Similarity Effects of Character Virtues on Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study was designed to measure how partner similarity on levels of virtues effects relationship satisfaction. Participants (N=170, 83% female) rated themselves and their partners on the level in which they possessed twenty-four character strengths that fit into six categories of virtues defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Before rating character strengths, participants took a relationship satisfaction questionnaire. Two patterns were found: a significant negative linear slope and a significant negative linear slope plus a significant quadratic trend. For every virtue, participants who rated their partner higher than themselves tended to be more satisfied with their relationship. This study has expanded the previous research concerning virtues and applied it to relationship satisfaction while aiding the growing positive psychology movement by highlighting the importance of character strengths in regards to romantic relationships.
Similarity Effects of Character Virtues on Relationship Satisfaction

Romantic relationships play a key role in the lives of most people. Consequently, the quality and stability of these relationships have extremely important implications on people’s psychological health and well-being. A satisfying romantic relationship can result in elevated levels of general well-being and life satisfaction; on the other hand, problems in relationships lead to much distress in the individuals involved and psychological and physical problems. Because, more than help of marriages in the United States end in divorce, finding the factors that may influence levels of satisfaction and stability in intimate relationships has been a popular topic in recent research (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese 2000).

A prominent finding from research on relationships is the idea of assortative mating or the phenomenon in which people choose to mate with individuals who are similar. Research has found that partners tend to be more alike in various dimensions such as: age, race, religion, anthropometrics, physical attractiveness, socio-economic status, intelligence, education, personality, attitudes, interests and sex drive (Wilson & Cousins, 2003). An abundant amount of research has been conducted on the topic similarity and how it affects romantic relationships. Individually reported similarity on dimensions such as: age, political, and religious attitudes, education and general intelligence, is found to be a consistently strong predictor of relationship satisfaction (Lou & Klohnem, 2005). Also, longitudinal evidence suggests partnerships based on similarity are also more stable. When asked to describe an ideal partner, people tend to
choose similar others so much that the average correlation between subjects own personality and their ideal mate has been found to be a fairly strong .30 (Wilson & Cousins, 2003).

The similarity effect in mating can be explained by four main theories, the first of which is the propinquity theory. This theory centers around the idea that people tend to form friendships or romantic relationships with those whom they encounter often. The propinquity theory suggests that the more we see and interact with a person, the more likely he or she is to become our friend or intimate partner. This effect is very similar to the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) in that the more a person is exposed to a stimulus, the more the person likes it. The second theory to explain similarity is the genetic similarity theory. This is the idea that we are attracted to, and help, those who share more of our genes, therefore those who are more similar (Hamilton, 1968). Another proposition is that mate preferences are established in early childhood as a result of behavior characteristics of the opposite-sex parent hence, the stereotype that a woman will date someone like her father (Wilson & Barrett, 1987). Consequently, people will choose mates much like themselves because (being closely related) they inevitably share many traits with their opposite-sex parent. The final theory is that people with a lot in common simply share more activities and therefore find each other’s company more rewarding (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna & Heyman, 2000). Whatever the
circumstances, it becomes clear that people have a tendency to choose and prefer mates which are more similar to them (Wilson & Cousins, 2003).

Although substantial theory and empirical evidence exists to support the idea that similarity across a broad range of traits is related to relationship satisfaction, one set of traits that has thus far been overlooked is the set of character virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). However, as previously mentioned there is little to no research regarding virtues and the part they play on relationship satisfaction. A virtue is defined as a commendable quality or trait and according to Peterson and Seligman (2004), is core characteristic valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers. Peterson and Seligman’s 2004 book *Character Strengths and Virtues* is one of the first attempts by the research community to identify and classify the positive psychological traits of human beings. In doing so, the authors emphasize the importance of virtues to the realm of psychology. Peterson and Seligman (2004) identify six classes of virtues which are made up of twenty-four measurable character strengths the full list of which can be found in Appendix A. The classification schema and ideologies represented in the text have been adopted by the present study not only to structurally define virtues but also to help emphasize the important role they should have in psychology. Research on these particular characteristics is new to the field of psychology and *Character Strengths and Virtues* appears to be the most widely accepted classification of virtues to date (Dunn, 2008).

The six broad categories of virtues defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) are: Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence. These six are all considered to be virtuous by the vast majority of
cultures and historical periods. Virtues, being valued as always good in and of themselves, have been found to lead to increased happiness when practiced (Punzo & Meara, 1993). In order to determine if someone exemplifies these virtues, the handbook identifies twenty-four measurable character strengths which are distinguishable routes to displaying the virtues. The twenty-four character strengths are dispersed unevenly among the six virtues, with each virtue composed of between three and five strengths. For example, the virtue of wisdom can be achieved through such strengths as creativity, curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness and perspective. These strengths are similar in that they all involve the acquisition and use of knowledge, but are also distinct (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Due to the lack of past research on virtues and their importance within people’s lives’, I am whether that virtues operate differently than other similarity effects in regards to relationship satisfaction. This leads me to my research question: does self-partner similarity on virtues predict relationship satisfaction?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to go a little more in-depth into the idea of similarity. For this experiment, similarity is considered to be on a continuum portrayed in Figure 1 with the x-axis being the difference in the rating one’s self and their partner and the y-axis being relationship satisfaction. This graph is showing that the farther away from zero or the more dissimilar two partners are, the less satisfied they are with their relationship. This is supported by previous research on relationship
similarity (Bartle, 1993). It is also necessary to indicate that negative values, or values which represent rating self as lower than partner are left of the y-axis and positive values, or values which represent rating self as higher than partner, are right of the y-axis.

*Figure 1.* Relationship satisfaction vs. Difference score between self and partner (taken from self minus partner ratings on one of the six virtues).

As established by the above graph, there are two ways that one’s self-rating can differ from one’s rating of his or her partner: either rating self higher or self lower. The differences between these two ways of differing are the topic of research on social comparison.

According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), people want to evaluate themselves and obtain some idea of their strengths. In order to do so, people tend to compare themselves with others when they are unable to evaluate their abilities on their own. For example, if a person is not sure to what level they possess the character strength *creativity* he or she is likely to compare abilities with a significant other and use that comparison to determine his or her own personal level of creativity. Relationship partners interact on a daily basis and have the privileged knowledge of knowing each other’s daily successes and failures. Since interactions within relationships are so frequent, it makes for a high likelihood of social comparison between partners; this can have a great effect on the relationship, whether that be in a positive or negative way (Watson et al., 2000).
Two types of social comparisons are defined by the literature: upward comparisons and downward comparisons. However, the research on social comparison theory is very confusing and the effect these comparisons have on relationship satisfaction is mixed and depends on many variables. Although there are always exceptions, some general trends regarding upward and downward comparisons have been found. Upward comparisons, or comparisons with more successful others, generally lead to individuals feeling worse about themselves, especially when the comparison is self-relevant. Social comparison can also be downward, in which an individual is comparing themselves to worse off others. These comparisons generally tend to be enhancing to the individual because they confirm ideas of superiority (Lockwood, Dolderman, Sadler, & Gerchak, 2004).

Because virtues have not been studied in regards to relationship satisfaction, it is plausible that they may be an exception to the general trends found in both similarity and social comparison research. The majority of literature on trait comparison within relationships has been on the Big 5 personality characteristics (Luo, Chen, Yue, Zhang, Zhaoyang & Xu, (2008); Watson, Hubbaard & Wiese, 2000; White, Hendrick & Hendrick (2004). The Big 5 has tried to stay away from the idea of characteristics as good or bad personality traits. Social comparison is more intense with comparisons that are relevant to the self, therefore, comparing virtues, or traits that are striven for by most individuals
and universally deemed as good, should elicit a higher level of social comparison between self and partner than seen in past literature (Watson et al., 2000).

An in depth look into the literature on similarity, relationship satisfaction, virtues and social comparison theory has led me to hypothesize that: relationship satisfaction will be highest for partners with the closest level of similarity, followed by those who rated themselves higher and then those that rated themselves lower than their partner. This hypothesis is clarified in Figure 2, which is identical to Figure 1 portraying similarity with the exception of the lines being not symmetric in order represent the postulated social comparison differences. Figure 2 illustrates a hypothetical situation in which self and partner were rated on a virtue. As shown by the figure the highest satisfaction is hypothesized to be at a difference score of zero in which self score (3) equals partner score (3). Consistent with the literature on social comparison, generally downward comparisons, self (6) rated higher than partner (3), are hypothesized to elicit higher ratings of relationship satisfaction that that of upward comparisons, self (3) rated lower than partner (6). My hypothesis would be supported by each of the six virtue graphs displaying the overall pattern described in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Hypothesized results. Relationship satisfaction vs. Difference score between self and partner (taken from self minus partner ratings on one of the six virtues).

To test this hypothesis, 170 participants completed an online questionnaire designed to measure the level which they believed they are their partner possessed
twenty-four separate character strengths. Participants were also asked a Relationship Assessment questionnaire to determine their satisfaction within their current romantic relationship and a few questions regarding the status of their current relationship and personal demographics.

Methods

Participants

One hundred and seventy participants were obtained via a survey posted on a popular psychological research website. Participant's gender was 83% female and 17% male. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 years old to 68 years old with a median of 22 years of age. Participants' ethnicities were 87.5% Caucasian and 12.5% other. 71% of participants described their civil status as single and 29% as married. Participants' relationship length ranged from 1 month to 44 years with the mean relationship duration being 7 years and 4 months. The median and mode for relationship length was 3 years.

Materials and Procedure

The materials required for this study were a computer that accessed the internet. The survey was posted on a popular psychology study website (http://psych.hanover.edu/research/exponnet.html) on the internet. The participants read the informed consent which explained that if they clicked on the next button at the bottom of the page they acknowledged they could quit at any time and their answers
were anonymous. At the end of the informed consent, there was a question which asked participants to confirm they were in a romantic relationship at the time of taking the survey. This ensured that all participants taking the study were indeed in a romantic relationship before they continued on.

Next, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which also included questions concerning their current romantic relationship (Appendix B). Items included such things as: duration of relationship, civil status and to your knowledge did your partner take this survey. Once participants completed this step, they were taken to a seven-item Relationship Assessment Questionnaire (Hendrick, 1988) which is designed to measure the participants’ satisfaction of their current romantic relationship. The participants were asked to rate their relationship on a 6 point Likert scale; 1 meaning strongly agree and 6 meaning strongly disagree. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

The final questionnaire was designed to evaluate virtues and character strengths; this questionnaire is based on a book by Peterson and Seligman (2006) in which he describes traits we as humans should all strive for. The questionnaire consists of twenty-four character traits such as “Creativity”, “Kindness”, “Humility” and “Fairness”. Participants rated themselves and their partners on a 6 point Likert scale; 1 being do not possess that character trait and 6 being highly possess. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

The participants generally completed the questionnaire in 15–20 minutes. After the participants completed the full survey, they were asked for any general comments, then were debriefed and thanked for their participation.
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Results

Participants rated their satisfaction within their romantic relationship using 6 items on a 1-6 Likert scale. The questionnaire’s reliability was analyzed and the Cronbach’s Alpha was .890. This indicates the items on the relationship satisfaction questionnaire are highly related to each other. A mean score was computed by averaging participants’ responses on the 6-item satisfaction scale, after reverse-scoring the appropriate items. High scores indicate high relationship satisfaction and low scores indicate low satisfaction.

Participants also rated themselves and their partner on twenty-four character strengths using a 1-6 Likert scale. The character strengths were organized into six virtues each of which was analyzed for internal consistency using Cronbach’s Alpha. The reliability for Wisdom and Knowledge for self-ratings was .510 while the partner-rating reliability was .738. Courage produced a self-rating reliability of .672 and partner-rating reliability of .621; the humanity virtue’s reliability was .524 for self and .652 for partner. Justice had a Cronbach’s Alpha of self being .500 and partner .530 while the reliability for Temperance was .551 for self and .693 for other. The final virtue, Transcendence, had a self-rating reliability of .519 and partner-rating reliability of .709. Although these reliability statistics might be slightly low because of the very small number of character traits per virtue (between 3-5) this still indicates that the character strengths within each virtue are related to each other. A mean score was computed for
self-ratings and partner-ratings for each of the six virtues. Mean partner ratings were then subtracted from mean self-ratings (self - partner) resulting in six ‘virtue difference scores’. A positive difference scores specifies that the self is rated higher than the partner on that particular virtue and a negative score indicates self rated lower than partner.

I expected that relationship satisfaction would be highest for partners with the closest level of similarity, followed by those who rated themselves higher (positive difference score) and then those that rated themselves lower (negative difference score) than their partner. Relationship satisfaction scores were fit by a 2nd-order orthogonal polynomial multiple regression model with a linear term and a quadratic term. This was performed for each of the virtue difference scores. Two patterns were found: a negative linear slope and a negative linear slope plus a quadratic trend. The virtues were divided evenly with courage, temperance and transcendence showing only a significant negative linear trend pattern and wisdom and knowledge, humanity and justice exuding a significant negative linear trend and a significant quadratic trend pattern. This indicates that my hypothesis was only partially supported.

As Figure 3 shows, a negative linear trend is shown for the virtue courage. These data were fit by a 2nd-order polynomial regression model with a linear term and a quadratic term, however only the linear term was significant ($B = -4.46, p < .001$). The overall model fit was significant, $F(2,170)=14.26, p < .001$, with an adjusted $R$-square of 0.13. This means that 13% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the model. This indicates that as participants rated themselves higher than their partners on levels of the virtue courage, their relationship satisfaction went down.
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Figure 3. Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue courage.

The virtue temperance followed the same pattern as courage and displayed a negative linear trend. As Figure 4 shows, the negative linear trend is significant, $B = -4.2$, $p < .001$. This indicates that as participants rated themselves higher than their partners on levels of temperance, their relationship satisfaction went down. However, the quadratic was not significant ($p > .8$). The overall model fit was significant, $F(2,170)=11.05$, $p < .001$, The adjusted R-squared was 0.1046, indicating 10% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the model and the virtue temperance.
Figure 4. Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue temperance.

The last of the virtues to follow the negative linear trend pattern was transcendence. Once again, these data were fit by a 2nd-order polynomial regression model with a linear term and a quadratic term, however as Figure 5 illustrates only the linear term was significant ($B = -3.33, p < .001$). The overall model fit was significant, $F(2,170)=6.948, p < .001$, with an adjusted R-square of 0.06, inferring that 6% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the model. Once more, this model shows the pattern that as participants rated themselves higher than their partners on levels of the virtue *transcendence* their relationship satisfaction went down.
The second pattern found through data analysis was a negative linear trend plus a quadratic trend. This indicates that as participants rated themselves higher than their partners on the following virtues *wisdom and knowledge, humanity, and justice*, their relationship satisfaction went down. However, the quadratic trend indicates that my hypothesis was partially supported and similarity does play a part as the more similar participants rated themselves to their partners, the higher their relationship satisfaction. This can be seen in Figures 6, 7 and 8.

*Figure 5.* Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue transcendence.
Wisdom and knowledge, as seen in Figure 7, was fit by a 2nd-order polynomial regression model with a linear term \( B = -4.99, p < .001 \) and a quadratic term \( B = -2.43, p < .01 \). The overall model fit was significant, \( F(2,170)=21.21, p < .001 \), with an adjusted R-square of 0.1997. This means that 20% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the below model and the virtue wisdom and knowledge.

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 7. Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue wisdom and knowledge.

As seen in Figure 8, the virtue humanity also displays the pattern of having significant negative linear \( B = -4.69, p < .001 \) and quadratic \( B = -2.34, p < .01 \) trends. The data was fit by a 2nd-order polynomial regression model with a linear term and a quadratic term. The overall model fit was significant, \( F(2,170)=18.43, p < .001 \), with an
adjusted R-square of 0.1685. This means that 17% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the below model and the virtue *humanity*.

*Figure 8.* Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue *humanity*.

The final virtue analyzed was *justice* and it also displayed the negative linear and quadratic pattern as seen in Figure 9. Once again, these data were fit by a 2nd-order polynomial regression model with a linear term ($B = -3.66, p < .001$) and a quadratic term ($B = -2.01, p < .01$), both being shown to be significant. The overall model fit was
significant, $F(2,170)=10.82, p < .001$, with an adjusted R-square of 0.1025, inferring that 10% of relationship satisfaction can be explained by the model. Once again, this pattern indicates that as participants rated themselves higher than their partners on levels of justice their relationship satisfaction went down. However, the quadratic trend significance indicates that similarity does play a part as the more similar participants rated themselves to their partners, the higher their relationship satisfaction.

![Figure 9. Mean relationship satisfaction vs. difference score between self and partner for the virtue justice.](image)

**Discussion**

My hypothesis stated that relationship satisfaction would be highest for partners with the closest level of similarity, followed by those who rated themselves higher and
then those that rated themselves lower than their partner. This hypothesis was partially supported by the data for three virtues: wisdom and knowledge, humanity, and justice, similarity did play an effect and relationship satisfaction was higher when partners were more similar. However, my hypothesis was only partially supported because the opposite of what I had predicted occurred and for every virtue, participants who rated their partner higher than themselves tended to be more satisfied with their relationship.

Previous research on social comparison can account for the negative linear trend that was present in all six virtues. Upward comparisons, or comparisons with more successful others, generally lead to individuals feeling worse about themselves, especially when the comparison is self-relevant. These negative feelings result from one’s own accomplishments seeming inferior in contrast (Lockwood, Dolderman, Sadler, & Gerchak 2004). When one is outperformed in a domain that is important to his or her self-identity, such as virtues, the person tends to do what Tesser and colleagues (1988) refer to as self-evaluation maintenance. This threat to self-regard leads a person to behave in a manner that will maintain or increase self-evaluation. Tesser’s theory states that relationships with others have a substantial impact on self-evaluation (Tesser, Millar & Moore 1988). The threat to self-regard that is a regular consequence of upward comparisons, is strongest with individuals who are psychologically close. Consequently, relationship partners who interact on a daily basis have a high potential
for social comparison and such frequent comparisons can have a great effect on the intimate relationship (Lockwood et al., 2004).

However, the impact upward social comparisons have on intimate relationships depends on the couple’s closeness, with closeness being defined as the degree to which one has incorporated one’s partner into one’s own sense of self (Lockwood et al., 2004). In relationships where the closeness is high, it is frequently found that when the partner outperforms oneself, or in the case of this study is more virtuous, one is happy for the partner and their own negative response is diminished. Steele (1988) found that individuals reduce threats to their self-esteem and the negative impact of upward comparisons by focusing on a valued aspect of their self-identity. The relationship in high closeness couples is so central to one’s self-identity that typically the threat is reduced by affirming the relationship. Focusing on the relationship’s strength buffers against the discomfort of the upward comparison (Steele, 1988). Also, in high closeness relationships, one will empathize with the partner, considering their success to be their own (Lockwood et al., 2004). Another theory is that participants might consider the benefits of having a spouse with high virtues to simply offset the cost of being outperformed.

The results of the present study were complicated and depended on the virtue; looking into the virtue and the character traits within it gave insight into why that virtue produced such results. Three virtues: courage, temperance and transcendence all produced significant negative linear trends. Looking into the character strengths that comprise these virtues helps one to understand why someone would be happier if their partner possessed an elevated level of these traits. Courage is comprised of: bravery,
persistence, integrity and vitality, because the majority of participants were female, social norms might lead a woman to prefer her mate to possess elevated levels of these character traits. The virtue *temperance* consists of the character strengths: forgiveness, humility, prudence and self-regulation. Having a mate who shows high levels of these character traits might be ideal considering if a partner feels they are more forgiving and have a better sense of self-regulation they could feel as if they are giving more to the relationship than their partner. This is confirmed by previous research on forgiveness which states that a partner’s level of forgiveness is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich & Fincham, 2007). The last virtue to follow the negative linear trend is *transcendence* although I do not think it has as high of an impact and that can be seen through it only predicting 6% of relationship satisfaction having a partner who shows the traits of humor, gratitude, appreciation of beauty, hope and spirituality at levels higher than oneself can lead to greater ultimate satisfaction. Consistent with past research this present study shows that a partners humor and not the similarity between one’s level of humor and that of their significant other is a predictor of relationship satisfaction (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra,2010; Cann, Zapata & Davis, 2011). This research found that high levels of humor in a mate correlate with high levels of relationship satisfaction.

The following virtues: *wisdom and knowledge, humanity and justice* all showed a negative linear and quadratic trend. This indicates that as participants rated themselves
higher than their partners on those particular virtues their relationship satisfaction went down. However, the quadratic trend significance indicates that my hypothesis was partially supported and similarity does play a part as the more similar participants rated themselves to their partners the higher their relationship satisfaction. It is helpful to look into the character traits that compose these virtues to distinguish why they showed a similarity trend as opposed to courage, temperance and transcendence.

The virtue wisdom and knowledge is comprised of the character strengths: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning and perspective. Wisdom and knowledge accounted for 20% of relationship satisfaction more than any of the other six virtues. There is a lack of previous literature on how these character traits serve as predictors of relationship satisfaction however, Peterson and Seligman (2004) state that wisdom is considered to be the chief virtue making all others possible and is grounded in cognitive strengths. Taking this into consideration there is considerable research stating that couples similar on levels of intelligence have report higher relationship satisfaction (Bartle, 1993; Luo & Kloehn, 2005; Wilson & Cousins, 2003). This research supports this study's findings that partners who are similar on character traits which indicate cognitive strengths and therefore intelligence will be more satisfied with their relationship.

Humanity is comprised of the character strengths: love, kindness and social intelligence and according to the results accounted for 18% of relationship satisfaction making it second to wisdom and knowledge. Although, there is little research on social intelligence and its effect on relationship satisfaction there is literature indicating that partners similar in love styles report having higher levels of relationship satisfaction
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(Hendrick, Hendrick & Adler, 1988). Past research has found kindness in partners to be a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction among neurotic males (Larson, Blick, Jackson & Holman, 2010) and other research has indicated no correlation (Cann, 2004). Although, there is a lack of research on how self or partner kindness relates to relationship satisfaction one can infer that when partners feel a mutual kindness between them, if that be in compliments, giving, etc., their relationship satisfaction would be elevated because it would feel more like an equal exchange relationship.

The final virtue to follow the pattern of having both significant negative linear and quadratic trends was justice. Justice is comprised of the character strengths: citizenship, fairness and leadership. There is a significant lack of research on how these traits might relate to relationship satisfaction in anyway however, it has been found that couples report similarity on political attitudes and personality traits (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Although not completely the same concept, this research could lead to confirming that couples who are more alike on strengths which Peterson and Seligman (2005) define as: traits relevant to interaction between the individual and a community, would indeed lead to increased relationship satisfaction.

A limitation to this study would be that the perceptions of one’s partner might be caused by satisfaction and not leading to satisfaction. This could have been why when participants rated their partner lower then themselves on the various virtues it resulted in a lower relationship satisfaction. Hence, dissatisfaction within the relationship might
lead someone to look for ways that their partner was not performing well. Because of the nature of this study the direction of influence cannot be specified and therefore only inferences can be made when interpreting the results. Another fault to this study is that participants were asked to simply look at the virtue and rate themselves and their partners not actually evaluate how virtuous their actions within daily life are. In order to combat this for future research I would use Peterson and Seligman’s (2005) Values in Action Inventory of Strengths assessment. The final limitation would be concerning a low external validity. There might have been a selection effect in that people who are unhappy with their relationship might be reluctant to take a survey concerning relationship satisfaction. Also, the majority of participants were females and Caucasian, this makes it hard to generalize findings and conclusions to the population. Females might value high levels of certain character strengths more than men, such as courage. The norm would be that a female would want her male to be more courageous than her however, a male might find a more courageous female dominion to his pride.

Despite the limitations research on virtues is a very popular up and coming topic in psychological research and I believe this study shows also very important to the understanding of what determines a satisfying relationship. Research having both partner’s take the survey and then comparing those results to the current study would only strengthen the understanding on how virtues relate to relationship satisfaction. Also, past research has indicated it is not the self / partner difference score which has an effect on satisfaction but simply how one perceives his or her partner (Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek & Furnham, 2009). Further investigation into this
phenomenon would be necessary for conclusions to be made in future research on self/partner comparisons.

Conclusion

In summary, the current study showed that for all six virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence, participants who rated their partner higher than themselves tended to be more satisfied with their relationship. This study also indicated that for the virtues: wisdom and knowledge, humanity, and justice the more similar the participants rated themselves and their partner the higher their relationship satisfaction. Previous research has emphasized the separate use of similarity and social comparison theory as a predictor of relationship satisfaction. However, this current study combines those theories in order to explain how virtues uniquely predict relationship satisfaction. Research on similarity's effects on satisfaction generally focuses on personality traits (such as extroversion or conscientiousness) or on demographic characteristics (such as religion or socioeconomic status) and not on character virtues. This study has expanded the previous research concerning virtues and applied it to relationship satisfaction while aiding the growing positive psychology movement by highlighting the importance of character strengths in regards to romantic relationships.
References


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THE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES ON RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION


Appendix A

Character Strengths

1. Creativity                      14. Fairness
2. Curiosity                      15. Leadership
3. Open-mindedness               16. Forgiveness and mercy
4. Love of learning              17. Humility / Modesty
5. Perspective                   18. Prudence
7. Persistence                   20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence
8. Integrity                     21. Gratitude
9. Vitality                      22. Hope
10. Love                         23. Humor
12. Social intelligence          
13. Citizenship                  

(Peterson & Seligman, 2006).
Appendix B

Demographic Questions
Please fill out the following questions about yourself.

Age *

Ethnicity *

Duration of Relationship * In Years/Months

Sexual Orientation * Is your current relationship
• Heterosexual or Straight
• Gay or Lesbian

Civil Status * The position or standing of a person in relation to marriage or the married state.
• Single
• Married

To your knowledge did your partner take this survey? *
• Yes
• No
• I am not sure
Appendix C

Relationship Assessment Questionnaire
Rate your current relationship on a scale of 1-6.

Your partner meets your needs. *

1 2 3 4 5 6
strongly disagree O O O O O O strongly agree

In general, you are satisfied with your relationship. *

1 2 3 4 5 6
strongly disagree O O O O O O strongly agree

Your relationship is good compared to most. *

1 2 3 4 5 6
strongly disagree O O O O O O strongly agree

This relationship met your original expectations. *

1 2 3 4 5 6
strongly disagree O O O O O O strongly agree

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship? *

1 2 3 4 5 6
Never O O O O O O Always

Do you love your partner? *

1 2 3 4 5 6
strongly disagree O O O O O O strongly agree

How many problems are there in your relationship? *

1 2 3 4 5 6
low amount O O O O O O high amount
Appendix D

Virtues
Rate YOURSELF on the following on a scale of 1-6: 1 being do not possess at all and 6 being highly possess that trait.

Creativity *The ability to do and think differently from the norm.

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Curiosity *The desire to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness.

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Open-Mindedness *The willingness to search actively for evidence against one's favored beliefs, plans, or goals, and to weigh such evidence fairly when it is available.

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Love of Learning *Being cognitively engaged and typically experience positive feelings in the process of acquiring skills.

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Perspective *Wisdom; represents a superior level of knowledge, judgement, and capacity to give advice.

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Bravery *The ability to do what needs to be done despite fear.

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Persistence *Finishing what one has started, keeping on despite obstacles, achieving closure, staying on task.

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Integrity *Speaking the truth and a genuine presentation of oneself to others.

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Vitality *Feeling alive, being full of zest, and displaying enthusiasm for any and all activities.

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Love *Marked by sharing of aid, comfort, acceptance and strong positive feelings of commitment and sacrifice.

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Kindness *Engaging in attentive behavior and the fulfillment of duties that provide material or emotional benefits to others.

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Social Intelligence *Ability to comprehend their environment optimally and react appropriately for socially successful conduct.

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Citizenship *Social responsibility, loyalty and sense of obligation to a common good.

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Fairness *Treatment of other people in similar or identical ways, not letting one's personal feelings or issues bias decisions about others.

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Leadership *Comfortably manage their own activities and the activities of others in a group setting.

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Forgiveness *Mercy; reflecting kindness, compassion or leniency.
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<tr>
<th>Virtue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>*Modesty; not taking undue credit for their accomplishments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prudence</td>
<td>*Focus on one’s personal future, practical reasoning and careful consideration of the consequences of actions taken and not taken.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>*Self-control over own responses so as to pursue goals and live up to standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence</td>
<td>*To notice excellence and appreciate it profoundly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>*The sense of thankfulness in response to a gift.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>*Optimism; a stance toward the future and the goodness that it might hold even when confronted with adversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>*Skill of laughing, gentle teasing, bringing smiles to the faces of others, seeing the light side of life and making jokes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>*Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and one’s place within it.</td>
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