV) than random pairs. Similar observations have been made with regard to attitude similarity for romantic couples (Dussyen and Teske, 1982) as well

as for children (Erwin, 1985). By contrast, Reilly et al (1960) reported that friendship pairs were not significantly similar on values measured by the SV.

Although actual friends were significantly more similar than random pairs on terminal values, the magnitude of similarity correlations was lower than one might expect. Lea and Duck's (1982) findings may help to explain why this finding may have been observed. The six SV value types were divided into three categories; (a) accepted values (the 2 highest-ranked values), (b) neutral values (the two intermediately ranked values) and (c) rejected values (the two lowest-ranked values). Their results indicated that friends were more similar than random pairs only on accepted values, but not on neutral or rejected values. The measure used in the present study, the RVS, has 18 values in both value categories. If only a small number of these values would be considered 'accepted', the greater dissimilarity among the other values contributes to the smaller correlation for actual friends.

The homogeneity of the sample should also be pointed out as a possible contributing factor to these results. The majority of participants were white, undergraduate students from Tennessee. This demographic similarity may suggest an underlying level of value similarity. Therefore, the finding that actual pairs showing greater similarity than random pairs on terminal values is particularly noteworthy.

Furthermore, these results suggest that any evidence of similarity of relationship pairs should be viewed with caution in the absence of comparable comparison with randomly-matched pairs. The reason that actual pairs were more similar than random pairs on terminal values, but not instrumental values is less easily explained. Terminal

values concern future goals and states of existence for (i.e. salvation, happiness) whereas instrumental values concern actions and strategies (i.e. honesty, intelligence). Thus there may be more consensus for broad and general end-states than for the means to achieve them.

Actual Similarity vs. Perceived Similarity

This phase of the study examined whether relationship pairs were actually more similar than they believed themselves to be or vice versa. First, results showed that overall the two measures of similarity are related to each other for both sets of values. Specifically, actual similarity of terminal values was significantly correlated with perceived similarity of terminal values. Likewise, actual similarity of instrumental values was associated with perceived similarity of instrumental values. Furthermore, for the total sample, perceived similarity was found to be significantly greater than actual similarity. Specifically, participants believe their partner to be more similar to them than they actually are. These results support previous findings with regard to attitudes and values. For example, several researchers report that perceived similarity of attitudes is more common and stronger than actual similarity (Byrne and Blaylock, 1963; Levinger and Breedlove, 1966). Also, Curry and Kenny (1974) reported that perceived similarity of values increased over time in newly formed relationships, but the same was not true for actual similarity.

With respect to specific relationship types this issue was more complex. For the MM and MF relationship pairs, the differences between actual and perceived similarity were not significant. However, for the FF and the RP relationship pairs, female

participants showed greater perceived similarity than actual similarity. Thus it seems that women, as compared to men, see their partner as more similar to them than they actually are. Gender differences may arise because women desire similarity of values in relationships more than men do. Another possible explanation is methodological. There were twice as many participants in the FF relationship pairs than the other three relationship types. Thus, the number of pairs that participated in the other groups may have been too small to observe a reliable effect.

These results are consistent with previous findings that perceived similarity is generally more robust than actual similarity. However, previous research did not examine sex differences with respect to perceived vs. actual similarity. Consequently, additional research is needed to determine if the gender differences are stable in this regard.

Similarity and Satisfaction

The final phase of the study focused on the relationship between the two types of similarity and satisfaction. In addition, the association between satisfaction and the extent to which relationship partners understood each other's values was examined as well as whether or not the length of the relationship was an important factor in this regard.

Actual Similarity and Satisfaction

The data showed that in general, actual similarity of instrumental and terminal values was related to satisfaction at the dyadic level but not always when examining these variables by type of relationship. Actual similarity of terminal values was related to

satisfaction for MM relationship pairs. Actual similarity of instrumental values was related to dyadic satisfaction for RP relationship pairs and actual similarity of terminal values was related to male satisfaction with RP partners. By contrast, neither the FF nor the MF relationship pairs showed a reliable relationship between actual value similarity and satisfaction. Initially, the finding that actual similarity was not related to satisfaction for these pairs was surprising. But, as noted in the previous section, these two relationship types showed a difference between actual and perceived similarity. Thus, it may be that perceived similarity, rather than actual similarity is more important to satisfaction for these relationships.

For both the MM and the RP relationship pairs, actual similarity of terminal values for male participants was strongly related to satisfaction (dyadic for MM and individual male satisfaction for RP). Instrumental values appear to be more important to dyadic satisfaction for the RP pairs. Because instrumental values pertain to how one behaves everyday, they may be more important to those involved in a romantic relationship. Also, it should be noted that MM relationship pairs had, on average, the longest relationships, whereas the RP relationship pairs had the shortest relationships. This difference may also explain the results. Because instrumental values can be viewed as actions or behaviors, they would be more observable and detectable in a relationship in the early stages. Terminal values, on the other hand, are future goals one strives for, and would not be as easily observed. Terminal values would perhaps require more explicit disclosure to be known by the relationship partner. Thus, in the earlier stages of the relationship, similarity of instrumental values would carry a greater likelihood of

influencing the status of the relationship, and perhaps as the relationship continues, the focus may shift to similarity of terminal values.

Previous research has examined the association between actual similarity and satisfaction for married couples only (e.g. Vaitkus, 1999; Rhodes, 1994). Additionally, some of these studies employ questionable methods and measures. For example, one study used the term 'value' to refer to a set of ideals for marriage (Acitelli, et al, 2000). Thus, the finding that married couples who are similar to each other with respect to these marriage related topics (e.g. raising children, maintaining the home, being sexually satisfied, etc.) report more satisfaction is not surprising.

Another study examined hypothetical couples rather than actual relationship pairs (Kindelen & McCarrey, 1981). Participants were given value profiles for hypothetical couples. These profiles were created to give the impression of some degree of similarity. Next, participants rated how satisfied the couples were based on the degree of similarity. Findings suggested that greater amounts of similarity influenced respondents to rate couples as more satisfied. These results do not prove that relationship pairs who are more similar to each other are, in fact, more satisfied with the relationship. They suggest that people assume that the more similar two partners are to each other, the more satisfied they would be.

The present study has been broader than the research found in the literature because actual relationship pairs were assessed as well as using a standardized measure of global values that is applicable to various types of relationships. Therefore these

findings are more generalizable and go beyond those of previous researchers in the exploration of actual similarity and satisfaction.

Perceived Similarity and Satisfaction

Results showed that as was the case for actual similarity, perceived similarity was significantly correlated with dyadic satisfaction for the total sample. Analyses by relationship type revealed that perceived similarity was related to dyadic satisfaction for FF and MM relationship pairs. For FF relationship pairs perceived similarity of terminal values was related to dyadic satisfaction. Given that the FF relationship pairs showed a significant difference between actual and perceived similarity and actual similarity was not related to satisfaction, this finding perhaps to be expected. Thus for FF relationship pairs how similar partners perceive themselves to be, rather than how similar they actually are, is more predictive of the level of satisfaction with the relationship.

For MM relationship pairs the difference between actual and perceived similarity was not significant but the correlation between actual similarity and satisfaction for terminal values was significant. In turn, perceived similarity of both terminal and instrumental values was related to satisfaction. These findings suggest that for male friends, similarity of terminal values (actual and perceived) is important to relationship satisfaction. As previously noted, the MM relationship pairs had the longest relationships and terminal values are likely to have been disclosed to a relationship partner. Thus, because MM relationship pairs had longer relationships, it has allowed for a certain level of disclosure.

Only 3 studies have previously examined the role of perceived similarity on some measured outcome (Levinger and Breedlove, 1966; Curry and Kenny, 1974; Rhodes, 1999). Curry and Kenny found that for newly acquainted relationship partners, perceived similarity of values was related to levels of reported attraction early in the relationship. However, statistical significance was not reported. The remaining two studies examined perceived similarity of attitudes and satisfaction for married couples with significant results. Thus, previous research does support the idea that perceived similarity is associated with satisfaction. However, the present study used values, rather than attitudes as well as different relationship types and these factors may have accounted for the difference in the findings.

Understanding and Satisfaction

Results indicated that the more a participant understood his/her partner, the more satisfied the participants reported themselves to be. These findings emerged in the mixed-sex dyads (RP and MF) but not the same-sex dyads (FF and MM). Specifically, for RP and MF relationship pairs, how well a male participant understood his female partner's values was important to satisfaction. Perhaps the dynamics of MF relationship pairs more closely resemble that of romantically attached partners than of friends.

Within the RP relationship pairs, how well a male participant understood his female partner's instrumental values was positively related to dyadic satisfaction. As previously noted, actual similarity of instrumental values was also related to dyadic satisfaction for RP relationship pairs. Thus, it seems possible that members of RP relationship pairs place great importance on their own and their partner's instrumental

values. One explanation may be that instrumental values are more specific and behavioral and therefore they might be viewed as how people act toward each other everyday. How one is treated by one's romantic partner on a daily basis might be the origin of satisfaction for this type of relationship.

Male understanding of female values was also important for the MF relationship types. Not only was male understanding of his partner's terminal values related to levels of dyadic satisfaction, but it was also related to his own individual level of satisfaction as well as his partner's level of satisfaction. Thus, for mixed-sex dyads, how well men understand women's values is important to relationship satisfaction. It appears that women, more so than men, associate being understood by a relationship partner with satisfaction. One might question the lack of support for the FF relationship types. Women may naturally understand each other better than men understand them. Therefore the need for understanding from fellow women partners is not relevant to satisfaction. Since it is more difficult and not as customary for men to understand women, having this need fulfilled by male partners' yields higher level of satisfaction.

Similarity and Satisfaction by Length of the Relationship

This part of the analyses explored whether the length of the relationship was a factor that mediated the respective correlations between satisfaction and actual similarity, perceived similarity and understanding. Participants were divided into three groups based on the length of the relationship. Length of the relationship was not relevant to the association between actual similarity and satisfaction. Specifically, none of the three groups showed an association between actual similarity and satisfaction.

For satisfaction and perceived similarity as well as satisfaction and understanding, length of the relationship yielded differential results. The relationships of the shortest and intermediate lengths showed significant positive correlations between perceived similarity and satisfaction as well as understanding and satisfaction. The longest relationships however, yielded non-significant correlations for perceived similarity and satisfaction and understanding and satisfaction. Therefore, perceived similarity to the partner as well as understanding are related to satisfaction in newer relationships, but not for those longer in duration.

The fact that length affected the relationships between satisfaction and both actual and perceived similarity differently is not surprising. Since there is a significant difference between the two aspects of similarity, one would expect there to be a factor that would differentiate between them. The finding that was surprising, however, was that as length of the relationship increases, the association between perceived similarity and satisfaction as well as the association between understanding and satisfaction seems to disappear. These results conflict with previous findings of Medling and McCarrey (1981) and Acitelli, et al (2001). These findings partially support Kerckhoff and Davis's (1962) filter model of values. Early in the relationship similarity and understanding contribute to the development of a relationship through the mechanism of satisfaction. As the relationship progresses, however, value similarity does not seem to influence levels of relationship satisfaction.

In early stages, development may be dominated by discovery as participants learn about their partner. Subsequently, two things might happen. First, if conditions of

similarity and understanding are not met, either one or both of the partners seek to terminate the relationship. Second, if conditions of similarity and understanding are fulfilled, the relationship continues but the level of satisfaction is no longer influenced by these factors, but rather shifts to some other aspect of the relationship.

The previous research that has examined the role of length of the relationship and similarity has been limited. It only examined actual similarity (e.g. Medling & McCarrey, 1981), not perceived similarity and no studies have examined whether the length of the relationship influenced the association between similarity and satisfaction.

To summarize, these findings suggest that value similarity is indeed important to different types of relationships. Previous research regarding similarity of attitudes and attraction has implied that the association is linear; as similarity increases so does the level of attraction. Because earlier research as previously limited to the hypothetical laboratory and experiments did not focus on actual relationships, one could question their generalizability. The present research examined the role of value similarity with regard to relationship satisfaction in different types of on-going relationships. Even though the data lends support for the idea that similarity plays a role in the development of some relationship types, perhaps the ‘all or nothing’ characterization of the attraction paradigm is no longer plausible.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although the present research has provided important information regarding the relationship between value similarity and satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, there

are limitations to the methodologies used to collect the data and the generalizability of the results.

First, a larger sample is needed to increase power for between-group comparisons. The FF relationship pairs had almost twice the number of participants than any of the other three groups. Adding observations to the other groups could allow for additional comparisons unable to be completed in this study (e.g. examining the effect of length of relationship on satisfaction by relationship type).

Second, the homogeneity of the sample may have influenced certain outcomes. Because all participants were recruited from a large southeastern university it is possible that responses to the values measures may have been limited in their variability. It is important that future studies include a more culturally diverse sample with respect to culture, ethnicity, etc.

The study attempted to examine established relationships, but the determination of whether two people were actually friends/romantic partners for example was left to the participants. Further investigation should include a measure or method that is able to better distinguish between those participants who are in important relationships those who are not.

Further investigation into the relative importance of certain values is also needed. For example, Lea and Duck (1982) found that friends are more similar than random pairs on their higher ranked or 'accepted' values. The same was not true for lowest-ranked or 'rejected' values or even the intermediately ranked or 'neutral' values. Their findings suggest that it may not be just similarity of all values that are important to relationships,

but rather similarity of the most important values may play a more central role in relationship satisfaction.

Despite these limitations, this study showed that value similarity is indeed important in relationships. Additionally, it has been shown that previous theories of similarity (i.e. Byrne's Attraction Paradigm) may not generalize completely to actual relationships. In fact, actual relationships have been shown to be much more complex, as is evidenced by the differences observed between types of relationships. These findings demonstrate that how similar relationship partners actually are, how similar they perceive themselves to be, as well as how well they understand each other are all important to satisfaction in the relationships.

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Vita

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